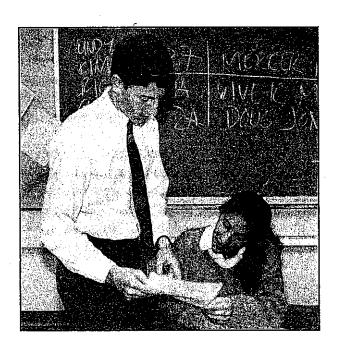# 8 The Affirmative Position

Knowing how to debate the affirmative position is a valuable skill. You can apply this skill in a variety of ways: to argue for a change in curfew, use of the family car, a variance in school policy, a promotion. Arguing for change takes skill and practice. It requires careful, thorough thinking to present good reasons for change and a plan of action that would be beneficial to all involved. If you want to use the family car, for example, you must give convincing reasons why you should be allowed to borrow it.

As you read this chapter, look for and learn the meaning of these debate terms:

- ✓ burden of proof
- ✓ case format
- ✓ comparative advantage case
- ✓ definition of terms
- ✓ disadvantages
- ✓ harm
- ✓ inherency
- ✓ need-plan case

- ✓ presumption
- ✓ prima facie case
- ✓ proof
- ✓ reasoning
- ✓ significance
- ✓ solvency
- ✓ stock issues

The affirmative argues for the proposition. The basic logic of affirmative debating is a good place to begin. The present system is considered to be a mixed situation. There are needs that the government has taken care of and needs that have been neglected. Some programs are good; and others need to be overhauled or eliminated. Although the world of public policy is imperfect, reasonable discussion and debate can identify possible improvements in the present system. The affirmative acts as an advocate (agent) for changing the present system or status quo. The direction and type of change that the affirmative must advocate is identified by the proposition.

It is not enough, however, for the affirmative simply to take a position and argue for a change. In academic debate, the affirmative team has several obligations. It must uphold the burden of proof, overcome presumption, and present a prima facie case. These responsibilities are explained in the following sections.

Burden of Proof

In a debate, the affirmative must provide sufficient reason for adopting the proposition. This is called the **burden of proof.** It always rests with the affirmative team. The affirmative maintains that there is sufficient evidence to indicate that part of the present system has failed or is failing and that the proposition can serve as a remedy for that failure. If there is no harm in the present policy, no defect in need of correction, then there is no reason to change.

In addition, even if there clearly is a problem, if the affirmative plan can be considered unworkable or impractical, then there is no reason for change. In a court of law it is the prosecution's responsibility to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused committed the crime. In a debate round, the affirmative takes the role of the prosecution and must prove that a change is needed. If the affirmative does not present a significant justification (reason) for change, it does not fulfill its burden of proof.

Discuss

1. Why does the burden of proof rest with the affirmative?
2. If the burden of proof is not upheld by the prosecutor in a court of law, the defendant will be found innocent of the charges. When the burden of proof is not upheld in debate, what is the result?

Presumption

Even if the affirmative has shown that the present system is defective and that the defect can be fixed by adopting the proposition, it has another obligation. The affirmative case for change must be compelling enough to overcome presumption. **Presumption** means that the policy now in effect should remain in effect. The feeling is that the values that led to the current policy will continue to exist, and that what

is currently accepted as true will continue to be accepted as true. Thus, the affirmative side is obligated to prove that change is necessary.

The affirmative case for change must be compelling enough to overcome presumption. As a rule, presumption says that the affirmative case establishes a *reason* (justification) for change. Even if the affirmative proves that there is a need for change and that the proposed change will work, the arguments must constitute a justification for change. Presumption usually favors the negative. The negative generally argues that the current state of affairs is adequate and in no need of major change. An example of presumption can be found in the American judicial system, where a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

At one time in the United States, segregated schools were legal. Segregated schools were the status quo, and many believed or presumed the system worked well. Shifts in values, conditions, and policies created an environment for change. Presumption shifted, and the status quo was questioned and debated. Finally, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation was unconstitutional, and a change was ordered. Values, conditions, and policies set up an environment for integration, which is now the status quo.

In debate the affirmative must prove that there is reason to change the present system. If this is not adequately proven, the negative wins the debate.

Discuss

1. Does the affirmative or the negative begin the debate with presumption? Why?
2. Why is presumption an important element in criminal law in the United States? What are the implications in nonlegal areas, such as politics and debate?

The Prima Facie Case

Prima facie is a term from Latin meaning "on face value" or "at first sight." The affirmative in debate must present a **prima facie** case, one that is complete "at first sight." Debate operates under the assumption that the affirmative can overcome presumption and thus meet the burden of proof only by presenting a prima facie case. Thus, the affirmative must do more than state a justification, describe a plan, and list its advantages. The affirmative also must support each of these issues with enough evidence and analysis to make a case both qualitatively and quantitatively. The case must be established strongly enough in the mind of the judge to justify a favorable decision. It must be strong enough to stand alone until it is weakened or refuted by the negative.

A prima facie case must stem directly from the proposition and give good and sufficient reason for adopting the proposition. In debate, a prima facie case is the minimal argument required to support the proposition without refutation. Unless the

affirmative team establishes a prima facie case, it cannot win a debate. In fact, technically, if the affirmative does not establish a prima facie case, the negative does not need to reply to affirmative arguments. However, most negative teams will refute any case that appears to the average person to be prima facie.

Discuss

1. What does *prima facie* mean?
2. In order to present a prima facie case, what must the affirmative do?
3. What happens if the affirmative does not present a prima facie case?

Basic Affirmative Concepts

You will need to understand several important terms before you examine how the affirmative position is debated. You must be familiar with these key terms and concepts in order to debate. In the next section of the chapter, you will study these concepts in greater detail.

Topicality

It is the responsibility of the affirmative to choose an area within the proposition. This is sometimes referred to as the *intent* of the proposition. Affirmative teams that choose debate areas that are only partially related to the proposition can be challenged on topicality.

For example, on the topic "RESOLVED: That the federal government should provide comprehensive medical care for all U.S. citizens," the affirmative might run a case providing for free preventive medical services. It's likely the negative would challenge the case on topicality, on the grounds that preventive care is not comprehensive medical care. The affirmation might justify the case by arguing that preventive care is for the benefit of all citizens. The affirmative could argue further that preventive care provides for early detection and early treatment. Therefore, the overall cost to the system for medical care would decrease, as would the need for extensive coverage for those few that would need "catastrophic" medical care. The question of topicality would probably be a significant argument in the debate round.

Definition of Terms

The affirmative must define terms so that the nature of the action advocated is clear to everyone. Definitions can be made by quoting experts who use the terms in a special way, by referring to dictionaries to suggest common usage, or by referring to examples of common usage.

Getting Started in Debate

The Contention

A contention is a claim made by the affirmative or the negative. Most often, a contention is a single, declarative statement. Sometimes the proposition being debated is called the main contention because it is the major claim of the affirmative. Typically, the affirmative contends (1) that there is a harm, (2) that it is significant, (3) that it is inherent, (4) that the plan will solve the harm, and (5) that there are positive side effects or advantages to the plan.

Proof and Reasoning

To meet the burden of proof, the affirmative cannot merely assert contentions. Claims must be supported with proof and reasoning. **Proof** is the evidence introduced to support the claim. **Reasoning** explains *why* the evidence supports the claim. For example, to prove the contention that bureaucracy is inefficient, you might introduce evidence of delays and mistakes that occur frequently in certain administrations. This constitutes evidence. Reasoning must be used to connect the evidence to the general claim. Thus, you might reason that many delays and severe mistakes can be said to constitute inefficiency. Contentions should always be accompanied by a well-organized presentation of evidence and reasoning.

Stock Issues

Stock issues are the basis of major affirmative contentions. Stock issues are claims that the affirmative must make in order to present a prima facie case. Each stock issue must be supported by reasoning and evidence. Stock issues include:

Harm—Is there a problem in the status quo that merits the attention of policymakers?

Significance—Is the problem important enough to take the time and energy of policymakers?

Inherency—Is the problem an essential and built-in part of the policies pursued by the status quo?

Solvency—Will the affirmative plan solve the problem?

A final stock issue is *disadvantages*. The negative is responsible for presenting disadvantages, which are problems or negative side effects that would result if the affirmative plan was put into effect. The affirmative doesn't need to negate all possible disadvantages if it fulfills its initial burden of proof. You must be familiar with these basic terms and concepts to debate. In the next section of the chapter, you will study these concepts in greater detail.

Affirmative Case

The arguments presented to support the resolution are called the *affirmative case*. The affirmative case is composed of the definition of terms, the plan, and the stock issues.

The affirmative case is presented in its complete form by the first affirmative constructive speaker and extended by the second affirmative speaker. To win a debate, the affirmative must sustain support for a substantial part of its case against negative attacks. Although affirmative case formats vary, the obligations for establishing the resolution are relatively similar.

Affirmative Plan

The affirmative plan is the action proposed by the affirmative to support the resolution. A plan is structured around several parts, called *planks*. The planks identify who enforces the plan, what is to be done, and how the procedures are to be carried out. A plan can be quite detailed, with multiple options, or it can be simple.

Discuss

1. Why is it important for an affirmative case to be topical?
2. What is the difference between reasoning and proof?

Defining the Terms of the Proposition

Not all propositions are created equal. Ideally, a proposition on a policy topic ought to specify a clear direction for a particular policy. Consider a good proposition: "RE-SOLVED: That the United States should guarantee a minimum annual cash income for all American citizens." This proposition explains who should do the action, what the action should be, and for whom the action should be done. There is little ambiguity requiring definition. However, not all propositions are so clear cut. If the proposition calls for the federal government to adopt a comprehensive farm policy in the United States, it is unclear what should be done. Indeed, even the definition of the word *farm* is disputable.

Frequently, the first affirmative constructive does not spend a significant amount of time defining terms. If the proposition is reasonably constructed and if most debaters are familiar with the proposition, defining terms may not be viewed as important. However, the affirmative must be prepared to defend its definitions. The negative can win the debate by proving that the affirmative has misunderstood or incorrectly explained the proposition. This means that the affirmative is always vulnerable to topicality attacks, arguments that suggest that the affirmative has not met the burdens imposed by the proposition or that the affirmative plan goes far beyond what is suggested by the proposition. The second affirmative constructive speaker should prepare briefs that defend the affirmative definitions.

If the proposition is imprecise or if it uses terms that may have multiple meanings, defining the terms of the proposition becomes important. There are several ways to do this.

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Common Usage

A standard dictionary is a good place to start when you need to define terms in a policy resolution. A common definition is often desirable, because policy-making ought to reflect the concerns of ordinary citizens rather than those of special interest groups. The problem with dictionary definitions, however, is that they may lack precision. The word *comprehensive* may commonly be defined as "thoroughgoing" or "complete," but this definition gives you little insight into the kind of action that the proposition calls for.

Experts

Special dictionaries are useful for defining specific terms that relate to such areas as economics, law, or political science. Expert definitions are often more precise than common ones, and they can help clarify vague terms. For example, a dictionary definition of *land use* would probably refer to any activity that has to do with the earth. In the field of ecology, however, the term *land use* is more restrictively defined. It refers to soil erosion and pollution. If the common definition seems to broaden the resolution too much, an expert definition may make the terms more exact and the topic more manageable.

Operational Definition

In debate, an operational definition is one that is implicit. Instead of citing dictionary or expert definitions, the affirmative presents arguments and a plan that make clear what the terms of the proposition mean. For example, if the proposition requires a "comprehensive program," then the affirmative plan is offered as an example of what a comprehensive policy might look like.

Use of Example

Definition by example is similar to operational definition. The affirmative relies on numerous examples to show how a term has been applied to similar policies, and then argues by *analogy* (comparison) that the definition is appropriate. For example, if environmental protection legislation has been used to refer to land and water pollution but not to air pollution, then the definition of terms for a topic requiring environmental protection may legitimately leave out air pollution. Definition by example is a powerful argument.

Discuss

What are the differences among the four types of definitions?

Act

Using the resolution below, define the terms of the proposition by common usage, experts, and example.

RESOLVED: That the federal government should implement a comprehensive long-term agricultural policy in the United States.

Stock Issues

Stock issues are the broad questions within a proposition. The major focus of any affirmative case is on providing evidence and reasoning to support those questions. Each stock issue is supported by identifying claims and providing proof. The analysis of these claims and proof form the major points of disagreement in the debate.

