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# THE DEBATE BIBLE

*By Jon Brusckhe*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### WHAT THESE 30 PAGES WILL DO FOR YOU

A lot of debates are lost by beginning debaters because they don't know how to handle all the issues that confront them. They might not answer a T argument correctly, they might fold when they hear a new DA, the mention of the word "Critique" will give them a rash, or something like that. These 30 pages will get you up to speed on all the issues you will encounter in college debates. The hard ones to judge are the ones where each side makes all the right answers; at that point it comes down to who has the better cards, who made the more compelling explanations, or who is more persuasive. This packet will not allow you to walk in and beat the top team in the country; it will allow you to go in against the top team knowing that there's nothing they can say that you can't handle.

### THE BIG PICTURE

To succeed in debate, you need six things: Tech, cards, and theory about disads, the kritik, topicality, and counterplans.

### THEORY DEBATES: STRATEGY NOTES

Debating theory is tough. Almost all debaters are more comfortable collapsing to issues that they have cards on and all judges are more comfortable voting on those things. You need to decide how "high risk" a debater you are. You may have a better team pinned down on a theoretical issue; the common tendency is for the upstart team to fall back on the carded issues in rebuttals. I think this may be a mistake; debate history has a bunch of stories of gutsy teams winning close rounds on theory hits, unique arguments, and even "substantially" topicality arguments. Getting back to cards will often favor the better team. In the rounds you need to figure out whether you can win a theory argument and whether you have a better chance of winning the carded argument; don't go to the carded argument simply by default. You can win a theory argument provided that you GO for the argument (probably to the exclusion of other arguments) and that you WIN the argument. Some judges won't vote on what they perceive as a non-argument no matter what, but a surprising number of judges will pull the trigger if there is no answer.

The flip side is that other good debate minds have concluded that if you are an upstart team going against a pre-bid, you are not going to win a theory argument like "exclusionary counterplans are bad." I think that if you are WINNING your argument and they don't have an answer it is worth going for; if they are at least hanging on the argument you probably shouldn't. But don't be afraid to press the issue.

### THE TRUTH ABOUT WHINING

Most theory debates come down to whether something is fair or unfair; in fact, ALL theory debates come down to this. Often, one side will say something is unfair and the other side will say that their opponents are merely whining. Here is how 99% of your judges will resolve the dispute: If the side alleging an unfairness can convince the judge that the other team has done something that REALLY IS unfair and that it makes a difference in the debate, they will win. If they can't do that, they are whining. To win a theory issue, you have to invest some time in the debate explaining in some detail why what the other team is doing is unfair.

"Potential abuse" arguments are treacherous; if that's the best you got by the end of the debate you probably shouldn't go for the theory argument. Your best bet, in that case, is to convince the judge that the other team tried to give themselves the option of doing something really unfair, they didn't do it only because you invested all your speech time stopping them from doing it, they are playing dumb now, and they probably would have pulled the trigger on the unfair escape-hatch had you not stopped them. Finally, say that the very strategy of leaving open the possibility is unfair because you have to debate it out to stop them from doing it and that gives them an unfair time exchange advantage.

### ATTITUDE

The most important thing for you to know is this: You will never be a nationally competitive debater unless you spend time outside of official squad meeting time working to improve yourself. That means more than just finishing our evidence assignments. This means: (a) Going over old flows, finding out what went wrong, and then correcting them even if it hasn't been assigned for you, (b) going over the assignments that others have completed to make sure you know what the cards say and whether or not there is a

winning argument there, and (c) figuring out for yourself what the crucial arguments on the topic are and making sure that you are prepared on them.

Of all of those, (c) is the most important. On every single topic there are a few negative arguments that seem to crop up and form the core of negative strategy; there will be one argument that I can promise you will be heard in over 70% of the rounds. On the criminal procedure topic it was Clinton, on PrezPowers it was the executive order counterplan, on privacy it was the hollow hope, and on Southeast Asia it was China. If you can make sure that you have mastered that ONE argument, blocked out every possible answer you might hear, and are totally ready to debate the argument through the second and third line extensions, your success will jump by 1 win per tournament. Ideally, your coaches should be on top of this, but if you want to be successful you need to take the initiative to prepare yourself.

## II. TECH

This means the following: Being able to flow everything they say; being able to speak quickly; being able to find the cards when you need them in prep time; knowing when to speed up, when to slow down, and being able to speak clearly. At its highest level of refinement, good tech means knowing when you can afford to blip and when more explanation is necessary.

Keep in mind that good tech means reading cards so clearly that they sound like your taglines. If the cards or the explanation give after theory arguments are unclear you have bad tech and won't win speaker awards.

Also, debates are won and lost on the basis of arguments and not taglines. If you are struggling with an issue and are simply concerned that you don't have enough answers stop and take a step back; 2 good answers is worth 12 bad ones.

**You rock if:** You can flow everything they say, know all the right answers to make, can give a pop-up speech (one without any prep time used at all) other than the 1A or 1N, and speak quickly and clearly.

**You can survive if:** You can flow and be able to fill your speech time without taking more than 5 minutes prep.

The only way to get the tech you need is with tons of practice; at a minimum you should be doing one practice speech and one practice debate a week. Of all the skills, **flowing** is the single most important. To get to varsity level quickly, flow one debate a day. The key flowing is abbreviating; make sure that you have an abbreviation for every phrase that pops up commonly. It doesn't matter what your abbreviation is as long as it can be written quickly.

### CARDS

There are two reasons you need lots of cards: (a) so you will never get in a debate where the other team has cards on an issue you don't, and (b) so that you will know before the debate what the issues are. If, for example, you have no idea what Critical Legal Studies is, you will never figure it out when they read it during the debate, even if you call for the cards.

The best way for you to get an understanding of the issues is to do all the original research yourself. However, because of the sheer volume of research there is to be done, you will have to rely heavily on the work that others do. If you get an assignment from someone else, you should read through all the blocks, including the taglines and cards, before you stick it away in your files. Ideally, you should take a highlighter and highlight down all the cards that you are given. This is time intensive, but if you get into a debate and the other team has read the original articles and you don't even know what your cards say the debate is probably already over.

Here is one final thought: At the 1995 NDT I judged 4 elimination rounds plus the top team at the tournament in round 8 against a team that made it to quarters. In every single debate the negative went for the strategy of turning the case and in every single debate they read cards from the affirmative authors. That means that from about round 7 of the NDT on, the only way for the negative to win a debate is to turn the case. To do that you have to know the affirmative articles as well as they do PLUS have negative evidence against the case. During the course of the year, therefore, you should at least have every card in your box highlighted.

**You rock if:** Every card in your file has been highlighted, all of your own evidence assignments have been completed, and you have done additional research to fill in the gaps in other people's research assignments.

**You can survive if you can:** Find every file in your box; know all the evidence assignments that you have filed.

### III. DISADS

#### Background and basic terms

The affirmative runs a *plan* and from it they claim *advantages*. The importance of an advantage is based on its *impact*, also called *significance or harms*. The impact can be a rights violation, the loss of freedom, suffering (100,000 people get a disease), death (100,000 people who would otherwise die are saved by the plan), or a war. At the end of the round the judge (and the rebuttalists, if they are good) will weigh the advantages against the disadvantages; if the impact of the combined advantages outweighs the impact of the combined disadvantages, the affirmative wins and otherwise the negative wins (assuming there are no counterplans, kritiks, or topicality arguments in the round).

The affirmative must prove that their plan is not being done now; that is called *inherency*. From there they must prove that there is a big problem (*harms, significance, or impact*, the three are usually functional synonyms) and that the plan will cure it (*solvency*).

To win a disadvantage, the negative must prove that the plan will do something bad (the *link*) and show how bad the consequence will be (a burden identical to significance or harms, and almost always called the impact). The *initial link* is what the plan does to trigger the chain of events in the disad and everything between there and the impact is an *internal link*.

A *threshold* is the point at which the impact occurs; if we are close to the threshold that means that the impact is just about to occur. If we are far from the threshold the impact, which may be bad, just isn't that likely to occur very soon. The threshold is often called the *brink*, and phrases like "now is a key time" usually mark threshold arguments. The tagline "no threshold" usually means that we are far from the brink or that the other team hasn't proven that the risk of the impact is imminent.

