

Finals Ballot—Morgan, William

RFD:

I voted Negative for a model of debate where affirmation “is tied and dependent on the bodies and voice of the speaker,” because the risk of the DA's (misleading, doubling, marginalization) to the Aff's model (and its inclusion via the perm) outweighed both the risk of a DA to the Neg model and a small Aff impact based on forgoing the 1ac or benefits of a plan-based model of debate that only voting Aff could access.

Process:

The central question of this debate was simply, whose model of debate is best. Unpacking the word 'best' in that sentence is what this whole debate was about and not an easy task. Deciding the best model of debate in this round required four comparisons and corresponding evaluations:

1. Advantages to each team's model of debate
2. DA's to the other team's model
3. Defense - whether one team's model could solve the other team's model's advantages or resolve their DA's / impact turns (through things like the perm or TVA)
4. Framing – impact comparison, solvency filters, etc.

Aff

1. Advantages to the Aff model of debate:

a) Argument Refinement - the Aff says a model of debate based on the evaluation of the 1ac versus the Neg argument centering the plan (although not necessarily always USFG plans), creates a competitive community that does in-depth research and refines its positions over time. The impact to that refinement is legal skills, which the Aff says can do several things:

i. Provide for the Aff's soft legal mechanisms and petitioning lawyers for hybrid governance in the Arctic, substantiated by the 1ac Osofsky evidence; as I will discuss later on, this is the part of the debate that was debated the least by the Aff (especially on the impact level). A series of questions in the 1ac cx regarding whether the Aff team personally knew anyone in the Arctic seemed to push the Aff strategy away from this part of the 1ac, but that was in error in my opinion, because the Neg had no defense to the case specific mechanism to solve the harms outlined by the 1ac.

ii. Warming (the impact the 2ar went for the most); that the community could through research methods create ways to resolve emissions by figuring out solutions and creative ways to deal with the EPA. The 2ar says warming is not distant, but personal and catastrophic, the largest and most important impact in the round. This "warming is personal" framing is problematic, because it is not offensive against the Neg model as the 2ar assumes, but rather aids solvency for the Neg model.

iii. Trucking example; EPA processes are shaped and changed most effectively with institutional and specific policy knowledge. The problem with the 2ar's framing, "this is our argument," is that the Neg is not contesting that claim, rather they have made the argument that the Aff model is bad for other reasons, but that their model can solve this (topical version).

2. DA's to the Neg model of debate

a) Uncomfortability DA; the Neg model breeds antagonism between white and black debaters, generally, it makes people uncomfortable. The 2ar extends this argument as a net benefit to the perm: affirm a vision of community with multiple forms. This argument has a strong link to the Neg model as demonstrated throughout the debate, but the debate is about the impact level. The 2ar briefly extends an uncomfortability impact, but does not do any impact calculus about it whatsoever. Let me provide a prelude to my eventual concluding question: what happens if I have to decide between on the one hand a model of debate (including the perm in this consideration) that has some very serious problems in terms of its effects, how its skills get used, how it treats the voices of minority debaters etc. and a model that produces some discomfort in its participants? Is that discomfort a prior issue? Does it have implications for the Neg's proposed model of debate or that model's ability to solve either its own advantages or the DA's to the Aff's model (turn arguments)? The problem for the Aff is that this impact debating is mostly absent. This argument is an impact turn to the Neg's model, yet it receives maybe thirty

seconds in the 2ar, so while the Aff may “win” this DA, what the Aff thinks that should mean for my deciding the debate is not clear after the 2ar.

The Aff needed to be playing much more offense on this argument and either tying it to their broader positions or going for it as an independent voting issue. The in between strategy that was chosen in the finals benefitted the Neg and would have required substantial judge intervention to make a ballot out of.

I think a creative way to deploy the Neg’s own jokes against them would have been to use them as reasons the Neg model would fail. For example, in a model of embodied debates that have the potential to devolve into cruel jokes will we have learned how to craft creative solutions to changing norms or rules of governance? No, we will not (warrant). (And then the impact question) Those legal changes matter (insert big impact discussion about how bad the situation is now and how only legal expertise provided by studying people far beyond the purview of the debate community can solve).