Harm

A **harm** is a problem caused by the present system, specifically by the presence or absence of government policy. What we do as a group of citizens can be said to present a social problem when the behavior of some people results in the harming of others. Actions that unnecessarily deprive others of life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness are *social harms*. Conduct, whether by private corporations or by government, that violates basic rights of liberty, freedom, equality, and association is not to be tolerated, unless justified. Some people believe these basic rights extend to material freedoms— freedom from hunger, unemployment, disease, inadequate education, and discrimination. In other societies, behavior that limits these rights and freedoms might not be considered social harms. In the United States, however, violations of these values are considered to be harmful.

Propositions often point to the area of harm to be discussed. For example, if a proposition identifies policy pertaining to education, then the harm area must relate to the inadequacy of schooling and the resulting lack of knowledge and skills. If a resolution identifies policy pertaining to the environment, you can expect to discuss the problems of pollution. If a proposition points to food policy, then harms of malnutrition and starvation will be argued.

The affirmative must discover the effect of the harms suggested by the proposition. Such effects may not always be straightforward. Poor education may lead to poverty, and poverty to civil unrest. Poor environmental policy may lead to pollution, and pollution to the threat of extinction. Inadequate agricultural policy may lead to hunger, and hunger to a loss of the human resources needed to solve ecological problems. The affirmative should be sure to examine the wider aspects of the harm suggested by the proposition. The wider dimensions of the problem might suggest important case areas.

Discuss

Act

1. Identify social harms in your community.
2. Outline the harms that might be included in the proposition you chose for Activity 1 on page 71.

Significance

The stock issue of **significance** is sometimes treated as part of the harm question. Even if the affirmative can identify an undesirable policy as a harm, the affirmative still must show that the effects of the policy are substantial enough to justify consideration. Significance may be established by qualitative considerations, quantitative considerations, or both.

The affirmative establishes that a harm merits consideration from a *qualitative standpoint* by pointing out that the present policy (or lack of policy) violates core values. If the problem involves behavior that is outrageous and threatens fundamental values of human decency, then it may not matter if the affirmative cannot provide a large number of examples of the problem. For example, traffic accidents kill far more people each year than state executions of prisoners, but the state imposition of a death penalty deliberately takes life away from citizens. If the affirmative can establish that the state does not have the right to take away life, then the death penalty stands as a repugnant policy—even if only one person is executed. To the extent that the affirmative can define core values and show that a policy violates what is important to a civilized society, it establishes the qualitative significance of a harm.

The affirmative establishes that a harm merits consideration from a *quantitative standpoint* by presenting a large number of examples of the harm. Typically, this is accomplished by referring to empirical data, to statistics. If the affirmative argues that smoking is harmful, then the greater the numbers of deaths and illnesses linked to smoking, the more solid the affirmative proof. Empirical evidence is important to establish that a harm is widespread. The affirmative may wish to introduce trend evidence to suggest that the number of cases is increasing. Such proof suggests that the problem will grow worse in the future and strengthens the affirmative's arguments for change.

You can see that arguing for the significance of a problem can be very complex. If the harm takes more than one form, then the affirmative must develop several subcontentions in the harm area. For example, if the affirmative problem area identifies the ill effects of poverty, then it may be necessary to identify the number of homeless and the problems of migrancy, the number of undernourished and the problems of starvation, the number of uneducated and the problems associated with discrimination.

Identifying the multiple dimensions of a harm increases the chances of establishing the overall impact of the problem.

Discuss

1. Why must the harm be significant?
2. What are the two types of significance? Explain the difference between the two.

Act

1. Identify one of the harms in Activity 2 on page 105, and begin research to document the harm and its significance. Bring the information to class.
2. Based on your research for Activity 1, write a short (three-minute) speech that develops a single harm contention. Be sure to establish the harm's significance.

Inherency

The affirmative must do more than prove that a harm exists. It also must establish that the problem is built-in to the workings of the present system—that the problem is inherent. **Inherency** requires the affirmative to locate the causes of the problem and show that the causes cannot be eliminated by anything short of the proposition. In doing this, the affirmative establishes a unique rationale for the adoption of the policy. If the harms will go away of their own accord, then there is no real reason to change policy.

Gaps in the Present System

One way to establish inherency is to identify a *gap* in the laws and programs of the present system. From time to time, problems come up that the present system did not anticipate. Groups of people may have been left out and are in need of protection. A good example of such an inherency position can be found in civil rights arguments. The U.S. Constitution originally guaranteed rights to American citizens but did not specifically include voting rights for American women and for black Americans. In other words, there was a gap in the present system regarding the protection of civil rights. In the twentieth century, as Americans gradually came to see women and African Americans as deprived citizens, these gaps became noticeable, and the system had to be changed.

Set of Barriers

Another way to establish inherency is to point out that present policy contains a *set of barriers* to the elimination of the harm. Look again at the civil rights issue. Even

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though women and African Americans got the right to vote in the early twentieth century, the manner of voting was left up to each state. The rules were discriminatory. Sometimes they required people who were too poor to buy food to pay poll taxes, or people who could not read to pass literacy tests. The status quo's rules and regulations constituted a barrier to participation in government, even though the system seemed to have filled in the gap by constitutional change. If the government chooses an inappropriate method to enact its own commitments, then that method creates a barrier to successful change.

Private Sector

Inherency arguments may focus on the private sector (businesses and communities) rather than on the government, as a further look at the civil rights issue shows. The real problem of inequality may rest not so much in how government acts, but in how the private sector reinforces racism. For example, for many years black workers and women did not have to be paid average wages for their work. Employment discrimination was legal. Moreover, because African Americans and women lacked money, they could not develop their own businesses. They had to depend on white- and male-owned businesses that benefited from their purchases. Because racial discrimination was accepted, the white community did not have to provide the schools, meeting places, health care, or other goods and services that might have improved the conditions of black Americans.

If the affirmative can establish that a powerful dominant group profits from policies that disadvantage minority groups, then the problem can be said to exist in the present system.

Other Examples

Many inherency arguments are not as dramatic as the ones that relate to problems of social discrimination. Often affirmative arguments about how government policy creates gaps and barriers are worded in terms of inefficiency, duplication, waste, and inertia. Government policies are frequently the product of compromise. They grow because of lack of action. Different political administrations emphasize some programs and deemphasize others. The result is conflicting rules and regulations.

Some affirmative approaches to a topic may call for the elimination of government activity in a special policy area. For example, if the topic called for a comprehensive farm policy, one way to put the plan into action would be to deregulate farm prices. The idea is that the free market would provide a more efficient system of supply than does the government subsidy program. In this example, government interference in the marketplace would be blamed for the farm problem.

Similarly, in debating a topic on law enforcement, an affirmative might wish to withdraw the government's right to tap private telephone lines, arguing that such activity needlessly intrudes on personal liberties. The inherency in this case is the discretionary power of government agents coupled with their power to use any system of surveillance available. The affirmative could argue that case-by-case decision making on wire tapping is too uncertain to guarantee rights.

In conclusion, the affirmative must be able to isolate the cause of the problem. If the cause is found to be a part of the current policy, then it is said to be inherent. Current policy can be found to be inherently defective because it does not do the job it should, and thereby permits social problems to grow. Current policy can also be defective because it causes problems that would not otherwise exist. In the first instance, the affirmative plan would remedy the harm by adding a program that would reduce the social problem. In the second instance, the affirmative plan would remedy the harm by banning unwarranted government activity. In many cases, the affirmative supports the repeal of bad laws and the expansion or addition of good ones.

Discuss

1. If the present system contains possible solutions to the problem, has the affirmative proven inherency? Why or why not?
2. What are the two ways to establish inherency? Describe the differences between the two.

Act

1. Using the harm you isolated in Activity 1 on page 106, outline the inherent causes of the harm. Find evidence to support your claims.
2. Write a short (four-minute) speech with a single contention, including inherency arguments. (You may wish to revise the speech you wrote for Activity 2 on page 106.)

Solvency

Solvency refers to the affirmative plan's ability to solve a problem or bring about an advantage. The affirmative plan typically is presented in the first constructive speech. It may be presented at the beginning, middle, or end of the first affirmative speech, depending on the case format used. (Affirmative case formats are discussed later in this chapter.)

Sometimes a plan is quite simple. If a proposition calls for the elimination of a policy, then the plan need consist only of the statement that government should no longer pursue a given action. More often, however, the affirmative plan is quite complex. It must provide for a complete method of enacting the resolution. Thus, it must specify who will enforce the plan, what action must be taken, what provisions must be made to assure adequate funding and access to resources, and circumstances that might prove sufficient for exemption from normal operation. For example, when debating the 1987–88 topic "RESOLVED: That the federal government should implement a comprehensive long-term agricultural policy in the United States," the affirmative usually chose to continue government subsidies for particular crops. This was done to avoid a significant disadvantage to the plan.

The affirmative usually has a number of different planks. A *plan plank* is a statement of action to be taken. Sometimes the action is spelled out. If the affirmative recommends that a specific technology be made available, that technology must be identified and distinguished from other similar means. The plan plank may put forward a number of different options available to a group of decision makers, who then must choose among them. This gives the plan greater flexibility.

In general, a plan should be as concise as possible. A lengthy plan reduces the amount of time the affirmative has to develop its case. As the affirmative develops the plan, solvency must be a primary concern. Can the affirmative plan actually solve the problems outlined in the affirmative case? There are many different reasons why the affirmative might fail to prove that the plan can solve the affirmative harms.

In this section you will learn the ways you can prove solvency. The principle you should keep in mind is *proportion*. Your solvency arguments should be proportional to the problems you described in establishing inherency. For every problem you identify, you must suggest a solution.

Workability

Most academic debate propositions are about questions of national importance. It is difficult to establish that sweeping changes will have positive effects unless such changes have been tried in other situations. The basic affirmative solvency argument usually works by analogy (comparison). If the program was successful on a smaller scale or at a different time or place, then—unless there are significant differences—it ought to work at a national level. Indeed, sometimes a national program might be even more successful than a local one. For example, a national handgun ban might work even better than local bans, because people could not simply go to another town where the ban was not in effect and buy handguns.

Pilot programs usually provide sources of information that suggest new possibilities for national programs. Traditionally, state and local governments have been known as the "laboratory of democracy." It is easy to experiment with ideas at lower levels of government because decisions affect fewer lives and the programs cost less. Child care, housing, education, and other programs have been significantly influenced by policies developed at the local level. However, the affirmative must make sure that the reasons a program worked are not unique to a small program in a limited area. Some pilot projects work because volunteers are very supportive of the program and because the clientele for the project are specially screened to enhance the chances of success. The affirmative must be able to prove that the same success could happen at the national level.

National programs that existed in the past but that have been ignored or repealed offer a rich source of solvency evidence. Many such programs were established to deal with particular problems and were ignored or repealed when the problem diminished or disappeared. For example, one such program is public works. In times of recession every president in modern times has given in to the pressure to spend money on government jobs. Solvency evidence might be gathered by examining which public works programs were successful and which were not. By using past examples for

solvency evidence, the affirmative can also identify past mistakes and take measures in the plan to avoid them.

Changes in Attitude

A major cause of social problems in general is that certain groups find it in their own best interests to continue the present system. Poor people remain poor because there are others who benefit from charging high prices, paying below the minimum wage, busting unions, denying credit to blighted areas, and so on. The military attracts trillions of dollars because many states and localities profit from military expenditures. In these examples, the key to solvency is changing the social structure so that there are incentives for what the affirmative believes to be positive social policy. A plan might penalize those who exploit the poor and thus make exploitation unprofitable. A plan might require that military expenditures be dispersed equally throughout all fifty states so that no region would gain much from military spending. The goal would be changes in attitudes.

Without changing the incentives, a problem might continue. The plan could be circumvented by the same people it is designed to control. A *circumvention* argument, made by the negative, says that the policy will have no effect, despite its good intentions, because it will not be obeyed. Often, the affirmative inherency evidence suggests the possibilities for circumvention. For example, the affirmative might argue that current environmental legislation is failing because business lobbies influence conservative politicians. Unless the link between influence and enforcement can be broken, there is no reason to believe that the same problems would not exist under the new plan. To avoid a circumvention argument, the affirmative would have to demonstrate that a new combination of punishments and rewards would significantly reduce or eliminate influence peddling. Incentives would thus bring about changes in attitudes.

Discuss

1. What does *solvency* mean?
2. What role do pilot programs play in proving solvency?
3. If the problem is an attitudinal one, how can you prove solvency?

Act

1. Having researched the harm, significance, and inherency in the Activities on pages 106 and 108, now outline a possible solution to the problem.
2. Using the plan outlined in Activity 1, try to anticipate possible solvency arguments and outline answers to them. Now research the answers.