Both affirmative advantages and negative disadvantages must be *unique*. It is the single most important bit of debate jargon to know. Uniqueness refers to the amount of the impact (either affirmatively or negatively) that is solely attributable to the affirmative plan. For example, the affirmative might claim to reduce prison overpopulation and reduce tuberculosis. As significance, they might claim that 1 million Americans will get TB a year. The unique advantage, however, is not 1 million people, because some people who never go to prison will still get TB and some people who are in uncrowded prisons will get TB anyway. The affirmative can only claim as its advantage that number of people that their plan will uniquely prevent from getting TB.

The negative has the same burden with its impact. The negative might claim that the plan causes the President to be more popular and that if the President is more popular he could pass a disastrous health care bill. However, the affirmative would point out that the President might be popular anyway and that there is already a chance the health care bill would pass. The negative can only claim as its disadvantage the unique increase in the risk of the health care bill being passed that results because of the affirmative plan.

#### **On the aff**

Once you get to round 7 of the NDT and later, you had better have some cards on a negative's disad or an affirmative's case. However, there are many, many occasions where simple pressing of the advantage or disad without cards will just about kill the argument. Trust me when I say that a few intelligent presses can be devastating to a bad argument. If the argument sucks making the right presses is much better than reading a bunch of cards.

Each step of the disad must have its own uniqueness and threshold. Imagine the following disad: (a) The plan is popular, (b) the President will get credit for the plan's popularity, (c) a popular President will kill the Non-Proliferation Treaty, (d) NPT is necessary to stop proliferate, and (e) proliferate causes war. Notice that (a) is the initial link, (e) is the impact, and (b)-(d) are internal links. Notice that the negative has to prove 3 brinks -- that the President's popularity is on the brink (otherwise a rise or drop in either direction won't make much of a difference in relation to the President's ability to pass legislation), that the NPT is on the brink (otherwise the President's efforts to kill it won't make much of a difference), and that proliferate is on the brink (otherwise having a treaty to stop it isn't likely to make much of a difference). Keeping this in mind, you can make the following answers:

\*\* For every step from the first internal link to the impact you should make both "no threshold" and "non-unique" answers. In the above example, you would have 8 answers automatically because there are 3 internal links and one impact.

\*\* In the 1AR you should look at the evidence the negative has read and use it against them. This can take one of two forms:

"The uniqueness swamps the link" -- If you have argued, for example, that the disad is non-unique

because the President is unpopular, and they read a bunch of cards that all prove the President is popular, then you should say that if the President is so popular the small change in popularity due to the plan won't uniquely increase his ability to pass legislation.

"The threshold is too low" -- If, for example, you have claimed that there is no threshold because the President is too popular now and the negative says that the President is unpopular, you should respond by saying that if the President is so unpopular that any further reduction in popularity that occurs as a result of the plan is irrelevant since he can't pass anything in his current unpopular state anyway.

\*\* Point out things in the past that would trigger the initial link or any internal link other than the plan. In the present example, you would have 4 arguments (in addition to the 8 you already have) because there is one initial link and 3 internal links. Here are the examples:

-- "Non-unique, the President let gays in the military, and that was an unpopular action."

-- "Non-unique, the President has already come out against the NPT; he gave a speech last Friday saying he will oppose it"

-- "Non-unique, the NPT is already failing. North Korea decided not to comply with the inspection requirements"

-- "Non-unique, countries are already proliferation now; Israel and Japan are currently working on a bomb."

The more recent the example you use the better; anything that occurs before their brink card they will dismiss by saying "that happened before we were on the brink." Anything that happened after their brink card should have triggered the link and already caused the disad.

You don't necessarily need evidence to make these arguments, but it certainly helps.

In the 1AR, all of these arguments should be transformed into "empirically denied" arguments. If, for example, the brink card is from January of 1995 and you show that in February of 1995 the President let gays in the military, the disad should already have happened. If it hasn't, that proves that the link is empirically untrue.

\*\* Point out things other than the affirmative that will occur in the future that should trigger the link. There might be an ethics hearing on the President, for example, that will kill the President's popularity whether or not the plan is passed. Thus, even if the link, brink, and impact are true voting against the affirmative won't prevent the disad from happening. You can make as many of these as you can think of or have evidence for.

At this point, we have 9 arguments against the disad.

Notice that, for each internal link, you can make 3 different types of uniqueness arguments: first, that they haven't read any evidence that proves the link, second, that other things in the past should have triggered the disad, and third, that things in the future will trigger the disad.

\*\* Read the initial link cards carefully (you should always, always, always call for them) and argue that the plan doesn't do what the link cards say will trigger the disad. In the present example, argue that what the link card says will reduce popularity isn't what the plan does. If the link says that "liberal actions are unpopular," say that the plan isn't a liberal action. Remember that it is their burden to prove their own link.

\*\* Make sure that the impact cards are talking about what the link cards are saying. If the NPT impact assumes UN action, for example, and the link just talks about domestic Presidential support for ratification of the treaty, you can argue that even if the President supports the NPT that doesn't mean that the UN will enforce the treaty. The common jargon for this is "the link doesn't match the impact."

\*\* Watch the time frame for the disad, especially in relation to the affirmative case advantage. If the aff claims to stop a war in the next year and the prolif advantage doesn't occur until 5 years from now (keep in mind somebody has to build the bomb, threaten someone else with it, get in a war and then use it) you can claim that the case "out time-frames" the disad. The logic is that a rational decision maker (the judge) would vote to avoid the war this year and then worry about prolif later, when it becomes a problem.

\*\* Make sure the impact is specific. The debate lingo for this is "no scenario." If the impact just says that a war will occur, for example, you should ask the following questions: "Who will the war be between? When will it start? What will be the issue? Will it escalate? Who will join who?" You should claim that until they specify what their scenario is it is impossible for you to debate it. If they are saying that North Korea will prolif and attack South Korea, for example, you could ready cards saying that such an attack won't happen. If they don't even tell you what the scenario is, of course, you can't do that. If you tell them to specify the scenario and they do and you have cards on it, feel free to read the cards in the 1AR.

\*\* Match the time frame on the link to the time frame on the impact. If the link won't happen for 3 months and the brink for the NPT is now the disad will be over before the link kicks in. For example, if the aff says that the plan goes through normal means and congress won't even be in session until March, and the brink on the NPT ratification is in January, then the plan couldn't have an effect on the President's popularity until after the ratification has already happened.

\*\* Make sure that all parts of the disad match up with all other parts of the debate. A backlash argument will usually contradict a "popularity bad" argument, for example, because one argument claims that the plan is popular and one claims that it is unpopular. Here are two things to remember:

-- The easiest way to spot a contradiction is to set aside all the debate jargon and just speak out to yourself what all the disads say would happen after the affirmative plan. For example: "Disad one says that the New Right will hate the plan, backlash, gain political power, and then crush rights. Disad two says that the plan will be popular, the Democratic President will increase in power, and he will kill the NPT." This is an excellent thing for the 1AC to do during 2AC prep time.

-- A common contradiction is that the disad is linked to solvency but the negative is claiming the aff can't solve. For instance, the neg may say that because laws are indeterminate legal changes can fix anything (a solvency argument) and then say that improvements in the legal system make the President popular.

-- If you catch them in a contradiction they will start to make distinctions between the arguments that contradict. For example, they will say: "Well, the rest of the country will like the plan by the conservative extremists will hate it." If this happens, read their evidence to make sure that the distinction the neg is making is supported by their cards. If it isn't, make the argument that even if the story is consistent the evidence contradicts and at the very least both sets of cards should be thrown out because it is impossible for you to answer them both.

\*\* Compare the impacts of the case to those of the disad. If the case impacts are bigger the aff can lose the disad and still win the debate. One good comparison is that of an ongoing impact against a one-shot deal. For example, the risk of a big TB spread will be constant, occur every year, and risk the death of millions. The NPT ratification will only come up once. If the impacts are roughly similar, the impact with a more constant risk can usually outweigh.

\*\* Finally, once you have spelled out all the links and internal links be sure that you read whatever evidence that you have. Remember that you only have to beat one link or the impact and you win. Just make sure that your story is consistent when you answer the disad, and DON'T TURN BOTH THE LINK AND THE IMPACT.

\*\* I may have said this already, but one of the easiest and most powerful uniqueness arguments comes from the neg's own evidence; read the cards to see if they are saying bad things will happen *if things change* or if they say that bad things are happening now. Obviously, if it is the latter you have uniqueness arguments to make. The cool thing is that almost all negative evidence falls into that second category.

### **On the negative**

Finally, all this has talked about how to answer a negative disad but you can do the same things in relation to an aff advantage. For instance, you should match the plan to the solvency cards, match the impact cards to what the plan can solve for, make uniqueness and threshold arguments against the impact and all the internal links to the impact, and so on. The uniqueness of the impact is where most advantages are suspect.