Comparison about how embodied politics don’t arrive at the Aff’s required solutions, because they devolve into personal attacks (using this not just as a reason the Neg should lose, but a reason their model is bad and can’t solve the Aff or the 1ac’s impact as a net benefit to it). The 2ar focuses on what happened during the debate as a separate argument from the rest of the debate, and in a sense it was, it was almost like a separate off. But the 2ar allowed the 2nr to get away with poorly “kicking out of” their roast page with minimal implications for the rest of the debate. If the 2ar was not going to go all in on the voting issue for this argument, then what needed to happen was turning that part of the debate into a source of offense on the framework debate / debate about models of debate. Arguments like, “this proves you can’t solve our offense, debate’s devolve into personal attacks and sacrifice clash because one can come for another’s institution at the expense of doing research, which proves the topical version can’t solve because it wouldn’t get researched in a Neg model. Debates in the Neg model turn into means for a community to expunge its own negative qualities, without considering things like the Arctic. So yes, the Neg may win they help some people to affirm themselves, but the Aff model can do some of that too with a net benefit of allowing people to go into the world and use their skills to help others and to make a difference in places like the Arctic and that is what you should care about because debate is the only place that produces this type of education.” This work was not really done by the Aff. Impact comparison was solely about the warming impact, which was, as I mentioned, a mistake.

b) Institutional scale-up (the case / legal skills advantage are a da to the Neg model); the link here is that the Neg interpretation can’t understand the relationship of individuals and their communities to the EPA because of constraints on the personal. The link to this DA is sort of assumed by the Aff; very little time is spent developing the reasons we must leave the local and forgo the type of embodied speech the Neg is proposing in order to understand the EPA. Again, this is why the Arctic part of the Aff should have played a much larger role. Instead of the debate ending, and me knowing with certainty that the Neg model cannot effectuate change on institutional level in any comparable sense to the Aff model, I am instead left asking if the Aff has a good reason why the Neg’s model cannot solve at least some of this impact. This is part of a larger note that I wrote down immediately after the 2ar. That speech felt far more scattered and defensive than I had anticipated. Instead of isolating offensive inflection points in the debate and winning all

the necessary link and internal link chains and then doing impact calculus for something like research, it felt that the 2ar tried to go for everything ("Mike, lesson number 1"). I'll say this as well, the Aff allowed the Neg to control what this debate was about. Instead of developing an offensively oriented picture of what was absolutely necessary about their model of debate, things would absolutely have to be sacrificed in voting Neg, the Aff allowed the debate to arrive on the Neg's terms. This meant the Neg got to identify the central questions of the debate, and not the other way around. To quote once more from Scott Deatherage's "The Speech," if "the key to offensive argumentation is to anticipate your opponents warrant and undermine their credibility BEFORE your opponent develops an offensive explanation in the first instance," then the Neg did that in this debate and the Aff did not. My decision revolves around this crucial point.

3. Aff Solvency of the Neg's model

This is really about the perm, whether debates that center decisions on the evaluation of the 1ac's plan foreclose or can include some of the things the Neg says. That part of the ballot is below.

4. Framing

Three similar arguments and one impact comparison claim here:

- a) Plan-based model of debate - the condition of possibility for solving Aff impacts
- b) Refinement – not just about singular debates, but molding our research throughout the year
- c) Competitive structure – not ballots, but norms of affirmation and types of research
- d) Warming outweighs – not distant, but personal; largest impact

Neg

1. Advantages to the Neg's Model:

a) Education vs. Information; the Neg says their model leads to changing the world with the skills we get in debate, providing a connection between the personal and political (the missing link arguments). The Aff has arguments about how their model solves this better, but no real defense to the basic claim that embodied debate leads to (more) real world change. Arguments like “embodied debate is less likely to lead to operationalization of skills out of debate, because if you are correct about psychological healing, people wouldn’t ever want to leave and face the harshness of the world, so your spill-up arguments link more to you, which proves your model can’t solve our impacts and only our model, which may not be as psychologically affirming, is capable of solving warming / arctic / policy” would have been very useful no matter what impact the 2ar was going for. As was, the Aff did not do enough to indict the Neg’s model, its ability to solve its own impacts or the Aff’s.