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Disadvantages

The affirmative can talk about the stock issue of harm from another perspective. Rather than emphasizing the problems inherent in the present system, the affirmative can concentrate on the benefits of altering it. The affirmative must still show that the benefits gained by the affirmative plan are unique, but the focus of argument is on the comparative advantages of adopting the proposition. Whereas the affirmative may or may not choose to argue about comparative advantages, it must always be prepared to defeat negative disadvantages.

A **disadvantage** is a claim that the proposal will make harmful conditions worse or will create new harms. The negative typically argues disadvantages in the second negative constructive, as part of its attack on the affirmative plan. Since the affirmative does not know exactly what disadvantages will be argued, the first affirmative speech discusses only the positive reasons for adopting the resolution. It would be a waste of time to argue against objections to the plan that may not appear in the debate round. In this section, you will learn about developing responses to disadvantages.

Uniqueness

A disadvantage clearly isn't unique if a harmful condition is going to come about regardless of whether the affirmative plan is adopted. In such a case, it does not matter—for purposes of evaluating the worth of the proposal—whether the plan is one among several causes of the disadvantage. If a negative argues that spending money on a plan will break up the consensus on deficit reduction, the affirmative can eliminate this disadvantage merely by saying that because other programs are going to spend money, the consensus will be broken up in any case. The harmful condition must be unique—it must be the exclusive result of the affirmative's proposal and not the result of other factors.

Significance

If the plan is only one of many contributing factors to a future harm, then it is the responsibility of the negative to quantify the effects of the plan on the alleged harm. The negative must prove that the disadvantage is significant. For example, it might be argued that giving money and support to Kuwait will destabilize the Middle East and increase the chances of a new attack or aggression by Iraq. If those chances are already high, however, then a small increase will not really matter. Just as the affirmative has a burden to establish the significance of the harm it can eliminate (or the amount of advantage its plan can obtain), the negative has a burden to determine the significance of the harm (or disadvantage) the affirmative will create.

Present System Harm versus Disadvantages

For a disadvantage to count significantly against the affirmative plan, it must have harmful social effects that are substantially greater than the harms eliminated or minimized by the affirmative plan. To understand this, consider this analogy. If you

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take medicine to cure a disease, you might experience some side effects—a headache or an upset stomach. If the disease is very serious, however, you might be willing to take the medicine in spite of the additional problems. With very serious diseases, the side effects may be substantial, but if the medicine is not taken, the disease might be fatal. The same logic applies to disadvantages. If the harm of the disadvantage is not as great as the harm eliminated by the affirmative, then the affirmative plan should be accepted. Disadvantages may occur, but, because they are comparatively less important than the advantages, they do not undermine the affirmative's case.

Discuss

1. What is a *disadvantage?*
2. What is uniqueness? Why must a disadvantage be unique?
3. To what extent must a disadvantage be significant?
4. Why should the affirmative compare the disadvantages to the advantages offered by the plan?

Act

What disadvantages (harms) might result if the affirmative plan outlined on page 110 were put into place? Make a list of the possible harms of the plan.

Case Formats

A **case format** is a plan for arranging affirmative arguments so that they can be clearly expressed and easily remembered. The case format suggestions made in this section are not meant to be ironclad rules. Case formats must be adapted to your levels of skill as a debater and to the requirements of the topic.

The Need-Plan Case

The **need-plan case** basically says, "There is a problem, and here is the solution." The affirmative begins by identifying a problem in the present system. Next, the affirmative shows that the problem is significant and worth fixing. The affirmative then explains why the present system cannot solve the problem. The affirmative argues that without intervention, the problem will continue and perhaps get worse. Finally, the affirmative outlines a solution to the problem—a plan—and shows how the plan will solve the problem. The harm, significance, and inherency of the affirmative case are usually organized into arguments or contentions.

A need-plan case comprises:

1. A statement of the proposition
2. An explanation of terms
3. A statement of problems affecting the present system
4. Claims about what has caused the problems and why they have not been solved
5. A plan
6. Proof that the plan will eliminate the causes of the problem and therefore the problem itself.

The case might also include a statement of additional benefits to be brought about by the plan. These can be presented in the first or second affirmative constructive speech. The following example is one way to construct a need-plan case.

Sample Need-Plan Case

Statement of the resolution
Definition of terms
Presentation of affirmative plan

Contention I. (on need)	There are significant problems in the present system.
	A. The problems exist.
	B. The problems violate substantial values. (harm)
	C. The problems are widespread and growing. (significance)

Contention II. (on inherency)	The causes of the problems are inherent in the present system.
	A. The status quo policy does not cover all or part of the problem.
	B. Those policies designed to cover the problem do not work.
	C. The structure of attitudes and incentives suggest that the problem is more likely to grow worse than to terminate on its own accord.

Contention III. (on solvency)	The affirmative plan will solve the problem.
	A. The affirmative plan fills in the gaps left by the present system.
	B. The affirmative plan corrects the defects of present system policy.
	C. When tried in another context, the affirmative plan worked.

The need-plan case is a standard case format. Even if you wish to argue other kinds of cases, it is best to begin your work on a topic by framing such a case. It permits you to clearly identify the range of issues and strategic options involved in working with a topic.

Discuss

1. What are the components of a need-plan case?
2. It is up to the affirmative to decide how many harms to include in the affirmative. How many should be used? Why?

Act

1. Arrange the arguments you outlined earlier, In Activities on pages, 105, 106, 108, and 110, into a need-plan format.
2. Based on your work in Activity 1, write an eight-minute first affirmative speech using the need-plan format. Present the speech in class.

The Comparative Advantage Case

A need-plan case argues that there is a problem and presents a way to solve it. The comparative advantage case takes a different approach. It argues that there is a problem and the present system may be trying to solve the problem, but that the affirmative plan can solve the problem better than the present system can. The **comparative advantage case** focuses on comparing the affirmative plan to the solutions of the present system.

To run a comparative advantage case, the affirmative needs to set the rules for comparing the two systems. To do this, the affirmative begins by defining how the two systems will be compared. To set the stage for debate, the affirmative presents the affirmative plan, then compares the advantages from that plan to the present system.

The structure of the comparative advantage case includes:

1. A statement of the resolution
2. Presentation of the affirmative plan
3. The support of one or more comparative advantages stemming from the plan

A comparative advantage is presented in the form of a contention. The contention states that an advantage will result from the adoption of the affirmative plan. The comparative advantage case format might also include an overview (or observation) that suggests a general problem area that needs improvement. The following outline presents one way of constructing a comparative advantage case.

Statement of the general area of policy concern
    A. The problem has been with us for a long time.
    B. The problem area is a legitimate government concern.

Statement of the resolution

Definition of terms

Presentation of affirmative plan

Advantage I.   The affirmative plan will bring about benefit X.
    A. Present policy does not have benefit X. (inherency)
    B. The plan is capable of achieving benefit X. (solvency)
    C. Benefit X is significantly desirable. (significance)

Advantage II.   The affirmative plan will bring about benefit Y.
(alternative   A. Benefit Y is significantly desirable (significance)
structure)   B. Present policy cannot obtain benefit Y. (inherency)
    C. The plan is likely to achieve benefit Y. (solvency)

Advantage III.   The affirmative plan will bring about benefit Z.
(alternative   A. Similar plans have brought about benefit Z. (solvency)
structure)   B. These plans have been eliminated or curtailed by the present system.
    C. Benefit Z is very desirable. (significance)

There are three considerations in preparing a comparative advantage case. First, the affirmative can argue for any number of advantages. However, the more time it spends on developing one, the less time it will have to develop others. Second, each advantage is a miniature case. The advantage must establish that an important benefit will come from the plan and that the benefit is not likely to be part of the present system. If the negative can prove that the advantage is not inherent or significant, or does not obtain the advantage, then the contention is lost. Third, the substructuring of each comparative advantage may vary. In the outline, the different advantages all contain the same concepts, but the order of the stock issues within the advantage results in slightly different case development. The affirmative should choose the structure and wording of contentions that best suit the purposes of persuasion.

The comparative advantage case is quite useful in developing independent lines of analysis that show it is better than the present system's policy. If a policy is cheaper, more efficient, and more comprehensive than that offered by the present system, there may be substantial reason to adopt it—even if the policy cannot eliminate an enduring or long-term problem. It may be that pollution, poverty, and crime will be part of U.S. society for a long time to come. If the affirmative can identify policies that create better solutions to these problems than those currently in practice, clearly such policies ought to be adopted.

The comparative advantage format is used by many debaters. Its development is nearly as simple as the need-plan format but it offers a greater range of choice for issue development. The affirmative need not focus on a single harm but instead can identify a whole range of benefits. In comparative advantage debates, it is critical for

the affirmative to refute the negative disadvantages, because the whole point of the case design is to compare the respective merits of the present system policy and an alternative.

Discuss

1. What are the elements of a comparative advantage case?
2. What are the three important considerations in preparing a comparative advantage case?
3. What is the difference between the comparative advantage case and the need-plan case? How would you determine which case format to use?

Act

1. Using the arguments you outlined earlier in Activities on 105, 106, 108, and 110, outline a comparative advantage case.
2. Based on your work in Activity 1, write an eight-minute first affirmative constructive speech using the comparative advantage case format. Present the speech in class.

Other Case Formats

There are many variations of the two basic case formats. Some of these variations include the *criteria case,* so named because the criteria for advantages are spelled out, and the *goals case,* so named because the objectives of the present system are compared to the present system's efforts in a policy area. Such formats work well for debaters familiar with basic case developments. However, as a novice debater, it is better to become well acquainted with the two basic case formats. Even the most sophisticated and complicated case structures developed by very experienced debaters are only variations on the basic outlines presented in this chapter.

Extending Affirmative Analysis

Once the case is written and presented by the first affirmative, the negative has the opportunity to probe for weaknesses and to refute affirmative contentions. The negative tries to establish that the harm is not significant, not inherent, or not capable of solution by the plan. To make sure that your affirmative case can be defended against such attacks, you should imagine potential negative attacks and create answers to possible objections. It may be difficult to imagine every possible negative argument, but with a little work you can become well prepared to extend the analysis presented in the case.

You need to ask yourself if every contention is supported with sufficient proof and reasoning. The most typical negative response to a claim is to challenge the evidence supporting the contention. To assure that you will not be caught short on any of these challenges, use the following checklist when developing your affirmative case.

Affirmative Checklist

1. Are the sources of opinion cited to substantiate the claim reliable?

   a. Are they experts in the field?

   b. Are they unbiased?

   c. Is their testimony recent?

   Are sources of opinion who disagree with your contentions reliable? What could lead them to hold erroneous opinions?

2. Is there substantial evidence to suggest that a large number of people are hurt by the failure of present system policies? If there is not substantial evidence on the numbers of people, are there any other reasons why it can be inferred that a large number of people are or will be hurt by the policies?

3. Are the harms really that significant? Is there evidence to suggest that people really do care or ought to care about the problem? Are there any situations with comparable harms in which policy action has been taken?

4. Is there a trend to suggest that present policies may be effective in eliminating the problem? Can current programs be given just a little more support and become effective in eliminating the problem?

5. Are there barriers to the affirmative solution of the problem? Are there barriers to achieving affirmative benefits? Are there other causes of the problem that might impede plan solvency?

The checklist outlines the attacks that are likely to occur. As an affirmative, you should be prepared to refer to the evidence established in the first affirmative constructive. If the questioning is extensive, additional evidence should be supplied.

As an affirmative, you also need to ask what possible improvements could be made, short of the proposition, that would make your plan unnecessary. Once these negative arguments are established, you can prepare your refutation.

For example, against an affirmative that attempts to correct the fee-for-service medical care system with universal socialized medicine, a negative might argue that the present system can be repaired by establishing small group-practice organizations. The negative would argue that this is more efficient than fee-for-service but less drastic a change than socialized medicine. The affirmative must be able to refute this argument, pointing out how the repair will not work or has been tried and failed. The affirmative must predict the minor repairs available to the negative and construct briefs that refute their effectiveness.

Finally, you also need to ask what the potential disadvantages of the plan are. Of course, not all teams argue the same disadvantages against a case. And even if an

affirmative team encounters similar disadvantages, the disadvantages are somewhat differently structured and argued in each round. Nevertheless, the affirmative must develop briefs to refute alleged harms created by the plan. Since the affirmative cannot know in advance how much a disadvantage will be developed, it is wise to prepare two kinds of arguments: one that includes a few good responses to the disadvantage (in case it is not important) and another that goes into great depth (in case it is). Especially when you are arguing for a comparative advantage case, it is very important to determine potential lines of disadvantage and to prepare counter-refutations.

Act

Using one of your first affirmative speeches, (from Activity 2 on page 114 or Activity 2 on page 116), outline possible negative arguments.

