



Journal of the International Public Debate Association  
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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# The Use of Pathos in IPDA Debate: Justifications and Guidelines

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*Simply put, pathos is the use of emotional appeals in argument. The reasons for using pathos include putting your audience into a favorable state of mind for accepting your message, to provide motivational warrants for your arguments, to provide a catalyst for action, to create a balance or working relationship between ethos, logos, and pathos, and to ensure that your participation in IPDA debate teaches you real-world argumentation skills. Guidelines for using pathos include carefully choosing your words, telling compelling stories, picking your motivations carefully by determining what is at the top of your judge's value hierarchy, avoiding the logical fallacy of emotive language, using a variety of motivational appeals, using pathos ethically, and considering the risks involved in using personal appeals.*

When we debate, should our arguments and decisions be based on logic alone or should our arguments and decisions also be based on our emotions? Would reason freed from emotion lead to better decisions? One answer to this question is contained in the episodes of the original "Star Trek." Spock represented the tendency to make decisions on logic alone and his logic often helped the Starship Enterprise undertake a successful mission. Bones, the doctor, represented the tendency to make decisions on emotion alone. He, too, was valuable to the Enterprise. However, the real hero of the series was Captain Kirk who represented the ability to balance logic with emotions when making a decision. The purpose of this essay is to help you become the "Captain Kirk" of the IPDA universe—"boldly arguing where no one has argued before."

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Aristotle, in *The Rhetoric*, wrote that rhetoric involved determining the means of persuasion in any given situation. He classified the three means of persuasion as logos (logic), ethos (source credibility), and pathos (emotional appeals). Brockriede and Ehninger (1960), in an article merging Aristotle with Toulmin, called pathos a motivational warrant. Warrants are permissions given by the audience that allow a speaker to use specific data as proof of a claim (Toulmin, 1958). Motivational warrants involve the emotions, motives, values, and desires of the audience (Brockriede & Ehninger, 1960). For example, advertisements often rely on pathos or motivational warrants. Data: "Our toothpaste will give you a sexy smile." Warrant: "You want a sexy smile." Claim: "You should buy our toothpaste." Obviously, if you don't want a sexy smile, you have no motivation to buy the toothpaste. This essay will proceed by discussing the purposes of using pathos and suggesting guidelines for using pathos in IPDA debate.

### **The Purposes of Using Pathos**

The first purpose of using pathos is to put your audience into a favorable state of mind for accepting your message. People's moods and emotions can influence how they respond to your arguments. For example, if your friend is in a bad mood, you know that this isn't the time to ask for a favor. Movies are known for having music playing in the background to set the mood. This music, among other things, may frighten us, make us sad, or make us feel hopeful. Thus, you might think of pathos as "background music" for the debate round. What emotions and motivations will lead the audience to accepting your arguments? Are there emotions and motivations that could work against you? Should you really tell that dead baby joke in a debate on consumer product safety laws or would that simply destroy the mood?

The second purpose of using pathos, as already mentioned, is to provide motivational warrants for your arguments. Pathos is a means of persuasion. Always ask yourself, why would your judge accept your evidence as proof of the claim you are making? The audience has to grant you permission to say that your evidence means that your claim is true. Sometimes the permission or warrant needed is authoritative (ethos), sometimes it is substantive (logos), and sometimes it is motivational (pathos). If the necessary warrant is motivational, does the judge have this motivation? If not, is there another emotion or motivation that you can appeal to that the judge does possess? Republicans and Democrats, Christians and atheists, and college students and college professors are often motivated by different things. You need to know your audience in order to supply the proper warrant. For example, you chose the resolution "Good fences make good neighbors." You are on the affirmative and would like to run a policy case increasing border security between Mexico and the United States to reduce illegal immigration. Would it be easier to find motivational warrants for this policy with a democrat or with a republican as a judge? If your judge is a democrat, would another interpretation of the resolution make appropriate motivations easier to find? In debate, you always take calculated risks that you feel will fall in your favor; choosing motivations based on pathos is just another set of calculated risks.

The third reason for using pathos is to provide a catalyst for action. You might remember from your chemistry class that catalysts speed up reactions. People often know logically what they should do. They know that, if they quit smoking and lost weight, they would be healthier. But, they still eat too much, exercise too little, and

smoke. Why? They lack the motivation to act. Something needs to get them started. Pathos can serve as this catalyst for action. In debate rounds, pathos serves to make the issue have personal validity by putting a face on the problem. There is a reason why commercials wanting you to adopt stray animals use sad music and videos of adorable, helpless animals, it moves us towards action. Unfortunately, many debates fall short by moving the judge towards action, yet, failing to provide the judge an action to move toward. In a round concerning the use of Native American mascots, the affirmative did a great job of establishing the cultural harms of using Native American mascots, including how it trivializes the culture and continues the ideological notion of a “savage.” Unfortunately, the affirmative had a fatal flaw because the case only focused on the “catalysts” and did not provide a means of solving the problem. The judge felt the need to act, but had been given no suggested actions to adopt.

The fourth reason for using pathos is to create a balance or working relationship between ethos, logos, and pathos. *Dissoi Logoi* posits that one side of an argument defines the existence of the other, creating a rhetorical situation in which, at least, two *logoi* (arguments or appeals) struggle for dominance (Johnson-Sheehan, 1998). When debaters offer arguments based on pathos, the judge must determine how the different proofs clash with each other. *Dissoi Logoi* acts as a means to evaluate how the three means of persuasion (ethos, logos, and pathos) can interact within a debate as “argumentative proofs.” This helps transform pathos from merely an appeal to emotions into emotions as argumentation. Micheli (2010, p. 5) asserted, “In its broadest sense, the term “pathos” has to do with the idea of change, movement or alteration.” When evaluating a debate, pathos appeals act as motivation for change and are an important part of argumentation. Foster (1945) reminded debaters that reason and emotion work together in all successful argument. The symbiotic nature between logos and pathos allows arguments to establish a complete narrative, breaking out of the traditional dichotomy between the rational and the emotional. London (1966, p. 14) encouraged debaters to appeal to the judge as a complete human being by making arguments that address both the judge’s intellect and emotions. By legitimizing Aristotle’s persuasive proofs as an equilateral triangle, a debater is promoting responsible argumentation. The move towards balancing Aristotle’s persuasive proofs within argumentation and debate is dependent on a greater understanding of the use of pathos within the round.

The fifth reason for using pathos is to ensure that your participation in IPDA debate teaches you real-world argumentation skills. People are motivated by their emotions, wants, and needs. To believe that debate should be characterized by logic alone is living in a fantasy world. The nature of words themselves should teach us that emotions can not be separated from logic as words have both denotative (logical) and connotative (emotional) meanings. According to the IPDA Constitution, “The speaking style of the top Public Debaters should be highly effective when transferred into real world settings.”