There are two special things the negative must do on the case. The aff may claim a decision rule or a "deontology/reject on face" sort of impact. Essentially, the aff is reading evidence that says that the advantage is so important that you should vote for the plan regardless of its negative consequences, usually for moral reasons. You MUST make the following answers or you are dead:

1. The authors don't assume the impacts of the disads; they are saying you should do the plan but they wouldn't necessarily advocate taking the action if they were persuaded that doing so would fry the planet.

2. Doesn't assume the debate context. Perhaps it is true as a moral statement that a real-world actor would want to take an imperfect action, but usually that is true because there is a broader statement to be made or a larger ethical realm is entered. In a debate round, however, the arguments are relative and should be compared. The judge doesn't make an ethical statement with the ballot, they merely indicate who debated better.

3. It's a stupid way to make decisions; why should we close off all other ways of looking at the issue? Why should we ignore negative consequences? No rational actor makes decisions that way. You should at least entertain other arguments; if they beat them that's OK but you shouldn't ignore them.

4. You can never evaluate anything "on face." What if the plan upholds a moral imperative in some ways but violates it in others? What if the status quo upholds the moral imperative in some ways? Why can't the judge vote for that "on face?" What if we counterplan and do something that gets the decision rule; does the judge vote for that "on face" and ignore competition and net benefits? What if the counterplan and the aff both get the dec. rule? All judgments about the worth of something are relative and made in comparison to something else, and those judgments are always made in relative terms and not in categorical rejections or embraces.

NOW, take this section and make a list of all the sorts of arguments you can make against a disad and a case advantage. You will think this is silly and childish. I can PROMISE you that you will lose at least one round this year because you forget to make one of these obvious answers. Even the very best debaters space off now and then and I watched really, really smart debaters blow it because they thought past the obvious. If you make this list, check it twice, and force yourself to focus on these issues when you start to lose a grip in the debate, you will hang together through the roughest debates.

You will be totally tech-ed up on all the necessary skills when you can press in all the relevant places an advantage or a disad without using any prep time.

## IV. COUNTERPLANS

### Basic ideas

The negative can refute the plan by offering a different plan that solves the problems better than the affirmative plan and is competitive with the affirmative plan. "Competition" means that the affirmative plan and the negative plan cannot or should not exist together. For example, if the affirmative plan solves world hunger with food aid the negative might counterplan with economic aid. If economic aid and food aid are not competitive then the fact that economic aid can solve world hunger does not refute the fact that food aid is a good idea. If, for some reason, economic aid solves better than food aid AND doing food aid means that we CAN'T do economic aid (or that doing food aid would make economic aid less effective) then the counterplan becomes a reason not to do the affirmative plan. The negative would have refuted the affirmative idea.

The two key terms to know are "mutual exclusivity" and "net benefits." Mutual exclusivity means that the plan and the counterplan CANNOT coexist; a plan that gave food aid and a plan that banned food aid are mutually exclusive. A net benefit for the counterplan means that the plans SHOULDN'T be done together even if it is possible to do so. Essentially, the negative has to prove that doing the counterplan alone is better than doing the counterplan plus the affirmative. For example, the negative might be able to prove that we can afford to give either economic or food aid, but if we gave both the US deficit would spin out of control and cause a recession. In this case, adopting the counterplan alone would stop hunger and avoid a deficit; adopting the counterplan plus the affirmative might stop hunger but causes a runaway deficit. The negative has shown that the counterplan alone is better than the counterplan plus the affirmative plan. It is actually possible for the affirmative to claim a net benefit; it is a reason that the affirmative plus the counterplan is better than the counterplan alone. In the case where both the affirmative and the negative have a net benefit, the team with the bigger net benefit wins. For example, the counterplan might solve for hunger but not for "culture as expressed in dessert items." The question is whether solving hunger plus culture-in- dessert (which the affirmative gets) is better than solving hunger plus avoiding a runaway deficit (which the negative can claim).

You may hear other types of competition offered; some that have gone by over the years include "redundancy," "resource competition," "games theory," and "philosophical competition." All of these are artificial; if you press the negative they will all come down to net benefits that the negative has no cards on. Simply continue to ask: "What does this argument mean?" followed by "Why isn't that just a net benefit?" Finally, say that your permutation captures it, whatever it is.

The "permutation" is the hottest area of counterplan theory and the one you really need to master. A permutation is a test of competition. It is always possible to write a counterplan that is artificially competitive with the affirmative; for example, the counterplan could do economic aid and ban food aid. A permutation is simply: "A hypothetical combination of the plan and the counterplan." If this hypothetical combination of the plan and counterplan avoids the net benefits it proves that the ideas of the plan and the counterplan are not truly in tension and that the only reason they are is the artificial way that the negative has combined them. The affirmative doesn't advocate the permutation and they don't change their plan; it is only a way of proving that the counterplan is artificially competitive. To solve the artificial counterplan suggested above, the perm would be: "Give food and economic aid and don't ban food aid; it solves better than the counterplan alone."

By a mile, the most frequent net benefit is simply a disad that the counterplan doesn't link to but the affirmative does. The most common type of counterplan is now an "exclusionary" counterplan, one that does most of the plan but changes it in some small respect and gains the net benefit from the part that the counterplan doesn't change. It is called exclusionary because it does the affirmative plan except for one small part that it excludes. On the old education topic, a common counterplan was to do the plan everywhere except for Amish schools and the net benefit was that external mandates destroyed Amish autonomy. Another way to think of these counterplans is that they are "plan inclusive." By far the most common counterplan is the "alternative agent" counterplan, where the plan is done verbatim by the negative using a different agent. For example, if the affirmative used the federal government to enforce health standards, the negative might do the exact same thing as the affirmative but have the states and not the federal government enact the plan. The net benefit could be something like states rights, that the plan would violate but the counterplan would protect.

### General use of the Perm

When you are affirmative, at a minimum you need to say what the perm is and how it avoids the disads. You should write it out. For example, imagine a plan that acts through the courts. The negative runs a counterplan that acts through the legislature and claims that if courts act social groups will get demobilized while legislative action is invisible. The permutation could be: "Have the legislature pass the law

and the courts enforce it; the groups wouldn't be demobilized because they wouldn't see the initial action and it wouldn't matter if they got demobilized when the courts enforced the laws because the legislation would already be in place."

By the way, permutations were invented at Iowa University by Dale Hrbeck, John Katsulas, and Baylor University's own Karla Leeper.

If you are the affirmative you should always write out the permutation; if you are the negative you should always ask for a written copy of the permutation. Don't let them finish CX without writing it down.

The number of permutations may matter; most people will accept 2 or 3 but think that 4 or more is excessive. There are arguments to be made about more than one perm being bad (see "Perm answers" block below).

### Perms and Net Benefits

Keep in mind that most often the net benefit will simply be a disad that the counterplan doesn't link to. Make sure that you watch for each of the following things:

-- Does the counterplan get the advantage? If it doesn't you simply have to outweigh the disad. Normal link and brink presses to the disad may reduce the risk enough that the advantage outweighs it.

-- Are you link turning the disad? If you are and the counterplan doesn't get the link turn you don't have to answer the counterplan; the link turn is an affirmative net benefit.

-- Are you impact turning the disad? If so, and the counterplan doesn't link to the disad, the disad becomes a net benefit for you. You don't have to answer the counterplan.

-- Always remember that you can refute the counterplan just like a plan; if you have a disad that links to the counterplan but not to you run the disad against the counterplan. If you are negative and they do this you want to immediately link or impact turn the disad; if you do then you automatically win a net benefit.

-- Does the counterplan solve the advantage? If it doesn't, does the advantage outweigh the net benefit? Do they have solvency evidence or are they just saying that they can solve?

### Perm Legitimacy

For a while, there was a big debate about whether or not permutations were legitimate. Now almost everyone thinks that they are. There is one remaining argument you can make if you are negative, however. A permutation is, in essence, an "intrinsicness" argument. It says that the plan and the counterplan, as written, do compete, but that the competition is artificial and that the "truly" do not compete. They have tested the intrinsic worth of the counterplan with hypothetical additions to the plan. This is the exact same way that "intrinsicness" arguments are made against disads; an affirmative might argue against a deficits disad that the plan could be done and the budget balanced in other areas. In other words, an intrinsicness argument is a permutation to a disad and a permutation is an intrinsicness argument against a counterplan.