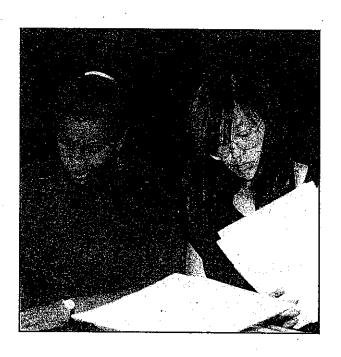# Style and the Affirmative Position

Putting together a workable affirmative case is difficult and complicated. The negative has the edge, it would seem, because the affirmative carries the burden of proof. If the affirmative makes a mistake, it might lose the debate even though only one or two arguments are wrong. Despite these problems, however, learning to debate the affirmative is very important.

In real life, many decisions are made on quite narrow grounds. To accept a change, people want to be reasonably certain that the change will improve conditions and not make them worse. By learning to make the best possible case for a resolution, you will be improving your own ability to make trustworthy appeals for policy changes that affect people's lives. Submitting your work to a strong challenge by the negative is difficult, but in the end it is worthwhile.

One of the keys to success in debating the affirmative is finding a cause you believe in. Most topics are broad enough to offer a variety of case areas for discussion. Find a problem that you find personally repugnant and see if there really is a way to correct it. The more real the problem seems to you, the more real you can make it appear to the audience. To be sure, there are moving situations in the world today—famine, terrorism, denial of human rights, ecological destruction. Debating these problems should involve much more than a dull exchange of information and statistics; it should involve language that communicates the true horror of the problems and that appeals to the consciences of people everywhere.

In debating the affirmative, you are establishing a logically complete case, of course, but you are also doing more. An affirmative case is a call to action. It says that there is something wrong in the world and that people can and must do something about it. However technical the arguments become in any debate, the affirmative must find the language necessary to describe the pathos of the harm, the frustration with policies rooted in political expediency, the joy of finding new solutions, and the satisfaction of a job well done. These are the emotions you must add to the evidence and reasoning in any case.

Getting Started in Debate

9 The Negative Position

L ife is filled with change or compromise. All your life, you will be faced with situations where you feel a proposed change is not enough, not appropriate, not effective, or unnecessary. When that happens, how will you convince others not to implement the suggested change? You won't always be able to just say no. Instead, you will need to justify your position. Learning to debate the negative will teach you to analyze and challenge positions, to look for alternatives to change, and to identify the disadvantages of a particular change. It also helps you develop courage.

As you read this chapter, look for and learn the following debate terms:

✓ causal argument
✓ causality
✓ circumvention
✓ counterexample
✓ counterplan
✓ counterposition
✓ disadvantage
✓ discretionary powers
✓ hasty generalization

✓ minor repairs
✓ negative strategy
✓ sign argument
✓ solvency
✓ testimony
✓ trend argument
✓ workability
✓ uniqueness

The basic duty of the negative position is to defend the present system. There are many theories about constructing successful negative arguments and strategies against affirmative cases. Some of these will be covered in this chapter. Basically, you should remember that there are two fundamental positions against any affirmative case. First, the negative may deny that the affirmative has established sufficient proof or evidence for its claim. Second, the negative may deny that the claim itself is true. Before you choose either alternative, you will want to develop a negative strategy.

The Negative Strategy

The negative has many options in a particular debate round. It can choose to argue any one or a combination of the stock issues: harm, significance, inherency, solvency, or disadvantages. The type of refutation used may vary. The choice of negative attacks is called a **negative strategy** or negative position. A strategy is a plan of action to defeat the affirmative position. Strategies affect arguments across both the first and second negative constructive speeches. Remember that there are two of you on the team. Your arguments should complement each other rather than appear to be haphazard choices. Strategies vary by debate team and from round to round.

One strategy is to argue anything and everything that comes to mind, in the hope that some arguments will go unrefuted by the affirmative. This "shotgun" approach has two major drawbacks. First, the arguments may contradict each other. For example, a negative team may argue both that the present system will solve the problem with no effort *and* that a considered plan of action can do nothing about the problem or even make it worse. How can a judge make sense out of a negative position that repairs the present system to solve a problem and, at the same time, says that any efforts to solve the problem will result in immediate, massive disadvantages? Contradictions reduce the credibility of the negative position.

The second disadvantage of the shotgun approach is that rattling through a number of arguments reduces the time available to develop a detailed, complete, memorable argument. Some negative arguments can be quite complex and must be developed as carefully as an affirmative case. (Refer to the section in Chapter 7 on developing the negative brief.)

At the opposite end of the spectrum is a strategy that concentrates on only one stock issue. This, too, is a difficult strategy to sustain. It creates a very strong burden of proof for the negative and permits the affirmative to win most of its arguments without contest. Good strategy requires that a number of arguments be used together. This section explains three negative strategies: topicality, defense of the present system, and the counterplan.

Topicality

When you are first learning to debate, it's unlikely that topicality will come up in your debate rounds. Beginning debaters tend to follow the guidelines of the topic without looking for extreme and unusual cases. Yet, because topicality is a strategic option for negative argument, you should be familiar with it.

The first thing to remember is that topicality ought to be used only occasionally because it is really a preemptive argument. If the negative can prove that the affirmative case is not topical, then none of the other arguments in the round really matter. Saying that the affirmative is not topical is the same as saying that the case presented is not relevant to the discussion. If this is true, then topicality ought to be argued exclusively. It should not be part of a block of arguments a negative team makes in every round, just in case the judge might listen.

A topicality argument makes for either a very short debate or a long one that turns mostly on the definition of trick words. However, topicality is a legitimate consideration, and it can be argued if the affirmative has somehow violated the expectations of the debate community. For example, if the proposition is "RESOLVED: That school campuses should be open," the affirmative will probably be challenged on topicality if it argues for keeping the buildings unlocked on Saturdays and Sundays. Why would this affirmative not be topical? The negative would argue that the terms of the proposition refer to students being allowed to leave campus when not in scheduled classes. This is known as an "open campus." An affirmative case to open the building when students are not present is not relevant to the discussion, and therefore lacks topicality.

Because topicality is a preemptive issue, it ought to be argued by itself. Before you present a topicality argument, you should ask yourself, "Am I willing to make this argument alone?" If the answer is no, then you need to seriously examine why you want to run the argument in the first place. If it is because you are not certain if the affirmative has lived up to the expectations of the proposition or has exceeded them altogether, then topicality can and should be used in combination with other arguments. In either case you will need to explain specifically what about the affirmative case makes it nontopical. Generic or handbook-generated topicality arguments rarely win a debate.

Discuss

1. What does it mean to have a negative strategy? Is there one set negative strategy?
2. One negative strategy is the "shotgun" approach. Why is it overrated?
3. When does the negative argue topicality?
4. It is often said that if an affirmative case is not topical, the negative need not make any other argument than topicality. Why?

Defense of the Present System

This is the most commonly argued negative position. There are many variations on the position. In its fullest development, the negative argues (1) that the harms to the present system are not as great as the harms brought about by the affirmative plan *and* (2) that the amount of harm potentially reduced by the present system is equal to, if not greater than, the amount of harm potentially reduced by the affirmative plan.

You could defend the present system simply by comparing levels of harm or by comparing levels of solvency.

As a negative, you may wish to defend the present system when the affirmative harm levels are overstated or when the present system has recently passed a program designed to eliminate the harms. In the first case, you need to concentrate on proving that the affirmative testimony is invalid. For example, consider the resolution "RESOLVED: That the hot lunches at elementary and secondary schools should contain health foods." The focus of this proposition is that eating health foods will make one healthier, therefore, providing health foods in hot lunches would make for healthier kids. Lots of books have been written on the benefits of health foods. Yet despite the claims of health food advocates, there may be little real evidence to support their conclusions. In the second case, you need to concentrate on proving that new programs in the present system will not have the defects of the old programs. For example, since the topic committee formulated the 1986–87 debate topic, "RESOLVED: That the federal government should implement a comprehensive long-term agricultural policy in the United States," Congress passed a new and improved farm program. Thus, the evidence from 1985 predicting catastrophe would probably not be relevant to a new policy enacted in 1986.

Oddly enough, another way to defend the present system is to concede that nothing can be done about a problem. You would then argue that taking action to solve the problem would only cause disadvantages. In some rare instances, it may be better to do nothing than to do something about a problem. The negative position also might argue for greater study of the problem in order to avoid the disadvantages that would result from acting too soon.

Discuss

1. What does it mean for the negative to defend the present system?
2. When would the negative want to defend the present system?
3. What is an alternative to defending the present system? When might these arguments be useful?

The Counterplan

The **counterplan** is a strategy that admits that the present system should be changed, but argues that the negative team's proposal is better than the affirmative's. It is the most complex strategy available to the negative. It is used frequently in advanced debate, but most beginning debaters should master traditional negative strategies before trying a counterplan.

The Importance of a Negative Strategy

A negative strategy tells everyone in the round that the negative team has some legitimate concerns about the affirmative case. The negative strategy identifies for the

judge the reasons why the negative team is opposed to the adoption of the affirmative case. In the end, the negative strategy also gives the judge a reason to vote for the negative. Having a negative strategy greatly reduces the chances for contradictions within speeches and, most important, between speeches. The negative strategy also tells the judge that some arguments are more important than others. It allows the negative the option to narrow the debate in rebuttal speeches. The negative is finally given the opportunity to set forth a criterion for judging the debate.

Refutation of Stock Issues

A key negative responsibility in debate is refuting the stock issues of harm, significance, inherency, and solvency. In addition, the negative is responsible for the stock issue of identifying disadvantages to the affirmative's plan. Each stock issue involves a number of affirmative claims that require individual attention. This section looks in greater detail at strategies for refuting stock issues.

Harm or Advantage

Each affirmative case indicts the present system. The indictment can be of two kinds. First, the affirmative can say that the present system is doing something wrong. This is called a harm. Second, the affirmative can say the present system is *not* doing something it ought to do or could be doing. This is called an advantage. A case that focuses on harm tries to get rid of a bad policy. A case that focuses on advantage attempts to establish a beneficial policy. Both cases are similar insofar as the affirmative tries to identify a change in policy that will leave the world better off, rather than worse.

Often, it is difficult to show that a problem identified by the affirmative is not harmful per se. The age-old scourges of famine, poverty, disease, war, and economic instability are too well accepted by the community to be discarded as not harmful. Rather, the affirmative claim as to the *significance* of the harm or the advantage is what is usually contested.

Significance

The negative can minimize the significance of a harm by showing that the harm is not as serious as the affirmative contends. For instance, most people agree that going without a job is a social harm. There are a number of laws that state that a just society should try to provide work for all citizens.

If an affirmative team argues that unemployment is a harm, and the negative can demonstrate that much unemployment is voluntary, then the harm may not warrant action. Also, the negative might argue people choose to quit their jobs in order to look for better work. While they may be suffering a harm, they also may be fulfilling other values, the rights of free choice and voluntary association. By putting the "harm" in the context of a necessary evil to fulfill a higher value, the negative can undercut the affirmative rationale for change.

Necessity of the Solution

Occasionally, the affirmative harm or advantage is based on the present system's failure to meet optimal policy goals. The advantage of a new policy, the affirmative argues, is its ability to handle a problem more comprehensively, faster, or less expensively. Here, the negative needs to be able to separate essential from incidental values. For example, although it might be desirable to have a car with many extras, they may not be worth the increased costs. By analogy, the negative might argue that even though increased funding to education would result in better programs, current funding is sufficient to cover the essentials of a basic education. By distinguishing core or central values from peripherals, the negative can lessen the affirmative advantage or moderate the perception that the status quo is inadequate.

Requesting Quantification

Another way to refute the harm or significance is to request quantification of a problem or an advantage. For example, if the affirmative case says that farm policy should be changed because present policy is driving farms into bankruptcy, then the negative can legitimately ask about the number of farms being foreclosed. If the affirmative cannot provide overall quantification, then it cannot be assumed—in spite of several spectacular instances of farm failures—that there is a national harm.

Moreover, the negative has a right to ask about the impact of the alleged harm. Even if farm foreclosures are high, it may be that farmers do not lose everything because they are protected by bankruptcy laws. Even if the harm is widespread, if its impact in individual cases is not great, there may not be a substantial reason for change.

Discuss

1. What are the two ways the affirmative can indict the present system?
2. How can the negative mitigate the significance of the affirmative harm?
3. What is the difference between essential and incidental values? Provide an example.
4. If the affirmative can prove that a harm exists (or that the case gains an advantage), must it also prove that the harm or advantage is significant? Why?