### **Guidelines for Using Pathos**

Having examined some of the purposes for using pathos, it is now time to discuss various guidelines for using pathos. In other words, how does a debater use pathos effectively in a debate?

1. Carefully choose your words.

Within debate rounds, there are several variables that the debater does not have control over; therefore, debaters must focus on what they can control. One thing debaters can control is the words they say in the round. When deciding what case or arguments to forward, it is important to keep in mind the connotative meanings of words. People attach connotative meanings to words based on their experiences, so words can have more than one meaning within a round. Specifically, debaters should focus on the impact pathos has on connotation. One apparent place that pathos intertwines with connotations is displayed within a debater's personal values or worldview. Often, worldviews (such as feminism, Marxism, or capitalism) influence how debaters and judges evaluate the meanings of words in the resolution and arguments in the round. During a debate round over the resolution, "Might makes Right," the negative spent time preparing a feminist kritik over the use of power and domination. This kritik was a strategy that stemmed from the resolution's use of "might." While in many debate rounds, this would be an effective strategy, the affirmative interpreted the resolution as a case about the legalization of hemp as an energy source. The affirmative framed "might" as the potential hemp has as a renewable energy. While both teams had arguments to forward surrounding their definition of "might," the affirmative garnered a lot of ground because of its right to define. It is important for debaters to remember that, since words often gain their meaning from an individual's experience, clearly explaining your meaning for a term is very important. It is also important to realize that one's ability to prepare for the arguments that are likely to be advanced by your opponent in the debate will be improved once you consider your opponent's experience with the words in the resolution. Additionally, one must choose words based on their connotative meanings in order to set the right mood for your arguments. Words can have either positive or negative connotations to the listener based on his or her experiences. The word "bar" will evoke different emotions in a prisoner, an alcoholic, a ballet dancer, and a lawyer. If you want to inspire sadness, joy, anger, or peace, what words should you use? Choose your words carefully to create the right pathos.

2. Tell compelling stories

Within IPDA debate, one of the most common ways to introduce pathos into the round is by telling stories. A story is an extended example and offers more psychological proof than logical proof (Campbell & Huxman, 2003). Walter Fisher has taught us that humans are story tellers (and listeners) by nature. The use of stories in debate rounds helps by providing a sense of personalization—putting a face on the issue. Fisher (1985, p. 349) argued that the way a story is to be judged in regards to its merit is through narrative rationality—using the principles of probability and fidelity. This means, when sharing stories within a round, there are two ways in which the judge will evaluate the stories as evidence: probability and fidelity. The principle of narrative probability asks, "Does the story hang together and make sense?" Does the plot tell a consistent story that is free of contradictions? The principle of fidelity asks the question, "Does the story provide good reasons to guide or future action or decisions?" Judging a story as having fidelity means that we believe that the values within the story should influence our actions because the story is consistent with other stories we know to be true in our lives. When using stories in a debate, it is important to maintain ethical narratives. For example, you should only tell "personal" stories that really happened to you. Properly cite the origin of any story when you are telling

a narrative that is not your own. In a classroom debate, where students were asked to debate the effectiveness of cause marketing, a student started her case with a heartfelt story of her grandmother's battle with cancer. The student used this story to support why individuals should donate to the Susan G. Komen foundation. After the mock debate, a student consoled the young lady about her loss of her grandmother, and the student responded, "My grandmother is fine, that was just something I read online." This becomes an unethical use of narrative as it manipulates the audience into action. While the student met the criteria of the narrative paradigm, the story loses effectiveness for not being properly cited as someone else's experience. The unfortunate part of this debate is that the student would have won the classroom debate if she had properly cited the narrative.

3. Pick your motivations carefully by determining what is at the top of your judge's value hierarchy.

One of the first things a debater should do in any round is look at the judge's paradigm or worldview. Debaters should then filter their argumentation through this paradigm. This means, pick your arguments and motivations carefully in order to construct the debate in the most effective manner. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, p. 81) reminded us that the audience determines how arguments will be evaluated. In the case of IPDA debate, the judge that you have in the back of the room should influence what type of arguments you choose to run. In debate, arguments are filtered through the judge's paradigm, or value hierarchy. As a debater, one must consider which arguments best interact with this paradigm. For example, some judges look for in round change ('real world impacts' that, for example, can come from how we talk about a subject) versus 'debate world impacts' (such as nuclear war body counts). If a debater has such a judge in the back of the room, the type of impacts that will help ensure his or her victory need to be social and real world—that is, one needs to offer the judge something he or she can actually enact without the magic of fiat. For example, in a round on feminism, you argue that the judge can personally oppose sexist oppression by refraining from the use of sexist stereotypes when telling jokes. Wallace (1972, p. 388) further explains the importance of value hierarchies in regard to how they organize arguments in regard to strength of appeal. This fact should influence debaters to keep their link stories and impact stories very clear. Essentially, debaters need to explicitly compare arguments on points of clash in order to reduce judge intervention. Of all of the variables that exist within a debate round (judge paradigms, opponent's arguments, the resolution, et cetera), one factor that the debater can control is the argumentation that is extended on his or her side. Adapting this argumentation to the judge's paradigm can help create clash stories involving how the lines of argument meet the judge's value hierarchy. In other words, what motivates one person will not motivate another—what does the judge value, want, or need above all other things? What emotions matter most to the judge? The dangers of picking a motivation that is too low of a priority in the judge's value hierarchy is that, first, it gives your opponent a competitive edge if they picked a higher motivation and, second, your argument may not reach the brink of becoming a catalyst for action. As an illustration of how value hierarchies can influence decisions, consider the following example. In a debate round where students were debating whether or not the security of society outweighs the personal freedoms of individuals, the negative asserted that Maslow's concept of self-actualization proved why we needed to safeguard individual freedom. The student impacted this claim with a story concerning the importance of freedom of expression to prevent tyranny. In response,

the affirmative was able to argue that Maslow's value hierarchy existed as a pyramid, and a person could never reach personal freedom without first meeting security needs. The affirmative continued by arguing that Maslow admits that self-actualization is rarely ever attained. In this round, both debaters asserted a catalyst for action, but the affirmative ended up winning because the negative's narrative was dependent on security being met.