The interesting thing is that intrinsicness arguments are historically negative arguments. If counterplans and disads have to be competitive then so do affirmative advantages. Essentially, you can make intrinsicness arguments against the advantages; simply list a bunch of hypothetical, non-topical ways that you could get the advantage without doing the plan. To pull this off, you need to do three things: (1) Make and win the point that permutations justify intrinsicness arguments, (2) make and win a bunch of intrinsicness arguments against the affirmative advantages, and (3) argue that you can win the debate if you destroy all the advantages even if you don't have a disad or counterplan. (See "Perm answers" block below)

### Offset Perms

Strictly speaking, a perm should only combine parts of the plan and the counterplan. If it includes actions that are in neither the plan or the counterplan it is an "offset" perm. For example, if the plan sends food aid the counterplan could send economic advisors, claim it was cheaper, and run a deficits disad. The perm could be to do both and balance the budget in other areas or cut something expensive, like SDI. In this case the perm is "offsetting" the link to the disad. This practice may be questionable (see the "Perm answers" block below). If you are affirmative and they don't question the legitimacy of the offset perm you can beat them over the head with it; GO FOR this in the 2AR if they don't say that the practice is theoretically defunct.

## Time Frame Perms

Often the perm will simply time-order the plan and the counterplan. The perm will be to do the affirmative and then the counterplan or the counterplan and then the affirmative. Occasionally, this will mean leaving the affirmative plan on the books while the counterplan does the bulk of the work toward getting the advantage. If the affirmative plan re-prioritizes food aid and the counterplan bans all aid (claiming banning aid will solve for hunger), for example, the perm may be to do the affirmative first then the counterplan, and if aid is ever restored after the counterplan is enacted it would have to be in the affirmative priority. This is a time-order perm that leaves the affirmative plan obtaining no advantage; both the time-ordering and the fact that the plan no longer gets any advantage may be illegitimate (see "Perm answers" block).

## Special Counterplan Problems

### Plan Inclusive Counterplans

The hardest thing to deal with is the plan-inclusive, alternative agent counterplan. The basic problem is that you can't permute the damn thing because the plan and the counterplan are the same thing; anything that got the net benefit would BE the counterplan and not a combination of both. There are four approaches to take; the first is to claim that plan inclusive counterplans are bad (see the block below), the second is to contest the competition calculus the negative sets up (discussed in the next paragraph), the third is an offset or time-order perm that kills the net benefit, and the fourth is to concede the legitimacy of the counterplan and then turn the net benefit or read a bunch of cards on why your agent is better. The fourth option is the simplest but may play into their hands; remember that they are negative and can read more cards than you can.

The only thing that needs more explanation is the calculus-changing approach. The negative is contending that the plan and the counterplan both get the advantage so any risk of the net benefit means that the neg. wins. This is a huge advantage because they can lose a bunch of threshold and uniqueness arguments and as long as there is some risk left over there is no advantage to weigh against the counterplan. Essentially, the negative wants to take a topic that starts with something like "Resolved the Federal Government should: ..." and only allow you to claim advantages from federal action in general and never any advantage from any specific federal action.

The question, I think, is how many parts there are to a counterplan. If you are affirmative, you need to win that the counterplan takes 2 distinct actions EVEN IF they are written in a single sentence and EVEN IF they are part of the same act: First, the counterplan takes the identical action as the affirmative, and secondly, it uses a different agent. It's like throwing a baseball; it is one action, but it involves several parts: Gripping the ball, moving the shoulder, moving the feet, moving the elbow, releasing the ball, and following through. It is one action but has several distinct parts to it, and some of the parts may be good and the others bad. A pitcher may move his/her elbow correctly, for example, but have the footwork all messed up. What you should say is that the part of the counterplan that uses a different agent is competitive but the part that takes the identical action is not. As a result, instead of BOTH teams being able to claim the advantage that comes from the ACTION and the only net benefit the affirmative gets coming from the AGENT, the aff. should argue that ONLY the aff. gets the case advantage that comes from the action, because the part of the counterplan that takes the same action as the affirmative is not competitive, and the only part the negative gets to claim is the generic action that stems from the agent. Basically, you have changed the calculus so that you get to keep the advantage to weigh against the net benefit.

The negative will argue that the counterplan is necessary to test the agent and that the agent is crucial, and you need to respond by saying that they can still test the agent by running disads off the agent but that there is no reason they should be able to claim non-competitive advantages. A clever way to say this is that "They set up an unfair test -- You need to test the plan by asking whether the advantages of the ACTION outweigh the disadvantages of the AGENT."

### Topical Counterplans

When counterplans were first invented in the 1970's there was no question that they had to be non-topical. Now, in the 1990's, nobody thinks that they do. Ed Panetta wrote an article somewhere in the 1980's about the issue and everyone believed him. He had a good point. The argument goes like this: Topicality is important because it divides ground and ground is really divided by the plan and not the topic. When there is a counterplan in the round it has to be competitive so ground between the plan and the counterplan is already divided, and as a result the non-topicality burden is unnecessary.

I think there is still some room for argument, though almost nobody agrees with me. At the very least, if the negative is running topicality the aff. should ask them why T is a voter. Any reason that they give will also be a reason that the counterplan has to be non-topical. For example, if T is a ground issue then the

counterplan is in the affirmative ground, if T is a voter for fairness reasons then a topical counterplan is unfair, if T is a voter because of tradition then traditionally counterplans have to be non-topical, and if T is a voter because of a social contract the a topical counterplan violates the social contract.

The key issue comes down to division of ground. You need to win that topicality is an important ADDITIONAL check on division of ground; while competition checks some forms of abuse non-topicality checks others. For example, topicality checks the negative seizure of topical affirmative plan planks and eliminates plan-inclusive counterplans (of course, you may have to win that plan-inclusive counterplans are bad). Also, because the affirmative is limited by the topic but the negative can choose ANYTHING outside of the topic they have many more options to choose from than the affirmative, so placing the additional burden of being non-topical on them is no big hardship.

Basically, this is a winning argument if they give a reason that T is a voter other than division of ground; if they stick to division of ground or don't run T it is a nuisance argument that will at least give the other team fits but won't be a winner unless you are judged by some Dinosaur like Me, Leeper, Katsulas, or Warren Decker.

### Uniqueness Counterplans

Occasionally the negative won't have uniqueness to their disad so they try to counterplan it in. For example, they want to run a deficits disad but can't prove that the deficit isn't high now so they counterplan with a balanced budget amendment and use the disad as their net benefit.

This never works; the aff. can simply perm and do the counterplan, and then argue that the perm swamps the link to the disad.

### Carpe Permum: Seizing the Perm

Affirmatives may use a perm that gets them out of a disad or something. The negative may concede the counterplan and try to win on other issues. When this happens the affirmative might try to keep the perm because it allows them to claim the original net benefit as their advantage. If you are affirmative, don't do this. If you are negative, point out that the perm is a test, it is hypothetical, and it probably isn't topical. If the counterplan fails the test it goes away but the affirmative doesn't get to keep it. If they do they are no longer perming but amending the plan. If somewhere in the debate the neg makes the aff say that the perm is only a test the aff will not be able to claim the perm later in the debate.

**YOU ROCK IF:** You can make all the theoretical objections to any form of counterplan they offer, make one sound perm that kills the competition, and have the cards to defend your agent and kill any counterplan that comes along.

**YOU CAN SURVIVE IF:** You can make perms and have some cards on your agent.

## V. TOPICALITY

Whenever you flow this argument and whenever you talk about it, call it by its universal acronym, "T." Otherwise you'll look like a geek and won't be able to flow worth crap.

### Basic terms and ideas

The topic exists to define what we should be debating about. Think of the universe of possible debate cases; those that are topical fall in "affirmative ground" and those that fall outside of the topic are in "negative ground." A good topic divides affirmative and negative ground fairly. In the debate, ground is divided by defining the words of the topic. For example, if "substantially" means "of importance" affirmative ground includes all the cases that have some importance, but if substantially means "more than 90%" the affirmative ground is more limited and they have fewer cases to choose from. The negative usually wants to limit the topic and will argue that the best topic is a narrow topic allows for in-depth debate on a few issues. The affirmative will usually want to expand the topic and will argue that the best topics are broad topics that allow discussion on a number of different issue. This is often called the "Breadth vs. depth" debate.

The *plan* has to be topical, the case advantages do not. The topic specifies the policy actions that have to be taken, not the advantages that may come from those actions. Thus, T can't limit advantages -- the good things a plan does are a question of what the affirmative can prove. Sometimes people say that "the plan is the repository of topicality" to express this idea.