b) Psychological health (self-affirmation); the other uniqueness argument that debate is always political and personal for black people and that forcing it to be about embodiment is good for affirmations of beauty that are contested by racism before any debate even begins. The Neg says that the Aff cant solve this because their model is silent on the internal link between the personal affects of the political and political effects, but that voting Neg can be a way to teach a means of affirmation to black students despite existing violence or lack of inclusion. This isn’t really gone for in the 2nr as an independent impact or advantage, but more as another solvency claim. It does complicate the uncomfotability debate especially when neither side directly addresses the other’s argument that relates to that portion of the debate. ((I’m not bemoaning the lack of line by line nor the absence of a strict sense of order, what I’m attempting to point out is that in debates where those things fade into the background, debaters must do more work framing the ballot, what issues are central and which impacts matter most, otherwise it is exactly as the people who remember how line by line looked long ago (not me) fear: some million arguments floating randomly, arrangeable in any way)).

2. DA's to the Aff Model

This is where the debate was really won and lost. The Neg advanced a number of disadvantages / impact turns to including a plan-based model of affirmation in the community (they overlap some, but I’ve separated them to maintain the 2nr’s form). The Aff strategy focused on saying their model was good, because it solved warming, but in addition to not having a strong enough attack on the Neg’s model, the Aff needed a stronger answer to the reasons why their model was bad. What played out was that these impact turns to the Aff model of debate grew throughout the debate and became persuasive reasons to not include the Aff model of debate at all (aka the perm).

a) Misleading DA aka the Mike Pence & Karl Rove DA (Campbell evidence); the Neg says allowing privilege to go unspoken or unchallenged in disembodied affirmation leads to the misuse of knowledge and research, either via complicity or via intentional misleading of people based on expertism. This is a big problem for the Aff, a much bigger one than I think was realized during the debate. If embodied affirmation is critical to make sure research goes in the right direction, then the inclusion of a disembodied model leads to

research, skills and training that all go to problematic ends. This has massive implications, it means there is not a 1:1 relationship between what the Aff model promises and what they actually lead to. This means that a disembodied model of debate could produce more technocrats who are not interested in “soft legal mechanisms,” but have more ill intentions of the Rove / Pence variety. One of the strongest moments in the 2nr is extending this DA and the doubling impact below. There is explicit framing about what the skills the Aff model produces, how I should understand the Aff model’s solvency and how its skills would be exported. The Aff’s answers to this are first that legal skills are good, but there is not good defense to the misuse turn. If this part is an impact turn debate—disembodied legal skills good / bad—then it is essential to answer this argument explicitly. Mostly Aff answers are defenses of the 1ac assuming it arrives at its planned destination and defenses of the 1ac’s institutional focus; there is not a great defense of debate skills as good or working towards their proper ends. There are not counter-examples. All of these would have helped.

b) Doubling DA / Impact; the Neg says separating the personal from the political allows one to divorce themselves from their politics and retreat to a place where one is not implicated, not responsible for the structures of violence that surround any decision. This buttresses the above arguments about skills being redeployed, but further means the Aff model results in the disavowal of violent structures in a move of rhetorical innocence, which the Neg says is a parasitic politic. The outcome is people not taking responsibility for their own actions, their own roles and contributions to harms, the continuing of business as usual, and the exclusion of black children, despite best intentions otherwise. The 2nr is explicit that the permutation links to this DA / Impact, and that only deciding against a disembodied model can resolve this. This is a very explicit framing move in the 2nr; it is not “our model is better than yours,” it is “your model is bad, and should be excluded”—very offensive framing. Aff answers here are slightly better, but even if individuals make up institutions, and we understand that relationship, that doesn’t answer why that relationship needs a depersonalized model to be understood. It is not offense that the topical version does not resolve, is another way to say that. Second, recognizing constraints on our actions probably doesn’t resolve the link or impact to this DA. It might be a good framing device for the Arctic impact or the warming impact if the 2ar had been like warming is a distant problem, it is not something that can be solved personally. At some point the Aff has to bite the link on some of these DA’s and do impact calculus or impact defense. I thought the 2ac probably needed to read a few cards, perhaps one of those would have had something to do with psychology similar to the cards Georgetown read against Oklahoma earlier in the tournament that may have disproved the basis of the doubling impact.