4. Avoid the logical fallacy of emotive language.

The logical fallacy of emotive language involves the substitution of logic and evidence with overly emotional language. The goal is to replace the reasoning process with emotions rather than to use emotions as an aid to reasoning. The line between the proper use of emotions and language with the improper use of such can be very fine. It is often a matter of degree that is open to differing opinions. So, err on the side of caution. Recent political discourse in the United States seems to be favoring the use of emotive language in the way that one's opponents are labeled (pro-choice advocates become "baby killers," favoring welfare programs becomes "socialism," favoring equality in marriage rights becomes "destroying the traditional family," and so on). The goal is to try to strengthen an argument that is weak in evidence and logic with emotional terms that circumvent the reasoning process.

5. Use a variety of motivational appeals.

There are a plethora of emotions, values, needs, and desires to choose from. Don't limit yourself to just a few. If you limit your options, your opponents will soon learn how to prepare for your arguments and your win-loss record will suffer. Also, if you rely on a limited set of motivations, you might find yourself without the ability to match your arguments with the particular value hierarchies of some judges. People can be motivated by fear, joy, family, patriotism, religious fervor, and many more. It will be worth your time to experiment with using new appeals in practice rounds to see how they suit you, the topics involved, and your audience.

6. Use pathos ethically.

An IPDA debater should always strive to be ethical. It is simply the right thing to do. The use of ethical arguments will increase your credibility (ethos) and contribute to your success in the long run. One's arguments should always be worthy of acceptance. It is true that you can win with unethical arguments, but is that really what you want to do? "I won debates by cheating" isn't the best line to put on one's resume. One way to be ethical in the use of pathos is to balance pathos with logos. As discussed above under the subject of emotive language, don't try to substitute one for the other. Another way to put this is that one should strive to use pathos as a catalyst for action, not as the sole reason for action. Olbricht (1964) noted that ethical argumentation requires that one give his or her audience the information (evidence) that they need to process (reason logically) in order to make an authentic choice. An authentic choice is one that is true to the self-image of a person. A person should not be emotionally tricked or forced into accepting a position that is not true to who they are.

7. Consider the risks involved in using personal appeals.



With any argument, a debater needs to consider the following questions: What is my rhetorical responsibility in using pathos? And, what type of competitive risk am I willing to take? When using pathos within a round, the debater faces unique circumstances when she or he is calling on personal appeals in order to forward an argument. First, as a speaker, the debater is opening up areas of vulnerability in regards to risking face. Personal narratives and pathos appeals can ask for the judge to emotionally intervene and cast judgment on the debater within a personal realm. For example, during a debate round regarding equality in marriage, a student decided to “come out” in her constructive speech despite warnings that this was a dangerous strategy. For the remainder of the debate, the student felt all comments designed to refute equality in marriage acted as ad hominem attacks on her. The student was emotionally unable to view the arguments outside of her personal connection. Furthermore, she felt that the judge voting against her meant that the judge felt LGBT members should not have rights. As a side note to this story, we believe that coaches as educators should allow students to pick their own arguments. Coaches should educate students about what distinguishes a good argument from a bad argument and should warn debaters about the risks involved in certain arguments, but the choice of what to argue should ultimately be the debaters.

Secondly, it is important for the debater to evaluate how their use of pathos will impact the audience. Audience members, including judges, can be emotionally moved by appeals involving pathos. When rhetorically engaging pathos, the debater should avoid trigger terms (words that purposely evoke overly strong emotions or reactions—often due to traumatic experiences) such as terrorism, rape, dehumanization, and exclusionary language (sexist language, racist language, ageist language, classist language, et cetera). Debate rounds involve captive audiences, such as judges, other competitors, and timekeepers, leaving them susceptible to rhetorical attacks posed by the use of trigger terms. For example, in one policy debate, a team decided to run a pornography kritik against a team from a religious institution. The offensive and obscene language within the kritik caused a negative emotional reaction in the opposing team and placed the judge in a position of having to determine whether or not the kritik violated the debate organization’s sexual harassment code. This use of pathos as a strategy to emotionally excite the other team violated rhetorical ethics.

To extend on how pathos affects the audience, we should look at exclusionary language. Unfortunately, debaters often times assume homogeneity within the activity and society and use sexist language. When making arguments like “all men [sic] are created equal,” the debater makes man the standard by which everyone is judged. Exclusionary language can be used in many forms within a debate round, whether it is the debater referring to a social position others in the room do not belong to or placing judgment on social categories. Therefore, debaters should avoid using exclusionary language as this can cause emotional noise within the audience, nullifying the debater’s personal effectiveness. For example, personally, we have a hard time accepting arguments when debaters assert ethnocentric beliefs on other cultures, most often when speaking on foreign policy concerns. With the use of kritiks becoming more viable as a debate strategy, debaters need to remain aware of how the use of trigger terms and exclusionary language can impact audiences and in round performance.

## **Conclusion**

This essay provided several reasons for using pathos and a list of strategies for effectively using pathos in IPDA debate. Go forth and “boldly argue where no one has argued before.”

#### Checklist for Using Pathos in IPDA Debate

- I have determined what mood is needed to put the judge into a favorable state of mind for accepting my message.
- I have discovered appropriate motivational warrants for my evidence and conclusions.
- I have considered how pathos can be used as a catalyst for action in the debate round.
- My arguments create a balance or working relationship between ethos, pathos, and logos.
- My arguments involving pathos would work in the real world.
- I have carefully chosen words for my arguments by considering both their denotative and connotative meanings.
- I have chosen compelling stories to add pathos and personalize my arguments.
- I will properly acknowledge the source of the story in the debate.
- I have chosen motivations that are at the top of my judge’s value hierarchy.
- My arguments avoid the fallacy of emotive language.
- My arguments use a variety of motivational appeals.
- I have experimented with using a variety of motivational appeals in practice rounds.
- My use of pathos is ethical.
- My arguments are worthy of acceptance.
- I have considered the risks involved in using personal appeals.
- I have considered the experiences of my opponents, the judge, and my audience in order to avoid trigger terms.
- I have avoided the use of sexist and other forms of exclusionary language in the construction of my arguments.