The one trick is that negative ground will always be larger than affirmative ground, but despite this it is still much easier to win on the affirmative than the negative. The key question is how to fairly divide ground, and the real answer is that nobody knows for sure but everybody says that they do it.

### Making a violation

All T violations have 3 parts. First, you define the word that you think the affirmative violates. Second, you explain why your interpretation of the topic excludes the affirmative case. For example, you might say that "substantially" means "materially" and that the affirmative is a change in philosophy and not material policy. Third, you explain why your interpretation of the topic is good. Here is the possible list of reasons:

\*\* Fair division of ground. You divide the topic in a way that allows lots of affirmative cases but still sets up the limits so that the negative can reasonably be expected to research the cases. You should usually list the cases that your interpretation allows and also show how many it excludes. If possible, you want to show that an aff. interpretation opens up entire new areas of debate and "unlimits" the topic. This is the key argument; if you can win this you have done 95% of what you need to do to win T and if not you're gonna lose it. A key sub-argument is whether the affirmative case is "in the literature" on the topic; if they are the negative should have been able to anticipate the case and research it, and if they aren't the negative couldn't have figured out what ground they needed to defend against.

\*\* Grammatical correctness. Sometimes nouns and gerunds and modifiers attach to odd elements. Since we are bound to follow the rules of grammar for the sentence to mean anything, if your interpretation follows the correct grammatical rules and theirs doesn't it is a clean kill for you if you can prove that you are grammatically correct.

\*\* "Brite line," which really means "a more precise definition." Most words are defined a little vaguely. For example, saying that "substantially" means "of importance" doesn't help all that much. How is the judge supposed to tell whether the affirmative plan is "of importance?" However, if the definition is more precise, say "substantially means 50%", and the topic is to substantially change policy towards a list of 8 countries, a plan that changes policy towards 4 or more is topical and one that changes policy toward 3 or less is not. It is easy to tell, and there is a "bright line" between the cases that are topical and those that are not.

\*\* Field context. Many words have specific meanings in specific fields. If I say "average" and I am talking about cars I probably mean the cars' overall quality, but if I use the word in relation to baseball I am almost certainly talking about a player's batting average. General use dictionaries are not field specific; on a foreign policy topic "Webster's is not field specific" but "Leeper's Lexicon of Foreign Policy Terms" is. You can get by without a field specific definition if you win the division of ground arguments.

\*\* If you have more than these 3 you are most likely wasting your breath, but you can argue T like any other card. You can say your T card is more recent, the source is more qualified, the wording is more direct, and so on.

\*\* If you are affirmative, make sure that the definition is exclusive. "Exclusive" means that it says what the word does NOT mean. A definition that says "substantially" means "large" doesn't exclude anything; a

definition that says that "substantially means NOT inconsequential" then if you can prove that the affirmative IS inconsequential you have a definition which excludes them.

### Answering T

There are 5 sorts of answers you can make when you respond to T. First, you can counter-define. Don't accept the negative definition but provide one of your own that you do meet. Second, you can argue that your counter-definition is good. Refer to the above list and use it to your advantage; you can say that the counter-definition is field contextual, provides a bright line, fairly divides ground, etc. Third, you can say that you meet the negative definition. Read what the definition says and don't take their word for it; ignore what they say their "interpretation" is and argue that the plan meets the definition. Fourth, you can say that their definition is bad. Almost always the big deal will be that they are overlimiting, that they exclude too many cases, that they make the topic too narrow, etc.

You might want to make an argument that says something about how the judge should evaluate the ground arguments. Affirmatives usually say something stupid like "we should get leeway on T." Instead of that, say that the negative has to show a clear violation, that if the judge isn't sure how the negative interpretation would alter the topic they should resolve the substantive issues instead, and so on. The funny thing is that even if the aff. doesn't make these arguments most judges will give them leeway on T anyway. What you can't afford if you are the aff. is to let the negative make arguments like "narrow topics are best" and let them slide. The best solution is this: If the negative is making arguments about why limits are good and judges should always try to limit, you should simply say that "fair limits are best," because nobody could argue against that, and then rest assured that the judge will probably give you leeway anyway. If they actually collapse to T you might want to take the standards arguments more seriously, but before then just rest with fair limits.

One final thought: Often it is helpful to say the resolution aloud with the definition inserted in place of the word. If their definition is really obscure this trick may help you understand how their definition would make the topic work.

### Extra-topicality

Extra-topicality just means that part of the plan is topical and part of the plan isn't. Still, the issues get tricky. The first question is what happens to the plan if part of it is non-topical. Most people say that the non-topical parts go away and that the aff. gets to claim advantages from the remaining topical parts. The best negative argument is that severing the plan is bad because it becomes a moving target; most affirmatives say something like: "Well, fine, leave it in the plan, we won't sever, just don't let us claim advantages from it" and the debate dies there. Occasionally a negative can slip in another argument like the "rider analogy" -- congresspeople can vote only for or against bills, not for or against parts of bills. The best aff. response is that debate is unique, T has a function unique to debate that is crucial, and that analogies make no sense. The only real question is division of ground. Most judges will agree and let the aff. drop off the non-topical parts of the plan.

The second issue is one I like to hear debate about but is seldom ever discussed. There are a lot of things that plans claim that are clearly non-topical, like funding, enforcement, and intent. What happens if the negative argues T against these parts of the plan? Are they severed? If so, does that mean that the aff. can't solve? Most people believe that you can put these "workability" mechanisms in the plan but you can't claim advantages from them. Otherwise, plans could fund themselves by cutting other programs (SDI was a popular one for a while) and the topic would have no limit on what affirmatives could do. But if aff's can't claim advantages from extra-topical funding provisions can negatives run disads off of them? If they can it seems grossly unfair, but if they can't then deficits disads or perception disads that stem from the spending or political enactment of the plan also seem illegitimate. If you are the aff. you should make these arguments against disads; most judges probably won't understand them but they are very defensible, will throw the neg. for loop, and should at least give you a great time exchange.

### Time allocation

95% of the time T is run as a time-waster. The aff. has to take it seriously because it's a voter but the neg. can drop it with no risk. If you are aff. and the neg. trots out their stock T violation, reads it a million miles an hour without being comprehensible, and then gets on to the real debate, you don't need to take it so seriously. Make a few straightforward answers, don't spend any more time on it than they did, and add at the end some answer like "If they explain it in more detail we will answer it then." It is especially important that the 1AR not bog down on a time-waster T.

### Is T a voting issue?

The answer is yes. In the 1970s it was debatable but now nobody seriously contests that it is; if you say that it isn't you'll hear judges mutter things like: "Holy high school, batman, they're saying T isn't a voter!" At the NDT there is even a rule that says that T is a voter. The real reason T is a voter is that if the affirmative were not limited by the topic negatives could never prepare for the possible range of cases.

The only serious issue surrounding T and its voter status is why T is a voter; depending on the reason that you call T a voter there may be some interaction with other issues (see counterplans and T). Most people just say "T is a voter -- we'll debate it if they do" just to be safe. I think it's weenie; you are better off just saying "division of ground" because that's what the debate will come down to anyway.

For the record, here are the list of reasons that T could be a voter: Division of ground, rules of the game, jurisdiction, fairness, and social contract. If you don't know what any of those mean find a coach and ask.

### Strategic things and decision making

If you are going to go for T, you have to go for T and T alone. Spend the whole 2NR talking about it.

You can make whatever other arguments that you want, the thing that will determine whether or not you win T is whether you win the fair limits debate. If you are negative you have to convince the judge that the affirmative is way outside of negative ground and that it is unreasonable to ask the negative to prepare for the case. Further, you might have to win that the affirmative interpretation unlimits the topic and allows in a ton of cases that the negative interpretation disallows.

Finally, T has been abused so often that a good T violation is still a winner. I think that at least one debate on T has been won at the NDT each of the past 5 years. Most people spew out T and never extend it; as a result, most 2ARs don't know how to deal with it. If you think you can win T, slow down in the 1NC, spend some time making explanations and developing the violation, and if you go for the argument with gusto it is winnable.

### Recurring T issues

#### "Substantially"

Every topic for the past several years has had the word "substantially" in it. There are 2 things that make it difficult to debate. The first is that the word is so inherently vague nobody knows what it means. Debaters keep screaming about their "brite line" that we all know doesn't exist. The second is that real question isn't whether not the plan is substantial, but substantial in relation to what. Negatives always want to evaluate the plan in relation to the entire topic area and affirmatives always want it evaluated against their inherency cards. For instance, if the topic is "foreign policy toward China" and the affirmative bans fireworks, the negative will correctly assert the affirmative is not substantial in relation to all foreign policy in China and the affirmative will correctly assert that they are substantial in relation to current fireworks policy. The real debate isn't about substantially but about what the plan should be compared to. I have heard almost no debates that deal with this issue; if you are negative and smart you should include a section in the violation that is titled: "The plan should be compared to \_\_\_\_" and the affirmative should have an answer of the same title.