Act

1. Using the following affirmative case, outline negative arguments with evidence to refute the affirmative advantage.

   I. Affirmative Plan:

   A. Phase out federal government crop loans, price supports, and commodity purchases or, in the alternative, phase out commodity

purchases and limit crop loan prices and target prices to a figure set below prevailing world market prices. Convert the USDA to an agricultural research and farmer education focus.

    B. Plan administration through the Office of Management and Budget, in conjunction with the USDA. Government officials in violation of the plan mandates will be removed from office, fined, and imprisoned, private parties to receive fines three times the amount of government funds illegally obtained and to be imprisoned.

    C. Plan funding will be through general federal revenues or from sale of government-held commodities as needed.

II. Advantages:

    A. Increased competitiveness of U.S. agriculture.

        1. U.S. aids to agriculture increase the price of U.S. agricultural products: target prices, crop loans subsidize farmer production at costs above world market prices.

        2. U.S. agriculture is export-dependent: production levels assume competitiveness: option A, no government supports for farmers; option B, supports are limited by world market prices.

    B. Avoid inefficient government subsidies.

        1. Most government agricultural aid goes to farmers in stable financial condition.

        2. Farmers in financial trouble are not saved by commodity programs (PIK) or price supports: their problems are from production glut, low prices, which price supports aggravate.

III. Inherency Arguments:

    A. Incrementalism: government perceives solution in adjustment or modification of current programs.

    B. Political perceptions: providing money to farmers creates a political illusion of assistance. Political motives guarantee continuation of aid.

    C. Support programs are incapable of solving the problem: by guaranteeing that the government will purchase crops, they encourage increased production.

2. Using the resolution and case below, outline negative arguments with evidence to refute the affirmative harm.

RESOLVED: That the federal government should establish a comprehensive program to significantly increase the energy independence of the United States.

    I. U.S. energy dependence is harmful.

        A. U.S. is dependent on foreign oil imports.

B. This dependence causes inflation.

    1. Inflation causes unemployment.

    2. Inflation causes death and suffering.

    3. Inflation reduces economic output.

C. The present system cannot solve the problem because energy independence is not a goal of the present system.

II. Fossil fuels will run out.

  A. Fossil fuels are finite.

  B. There is a need to develop alternative energy sources.

  C. The present system cannot develop alternative sources because it lacks a comprehensive national energy program.

III. Affirmative Plan

  A. A five-member energy board with all necessary powers will be created. All necessary staff and facilities will be provided. All members will be required to retire at age seventy, with a replacement to be appointed by the board.

  B. Duties of the board:

    1. Oversee programs for solar energy.

    2. License buildings equipped for solar energy.

    3. Oversee research and development of alternative energy sources.

    4. Provide tax incentives for conservation.

    5. Provide tax incentives for insulation.

  C. Funding will be by a mix of cutting tax loopholes, eliminating duplicative programs, and cutting defense spending.

  D. Enforcement by fines and/or imprisonment.

IV. Advantage: Solar energy is the best energy alternative.

  A. Solar energy is cheap.

  B. Solar energy is effective.

  C. Solar energy is renewable.

  D. Solar energy is technologically feasible.

3. Present a three-minute speech, using your arguments from either Activity 1 or Activity 2.

Inherency

Inherency establishes that the causes of a problem exist within the practices and policies of the present system. The negative position on inherency is to deny that the causes of the problem have been isolated or to argue that the present system can adjust and eliminate the problem. There are several methods that can be employed to deny the inherency of a problem.

An affirmative team arguing a comparative advantage position also has the burden of inherency. The advantages must be shown to be unique to the affirmative plan. If the negative can demonstrate that the present system is in the process of achieving the advantages, then it proves there is no rationale for the affirmative plan.

Trend Arguments

One way to show that a problem is not inherent is to demonstrate that the present system is moving as rapidly as possible toward the end desired by the affirmative. Such a **trend argument** requires the negative to show that the problem has been reduced and will continue to be reduced. This helps put the problem into perspective.

For example, if the affirmative argues that there are a significant number of people without access to medical care, the negative can respond that over the past twenty years a combination of increased insurance coverage, health maintenance organizations, and government programs have made health care available to 95 percent of the population. In terms of the overall population, 5 percent may seem like a lot of people, but when put in the perspective of expanding coverage, the problem does not seem to be serious.

Furthermore, if the negative can isolate the factors that will assure the expansion of the present system into the future, then the negative can argue that the problem can be ignored for the time being.

Minor Repairs

A **minor repairs** argument states that while there is some defect in the present system, the required remedy does not require a substantial change in policy. For example, if medical care has been denied to some people simply because of a lack of administrative coordination between various health service organizations, then the negative could advocate a minor procedural change. If the affirmative is arguing for socialized medicine to solve the problem of health care access, the negative might argue that all that is needed is a minor repair to the health care system. If the minor repair is less costly and less risky than the affirmative plan, then the negative wins the debate.

To argue a minor repair requires that the negative assume certain burdens of proof. First, the negative must show that the minor repair does not intrude on affirmative ground. Especially when arguing broad, vaguely constructed resolutions, the negative must be careful that the repair cannot be made part of the proposition.

Second, the negative must prove that the repair will work. Because the negative is claiming that the real cause of the problem is something other than what is claimed by the affirmative, the negative must show that the repair is sufficient to remedy the situation.

Third, the negative must be prepared to demonstrate that the minor repair has no undesirable side effects. Just as the affirmative must refute disadvantages to its proposed plan, so the negative must refute harms that might come about if the minor repair is made.

Discretionary Powers

A commonly made negative argument is that individuals make choices (have discretion) about their decisions. It would be wrong to conclude, for example, that all the nation's environmental laws are inadequate just because the top administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency is corrupt, incompetent, or both. The negative should argue that, given an adequate test, the present system can be expected to do a good job. The problem rests with the discretionary powers the administrator has, and not with the structure of the present system. If the laws were enforced or the program funded at reasonable levels, the problem would be eliminated.

The strength of this position is that it appeals to fairness. Yet it can be taken too far. Some negative teams argue that because Congress can adopt the affirmative plan, the problem cannot be inherent. This is an invalid argument because the issue is *what* should be done, not *who* should do it. That Congress can adopt an affirmative proposal does not indict the fact that under the present system the problem goes without solution. It also might be reasoned that the failure to use discretionary powers is a sign that the problems of the present system are perpetuated only by attitudes, predispositions, or interests that prevent solutions. However, if the affirmative can demonstrate a consistent pattern of neglect, the argument that the present system possesses discretionary powers is meaningless. On the other hand, if there are good reasons for maintaining discretion and if there is not a consistent pattern of abuse of discretion, then the negative position might succeed.

Discuss

1. Describe three ways the negative can argue against inherency.
2. What burden of proof does the negative assume when running a minor repair?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of a discretionary powers argument?

Act

1. Using the two cases on pages 124–26, outline arguments against each case's inherency. Try to use each of the three techniques described in this chapter, but not necessarily in each case.
2. Using the arguments outlined above, write a three-minute speech and deliver it.
3. Based on an actual affirmative case (perhaps one prepared by someone in your class for the activity on page 116), prepare a first negative constructive speech attacking the case (using the methods discussed earlier). This speech should be approximately four minutes long and should include evidence.

4. Select a bill currently being debated in Congress (or one that was debated, if it pertains to the proposition you are debating). Study the arguments used by the negative speakers against the bill. What types of negative arguments are they using? What issues are being raised?

Solvency

Solvency or efficacy challenges the affirmative plan's ability to solve the problem isolated by the proposition. In a need-plan case, a solvency argument questions the ability of the affirmative plan to solve the problem by eliminating its causes. In a comparative advantage case, a solvency argument questions the ability of the affirmative plan to bring about its stated benefits or advantages.

Solvency arguments can be either directed against the specific affirmative claims made in the case or brought up as new considerations. In either case, the negative asks for rejection of the affirmative case on the grounds that it simply will not solve the problems the affirmative claims that it will.

Workability

A **workability** argument questions whether the plan can work. Even if the affirmative has isolated the correct causes of a problem, the plan must be capable of doing something about them. For example, an affirmative plan that proposes to assure adequate medical care for all American citizens by establishing a national program with adequate funding and good intentions might run into severe problems if there are not enough doctors, nurses, or hospitals available to provide care. Furthermore, even if the affirmative assures money for training and facilities, there may be a limit to the number of talented, dedicated people who want to go into health care. Workability issues focus the debate on the availability of resources, technology, or workers. If there is a significant shortage of any of these components, the plan will not work.

A good affirmative case will attempt to establish its workability by showing that the policy worked in the past, that a similar policy has been implemented elsewhere with good results, or that a pilot project seems likely to succeed. For example, the affirmative may claim that even though there are substantial *theoretical* problems with wage and price controls, such controls did work well during World War II. Or the affirmative may claim that because a pollution control program in the German industrial region of the Ruhr valley was successful, similar programs in the United States are likely to work. The affirmative may argue for establishing "safe homes" for abused women, pointing out that pilot programs in Austin, Texas, and Madison, Wisconsin, worked well. In each of these instances, the workability of a national program is suggested by a policy analogy.

Confronted with such evidence, the negative has several options. First, if the analogy is drawn between the proposed policy and one that is no longer in effect, then the negative might be able to prove that the analogy is inappropriate because conditions have changed. For example, although wage and price controls were acceptable during

World War II, such controls might not be supported today by the general public. If public support is crucial, then the plan may not work.

Second, if the analogy is drawn between the proposed policy and one in effect in another country, then the negative might translate the differences between nations into different policy effects. The German industrial system might be different from our own in significant ways. However, the fact that Germany is a European country and the United States is part of North America does not invalidate the analogy. If pollution control laws work similarly in industrial democracies, then the comparison may be legitimate.

Third, if the analogy is between a pilot program and a national program, then some attention might be given to the unique qualities of a small program. It may be the case that the local program has taken only the most easily solved cases or that its work can be conducted only within a limited range of communities.

Circumvention

A **circumvention** argument says that the problem will continue in the present system because ultimately the attitudes that allow the harm to exist will not be changed. This argument is common among advocates of the private ownership of guns. The slogan "Guns don't kill. People do" reflects the argument that if handguns are banned people will find other ways to kill one another. Because the policy treats the symptoms of a disease as its cause, the problem is likely to continue in a different form.

A good affirmative case will attempt to create a system of incentives to prevent circumvention. By combining rewards and punishments, the affirmative can maximize a policy's chances for success. A major problem with toxic chemicals, for example, has been industrial dumping. In some cases, tank trucks simply drive down the road and open the valves. This happens because the treatment of toxic wastes is costly—rather than comply with government regulations, companies dump wastes illegally. The affirmative may propose providing free toxic-waste treatment and money for good waste cleanup procedures. This would eliminate the incentive to pollute.

The negative must not take such solutions at face value. If greed and willingness to commit a crime are at the root of a problem, how might these motives reappear under the affirmative plan? In the example given, the polluters might take the money and produce even more toxic waste, under the assumption that the government will clean it up. If this happened, increased costs might make the plan unworkable.

Discuss

1. How does solvency apply to a need-plan case? To a comparative advantage case?
2. What is the difference between a workability argument and a circumvention argument?
3. How might an affirmative try to prove the workability of its plan? How could such claims be refuted?

4. How do incentives in the affirmative plan help the affirmative get around circumvention arguments? How can the negative counter this tactic?

Act

1. Using the cases presented on pages 124–26, outline possible solvency arguments. These should include both workability and circumvention arguments. When possible, use evidence. When evidence is not available, develop the argument with reason. Be sure to show how the argument applies to the affirmative plan.
2. Using the arguments outlined in Activity 1, write a three-minute speech and deliver it in class.

Disadvantages

A **disadvantage** is a harm caused by the affirmative plan. In a sense, a disadvantage is the most important stock issue for the negative. Even if the affirmative harm is not as significant as the affirmative claims, if some portion of the harm can be solved by the present system, or if the plan does not solve a part of the problem, as long as a *small* part of the harm can be solved by the affirmative, there is a reason to vote for the proposition. In other words, it is possible for the negative to win many particular arguments and still lose the debate.

A disadvantage works best in combination with other negative arguments. The negative attack on the case is designed to reduce the amount of harm that exists and can be solved by the plan (or to reduce the number of advantages delivered). Questioning the solvency of a plan, too, reduces the affirmative rationale for change. Disadvantages are the negative side effects of the affirmative case. The negative claims that to solve the problem using the affirmative plan could be worse than leaving everything as it is.

There are several steps in constructing a disadvantage. The burden of proof for establishing a disadvantage is much the same as the affirmative's burden of proof in building a case. Disadvantages must be constructed with the same care and logical precision. The major difference, of course, is that a disadvantage proves why the plan creates a unique, compelling harm sufficient to reject the affirmative. The most powerful disadvantage would conclude that, even if all the affirmative arguments are true, the case should not be adopted because its side effects are so terrible.