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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Building New IPDA Communities - Using the Full-Range Leadership Model to Grow IPDA in the Pacific Southwest Collegiate Forensics Association

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*Since its inception in 2014, IPDA debate is one of the fastest growing formats in the Pacific Southwest Collegiate Forensics Association (PSCFA). However, the PSCFA is eschewing traditional IPDA guidelines in favor of rules that fit with established practices. In this essay, we argue that this phenomena adheres to the transactional and nontransactional laissez-faire leadership styles included in the full-range leadership model (FRLM), but not the third style: transformational leadership. We propose a new direction for PSCFA that removes transactional and nontransactional laissez-faire leadership norms in favor of actions that model a transformational leadership style.*

In September of 2014, the Pacific Southwest Collegiate Forensics Association (PSCFA) voted to adopt IPDA debate at the Fall and Spring Championship tournaments. In its first year of implementation, IPDA was an instant success by participation standards with 141 combined entries between both tournaments in 2014-2015. In 2015-2016, that increased to 215 combined entries. However, much of the in-round argumentation lacked the competitive equity and real-world application that is so integral to IPDA debate (Eldridge, 2008). Instead, the uses of “spreading” and policy-based arguments apparent in many rounds are reminiscent of tactics that are at

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the core of declining participation in NDT/CEDA and NPDA debate (Gerber, 2009). Outzen, Youngvorst, and Cronn-Mills (2013) add to this harrowing reality that forensics teams across the nation have lost a significant portion of the budget, scholarships, and other types of administrative support since the advent of the 2008 Great Recession. To combat this threat to the long-term health and future of intercollegiate forensics, coaches are increasingly using leadership theories to balance the need to continually emphasize the academic virtue of the activity while also recognizing the responsibility to illustrate its practical value (Walker & Walker, 2013). However, intercollegiate forensics research to date has not effectively leveraged or applied broad organizational leadership models as a framework and launching point for coaches and researchers to adapt to the current milieu. As the host for a newly constructed and fast-growing IPDA community that diverges from existing norms of the activity, the PSCFA risks impairing the real-world education for students competing in the event. Since IPDA was added only two years ago, it is critical for research to drive the future of activity in PSCFA. This research seeks to apply traits from the multifaceted and empirically validated Full-Range Leadership Model (FRLM) to advance the ethos and competitive experience of IPDA debate at PSCFA tournaments. The recommendations will emphasize nuanced transformational leadership techniques to replace current practices that are driven by transactional and nontransactional passive-avoidant leadership behaviors.

## **Literature Review**

### **Full-Range Leadership Model**

Transactional and transformational leadership are the integral concepts in the FRLM. Originally outlined by Bass (1985), the first iteration of the theory included four transformational leadership factors – idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation – and two transactional leadership behaviors – management-by-exception and management-by-exception passive. However, Bass and his colleagues further expanded the theory based on the results of studies completed between 1985 and 1990 (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). The updated form of the FRLM includes nine single-order factors comprised of five transformational leadership factors (i.e., idealized influence attributed to charisma, idealized influence behavior attributed to beliefs and values, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration), three transactional leadership factors (i.e., contingent rewards, management-by-exception passive, management-by-exception), and nontransactional laissez-faire/passive-avoidant leadership behavior (Avolio, 2010). The FRLM is lauded for its capacity to link theoretical foundations of transformational and transactional leadership with specific behaviors (Verlage, Rowold, & Schilling, 2012). One benefit of transformational leadership is that it increases employee self-esteem and efficacy more than transactional leadership (McCleskey, 2014). In fact, Mathieu and Babiak (2015) found that transformational leadership is correlated with reduced stress, improved psychological well-being, and increased work ethic in employees.

### **Intercollegiate Debate and Leadership Theory**

The application of leadership theories to intercollegiate debate (or forensics as a whole) is scarce. Broad discussions of leadership and forensics began as more forensics journals were created in the late 1990s and early 2000s (White, 2005 &

Rutledge, 2006). However, employing specific leadership theories in forensics research is a more recent phenomenon. In one case, Walker and Walker (2013) employed leader-member exchange (LMX) theory to examine how coaches created a collaborative environment amongst their squads. Similarly, Swift (2013) applied Chaim Perelman's theory of universal audience to the strategies coaches employ to maintain the status quo in competitive strategies in NPDA debate. In reviewing current research, there is little evidence that the FRLM has been applied to the analysis of intercollegiate forensics coaching. Reorienting current transactional and laissez-faire leadership behaviors into transformational leadership behaviors may help to provide a framework moving forward for IPDA debate in the PSCFA.

### **Applying the FRLM to IPDA in PSCFA**

#### **Contingent Rewards to Intellectual Stimulation**

At the 2015 PSCFA Fall Championships, 144 IPDA debaters were given the following five resolutions in the first round from which to choose (PSCFA, 2015):

Round 1: College

1. A humanities degree is best.
2. A science degree is best.
3. General education requirements are a waste of students' time.
4. Higher education should be free for all students.
5. Trigger warnings in college classes do more harm than good.

This round is representative of each preliminary and elimination round at the tournament, which included overarching themes and an exclusive focus on resolutions of policy and fact. This is antithetical to the stated purpose of tournament directors in IPDA debate, which is to include a variety of fact, policy, and value resolutions (Constitution of the International Public Debate Association, 2015). This bylaw is not included by chance; instead, it is grounded in the history of public argument, and it is integral to the identity and ethos of IPDA debate. In fact, each of the three types of resolutions requires competitors to act as real-world speakers by utilizing different delivery skills, evidence, and persuasive appeals (Harper, 2015). By spotlighting only fact and policy resolutions, PSCFA tournaments limit the breadth of education that arises from debates of policy, fact, and value. The discursive harm this precedent sets overrides the validity of PSCFA's current justification for this policy: alignment with the national championships for community colleges (Phi Rho Pi National Championship Tournament). Until changes were made for the 2016 Phi Rho Pi tournament, IPDA topics also prioritized singular themes and fact/policy resolutions in each round. By changing IPDA topics to fit the structure of Phi Rho Pi, this functionally excludes students from four-year universities and only rewards the small subset of students who will be attending the tournament.

An additional contingent-reward issue is the use of IPDA as a supplementary event for NPDA debaters to increase the capturing of sweepstakes points. At the Fall Championships, 84% of competitors in the Varsity IPDA division also competed in Varsity division of NPDA debate (PSCFA, 2015). This transpires because IPDA and

NPDA debate are held on separate days, thus allowing students to compete in both. Coaches certainly deserve the autonomy to control the entry decisions of their competitors, but they risk forcing students to focus their efforts on one form of debate at the expense of the other. Given the embedded role of NPDA debate in the PSCFA, this leaves IPDA as the “other” event to compete in. For IPDA to thrive as its own debate format, coaches must be more willing to let students singularly prioritize it in practice and competition. IPDA is unique amongst debate formats due to its unqualified focus on extemporaneous delivery and persuasive appeals that can be accessed by a wide audience (Eldridge, 2008). To embody these characteristics, students must be allowed the opportunity to limit cognitive dissonance and abjure NPDA (and other debate formats) that discourage such tactics.