#### "If they're plan had just added..."

Often to try to show that their violation doesn't exclude too many cases the negative will say something like, "The aff. could have run the exact same case had they simply added \_\_\_\_\_ to their plan." If you are aff. you should point out that this kills all their ground arguments; if the identical case could have been read with the addition of 3 words to the plan the negative had to get ready for the case anyway and voting aff won't uniquely expand the topic.

### Mass nouns

There are 2 kinds of nouns that have plural qualities; mass nouns and plural count nouns. A plural count noun ends with an "s" and refers to distinct entities that can be counted. If I say "Bobby Bonilla's home runs" I have used a plural count noun; you could count the home runs and each one occurs separately. There would be a presumably fixed number attached to the quantity: In 1987 you might be able to find that Bonilla hit 35 home runs. A mass noun does not end in an "s" and it refers to the mass of something, not individual parts of it. "Water" is a mass noun because it has no "s" and refers to an entire entity and not individual parts; if I point to a pond and say "Look at that water" I refer to the entire amount, not parts of it.

For debate purposes, negatives have often seized words in the topic and called them "mass nouns" and then said that unless the affirmative changed the entire entity in question they weren't topical. For

example, if the topic said that the affirmative should "develop space" the negative could say that "space" was a mass noun and that unless the affirmative changed every part of it they weren't topical. For the record, MacCalester college kicked serious butt with this argument in the early 1980's and it has been only a minor issue at best since then.

If you are the affirmative and you are answering the mass noun violation, do the following. (1) Make sure they read evidence from an English book defining what a mass noun is and how it functions; otherwise, you and the judge can't even evaluate the grammatical function of the word and the whole debate collapses back to division of ground. Essentially, they would be asserting a grammatical issue without proving it. (2) Make them read evidence that the word in question is in fact a mass noun; otherwise the explanation in (1) applies. (3) If the topic has the words "one or more" or "and/or" it proves that you can't be expected to change the totality of something. (4) Point out that it moots the word "substantially" (5) Say that it overlimits; it is impossible to change all of everything (6) Call it a plural count noun and explain the difference (7) Say that even if the word is a mass noun you don't have to change all of it; changing any part of it means that you have changed the whole -- they have to win a substantially violation to win the argument.

#### Pre- and in-round abuse

Most affirmatives want to debate "in-round" abuse; they want the negative to show how the aff plan and case in particular are abusive or unreasonable to debate. Most judges agree with them. Most negatives, however, want to divide the topic broadly and talk about the types of cases different interpretations do and don't allow. About a million debates on T a year come down to this question.

If you are negative, you need to argue that topicality is never an in-round question. In any round if the negative can find cards on the case you could have clash; topicality can only serve as a "pre-round limiting device" because after the round starts you can't go do research on the case. For the topic to have any limit at all you have to be able to anticipate what the cases will be before the rounds start and research them; asking you to prove in-round abuse won't help you at all. Finally, it collapses the question of whether you *did* do research on the case with the question of whether you *should have* had to do research on the case. The clever phrase is "Don't punish us for being good researchers."

#### Words of the topic in cards

With the advent of Lexis affirmatives are now typing the words of the topic into the computer and having cards pop up that they think proves that they are topical. The tag line says something like: "The plan is ..." and then they read the topic. The card will be some reference to the affirmative case with the verbatim words of the topic in it.

If you are affirmative, you need to say that this proves that the negative should have anticipated the case, it proves that you are "in the literature," and it proves that the pre-round limiting function of T has been served. If they didn't find your case it was because they were lazy; anyone researching the topic surely would have found your case. The power of the argument is that you are saying that people do research based on key term searches, not knowledge about what individual terms mean.

If you are negative, you need to say that to win T you have to define the words and provide limits, not simply use the words in the sentence. Argue that interpretations are more important than the occurrences of words and that using Lexis doesn't make you topical; you still have to answer the negative arguments. Keep in mind that what you are saying is that before the round everyone should have known what the correct definitions of the words were and done their research accordingly.

**You rock if:** You can answer any T argument they throw at you; you can answer violations you have never heard before without cards; you have a counter-definition for every word in the topic that your plan meets; you can write, run, and win a true T argument against a good team.

**You can survive if:** You have front-lines to the common T arguments and can generate about 10 or so gooey answers to anything you hear that's new.

## VI. THE CRITIQUE

Much as we have Leeper to blame for the permutation and Panetta for the topical counterplan, Bill Shanahan (now of Fort Hays) is to be held accountable for the critique. It is sometimes spelled "Kritik" because that makes the people who use it feel more like they actually read German. You should be aware that the following section is not being written by a fan of the critique.

### Basic ideas

There are 3 inter-related things that a critique means. The first is that they are critiquing your "paradigm." A paradigm is nothing more than a theory or a way of viewing the world. Capitalism may be a paradigm, socialism may be another, neo-classicism may be another. The most popular paradigm to critique "modernism," which is the belief that power derives from the people, that elected representatives and democracy work pretty well, that the world can be classified relatively neatly into discrete categories (like "land" and "air" and "rich" and "poor"), and that the state when it acts in its proper function serves to protect and serve the populous. Essentially, the critique argument goes like this: "Your plan is from paradigm X, paradigm X is bad, therefore your plan is bad." The argument is called a "critique" because the negative isn't really clashing with the plan, it is critiquing the paradigm that the plan came from. The idea is that if we critique philosophies before we start talking about policy actions we'll get a better philosophy and then, they hope, better policy actions. The method used to point out the flaws in philosophies in the hope that criticism will prevent abuses and move them forward is often called "deconstruction." A key feature of deconstruction is that it holds that you don't have to offer an alternative philosophy or course of action; the think that tearing down bad ideas is enough to start us moving in the right direction.

Usually, the affirmative won't claim to be "from" any paradigm nor will they really claim to defend any paradigm. Instead, plans usually "assume" paradigms. For example, if I decide to fund my plan, I may have assumed that you need money to operate, that if someone gets paid they will do their job, that they can't be motivated to do their job unless they get paid, and in short, you have assumed a capitalist system.

The big issue is what happens to fiat and the plan. One way to run the critique is to link the argument to the plan and the cards read on the case; it literally functions as a disad. The claim is that the plan propagates false rhetoric and it is a reason that the aff. should be rejected. The second way to run the argument is to claim that fiat is an illusion and doesn't exist and as a result nothing happens as a result of the plan; the only thing that really matters is the rhetoric that the debaters use in the round. The critique isn't linked to the plan and the evidence but instead to the way that the people in the room talked.

The last question is how to evaluate the argument. There are 3 ways that I know of. First, the negative might claim that it is an "a priori" issue; that before discussing advantages and disadvantages you have to prove that your paradigm is OK and that if you can't do that the discussion should stop and you should lose. There is not much of a reason for this but negatives say it all the time anyway. If you ask them why they'll say something like "You just have to justify your assumptions and then you can move on." They might also use the word "deontology" -- don't be afraid of it; it only means that if you have a bad paradigm you have misunderstood the way that the world really works. Understanding "the way the world works" is the study of being or essence and is called "ontology," so "deontology" means that you have to reject all ideas that misrepresent the way the world works. Second, it can be a solvency argument. The idea is that your paradigm is faulty, it misrepresents the way that the world really works, and so any idea it produces must also be faulty. As a result, you can never really solve any problem with an idea that comes from a bad paradigm. Usually the negative will have cards that actually say things about why the paradigm won't solve; you should be aware that they mean that you can't solve really big problems like understanding the nature of humanity or solving all violence or something like that and they aren't necessarily talking about the case advantage. Thirdly, the negative might say that you have "reified" the paradigm. That means that when you assume that a paradigm exists and operate using the assumptions of the paradigm you subtly entrench the paradigm and make it more hard to get rid of. You don't have to explicitly defend or advocate the paradigm to reify it; using it without thinking about it reifies it. And so, the argument goes, you can't really fix anything with the paradigm and by using the paradigm without thinking you have made it a little worse; in the worst high school vernacular the argument is a "non-unique PMA/DA" -- both a solvency argument and a disad.