c) Marginalized Voices DA; the Neg says that the Aff’s model leads to excluding people or silencing them. The 2nr extends two examples from the block, in particular one about Barbara Lee and her being silenced regarding Iraq. The Neg says that a model of plan-based affirmation leads to forms of echo-chamber discussions and racialized silencing. This argument was extended on the perm, and there’s a slight concern here for the Aff, which is that maybe the perm could resolve some of this DA, but how? The 2ar says the perm allows two modes of organizing, multiple visions of community, ie no link. The 2ar does not say the inclusion of both resolves or overcomes the links to the DA’s. The Neg says including the Aff’s model has these pernicious effects. The Aff says you can have

both, but not why both would mean debates occurring between the two types of debate models (in a world of the perm) would resolve the links. For this DA in particular that matters, because the Neg has said that the inclusion of the Aff silences black people in the hypothetical perm-world debates. The Aff needed to focus more on using the perm to soak up and resolve Neg offense instead of using it to try and cordon off the 1ac from the rest of the debate ((re)solves the link vs. no link)).

d) Spill-up DA; this is more defensive and largely covered above, but it's basically the get stuck in debate DA. As debate teaches us more and more, we get more and more trapped within it, we never change the world, we never stop going to the office even though the NDT is over, we can't go outside (of debate), and we can't export all of this knowledge. The Aff says we as individuals make up institutions, but that is not really a defense of their model, nor does it truly engage with the Neg's claim or prove the Aff model of debate exports useful skills outside of itself. The Aff says there is no tradeoff with individual action and their model, perhaps this is true, it would be great if some examples were listed. The Aff is winning, however, that debate is not about the singular rounds (refinement), and it doesn't really get debated well enough on either side to say whether or not the refinement process itself is something that gets actualized. It may, it may not, it doesn't really matter for my decision because the other offense is prior and far more definitive.

3. Neg Solvency of the Aff's Model

a) Topical Version; the Neg topical version is using debate research to craft an EIS form and take it back to one's community to challenge emissions. Can this solve any or all of the Aff impacts?

i. Arctic governance; the Neg does not have an example of how one speaking from an embodied position would be able to discuss something like policy in the Arctic (this would be relatively easy to provide, simply by saying one needs to start with an embodied politics and that can be supplemented with evidence about other people even at a large geographical remove, however, that was not done in this debate, and there is a risk that would, without this explanation, link to some of the Neg's DA's), so it is not something I should assume the Neg model can do. The block gave an example about XPO Logistics and trucking in Newark, but not really any examples about how one could use their embodiment to also speak for or about others, which makes it a stretch for me to add that as a solvency claim to their TVA that the Neg's interpretation could allow for one to talk about other people suffering, because that might be a form of aesthetic tourism. Given this it seems very difficult to imagine the TVA could solve the arctic governance part of the Aff, but there is almost no impact articulated to this part of the Aff or any of the Osofsky evidence's claims about indigeneity and law.

The other two Aff impacts, warming and trucking / EPA policy, the TVA has much better solvency for:

a) Warming; the 2ar's framing of global warming as a personal problem is actually Neg solvency here. Different people from debate discussing from their communities and how they are impacted by emissions is a way to translate

debate's education into real world politics (this combines well with the Neg spill-up DA). People in debate from across the country could work with EPA based on education from embodied discussions. This goes well with Neg framing argument #1 below.

b). Trucking; this is the Neg's main example about Newark sustainability work and EIS filing. The Aff is attempting to say how their model is key to refinement and policy knowledge that makes this possible, and they have indeed won that their model can produce that refinement to some degree, what the Aff has not won is the offensive claim that the Neg model cannot produce analysis that would allow for filing an EIS of this sort.

Resolution: TVA doesn't solve the arctic stuff but the impact is tiny as I've mentioned, but it does solve the warming internal link because as the 1ar/2ar says refining ourselves is way to change institutions because they are made of people like us, so if we debaters refine our research with embodied positions we can still take on emissions. So maybe there is some risk we have less specific policy proposals, but the DA's to disembodied affirmation outweigh the risk of that and the Neg interpretation avoids them as well as the misuse and marginalization arguments.

4. Neg Framing

1. TVA; the Neg says we don't preclude the state, the law, or the win/loss structure of debate you just need to embody your politics ((almost makes this a PIC out of disembodied politics and the Aff doesn't really go for the part of the Aff (arctic) that the PIC cannot solve)). Both Aff and Neg in the final two speeches move much closer towards each other's arguments. This works in favor of the Neg, because there is a much stronger set of arguments for excluding the Aff than there is for including it.