These dual realities perfectly encapsulate the description of contingent reward behaviors in transactional leadership, which “use reward and punishments to gain compliance from their followers” (Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013, p. 358). Intellectual stimulation involves followers in decision making processes and emphasizes innovation and creativity amongst their followers (Verlage, Rowold, & Schilling, 2012). Emboldening students to focus on the stated values of IPDA debate for a wide range of tournaments inculcates a creative, innovative environment where they can maximize their comprehension of audience analysis, real-world delivery, and basic persuasive appeals. Instead of this damaging focus on preparation for a single tournament and winning sweepstakes trophies, PSCFA must uphold the tenets of IPDA by engaging students in the larger intellectual value of the event. Bodla and Nawaz (2010) found that intellectual stimulation in higher education is vital if it is to maintain the efficacy of the FRLM at colleges and universities. By eliminating themes and adding diversity to the types of resolution, PSCFA can cultivate the intellectual stimulation that FRLM scholars recognize as effective in higher education.

### **Management-by-Exception Passive to Idealized Influence**

One unique cultural norm in standard IPDA tournaments is the central topic strike. The Constitution of the International Public Debate Association (2015) states that topics will be selected in a centralized location for an extemporaneous topic draw. This practice is not upheld in PSCFA tournaments. Instead, competitors meet their opponent and judge in the competition room and conduct the topic strike in the room. PSCFA tournament directors decided to eschew this standard in favor of allowing competitors to ask adjudicators their judging paradigm before the round. The main argument in favor of this rule is to avoid the splintered practices of judge disclosure at IPDA tournaments in the Pacific Northwest and the South by increasing judge-competitor interaction before topic strike. However, by disavowing the central topic strike for this purpose, PSCFA tournaments codify management-by-exception passive leadership. This brand of leadership promotes intercession only when nonconformity is present or when it is believed that corrective action is needed (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). By taking only corrective action, the leadership at these tournaments illustrates a lack of future vision and threatens to devalue an intrinsic component to IPDA debate. Cirlin (2007) noted that IPDA is unique among debate formats in that it was developed using empirical methodologies to meet precise pedagogical ends. One of these goals is to consult anyone they want to get help or coaching. This has “lead to a great deal of camaraderie on the IPDA debate circuit...where it is quite common to see groups of debaters from different programs prepping together and helping each other” (Cirlin, 2007, p. 12).

The experience of the researchers as competitors in IPDA in the South supports this research. However, as coaches present at the past two years at PSCFA tournaments, the isolated nature of topic strikes prevents this camaraderie from building here. It is encouraged for the Affirmative speaker to prepare in the competition room and the Negative to prepare anywhere else. This management-by-exception passive leadership strategy should be replaced by the idealized influence of enabling central topic strike and nurturing community interaction and camaraderie that is at the core of IPDA debate. Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2013) conceptualized idealized influence as leadership that displays convictions, encourages role modeling for followers, and fosters a collaborative, congenial culture. PSCFA tournaments can put these leadership strategies into practice by promoting centralized topic strike, cooperation amongst different teams, and more interpersonal interactions between competitors.

This idealizing influence is needed to enable students to succeed while being autonomous at tournaments, which is helpful for the health and well-being of both students and coaches. Duerringer and Adkins (2014) noted that IPDA coaches (like many in forensics) are tasked with driving teams to and from the tournament, helping their teams prepare arguments, judge rounds, partake in ballot review, and deal with any other extraneous factors (issues with the hotel, team cohesion, etc...). Empowering students to collaborate with others to help in argument construction will ease at least one burden from coaches, which can play even a small part in transporting teams more safely back home. Similarly, the influence of increased interaction of competitors with other members of the community will increase their capacity to adapt to community norms. Duerringer (2010) argued that the variety of IPDA resolutions (which range from examples like "Snickers are better than Three Musketeers" to "The United States should increase military engagement with ISIS") mean that competitors must be more adaptive to different forms of evidence, persuasive appeals, and warrants. This adaptation process is eased when competitors are able to take direct and indirect cues from their peers.

### **Nontransactional Laissez-Fair Leadership to Inspirational Motivation**

Across three Varsity IPDA Gold rounds at the 2016 PSCFA Spring Championships, 78% of the judges were current coaches (Open IPDA Result Sheets, 2016). Although this statistic is quite acceptable for NPDA and NDT/CEDA debate, it runs counter to the foundation of IPDA debate. Although no quota exists on the maximum number of coaches or former competitors available in the pool, it is encouraged for tournament directors to include a large amount of critics who are students, members of the surrounding community, or other individuals who are new to the format (Bylaws of the International Public Debate Association, 2015). This is done to prevent IPDA from slowly morphing from a debate format that prioritizes extemporaneous speaking and audience adaptation into one that emphasizes comprehension of technical language and speed-reading found in NDT/CEDA and NPDA (Eldred, 2009). Unfortunately, these recommended practices are being mitigated by the coaching methods of debate directors in PSCFA. At the 2015 PSCFA Coaches Conference, a coach who attended the IPDA National Championship Tournament led a panel dedicated to discussing the national norms of IPDA and how PSCFA can implement them (Griffin, 2015). However, the panel discussion instead focused on repudiating the codified rules and behaviors of IPDA and how students who primarily compete in NPDA debate can transition to IPDA. There were three main justifications for the



shifted focus of the panel – the belief that reinforcing regional activity norms are vital for maintaining familiar coaching strategies, recruitment of students who can fit predetermined debate formats, and the need to keep consistent judging paradigms (Griffin, 2015). The emphasis on familiarity and preconceived methods over upholding the ethos and recommendations of the event reveal nontransactional laissez-faire leadership that prevents students, coaches, and judges from obtaining the education and training that the founders of IPDA debate intended.

Regional insulation from the national norms of IPDA debate is enabled further through a lack of governing representation. Since PSCFA added IPDA to their offered events in 2014, no coach or administrator has elected to run for a position on the IPDA Governing Board, and they won't have an opportunity to do so until the next opening at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school-year (Governing Board of IPDA, 2016). The reticence to be on the Governing Board may result from a multitude of factors unrelated to disinterest (lack of exposure to the organization, no familiarity with the process, declining to attend the IPDA National Tournament, etc...), but the absence of representation harms PSCFA for the future. Intercollegiate forensics governing boards occupy an important role not only by maintaining the integrity of the event, but also by preserving the ethical and competitive guidelines for competitors and coaches to adhere to (Swift, 2006). With no coach representation on the governing board, PSCFA member institutions impede the ability of coaches and students from learning the intricacies of the activity and shaping the future of IPDA debate. As a community that sponsors over a dozen programs, PSCFA possesses the coaches and explosive growth to parlay this into a position on the IPDA Governing Board. However, thus far, PSCFA continues to treat the national IPDA organization with laissez-faire indifference.