To build a disadvantage argument, the negative can examine the harms of the affirmative plan, the relationship between the plan and the harm, and the uniqueness of the disadvantage.

Harms of the Affirmative Plan

An affirmative plan can cause two types of harms. The first includes harms that result because the affirmative plan increases the problem rather than solves it. If the affirmative

claims to solve poverty but produces a plan so expensive that it leaves people poorer than they were before, the proposition is undesirable. If the adoption of a particular type of weapons system is so costly and ineffective that it makes the United States more vulnerable to attack, then the case is without merit. In these instances, the negative claims that the solution adopted by the affirmative plan increases the harm isolated by the affirmative case. This is an effective type of disadvantage argument.

The second type of harm involves harms that are different from the ones isolated by the affirmative case. For example, an affirmative might claim to stop the drug problem in the United States by increasing border inspections. The negative could argue that this would damage good relationships with some allies, thus causing a new harm. Or an affirmative might claim to provide more jobs for people, but the negative could point out that the program would create pollution and inflation. In these instances, the harm of the disadvantage is not the same as the harm in the present system that was isolated by the affirmative.

When arguing these kinds of harms, the negative must show that its harm is more significant than the harm identified by the affirmative. In cases where the affirmative advantage and the negative disadvantage are based on different values or beliefs, the negative must establish the superior merits of its argument. Sometimes this is easy to do. If the affirmative advantage is only one of great efficiency, and if the negative disadvantage involves the loss of human life, it is easy to argue that life-threatening concerns are more important. More often, however, the value judgments are quite difficult. Suppose an affirmative plan raises U.S. standards of living at the expense of using up nonrenewable resources from impoverished nations. Which value should receive priority? The negative must be prepared to explain why its harm ought to be considered more important than the harm in the present system that was identified by the affirmative.

Relationship Between Plan and Harm

The negative must identify why the affirmative plan will bring about the harm. In other words, the negative must point out the link between the plan and the disadvantage. If a plan uses up limited resources, the relationship between plan and harm is obvious: resources used for one program cannot be used for another. If a plan creates an obvious violation of human rights or constitutional privileges, again the link is obvious.

However, most links between plan and harm are based on the claim that a bad situation is made worse by the affirmative plan. In a debate about farm policies, an affirmative plan might include an import quota to protect certain products. The negative could argue that trade relations between the United States and its allies are deteriorating. While an import quota for a single commodity, like sugar or beef, usually will not cause a trade war, the negative could argue that under the present circumstances even a single-product quota may be enough to cause a trade war.

This argument resembles the story of the straw that broke the camel's back. Each straw does not weight much, but there is a limit to what the camel can carry. Similarly, if the negative can demonstrate that the present system is close to this threshold of harm, and if the affirmative plan can be shown to worsen problems in the direction

of the harm, a disadvantage can be argued. The negative simply asks the judge not to accept the affirmative plan because there is a risk that it will end in disaster.

Uniqueness

If the present system creates the same disadvantage as the affirmative plan, then the disadvantage cannot be offered as a reason for rejecting the affirmative plan. Because the disadvantage is not unique to (caused only by) the affirmative plan, it does not constitute a reason for rejecting the proposition. The negative must argue the **uniqueness** of the disadvantage.

Consider the following scenario for a disadvantage linked to massive expenditures in an affirmative plan. The negative may argue that such expenditures will break up the budget-cutting consensus in Congress. Such a consensus is necessary for reducing the federal deficit, since the growing deficit threatens economic stability. If the affirmative can show that other budget-busting programs are in the process of being passed by Congress, then the affirmative can argue that the budget-cutting consensus is doomed anyway—whether the affirmative plan is approved or not. Therefore, the disadvantage of massive expenditures is not unique to the affirmative plan and there is no reason to reject the affirmative plan. The negative must provide reasons why the present system is not susceptible to the same type of "disadvantage" as the affirmative plan is.

Discuss

1. Is it possible for the affirmative to win only part of its inherency, part of its harm, and only partial solvency, and still win the debate?
2. Why are disadvantages important to the negative position as a whole?
3. How can a negative construct a disadvantage argument?
4. What are the two types of harms resulting from the affirmative plan?
5. Why must a disadvantage be unique to the affirmative plan?

Act

1. Using the affirmative cases on pages 124–26, outline possible disadvantages. These disadvantages should be proven with evidence.
2. Using the arguments from Activity 1, prepare a four-minute speech establishing the disadvantages that will result if the affirmative plan is adopted.
3. Select a bill currently being debated in (or recently adopted by) Congress. Outline the possible disadvantages of the bill.
4. Prepare a series of generic disadvantages that could be used against many specific affirmative cases under the proposition you are debating in class. Be prepared to justify your choice.

Denying the Problem

You now know how to develop a negative strategy and refute stock issues in a debate. There are other negative arguments that you can make. One key argument is denying the problem. As a negative, you argue that the affirmative has failed to establish its claim that there is a significant problem in the present system. There are several ways to deny the problem, including challenging the affirmative's proof, creating a counterposition, combining a challenge and counterposition, and conceding arguments.

Challenging Affirmative Proof

In Chapter 8, you learned that the burden of proof is on the side arguing for a change. Thus, the affirmative has to prove the truth of its contentions and provide a reason to adopt the proposition. If the negative team can demonstrate that the affirmative has failed to meet its burden of proof, then the negative doesn't need to prove anything else in the debate.

Here is an example of this point. If a person claims to have seen a blue piece of paper but cannot present any evidence that he or she in fact saw a blue piece of paper, there is no reason to accept the claim. There is no need to prove that the piece of paper was actually green.

In a debate, all the negative has to do is ask for some kind of proof to support each affirmative claim. In the absence of proof, the claim cannot be established. Additionally, even if the affirmative does not produce some evidence that a claim is true, if that evidence is tested and found to be questionable or unreliable, there is no reason to accept the claim. Thus, as a negative, you can argue against the affirmative by questioning either the existence of the affirmative's proof or its reliability.

Counterposition

You may wish to do more than challenge the reliability of the affirmative proof. You may want to establish the real truth of the matter. To do so, you create a negative counterposition. A **counterposition** says that the real truth is other than what the affirmative says it is.

In the example of the blue paper, the negative might choose to prove that the paper is actually red. They would then refute the affirmative claim by inference: because the paper is red, it cannot be blue. If the negative chooses this type of refutation, then it assumes a burden of proof. The negative must show that there is enough evidence to accept the counterposition. If the burden of proof can be met, then the negative has a powerful refutation of the affirmative claim. This type of refutation proves the affirmative claim is actually wrong.

Combining Challenges and Counterpositions

In most debates, the negative combines both types of refutations. If the strength of the affirmative proof can be weakened, and at the same time the believability of a counterposition can be established, then the negative is in an excellent position to win an argument.

Conceding the Argument

Sometimes the affirmative proof is simply too strong to overcome. An affirmative argument may be true! In such a case, you may choose not to refute the affirmative argument but instead to concede its truth. Concessions are not necessarily bad. A concession on one argument may permit you to attack a more weakly supported contention. As a negative, if you concede an argument you should also explain why the truth of the argument is not important to the outcome of the debate. For instance, it may make sense to concede the affirmative claim that there are homeless people in the United States. You can then concentrate on proving that government housing, instead of the affirmative plan, can solve the problem.

Applying the Types of Refutation

Remember, when you begin to consider responses to an affirmative case, you have four possible positions on any given argument: (1) refute the adequacy of affirmative proof, (2) establish the truth of a counterposition, (3) combine challenging the proof and establishing a counterposition, or (4) concede the argument but explain why the truth of the argument is not important to deciding the desirability of the policy. No matter how complicated thinking about the negative position may become, these are the basic options.

Now that you understand the choices for refutation, you need to consider how refutation may be applied to an affirmative case. Like a general planning a battle, your purpose is to defeat an opponent. You need to conduct your attack on three different levels. First, you must decide how each soldier will fight another—who will lead attacks and counterattacks. Second, you must decide upon the tactics of engagement. Third, you must have an overall battle plan that gets the soldiers to the right place at the right time and organizes the tactics in the best way to defeat the opponent.

At the level of individual argument, as a negative you must know how to attack the claims made by the affirmative. Rather than fighting with bows and arrows, or machine guns and hand grenades, you will use verbal argument. The negative refutes the affirmative claims by arguing that the evidence used is untrustworthy or that the reasoning from the evidence to the truth of a claim is unsound. There are many ways to indict evidence and reasoning. Some of the most important ones will be discussed in the following sections.

1. What must the negative prove in the debate? Why?
2. When considering responses to any affirmative case, the negative has four possible positions on any given argument. What are they?

Act

1. Using the proposition and affirmative case outlined below, determine if there is a counterposition. If so, outline it. If not, explain why.

   RESOLVED: That an environment conducive to teaching and learning should be provided in the elementary and secondary schools.

   I. The problem of school violence is widespread and growing.
      A. Many attacks on teachers and students have occurred. Students and teachers have a right to security.
      B. Present disciplinary procedures do not discourage violence.
         1. Psychological referral is inadequate.
         2. Security personnel are limited by expense.
         3. There is a lack of communication among parents, the schools, and the courts.
      C. Increased violence can lead to repressive social policies.
   II. Alternatives to present disciplinary procedures are desirable.
      A. Tougher suspension policies can increase discipline.
      B. Student participation can increase discipline.
      C. Television monitoring and more security can increase discipline.
      D. Revamping juvenile courts can isolate violent students.
      E. The present system has taken no steps to implement any of these solutions. It is unlikely that it will do so in the future.
   III. The affirmative plans help to curtail school violence.

2. Using the affirmative case outlined above, identify the affirmative weak points.

Refutation of Individual Arguments

There are many ways the affirmative can support a claim and many ways the negative can refute one. This section of the chapter identifies some of the most common methods of offering and refuting proof. You should become familiar with the following tests of support and of reasoning. Each test you learn will increase your ability to refute arguments.

Generalizations

A generalization simply says that a particular statement is true because a number of instances or examples support the statement. For example, if an affirmative wishes to establish the claim that all U.S. military interventions are bad, one way to do this is to present examples of interventions and point out their harmful consequences. The list of interventions might be long. If the affirmative indicted nearly all interventions, the proof would appear conclusive. What opportunities does the negative have to refute this reasoning?

Time Frame

One way of testing a generalization is to ask whether the examples cited cover a reasonable period of time. Several mistakes are possible.

First, the examples of harmful interventions may be dated. It is possible that military interventions in the nineteenth or early part of the twentieth centuries turned out badly, but that more recent examples turned out differently. As a negative, you would want to show why there is a difference between examples from the distant past and those more relevant to the present and future.

Second, the examples of harmful interventions may have occurred during a period when there were unique problems. Perhaps the bad interventions occurred when the United States was experimenting with the idea of imperialism. Perhaps interventions over the long run reflect a wise policy.

Third, the generalization needs to be considered as a truth extending into the future. Even if all past examples of interventions have proven unfortunate, this does not necessarily mean that future invasions of foreign nations will have the same results.

If the negative can show there are different conditions that will produce successful interventions, then the affirmative examples are not relevant to the claim. When all past examples support the affirmative generalization, the negative must prove that the future will be different from the past.

Number of examples

Another test of a generalization is to see if a reasonable number of instances are cited to support the claim. If there are only a few examples, and if the claim is quite broad, then the affirmative has committed the fallacy of **hasty generalization.**

For example, in establishing that interventions are bad, the affirmative may use the Vietnam War as an example in which a lot of American lives and money were wasted. However, Vietnam may not represent the risks inherent in interventions in general. Even if one or two other examples of unsuccessful interventions could be provided, like the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba or the mining of harbors in Nicaragua, it is not necessary to conclude that these "atypical" examples justify the generalized claim. A negative might strengthen this claim by showing why the few examples presented are unique or atypical and by showing why the generalized rule of successful intervention policy still stands.

In many cases, the notion of what constitutes a sufficient number of examples is a matter of judgment. If an affirmative cites a few examples, the negative cannot just claim that it wants to see more. Rather, the negative must show that the examples given are insufficient. One reason might be that of simple proportion. If there are thousands of instances, a generalization from one or two does not seem sufficient. Another reason is that of risk. If the claim is important, then it is desirable to have a significant amount of confirming evidence. Also, if authorities say that intervention is a good policy on the whole, then the affirmative is obligated to present a more comprehensive analysis. Whatever the particular reason, the negative must establish why the proof in question is not proportional to the conclusion.