### How to answer the beast

There are 4 ways to answer a critique; you can claim that all critiques are bad, you can say that the particular critique issued in the round is bad, you can say that your plan isn't part of the paradigm under critique, and you can say that the critique isn't a voting issue.

## THE PLAN DOESN'T LINK

Think of the critique as a disad with the link being that the plan is part of a paradigm. The quick and easy thing to do is to say that the plan does is not part of the paradigm in question. If they say things like "the plan is normative" say that it isn't. Ask them what the hell "normative" is and explain ways that the plan doesn't assume it. Also, say things like "There is no evidence that says that the plan is normative" -- that will drive them crazy because you're right. In fact, it is usually pretty easy to think of reasons why you "challenge" the paradigm in question rather than support it. Keep in mind this is the part of the debate where they have no advantage over you whatsoever; they are just saying that the plan is part of a paradigm and you are saying that it isn't and your story is just as good as theirs. In fact, you might want to explain it this way in the 2AR: "Look, we've been debating this for 7 speeches now. We can tell all the stories that we want but its their argument and they have to PROVE the link ... you'd never vote for a disad without a link card, so don't vote for this without an evidenced link to the plan." And if they do read a link card, of course, you should read it and make sure that they are right about what it says. If you don't understand most of the words in the card or it is from Foucault, point out that the evidence is incomprehensible.

## ALL CRITIQUES ARE BAD

Here's the scoop -- this is where everyone started debating the critique when it started winning a bunch of rounds for Texas a couple of years ago. It will now be very difficult to win this argument (unless you have a Dinosaur-type judge) both because most judges will probably accept that critiques are legitimate arguments and because the negative will be wired to debate you on the issue. Having said that, make these arguments anyway: It will irritate them, make them start using words like "post-structural de-distinctionism", confuse the judge, and suck their time. The specific arguments are contained on the "critiques are bad" theory brief.

The one argument that will really bug the negative is the uniqueness argument. Just point out that the paradigm will exist with or without the plan, the negative can't quantify any degree of entrenchment the plan causes, and so on. If they can't win it as a solvency argument (and they can't -- see below) the linear entrenchment doesn't outweigh Newt Gingrich's brain tissue.

## THE PARTICULAR CRITIQUE IS BAD

Here are some specific critiques that are likely to rear their heads over and over. The "statism" critique says that you either assume that individuals exist and so you diss on the collective or that you privilege the collective and diss on the individual; either way you play into the power of the state and probably make them more likely to use nukes. The "normativity" critique says that the assumption that specific changes in the law will work is bad. We shouldn't be talking as if we could magically change the law and as if changes in the law magically change problems. Literally, the critique is questioning fiat and so it should apply on just about any topic you hear. The author's name is "schlag," it rhymes with "dog," and he's talking about law school debates. If the topic isn't a legal one the argument will probably be misapplied and you should say things like "Schlag assumes legal education, not the plan." There are various "power" critiques, mostly from Foucault or his minions, that say that power is bad, that uses of power are bad, that power is "fluid" and not static, or something like that. If the topic is a legal one, there are critiques of the constitution that say that constitutionalism are bad. On international topics there are critiques of the nation-state system or the existence of borders.

If you want to debate the negative on this level you need to do research on their specific author and argument. I don't know what I think about this strategy; on the one hand you are playing on their field and debating them off of your case, but on the other hand negatives aren't used to having to defend their own authors and arguments and I have seem some negatives fold under the pressure. If you can't beat the argument any other way or if you are really bad at theory this isn't a bad option.

## THE CRITIQUE DOESN'T OUTWEIGH

This is probably just another way of saying that critiques in general are bad, and the relevant arguments are contained in the theory briefs. I think these are some really good arguments; they let you accept the legitimacy of the critiques but still make them non-issues. I also think they are true. There are 2 in particular that I just think are correct.

First, you should say that when their cards say that nothing from your paradigm can solve they mean nothing can solve the grand problems of human existence, like hatred, jealousy, war, etc. They do NOT mean that you can't get the case advantage and if the neg. says that their authors do assume that they are probably wrong. Word this as "No negative evidence assumes or even mentions X" and instead of X use the label for the case advantage. If they say that their evidence says nothing can solve you need to characterize the debate by saying that you are reading specific solvency evidence for the plan and they

are reading generic evidence that says "actions don't fix problems." That simply isn't good enough as an absolute solvency takeout and the neg. can't quantify any other reduction in solvency.

Second, you should say that it is simply wrong that a bad paradigm can't solve anything. Copernican mathematics are generally a bad paradigm but they have many equations that they solve well. Pathagoras was operating from a paradigm that claimed that all matter on the earth was composed of fire but he was right about the Pythagorean theorem. The Nazis had a flawed social paradigm but they had a good train system; the bad social paradigm system didn't mean that the train system couldn't work. All this is a reason that the plan still solves.

### Strategy and the Critique

There are 3 things to keep in mind when debating the critique. First, you probably don't want to debate them at their level. When a critique is introduced the negative is essentially saying that you ignore all the practical consequences of the plan and only discuss whether its particular philosophy is good or bad. The aff. needs to re-assert that the plans consequences and advantages should be weighed. If the aff. can win that point they'll win the debate 90% of the time because as a disad the critique doesn't have any uniqueness to speak of. The more you talk about their philosophy and its legitimacy the more it seems like their arguments are OK; you need to make the judge believe that ignoring the plan entirely and discussing ONLY the philosophy is a bad idea. As always, it is good to say something like "they have no evidence that says that only philosophy matters and that practical advantages should be dismissed entirely."

Secondly, you might want to consider straight turning the position. The negatives love the critique because it is a no risk issue for them; affs have to suck time into answering it, if they mishandle it then it becomes an absolute issue, and it can't be turned. If you can straight turn it they may get stuck with an albatross or at least they will suffer a time disadvantage. There are 2 ways to straight turn the critique. First, you can argue that the negative's other arguments violate the critique, that they have entrenched the paradigm more than you have and should hence lose, and that only they have been hypocritical -- you didn't know your paradigm was bad but they did and so they should be punished for violating anyway. Essentially, you are making the argument a reverse voter. Secondly, you can concede all the assumptions about debating the philosophy, claim that the negative assumes a critical theory philosophy (or deconstruction, or whatever) and then beat them senseless with a million "critical theory bad" or "deconstruction bad" arguments.

Thirdly, the most crucial thing to do when debating a critique is to make them explain what their argument means. Here are questions you NEED to know the answers to before you can even debate the argument intelligently:

--Is it a solvency argument, a disad, or both?

--What happens to fiat? If fiat is an illusion is it possible to "move on to other arguments"? If the critique is linked to the plan doesn't that assume that fiat does exist?

--If we justify our assumptions, do we move on to other issues?

--How can we justify our assumptions? Will reading cards do it? What would those cards need to say?

--What paradigm does our plan encompass?

--Is there evidence that says the plan is part of that paradigm?

--What card says that practical consequences should not be considered?

--If we "must reject" the plan, why? Will a better philosophy come along if we do? What philosophy will that be? If you can't tell us, how can we debate it?

--Does the critique assume critical theory is good?

--Does the critique contradict your other arguments? If not, how come (any answer they give will feed your "no link" answers)? If so, why aren't you being grossly hypocritical?

**You rock if:** You can debate the theory out, you can explain to death the link arguments, you have deconstruction turns ready to go, and you have researched the specific critiques that are being run on the topic.

**You can survive if:** You are literate with the theory, can make link arguments that trouble the negative, and have cards against the specific critique. If you can just dump the theory answers you get from the blocks you can probably make enough of them to scare the negative away from the argument, but if they're serious about the issue you may still be in trouble.

## VII. OTHER THEORY ISSUES

### Fiat

Occasionally this will be an issue, but not very often. If someone is trying to fiat something that is really stupid and you feel like it is killing you, make the argument that fiat should be limited to real-world possibilities or things that a single agent would be capable of doing. If fiat isn't limited to that then debaters could do anything, like fiat that molecules in bullets stop moving, and debate would become stupid. You will win all those arguments.

### Severability

Plans can't be severed. If someone does that say that it makes the plan a moving target, is grossly unfair, and that the unfairness destroys any search for truth. If a practice is unfair, how can it lead to truth? Make it a voter or just a reason they can't do it and you will win.