This dissension also manifests itself in round. A female student on the Affirmative who competed in the Gold round competed against a Negative speaker who called her out for not providing a "link story" to her argument that Keynesian economics is key to keeping markets fair and equitable. The Negative did not explain what this terminology meant, but also did not address the substance of the Affirmative's original argument. In addition, all three judges in the round were current coaches with a heavy competitive background in NPDA debate. This meant that the reflexive use of terminology instead of addressing the core of the argument became the primary focus of the debate. Although this was just one of many arguments made in the debate, it is an increasingly common consequence of coaches being the sole adjudicators in the round. Compounding the issue is the implicit cultural norm in PSCFA that "lay" judges do not provide post-round feedback – only former competitors and coaches do. This practice prevents competitors from obtaining the holistic educational value of IPDA debate, which "tells debaters they should focus on their entire audience and adapt to it" (Eldred, 2009, p. 61). This cannot take place when only certain judges are conditioned to explain how they evaluated the debate round and these evaluations are unjustifiably privileged (keeping in mind the value to higher education brought by IPDA argued above).

Problematically, nontransactional laissez-faire leadership evades making decisions, abandons responsibility, and fails to use their authority for predictive or corrective action (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003). The lack of action in upholding the philosophy of IPDA exemplifies nontransactional laissez-faire leadership. This approach can be corrected by prioritizing the recruitment of student

judges from public speaking or argumentation classes and encouraging them to give a few minutes of verbal feedback after the round to explain how they saw the interaction of arguments, an explanation of who they voted for, and advice for each debater to implement in the future. The unifying of judging standards between IPDA in the South and Pacific Northwest with the PSCFA gives programs the capacity to be competitive and prepared at any tournament regardless of the adjudicator in the round. As a new debate organization compared to more established formats, IPDA requires more constant norms to ensure consistent pedagogical techniques (Ducote & Puckett, 2009). Therefore, consistent style and rules improves the quality of competition in IPDA regular season and national championship tournaments.

Similarly, the Coaches' Conference each year should refocus discourse on IPDA debate away from reinforcing regional norms and instead on how to conform to standard practices at the national level. This is also true for the IPDA Governing Board. Forensics competitors are more likely to join and persist with a program when uncertainty in regards to competitive norms, behaviors, and expectations are low (Croucher, Long, Meredith, Oommen, & Steele, 2009). The PSCFA must recognize this correlation between uncertainty reduction and motivation to grow the activity properly and enforce national competitive standards (and engagement) over regional tradition. Additionally, limiting uncertainty and cognitive dissonance is likely to not only increase likelihood that competitors feel comfortable attending the IPDA National Championship Tournament, but to succeed there as well. This strategy upholds the spirit of inspirational motivation described by Bodla and Nawaz (2010), which uplifts followers by framing the future with optimism, setting ambitious goals, and communicating to followers that the vision is attainable. This strategy will not only enable student judges to enhance their comprehension and application of critical thinking and persuasive messages, but will also empower competitors to be more fully aware of their entire audiences' predispositions, beliefs, and view of debate.

### **Conclusion**

As the newest national debate format, IPDA is still developing a unified identity and set of cultural practices. When intercollegiate debate organizations are under constant threat of team budget cuts and consequences of changing academic trends across the nation, inculcating cohesion among all cross-sections of the IPDA community is essential. This is especially true in PSCFA where an entire community of coaches and competitors is learning how to integrate IPDA debate into its Fall and Spring Championship tournaments. This article has discussed the disparity between the structural norms of IPDA debate at PSCFA tournaments and the codified rules and norms at tournaments in the South and Pacific Northwest. The PSCFA needs to restructure and reframe current PSCFA practices that embody transactional and laissez-faire leadership to align more with transformational leadership. In doing so, PSCFA will be aligned with the ingrained standards for IPDA debate, thus making the event more cohesive nationally. It is hoped that future research can build upon these recommendations by utilizing different leadership models to critique current methods being employed by IPDA debate tournaments. Critically evaluating and reassessing how IPDA functions will hopefully ensure its long-term health and vitality for future generations of debaters.

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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# In Defense of Topic Disclosure

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The narrative is now familiar of how the form and practice of academic debate changes over time. NDT policy resolutions, CEDA value resolutions and NPDA alternating resolutions all changed from their original designs to their current practices. At present each of these debate forms is marked by a rapid delivery of speed. They are also marked by some trickery in defining terms and selecting an approach to topics that often differs markedly from a framer's intent or a common reading of the topic. The affirmative goal seems to be to narrow or alter the topic in such a way to catch the negative unprepared for a particular interpretation. These practices created a world where much time is spent on debating definitions, approaches to the topic or meta-debate issues instead of debating the actual merits of the particular topic.

Perhaps IPDA can avoid this world with judge intervention on delivery (that is another essay), and promoting affirmative topic disclosure. Topic disclosure can significantly increase the quality of informed argumentation in a round. This essay will describe three sample rounds, offer two rationales for topic disclosure, and then respond to three claims Duerringer & Adkins made in the May 2014 issue of the IPDA Journal, and one claim Richey made in the May 2015 issue. The previous two issues of the IPDA Journal included five forum essays and one article on this topic. However Brown 2014 was the only forum author favoring disclosure. The arguments for disclosure would benefit from further exploration.

This essay defines topic disclosure as “the affirmative providing the negative with one or two sentences that accurately describe the affirmative approach to the topic before five minutes have elapsed in the preparation time.” This definition is similar to Key's (2014) use of the term as “the affirmative debater disclosing the general direction of the round to the negative” (p. 10). This combination of definitions is less proscriptive than Duerringer & Adkins (2014, p. 14) use of “the practice of declaring the affirmative's resolitional analysis before the beginning of debate rounds” and Richey's (2015, p. 7) “disclosure can mean letting a debater's opponent

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know the definitions the debater plans to frame the round with.” Certainly topic disclosure does not mean the affirmative gives away the coming arguments or reveals its best strategies before the round. Disclosure simply identifies the framework of the round or whether the affirmative is going to run metaphor topics in the abstract or in an identified and applied context.

### **Case Studies**

Here are three stories to illustrate how topic disclosure could have helped salvage actual debates where the negative was caught off guard by a narrow or tricky interpretation of the resolution as well as deceit.

#### *Case 1*

The author attended a tournament in October 2011, during a time when most political scientists believed that former Governor Mitt Romney had already sewn up the 2012 Republican presidential nomination. The resolution was “The primary season is already over.” Most observers would look for a debate over whether Romney’s nomination was likely inevitable or that other challengers could be successful. Judges might expect good arguments about the probability of Romney keeping a lead among his Republican challengers. Instead the affirmative arrived with a literal interpretation of the resolution, arguing that summer was the primary season for agriculture and vacation, and that it had already passed. The negative debater spent one minute arguing his prepared case, that other Republicans could emerge as contenders for the nomination, and then responded to the affirmative claims about summer being the best season of the year.