Counterexample

A **counterexample** throws the affirmative generalization into doubt. The counterexample establishes that there are significant exceptions to the affirmative generalization, and that these exceptions must be taken into account when judging the reliability of the affirmative claim. If the generalization that all military interventions are bad is challenged by the fact that the invasion of the Dominican Republic saved American lives and property, then one may be able to conclude that sometimes interventions are good and sometimes they are bad. In this instance, the negative would argue that intervention as a policy ought to be preserved. Bad or dangerous interventions should simply be avoided. If the negative has enough timely counterexamples, the affirmative would have to abandon the claim.

Relevance

A basic test of the reasoning of a generalization is to verify that the examples cited are actually instances of the rule asserted. If the generalization were put forward that interventions are not harmful, and the examples included covert operations, economic aid to military regimes, and rescue missions taking place during the Vietnam War, then the number of harmful interventions might seem small compared to the number of successes. The negative might point out, however, that these other so-called interventions are not really examples of the generalization. They are actions much smaller than a full commitment of troops in the field. Looking at the number of "real" interventions might lead to a much different generalization. Thus, the negative should examine the examples to see if some can be declared irrelevant to the general rule. This tactic permits counterexamples to carry more comparative weight in testing the general rule.

Discuss

1. What are the tests of a generalization?
2. What role does time play when the negative is challenging affirmative generalization examples?

3. Define a *hasty generalization.*

4. When you are proving a generalization, how many examples are enough? When the number of examples is sufficient, how should the negative refute the generalization?

5. One way to refute a generalization is with counterexamples. How important is the quality of the example? What will be the impact of significant counterexamples?

Act

1. Outline two examples of a hasty generalization, using evidence. Then outline a negative response (with evidence).

2. Select a speech and identify any generalizations and how they would best be refuted. Why? (For examples of speeches, consult *Vital Speeches, Congressional Quarterly, Representative American Speeches, Time,* or other resources.)

Causal Arguments

A causal argument is important to debate. A **causal argument** basically says that one event causes another. An affirmative may wish to identify the causes of a problem to prove that the present system's policy cannot solve the problem. The affirmative would argue either (1) the present system is not equipped to deal with the causes, or (2) it is only equipped to deal with the wrong causes. Additionally, the affirmative always argues that the proposed policy will bring about effects that will solve a problem or at least create a condition better than the one created by the present system. The negative must be prepared to refute both types of causal claims.

Finding the Real Cause of a Problem

Debaters sometimes confuse the *fundamental* cause of a problem and its intermediate causes. Consider a simple example. What causes poverty? At one level the answer might be a lack of money. When you are poor, you do not have money. But what causes a lack of money? One answer is that the poor do not have work. If this were true, then you could assume that work programs would solve the problem of poverty because they would provide people with money.

The problem with this analysis is that it does not go far enough back and ask the question, What is the cause of joblessness among the poor? It may well be that the poor do not work because they do not have the skills and training. A cause of this problem may be that a culture of poverty influences the poor to give up. By not tracking the chain of causes and effects back far enough, the affirmative has failed to get at the root of the problem. Should the "real cause" persist, the affirmative plan may not be able to eliminate some undesirable social effects.

Multiple Causality

Large social problems are usually not the result of a single cause but of a number of interlocking causes. In the case of poverty, causes seem to be numerous. The "culture of poverty," for example, is a general term that includes numerous reasons why the poor remain hopeless. The lack of a job, a decent home, education, medical care, protection against crime, and so forth may all contribute to a psychology that keeps people poor for generations.

If an affirmative can point out a basic cause of a problem, then it may have a better chance of proposing a solution. However, the negative should question whether authorities are in agreement that the single cause is valid, and also see if there are other major contributing causes to the problem.

Counteracting Causality

Even if the affirmative is able to establish a relationship between a policy in the present system and social problems, it still might run into problems when it compares the future of the present system under an affirmative plan to the future of the present system without the affirmative plan. There might be some other factor that also caused or significantly contributed to previous relationships. This new factor might interrupt the causes of the present system and possibly prevent the affirmative from achieving its solution to the problem.

Return to the poverty example. One of the causes of poverty is unemployment, which leads to ill effects such as spouse and child abuse, hunger, and lack of adequate medical care. If enough people are unemployed, however, wages might become cheaper and industry might be able to reemploy more workers and reverse the economic cycle. Thus, there is a *counteracting cause*, a self-corrective mechanism within the present system that prevents the problem from getting too bad. The negative should look for present system mechanisms designed to ease social problems. These mechanisms can furnish grounds to claim that the affirmative harm is not inherent.

Another important area for counteracting causality arguments is the solvency of an affirmative plan. The affirmative plan may involve certain steps that would unintentionally trigger events that make it impossible to solve the problem. For example, if the affirmative wished to solve the poverty problem by guaranteeing every U.S. citizen a cash income, then poverty would be solved. Everyone would have money; no one would be poor. Right? No. By giving the poor cash, the government would create a demand for more goods. Stores might simply raise their prices, and those who could afford to pay would get the goods. The poor would have money, but they still would not be able to buy necessities. Because the affirmative plan set off a counteracting cause—increasing demand, which increased prices—and because the counteracting cause came between the plan and its desired effects, the affirmative would lose the solvency issue. The negative should look for side effects of the affirmative plan that work against the solution of the problem.

Discuss

1. Define the two types of causal arguments.
2. Outline three ways the negative can challenge the causal argument.

Act

1. Using each of the claims below, identify (with evidence) alternative causes.
   a. Poor farm management is the cause of many farm foreclosures.
   b. Water supplies are being destroyed by chemical waste dumping.
   c. Spending for social programs has been cut to finance increases in military spending.
   d. Student test scores are declining because of teacher incompetency.
   e. Poverty is responsible for the malnourishment of America's poor children.
   f. Welfare programs encourage the unemployed poor to remain jobless.
2. Each of the social problems listed below has multiple causes. Identify some of them.
   a. Poverty
   b. Air pollution
   c. The federal deficit
   d. Energy shortages (past and future)
   e. Farm foreclosures

Sign Arguments

A **sign argument** says simply that when x appears, so does y. It does not say that x causes y, or that y causes x. It says that the two are related much like symptoms and a disease. For example, when you have the sniffles you know you have a cold. If you have been exposed to people with colds, you know that you are likely to get the sniffles. Sniffles are a sign of a cold. *Cold* is the term given to a particular type of disease. A sign argument can either take known characteristics and reason to a conclusion, or it can take a conclusion and reason to the kinds of characteristics that are to be expected.

Sign arguments are useful to the affirmative when the cause of the problem is unknown, but it is necessary to know the nature of a problem before you can treat its symptoms. If there were an outbreak of a certain kind of disease, you might conclude that the disease was related to certain substances that ought to be under the control of an inspection system. For example, a certain dairy may have become contaminated. The spread of disease does not show *why* the inspection system has failed, but it does suggest that the basic problem was with the inspection, and it suggests a direction for treatment.

Sign arguments are especially useful when you are considering a problem that is just emerging but has yet to be fully identified. If one or two undesirable cases are identified then—given the nature of the cases—one can be assured that an undesirable state will emerge. For example, it might be argued that the fact that people are living longer is a sign of an adequate health care system. However, this may be a false sign. In reality, people may be eating healthier foods and generally taking better care of themselves, and therefore they are living longer. It could still be the case that when someone does get sick the health care system is of little use.

Countersigns

There may be more than one set of signals (or signs) relevant to judging the likelihood of an existing or future harm. With the reorganization of the Soviet Union, the U.S. Congress has moved to reduce military spending. Budget cuts have even included eliminating some weapons programs. This might be read by the former Soviet and by Middle Eastern countries as a signal of America's weakness. However, given the quick and decided victory in the Persian Gulf War in early 1991, it cannot be said that the signs of U.S. military strength are consistent. The negative should try to assemble countersigns that indicate that the problem is not emerging or that there is substantial doubt about the existence of the problem.

Affirmative Emphasis

If a situation includes both signs and countersigns, you must distinguish minor or incidental signs from important or telling signs. A telling sign is one that establishes an intrinsic relationship between the characteristics and the substance, a relationship in which the characteristic always accompanies the substance. *Substance* is thought of as the inherent characteristics of a particular thing, person, or place.

For example, when a company tells you it has a vehicle to sell with four wheels, seating for four, windows, heating, and a combustion engine, you can assume that the vehicle is a car. So, too, when a dealership says it wants to sell you a car, you could assume that it has four wheels, seating for four, windows, heating, and a combustion engine. While these are not the only signs of a car, they are some of the *telling* signs. If someone described a vehicle with a cigarette lighter, captain chairs, rearview mirror, and gears, these characteristics would not necessarily describe a car. These signs are fallible—they could refer to another kind of vehicle.

Because knowledge of an intrinsic relationship is usually not available, conflicting signs must be interpreted based on evidence. Where do most of the signs point? Are the signs that point in a given direction the most important ones—that is, are they the signs that almost always accompany the substance? To win a sign argument, the negative must do more than uncover the presence of conflicting signs. It must show that these conflicting signs are more important than the signs identified by the affirmative.

Discuss

1. When are sign arguments most useful to the negative?
2. What are the two tests of sign arguments?

Act

Using the resolution and case in Activity 2 on page 125, develop negative arguments using sign arguments.

Testimony

Testimony is a statement of opinion. An opinion is necessary to provide proof where empirical evidence is not available, either because no study has yet been done to specify the harm or cause of the harm in question or because no study is possible. When no study is possible, opinion provides authoritative evidence as to what *ought* to be society's goals and values. Such evidence can come only from opinion because questions of purpose can be resolved only through cooperative discussion. In testing the affirmative case, the negative needs to be concerned with any testimony that is cited. Here are the major tests for this kind of evidence.

Reliable Sources

Currently, lots of information is being published without credentials. Often, such unreliable information is quoted in academic debate without even a blush. Such evidence makes claims that no responsible person or institution would make. There are no homeless in America! There is no hunger in America! Cancer is cured! Aliens have invaded from outer space! If any of these claims were true or even likely to be true, then a debate might be quite different, but their truth is so suspect that no other source even bothers to comment on their falsehood. To determine whether such "testimony" is part of the affirmative's case, the negative should examine the affirmative's sources. If an affirmative uses a number of sources without credentials, this should become a major issue in the debate.

Consensus

Testimony that has been confirmed by a majority of experts is compelling proof. If climatologists all agree that the world's weather is getting warmer, then there is a consensus from which reliable policy can be formulated. On the other hand, if it can be shown that there is substantial disagreement among experts, then the negative can argue that it is too soon to determine a policy. In this case the negative should point out that disagreement among experts requires that the judge vote on the basis of presumption. Without compelling proof, there is no reason to change the present system.

Disinterested Testimony

If the person providing the testimony has something to gain by the acceptance of a policy, then his or her motives can be questioned. Consider, for example, a debate on the use of nuclear power. If the affirmative's testimony showing that nuclear power is cheap, safe, and reliable comes from representatives of utility companies, it is legitimate to ask whether the testimony can be trusted, without support from more neutral experts.

On the other hand, the negative must guard against this charge, particularly in defending the present system. It may be that some representatives of government agencies are more interested in defending the administration's policies than in acting in the public interest. For example, leaders of the Environmental Protection Agency often testified that pollution problems were overstated and that the EPA was making progress toward enforcing pollution standards. However, several congressional investigations and firings showed that even high government officials cannot always be trusted.

Recent Testimony

When it comes to contemporary problems, recent opinions are prized. The reason is obvious. If an authority is describing a situation that existed ten years ago, the evidence may no longer be relevant. Especially where situations are rapidly changing, it is important to use contemporary opinion. The more recent, the better.

The negative should remember, however, that the date of testimony is not an absolute value. In most cases, it really doesn't matter that the date of one opinion is a day or even a month later than the date of another opinion. What is crucial is to explain why more recent testimony is more trustworthy—to show that changes have occurred that might render past judgments unreliable. In some instances sources that have withstood the test of time may be more valuable than an up-to-the-minute report.

Values Consistent with Community

Some sources who are regarded as experts in a special field may hold views that are inconsistent with those held by the community. Marx is an expert on communism; Krapotkin, on anarchy; and Louis XIV, on monarchy. But debate does not operate in a world in which values are determined by allegiances to communism, anarchism, or monarchism. Each of these ideologies devalues argumentation and debate as processes of decision making. Debate can only deal with opinions that exist within the framework of democratic values.