2. Education vs. Information – focus on a paradigm for operationalizing skills debate provides in the real world.

There is a potential question hovering about “solvency of ballots” and that can be addressed here. The first thing to say is that is frankly not the debate that is being had. See the Aff's framing arguments; this debate is about what debate ought to be about. Put differently, this debate is not a performance debate; it is a debate about the hypothetical enactment of a different kind of debate, or a framework debate. Many of the framework debates that ask for the affirmative to defend the hypothetical enactment of a topical plan “fiat” into a different imagination of debate. It is basically a refrain at this point, “we don't have to defend current methods of debate, our interpretation allows x...” That is not unlike this debate, which model is better, which model would be better. The Neg won that they had a superior vision of what it should mean to affirm. However, I will say that if the Aff had argued the inability to actualize this vision meant that the risk of their offense was higher and the risk of the Neg's ability to solve theirs lower, potentially even changing the framework debate entirely from a should to a can question...well, that would have been an entirely different debate.

(Returning to the) Perm

Most of this is probably redundant by now, but for clarity's sake...

The 2ar says the perm is to affirm a vision of community with multiple different forms, to include process counterplans, new Aff's and the 1nc. The Aff doesn't really make any argument that the perm resolves the Neg's DA's, simply that both models of debate would be available. The problem with this is that most of the Neg's offense is not "our model is good," but "Aff model is bad," so including both still links, even if there is less link, simply based on quantity of debates where the Aff model is present. See earlier remarks about solves link vs. no link. Including both whittles away at the link, but not very much, given the Neg's offensive framing. The other option for perm deployment should have worked better.

More detail about my thoughts on the perm:

The combination maybe solves some of the advantages to the Neg model, allows self-affirmation, but it still links to the doubling DA (allows for the production of policy without investigation of self, which means it links to the distancing and parasitism impacts), and the misleading DA (policy analysis without explicit focus on embodiment allows redeployment of the skills gained in debate towards violent ends) and maybe a reduced link to the marginalized voices DA (silencing of people with personal experience in favor of technocratic decision-making on account of centering the plan). The problem is the following question, what is the offensive net benefit for the perm, for including the detached model of the Aff? The perm is not phrased as a test of competition, rather it is a combination of the two models of debate, a sort of you do you, we do us argument. Why then is it good or essential to include policy analysis that does not have to be embodied? This is where a discussion of the impacts of researching beyond one's life (Arctic) would have served the Aff well: only the Aff model can provide this type of education, the ongoing misuse of legal power beyond the scope of any persons in debate necessitates keeping the Aff model in circulation in debates.

Final Notes

The above summarizes not only how I decided the finals of this year's NDT, but also how I attempt to work through all debates that I judge. In this debate, the Neg went for an argument that affirmation ought to be tied to and dependent on the voice of the speaker. The debate was somewhat about this interpretation, but far more it concerned what were the positive and negative effects of the Aff's model of debate. The Negative won that to endorse debates centered around on a plan's happening (how the somewhat vague 2ac interpretation, "evaluate the 1ac versus the Neg's arguments," ended up being interpreted in speeches in cx) would be to risk the impacts of disembodied politics. The Neg won that there was a risk the education and skills the Aff provided could be redeployed for nefarious ends, that a disembodied option for affirmation in debate could result in whitewashing violence and apathy even from those most directly responsible for it, and finally that a model which included the option for disembodied affirmation made likely the use of that disembodiment to silence people of color, in particular black people as shown by the Neg's examples. The Aff won that their model was important to solve global warming, but they did not win that only their model could do that. Based on warming being an issue that affects all persons as well as the fact that persons are tied to institutions, an embodied politics that retains the capacity to discuss the law from a personal perspective would also retain a high chance of solving the Aff's internal link to warming. The Aff won that their model was crucial to deal with issues of Arctic governance, but no reason as to why I should prioritize that if the Neg won that there were problems with including the Aff model. Finally, the Aff won that the Neg model produced directly or as a side effect of its dynamics uncomfortability. The Aff did not win that this mattered more than the problematic effects of including the Aff. The Aff also did not win that this was a separate issue worth deciding the debate on apart from the rest of the issues. So to sum it all up, the Neg impacts were large and turned the Aff as well as its potential inclusion via the perm. The Aff impacts were small and did not turn the Neg model.