#### *Case 2*

In March 2015 the resolution was “America should drink less Koch.” Most observers would look for a debate centered on the influence of wealthy Wisconsin brothers Charles and David Koch funding Republican candidates. Instead the affirmative defined Koch as Jim Koch, a co-creator of Samuel Adams beer, and offered a case on why drinking beer was harmful. The negative debater spent half of the time defending a broader and more common understanding of the topic centering on the Koch brothers, as the more likely object of the topic framers, and half of the time running a prepared case on why the Koch brothers were a positive political influence. The affirmative debater appeared to this judge as one trying to employ tricky definitions and narrowing the topic specifically to catch the negative unprepared.

In the Romney round the affirmative chose a literal reading of the topic instead of a political reading, which most debaters would expect. Unfortunately that resulted in essentially wasting and disrespecting the preparation time of the negative. This situation could have been avoided with a quick sentence before the preparation time for the affirmative to disclose the framework. It would have been fairer for the negative debater to know of the affirmative’s interpretation and made for a more informed and better debate by allowing the negative equal time to research this narrow focus. It would have preserved the affirmative liberty to frame the topic and honored the negative preparation time.

The bylaws of IPDA give the affirmative the right to define terms and interpretations. The affirmative can define the resolution in a more narrow way (as long as there is fair and debatable ground for both sides). Negative debaters can challenge the interpretation if the affirmative has defined the round as a tautology or as a topic area that does not fit within the resolution as Richey 2015 discussed. Otherwise the negative should go with the affirmative interpretation. In both of these cases, the affirmatives could have still selected a literal reading of summer and focusing on beer respectively, and provided debatable ground. Topic disclosure would not have wasted the negative preparation time and probably would have led to a more fruitful, informed and educational round.

### *Case 3*

It should be agreed that debaters should not lie to their opponents in topic disclosure. In January 2012 the resolution was “Christian Bale is the best Batman.” The affirmative disclosed that he would run the resolution literally and explain why the actor Bale was the best performer of this character. The negative prepared a case to show why Michael Keaton and Adam West had been better actors for this character. When the round began, the affirmative announced that “by ‘Christian Bale’ I mean ‘Mitt Romney’ and by ‘the best Batman’ I mean ‘the best Republican candidate for president.’” The affirmative debater lied to the negative debater. The negative was frustrated by the deceit. If debaters embrace topic disclosure, they should do so in an honest manner. That is congruent with a standard of fairness, promotes a more respectful dialogue, and seems congruent with the IPDA Constitution Section VI’s call that “Respect must be extended to all.”

Affirmatives are entitled to translate a metaphor resolution, in this case to a political topic about presidential candidates. There is fair and ample ground for both sides to explore ideas. In this example, where is the harm in telling the opponent “this will be about presidential candidates” ahead of time? Affirmative debaters would respect opponent’s preparation time and yet not reveal specifics of how to affirm Romney’s candidacy.

Topic disclosure provides a simple means to reduce the “surprise, I have been extraordinarily narrow or bizarre in my interpretation” factor from IPDA. It honors the preparation time for both debaters, and provides a more useful skill with real world applications.

### **Rationales**

Two particular rationales emerge for topic disclosure. First, it allows both debaters to get to the heart of the matter in a more efficient way. IPDA speeches are significantly shorter than speeches in any other collegiate debate form. IPDA constructives are five or six minutes long, as opposed to seven minutes in British parliamentary, and eight minutes in the National Parliamentary Debate Association. Time for preparation and speaking is precious and should not be wasted. Disclosure allows the negative to focus on what the affirmative has selected and to provide a more informed response to affirmative claims. It allows the negative to use preparation time to bring relevant arguments and research to the round that deepen the knowledge of both debaters and to judges and audience members as well.

In Case Two, the negative might have further challenged the affirmative interpretation of the round. Yet the negative would have known this framework was coming, and had the opportunity to research Samuel Adams, primary evidence about beer consumption and other relevant issues to create a more informed round with more topic specific information, instead of being surprised by this tricky definition.

Consider how topic discourse would help debaters using a resolution from the 2015 IPDA National Tournament. Affirmatives drawing “Success is a lousy teacher” could frame the topic in many ways, like broadly evaluating success conceptually, pointing to where a presidential administration actually failed to learn from its apparent triumphs in foreign policy or how college students might actually not benefit from getting high grades in all of their classes. Letting the negative know if the case will be broad or specifically located in a context allows the negative fair time to think, research and be well prepared for the round. That promotes fairness and adds intellectual value to the round.

A second rationale for topic disclosure is to reduce the influence of gamesmanship and meta-debate in IPDA. Disclosure can limit the impact of tricky definitions and unnecessary gamesmanship. (Debaters who enjoy gamesmanship can find a welcome home in many NPDA rounds). Affirmatives who plan on using a tricky or more narrow interpretation would give negative debaters adequate warning to evaluate this framework instead of being surprised during the affirmative constructive. IPDA proclaims a love of good speaking and good arguing that is accessible to educated lay audiences. Imagine host schools inviting their faculty or their deans to come and observe a round. Would it be better for them to see rounds like Case One and Case Two mentioned above? Or would it be better for them to see rounds where both debaters start with a common understanding of how the affirmative has framed the round, and spend less time debating framer’s intent?

Academic debate is best served by clarity of thought and honesty in assessing evidence and argumentation. Coaches should teach debaters to be clear in their claims to promote the most robust exchange of ideas possible. Debates that center on the merits of particular arguments serve a greater purpose than game playing or trying to surprise negative debaters.

### **Responding to Duerringer & Adkins**

In the May 2014 issue of the IPDA Journal, Duerringer & Adkins explain their opposition to topic disclosure. Their arguments are thoughtful and are consonant with the practices of some coaches in the association. However they make three claims that warrant further investigation.

First, they define disclosure in an overly broad fashion, as the surrender of the affirmative’s best-kept secrets. Duerringer & Adkins (2014) compare disclosure to football coaches “telegraphing each play to the competition before the ball is snapped” (p. 14). This seems like an exaggeration of disclosure, which this essay has more precisely defined as “the affirmative providing the negative one or two sentences that accurately describe the affirmative approach to the topic before five minutes have elapsed in the preparation time.”

Duerringer & Adkins argue that disclosure can limit the ability of the affirmative to blow the negative out of the water with arguments not previously



considered by the negative. But again, the definition of disclosure is key. Affirmatives should disclose their interpretation without revealing particular arguments. Disclosure is not revealing strategy. It is identifying the focus of the debate for a beneficial educational experience for all parties. Strong affirmative debaters can still create solid arguments, and win arguments that are commonly known.