Sometimes the test of value agreement is more subtle but no less important than in the instances just examined. Suppose an authoritative source is quoted as saying that freedom is the most important democratic value. Nothing less than the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution can be cited here. Suppose further that a right-wing gun control lobbyist is quoted as saying that handgun control is a significant violation of freedom. Has a substantial argument been made? Not

necessarily. The value of freedom may enjoy widespread support from experts and the public alike. The particular violation in question, however, may not be very significant. The lobbyist's claim may reflect more of a concern for keeping his or her own gun that a commitment to democratic values. The negative should make sure that the reasoning process that links statements about values employs respectable sources throughout the argument.

Discuss

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of testimony as evidence?
2. What are five ways to challenge testimony.

Act

1. The following examples of testimony are flawed. Identify the problem with each.

   RESOLVED: That the federal government should establish a comprehensive long-term agricultural policy in the United States.

   a. "Homeless in America," *Newsweek*, January 2, 1984, p. 2.

   "Because they live without addresses, the homeless are unable to receive food stamps and welfare in most states, invisible in unemployment statistics and impossible to count. Estimates range anywhere from 250,000 to 2 million nationwide, tens of thousands of whom hazard the elements every night."

   b. The World Bank, "Drought in Africa," *The Economist*, September 10, 1973, p. 45.

   "Africa is the only part of the world which now grows less food for each of its people than it did 20 years ago. In nine countries food production per head is less than 90% of what it was in 1950. Nearly 200 million people—more than 60% of Africa's total population—eat fewer calories each day than the UN thinks are required to provide a survival diet."

   c. *The New York Times*, December 18, 1985, p. A8.

   "There are no longer any emergency conditions in the 20 countries affected by the drought. The goal to feed the hungry in these countries appears to be accomplished."

   d. Shona McKay (writer, *MacLeans*), "How Drought Engulfed a Continent," *MacLeans*, November 7, 1983, p. 59.

   "Said Oxfam's Gallagher: 'This system provides people with a subsistence living when conditions are normal. Under drought conditions, it means they face starvation'."

e. John Glenn (senator), *Famine in Africa,* Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, January 17, 1985, p. 7.

"I've seen one estimate that indicates that the Sahel region in Africa is expanding southward at about 8 miles per year. This climatological condition is unlikely to be altered until the world goes through its 11- or 22-year cycle of weather changes."

2. As you did in Activity 1, identify the problem in each of the following examples of testimony.

RESOLVED: That the federal government should establish a comprehensive national policy to protect the quality of water in the United States.

a. J. E. Tiernan (Resources for the Future), "A Rational Evaluation of Cancer Mortality Associations with Treated Drinking Water," *Journal of Environmental Health,* November–December 1983, p. 124.

"More epidemiological studies on drinking water and cancer mortality are essential. Our natural resources are rapidly being depleted and the effects of the degradation of our water must be soundly proven before it is too late."

b. William Ruckelshaus (EPA Director), *Groundwater Protection: The Quest for a National Policy,* 55th Report by the Committee on Government Operations, October 4, 1984, p. 9.

"If we discover gaps in terms of our ability to protect ground water, either with our own responsibilities or those of the States, we will investigate ways to fill those gaps. If, in order to implement our responsibilities and the States' responsibilities, we need to develop a national ground water policy, then I will do that."

c. Tom Kelley, "Enforcement Drive Mounts," *EPA Journal,* November 1978, p. 7.

"In the fiscal year since then, 28 corporations and individuals have been convicted in federal courts of environmental crimes, a dramatic increase from 11 in FY 1975, nine in FY 1976 and 11 in FY 1977. Twenty-four other cases, including fifteen involving illegal dumping of waste, have been referred to the Justice Department for prosecution and some 160 cases are currently under investigation."

d. James J. Floyd (president, White's Chemical Research Group), "Reliance on Disposal Does Not Present a Future Problem," *The Environmental Forum,* October 1985, p. 20.

"The current disposal rate of chemicals into landfills and nearby streams does not pose an immediate danger. Those chemicals being dumped are harmless and the cost to clean up the landfills and streams to their original state would be minimal."

Glossary

abbreviation system Abbreviations or symbols for words used frequently in debate; used to speed up flowing.

advantage Benefit that will result from adopting the resolution.

affirmative Side that argues that a change should be made in the present system.

alphabetical filing system System that involves organizing index cards into subject areas and filing them alphabetically by subject.

analysis Process of separating ideas and arguments into smaller units for study.

argument Claim supported by evidence.

assertion Claim that lacks supporting evidence.

ballot Form a judge uses to record the decision of a debate round.

brainstorming Process of coming up with ideas and arguments by thinking with an open mind, either alone or in a group.

brief Outline of arguments and evidence supporting one side of a proposition.

burden of proof Affirmative's obligation to provide sufficient reason for adopting the proposition.

card catalog List of book titles in a library, arranged by author, title, and subject.

card file Organized collection of evidence cards.

case Area of the proposition the affirmative wishes to discuss. The affirmative must present justification for change, a plan, and advantages, and must support each of these with evidence and analysis.

case brief Arguments developed by the affirmative to answer anticipated negative arguments against the affirmative case; or arguments developed by the negative against anticipated affirmative contentions.

case format Structure for an affirmative case, such as need-plan or comparative advantage.

case side In an affirmative case, the justification for change.

causal argument Argument that isolates the cause(s) of a problem to prove that the present system cannot resolve the problem.

causal link Argument that one event causes another.

causality Relationship between two events, in which one is believed to cause the other.

circumvention Argument that a policy will have no effect because it will be gotten around or avoided.

clash Direct response to the opposition's argument.

comparative advantage case Type of case that shows the affirmative plan will create advantages (benefits) over the present system.

constructive speech Speech that presents the major points made by each team. Constructives are given first in a debate.

contention Major claim in a debate.

contradictory arguments Two or more arguments that cannot be true at the same time.

counterexample Example that is an exception to a general rule.

counterplan Negative strategy that admits the present system should be changed, but argues that the negative team's plan is better than the affirmative's.

counterposition Argument that the real truth is other than what the opposition claims.

cross-examination debate Form of debate in which debaters are permitted to ask direct questions of an opponent during periods following the opponent's constructive speeches.

debate Regulated discussion of a proposition by two matched sides, providing reasoned arguments for and against a proposition.

definition of terms Explanation of key words in a resolution so that the action recommended is clear to everyone.

disadvantage Harm that will result from adopting either the resolution or the affirmative plan.

discretionary powers Authority to make decisions and changes necessary to ensure a plan can be implemented or administered.

evidence Support for an argument, usually found in government documents, newspapers, magazines, journals, books, and interviews.

evidence card Index card containing one piece of evidence and a complete citation of the source used.

fiat Affirmative right to state that the machinery and personnel will be made available for a plan to be implemented.

first affirmative constructive First speech of the debate; includes contentions, case, plan, and advantages, and sets the grounds for the rest of the debate.

first affirmative rebuttal Speech that answers all arguments presented in the second negative constructive and that extends case arguments refuted in the first negative rebuttal.

first negative constructive Speech that responds to the first affirmative constructive and may challenge the affirmative's definition of terms and topicality; defends the present system by showing that it can solve the problems outlined by the affirmative.

first negative rebuttal Speech that refutes, extends, and develops case arguments introduced in the second affirmative constructive.

flowing (flowsheeting) Process of taking notes during a debate.

flow sheet Notes of the arguments made in a debate; often refers to the actual paper used to record notes.

generalization Argument that a particular rule is true because of a number of instances or examples that support the rule.

harm Problem caused by the presence or absence of government policy.

inherency Issue of whether a problem is caused by the present system, and whether the present system can solve the problem.

judge Person (or panel) that evaluates a debate and decides who wins and loses, based on the debaters' analysis, reasoning, evidence, organization, refutation, and delivery.

justification Argument that the resolution should be adopted to solve the affirmative harms or gain the affirmative advantages.

key terms Words about or relating to a research subject.

Lincoln-Douglas debate Form of value debate that involves two participants (one on each side). Emphasis is on persuasion and analysis as opposed to evidence.

logical reasoning Process of explaining why a particular argument makes sense.

minor repairs Negative argument that while there is a defect in the present system, it can be fixed without a major change in policy. The negative argues that the affirmative plan is overkill.

multiple causality Argument that a problem may have more than one cause, and that the affirmative plan is adequate to solve the problem.

need-plan case Type of case that shows the affirmative plan will meet needs or eliminate problems in the present system.

negative Side that defends the present system.

negative block Second negative constructive followed by first negative rebuttal, amounting to 12 to 15 minutes of uninterrupted negative speeches.

negative philosophy Negative point of view or position in the debate.

negative strategy Negative's plan of action to defeat the affirmative position.

notebook index system System that involves organizing index cards by numbers or codes rather than alphabetically by subject. A master index is kept for the entire filing system; evidence cards can be found by referring to the index.

novice Beginning debater.

operationl definition Practice of defining terms in the resolution through examples and arguments in the affirmative case, rather than by providing dictionary definitions.

plan Affirmative's recommendation for action to support the resolution. Includes what action must be taken and provisions for putting the action into effect.

plan brief Negative arguments developed to attack the workability of the affirmative plan or to point out disadvantages of the affirmative plan.

plank Part of the affirmative plan, such as the type of board that will implement the plan, how the plan will be implemented, funding, and enforcement.

plan-meet-need Requirement that the affirmative plan be able to meet the needs or eliminate the problems in the present system, or that the plan be able to achieve the advantages that the affirmative team claims.

plan side   Arguments relating to the affirmative plan for change; specifically, the part of the affirmative case that relates to the plan.

policy debate   Debate using a proposition of policy. Emphasis is on evidence and analysis.

preparation time   Time between speeches that is used to get ready to speak.

present system   Current state of affairs; the laws, regulations, and rules that people live by. Also called the *status quo*.

presumption   Assumption that the policy now in effect should remain in effect. Presumption usually favors the negative; the affirmative must prove that change is necessary.

prima facie case   Case that stems directly from the proposition and that is complete "at first sight"; the minimal argument required to support the proposition. The affirmative team must establish a prima facie case to win a debate.

problem area   General question or concern that a resolution tries to address.

proof   Evidence introduced to support a claim.

proposition   Topic of debate; a statement about which reasonable people may accept arguments on either side.

proposition of fact   Objective statement that a condition exists; the condition can be verified. The simplest and least controversial of the three types of propositions.

proposition of policy   Statement that a course of action should be considered for adoption. Policy debate is based on propositions of policy.

proposition of value   Subjective statement or judgment about the qualities of a person, place, thing, idea, or event; involves opinions and attitudes. Value debate is based on propositions of value.

research   Process of gathering evidence to support an argument.

reasoning   Process of explaining why evidence supports a specific claim.

rebuttal speech   Speech that rebuilds arguments that have been attacked, refutes opposition arguments, and summaries the debate. Rebuttals are given at the end of a debate.

refutation   Process of attacking and destroying opposing arguments.

resolution   Proposition offered for consideration; requires explanation, discussion, and proof.

second affirmative constructive   Speech that reestablishes the affirmative position in the debate, refutes major arguments presented in the first negative constructive, extends affirmative arguments, and presents any remaining affirmative arguments.

second affirmative rebuttal   Last speech of the debate; explains what the affirmative arguments mean in the context of the debate.

second negative constructive   Speech that deals with the affirmative plan, especially the plan's workability, solvency, and disadvantages.

second negative rebuttal   Speech that identifies the case arguments the negative considers voting issues and argues that the disadvantages outweigh the affirmative advantages or solvency.

shift   To abandon an original position and argue for a different one.

should-would argument   Argument based on whether affirmative plan *will be* accepted, rather than on whether it *should be* accepted.

sign argument   Argument that because one thing occurs so does another. Sign reasoning is used to make a generalization, based on the known characteristics of a person, place, or event.

significance   Importance or scope of an issue.

solvency   Ability of a plan to solve a problem or bring about an advantage.

standard debate   Form of debate in which there are constructive and rebuttal speeches, but no question periods.

status quo   Current state of affairs; the laws, regulations, and rules that people live by. Also called the present system.

stock issues   Claims that the affirmative must make in order to present a prima facie (complete) case, including harm, significance, inherency, solvency, and disadvantages.

testimony   Evidence based on a statement of opinion, usually by a qualified expert.

timekeeper   Person who keeps track of each debater's speaking and preparation time and lets the speaker know how much time has elapsed.

topicality   Issue of whether the affirmative plan falls under and supports the resolution.

trend argument   Argument that the present system is already moving toward the desired end, and that therefore the resolution or affirmative plan are unnecessary.

uniqueness   Issue of whether the affirmative plan is the only cause of advantages or disadvantages.

value debate   Debate using a proposition of value.

voting issues   Arguments that the affirmative or negative teams believe are the key issues in the debate and that should decide who wins the debate.

workability   Ability of a plan to solve the problem(s) identified.

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