## VIII. DEMEANOR AND PARTNER INTERACTION

### Partner Interaction

1. Thou shalt not interrupt your partner's answer. You may enter your partner's CX by invitation only; ask them if you can answer or ask a question.
2. The person who will next speak gets to start asking questions first; then the CX reverts to the person who is scheduled to CX.
3. Prep time: DO NOT interrupt your prepping partner unless they explicitly ask for your help. Immediately before they get up to speak, you get 30 seconds to tell them the 3 or 4 most important answers that they must make.
4. In general, the aff. belongs to the 2AR and the neg. belongs to the 2NR. If there are disagreements over strategic decisions to be made, the 1AR should defer to the 2AR and the 1NR should defer to the 2NR. There is plenty of time to argue about the decision after the round; you don't have time in the round to have an extended discussion.
5. Flowing each other MUST be practiced before you do it at a tournament; if you plan on turning to your partner and saying "Flow my speech for me" it is YOUR responsibility to let your partner know that they will need to do that BEFORE you speak.
6. The 1NR will happily and without complaint take any answers and read any cards the 2NC asks them to read.

### Before The Round:

1. Feel free to find the other team and ask what they are running. Don't press them on anything that they won't tell you. Ask as many questions as you feel are necessary but if they have to go and prep or if they don't want to reveal something, don't get hot and bothered.
2. If they press you for more information than you feel you should be giving out, don't be afraid to say "We'll have to get in the debate before we'd decide that."
3. Jon's question: Should you show them the plan? Should you ask to see their plan?
4. Timing: Don't intentionally hide from the other team to avoid telling them what you are running.
5. If it is a flip debate, don't ever flip unless a coach is there. Know where your partner is so that two flips don't occur. If you can't find a coach, don't flip before you know what you will run and which side you will choose. If the other team insists you flip anyway, make sure they know that you aren't ready to decide. When they ask you to flip, ask them if they are ready to say what they will run in the event that they win the flip. They don't have to be ready that instant, but do get them to commit to a time that they will probably be ready to decide.

### After The Round:

1. Do not argue with the judge. The ONLY question you are allowed to ask is "How could we have won this argument?" You should ask questions until you legitimately understand how the judge voted, but never raise your voice, turn red in the face, or utter the phrase "I don't understand how you could have done that?"
2. If the other team is in the judge's face, feel free to go to bat for the judge unless the judge tells you not to. If you think that they're being rude, call them on it.

### In The Heat Of Battle:

1. Don't intentionally with-hold cards from the other team to try to suck their prep time; be as forthcoming as you can. Don't let them give you crap if you legitimately can't find a card.
2. Don't take cards from the other team during their speech unless you ask them if they mind before the debate.
3. If you don't want them to take your cards during your speech, let them know that before the speech.
4. Cross-ex:
  - A. Don't get into screaming matches. At all times try to act like you are just legitimately seeking information. They will be more likely to answer honestly if they aren't throwing snit. I can't count the number of times that a debater wasn't hearing the answer that they needed to hear because they were locked into a "I must crush them into submission" mode.

B. If they get out of line or become unduly assertive in cross-ex, act amused at their immaturity and make a joke about it. Phrases like "Had a little too much caffeine this morning, did we?" or "Could you ask that just a little bit louder, please?" are more effective than phrases like "Chill out, dude."

C. At all times, the single most important thing you can do in CX is figure out positions you are not totally wired on. This means that you should start on the issues you don't understand and are losing rather than positions you think you are killing them on.

D. The 2NC should always start the first CX by reading the plan. If there are parts that are vague or that you don't understand this will be your last chance to make them commit.

E. Make the 2AC commit to exactly what the permutation is.

F. Make the 1NR give you a text of any counterplan.

5. At all times attack the arguments of the opponents, not their personality flaws. Attack arguments as being abusive, not people as being abusive. If they are running abusive arguments, DON'T GET PERSONALLY OFFENDED THAT YOUR OPPONENT RAN AN ABUSIVE ARGUMENT. Just beat it. If they have to run something really abusive they are probably grasping at straws anyway.

#### Things You Will Always, Always, Always Do:

##### On The Aff, After The 2ac:

1. Talk about what arguments you may be hurting on. The 2AC should spend the CX of the 2NC on those arguments.

2. Figure out what arguments you can win by just reading more cards. The 1AR should spend 2NC prep time picking out the best cards or reading through them.

3. The 1AR should ask the 2AC about any arguments that they don't understand.

##### As The 2nc Is Speaking:

The 1AR and the 2AR should each circle arguments on their flow that they feel the 1AR HAS to get to. That way when time is running down in the speech and you have to cut something and run, you won't drop anything critical.

##### After The 1ar:

Talk about the best answer to go for on each position. That way no matter what the 2NR goes for you will already know what the 2AR should focus on. This is critical in two situations: (1) the 2AR has no prep time, and (2) during the 2AR time is allocated poorly. In all other situations it will help you and your partner be equally equated with the issues. Phrases like "I think you can win the turn if you just read another card" are especially helpful.

##### On The Negative, Before The 1ar:

Talk about what you think you might win the debate on. Talk about any turns that you MUST answer in the 2NR. Discuss what issues the 1AR would really have to blow it on for the 2NR to waste any breath on at all.

The 1NR should tell the 2NR any argument that they think they are winning and that they would be truly offended about were the 2NR not to extend. The 2NR has total veto power. This discussion should NOT happen after the 1AR unless something really weird happened in 1AR or you have a lot of prep time. If you talk about what issues to go for after the 1AR, it should be the FIRST thing you talk about and shouldn't take any longer than 1 minute.

After the 1AR, never base the 2NR strategy on a single dropped argument. A position, perhaps. 2ARs will always have ways of covering the drops and will get away with even flagrantly new answers more often than not.

If you go for T, don't go for anything else.

##### Random Issues:

\* If either the aff. or the neg. you are opposing runs conditional arguments, at the very least force the 1AR or the 2NR to choose which they are going for.

\* While prepping for the last rebuttal, use your partner to go through a huge pile of cards and pick out the best ones.

## **IX. THINGS I LEARNED ON THE WAY TO SEMIS AT THE NDT...**

### **(BIG STRATEGY FOR BIG DEBATES)**

**\*\*\* THE TEAM THAT EXTENDS THE LARGER NUMBER OF AGGRESSIVE ARGUMENTS IN THE LAST 2 REBUTTALS WILL WIN THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE TIME.** Sounds simple, but this is seldom talked about before debates. It works like this: If the neg goes for a disad and the aff is extending 5 turns, the aff will win. If the neg extends 6 case turns and a disad with no turns to it, the neg. will win. This is simple, simple, simple, widely overlooked, and the way debates are won and lost.

**\*\*\* HAVE 10 GOOD CARDS.** When you do research you don't need 500 cards; you will only read 30 in the debate. Ten have to be really, really, good. If you have a great brink card that supports a story, a good link, and the impact card rocks, you are in there. On the affirmative you need link turns and counterplan answers. With those you will rule the world.

**\*\*\* THE 2NR IS ALMOST ALWAYS BETTER OFF MAKING THE DEBATE SMALL.** You might beat the 1AR by being big, but you rarely beat the 2AR. This is most true in first round debates.

**\*\*\* ETHOS IS IMPORTANT IN ONLY ONE CONDITION: MAKING A BAD ARGUMENT LOOK GOOD.**

You can go for and win substantially T, but to do it you need to look like you have a winning argument, you aren't whining, and you are CALM. When in doubt, err on the side of calm and be right about your issue.

## **X. TIPS FOR INCOMING FRESHMAN.**

Success will involve more than debating well; you have to get along with an awful lot of people with an awful lot of deep personality problems. If you piss off the coaches things are going down hill for you quickly. Focus on the following issues...

- 1) Be on time for everything. Other people won't be. Don't let that stop you.
- 2) Don't complain about food and driving decisions. There are a lot of us in the van; we can't accommodate everyone. We'll do well if we find a restaurant we all can live with and a departure time we can all make,
- 3) You must be a self-starter. Coaches will organize some things. That will only be 10% of the game. You need to proactively find the files you are missing, identify weak spots in your case, identify your own weaknesses, and schedule practice speeches and debates.
- 4) Wear belts in the van.
- 5) Don't whine about your partner. There are 3 reasons for this: (a) Your first partner won't be your last partner (b) it is your job to help them get better (c) the second you start blaming your partner for losses you are defeated in debate. You aren't improving yourself and you are placing winning debates over the feelings of a human being.
- 6) Don't let a loss throw you. You'll lose a bunch of debates. If you break down into tears or get so bitter about any one loss that you can't concentrate on the subsequent debates you will quickly turn a bad debate into a bad tournament.
- 7) Don't worry about whether or not the coaches like you or think that you're good. If you are good enough to win the NDT we'll notice that. If you aren't then don't worry about our opinion; start convincing the judges.