Tricky, outlandish or unnecessarily narrow affirmative interpretations of topics seem essentially based on having a surprise element to catch opponents off guard with a peculiar approach to the resolution. Richey 2015 uses Unger's description of muddled definitions when a resolution on NAFTA is no longer about the "North American Free Trade Association" but becomes the "Nudist Alliance For Terrific Abs." This premise is simply "be tricky because the affirmative argument cannot withstand scrutiny or research" (p. 9). If an argument is strong and worthy of merit, then disclosure is no threat. If an argument is strong and delivered well, it can withstand 30 minutes of negative investigation.

Second, they address an argument about fairness claiming that the affirmative and negative have different burdens in the round. They argue topic disclosure "tips the balance in favor of the negative." But they miss the point about how topic disclosure in fact promotes fairness by allowing both sides to use preparation time. And they overstate the claim about tipping the balance. The affirmative will always have the harder burden, that of proving the resolution true. Negative presumption makes the burden of rejoinder much less onerous. What topic disclosure means is the negative knows whether to focus on a narrower or broader approach to the resolution. The affirmative still gets to define terms and the overall interpretation, as long as they are reasonable and have ground for both sides to argue. Nothing is lost with topic disclosure and clarity can be gained. The affirmative shows a confidence in argumentation by not resorting to a "gotcha – you did not see that outlandish interpretation" approach.

Duerringer & Adkins (2014) use an example of the affirmative disclosing the resolution "We should work smarter not harder" being interpreted as an oil policy topic. Then they argue how this disclosure gives the negative an unfair advantage and time to research oil policies. However, disclosure means the negative gets to do some research into oil and comes to the round better able to offer substantive arguments related to oil, instead of having to guess about a very wide range of philosophical positions that "work harder" implies. This leads to a more focused and more educational debate for all participants.

Good resolutions should have fair ground for both sides to debate. While metaphor resolutions can be interpreted in a wide variety of ways, they ought to always provide both sides with fair and reasonable ground. Affirmative disclosure, defined above as sharing the affirmative approach and not specific arguments, does not tip the scale to the negative. It signals the negative that fair and adequate ground exists in the coming debate. It does require the affirmative to create and advocate for a *prima facie* case that does not rely on the "gotcha" strategy. Disclosure thus leads to a more educational debate where both sides research a topic and come armed with specific claims and evidence to the round. That is a fair debate. That is a more educational debate. It is not an imbalance weighted to the negative side.

The obvious claim is worth stating. Negative debaters still have to win the round. Recipients of topic disclosure do not automatically receive an insurmountable advantage or unfair assistance. They simply know the direction where the debate is likely to go, and they still have important work to do in preparation time.

Finally, Duerringer & Adkins overreach again with their football metaphor to invoke the case of the New England Patriots stealing the signals of the New York Jets. They go on to decry a demanding spirit from negative debaters to “force” the affirmative into disclosing, and they label this as “anti-competitive.” They praise the value of being quick on one’s feet, and suggest the negative must always be ready for a surprise interpretation of the resolution. Being adept at impromptu thinking and extemporaneous speaking are important life skills, and are key elements of excellent IPDA. There are many rounds where the affirmative has disclosed the approach, and both debaters must still be quick on their feet to address topic centric arguments their opponent has raised.

For example, in Case One, an affirmative could have disclosed “I will argue that one Republican candidate is already ahead and will win the nomination” without revealing which candidate. The negative would have to be ready to challenge an argument about Newt Gingrich, Mitt Romney, Ron Paul or Rick Santorum, and offer arguments that the primary and caucuses which were still months away would matter. The affirmative did not need to disclose which candidate nor provide a preview of three contentions. Good negatives would be prepared for a range of possibilities and adjust in the round if the affirmative had selected Gingrich instead of Romney. In Case Three, an affirmative could have disclosed “I am running it straight” and not indicated which arguments would be used. The negative would have to be prepared for arguments about Bale’s acting skills, acting training, physical traits, audience reception of the Batman films or some other possible argument.

Asking for voluntary disclosure is hardly “anti-competitive” nor akin to the Patriot’s clear violations of National Football League rules. The NFL punished the Patriots for unethical conduct. Asking opponents to disclose is hardly analogous to spying on opponents, thus their analogy is not quite cogent.

Asking for disclosure is a cultural practice, clearly accepted by some programs and regions, and unaccepted by others. It is not an IPDA rule, nor does it seem likely to become one with the current Executive Council. But asking teams, in a courteous fashion, how they will interpret the resolution hardly seems like stealing or breaking of agreed upon rules. Indeed, it works to promote a more informed debate round.

### **Responding to Richey**

Richey (2015) argues “there are standards that, if followed by ethical debaters, help limit the need for disclosure, as well as abuse arguments and definitional challenges” (p. 9). Richey’s premise is partly correct. But given recent tournament experiences of the author’s teams, there are many examples of debaters not following these ethical standards for debate (like fairness or reasonability). Topic disclosure can help remedy some problems by leading affirmative debaters to think about the fairness of their positions before preparing their case. This practice can help the affirmative to think more clearly about upholding the resolution and crafting a fair round for both sides prior to the round. It also increases the chance of a clear debate about the issues in the resolution and reduces the likelihood of debate about definitions or fairness.

Disclosure also helps debaters think about the merits of their case when they are contemplating a tricky definition. Later in his essay Richey describes a scenario when a debater plans to “squirrel” the topic, or in his words “fundamentally alter the common meaning.” He concludes “the debater and the coach must determine if disclosure is a fair scenario to insure a competitive and educational round” (p. 11). This essay argues if debaters and coaches are countenancing a squirrel definition, they are obligated to share this approach with the negative team. Otherwise, as indicated above, the educational quality of the debate is likely to suffer, and the negative team is not treated fairly.

In cases of squirrel definitions, Richey calls for disclosure within five minutes of the draw. This timeline serves both debaters well. At the 2014 national tournament, a member of the author’s team faced an affirmative who disclosed around the five minute mark, and then changed her interpretation of the resolution at the ten minute mark, and went back to the original position about the 20 minute mark. This continuing shifting was hardly fair to the negative in his preparation.

### **Summary**

This essay described three sample rounds, offered two rationales for topic disclosure, and responded to three claims Duerringer & Adkins made in the May 2014 issue of the IPDA Journal, and a claim Richey made in the 2015 issue. Topic disclosure is a practice that can honor the preparation of both debaters, reduce the likelihood of “gotcha” rounds and promote more informative and educational debate rounds.

### **References**

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