The Kritik-Focus Model of Debate

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In 2013 Emporia SW became the first team to "Unite the Crowns" of American Policy Debate by winning the National Debate Tournament and the Cross Examination Debate Association Tournament. This historic run was controversial, in part, because both championship rounds were won on the Affirmative using the Kritik; it accelerated the spread of Kritikal arguments about race and the de-centering of the Plan-Focus Model. While affirming herculean efforts to develop the Kritik as a valid form of argument when positioned as the adversary of the Plan-Focus Model, Uniting the Crowns also exposed a gap in the literature about Kritikal debate. There is no academic defense of a formal model of debate that puts the Kritik at the center of an adversarial mode of competition despite similarly hard-fought opposition from detractors. Proponents of the Kritik respectfully disagree on strategic use of Kritikal arguments but there is near-universal agreement that the value of the Kritik is in creating opportunities for necessary conversations about critical and cultural issues. In order to establish a defense of a Kritik-Focus Model I will collect qualitative data during interviews with coaches and alumni of Cross Examination debate who have gone on to become public advocates, activists, lawyers, and policy wonks invested in the future of the activity. I, along with stakeholders from both sides of the Clash of Policy and Kritik Civilizations, will engage in Community-Based Action Research to lay out a sustainable and formal Kritik-Focus Model of debate.

1. INTRODUCTION

College Policy Debate finds itself at the convergence of many ripples in the pond of the American Academy over the last 40 years. Argumentative innovations, the growing complexity of academic scholarship, the and the advent of Urban Debate Leagues, are among the factors that brought us an era in which students can "hack" the rules of debate by reading an Affirmative advocacy indicting the activity of Policy Debate in the finals of a national championship and win (Kraft, 2014). The advocacies are known as the Kritik. Teams that have won national championships by using the Kritik, such as Towson, Georgetown, Rutgers, and Emporia owe their success to a long-legacy of scholars, coaches, and supporters who created cracks in the door of Policy Debate and set the stage for the modern era.

Proponents of College Policy Debate (CPD) have traditionally vaunted what I call the Plan-Focus Model of Debate (PFM). Within the Plan-Focus Model, the Affirmative team proposes a Plan of action to solve an inherent problem in the status quo that is causing significant harm. The Plan is as an example of the larger Resolution, or topic, that debate organizations craft and vote on for a year of debate. Resolutions almost exclusively center on what the United States federal government should do about problems ranging from immigration, to democracy assistance, land use, and alternative energy. The PFM is argued to provide competitors with long-term research, decision-making, and critical thinking skills by debating both sides of the Resolution with well-reasoned arguments (Freeley & Steinberg 2013). Alternatively, proponents of the Kritik do not believe that the debate must center on a Plan of action by the government. Instead, Kritik debaters introduce arguments linked to philosophical questions raised by the Resolution, the debate community, and the norms and procedures of debate.

These two competing camps are engaged in an ongoing culture war known as the Clash of Civilizations which segregates the community along pedagogical, and often racial, lines (Dillard-Knox, 2014, Pg 6). Those who sit in the traditionalist camp have been regularly accused

of avoiding, rather than engaging, the arguments presented by teams that read the Kritik by objecting to the content of Kritikal arguments as a distraction from the Resolution (Odekirk & Reid Brinkley,2012). The culture war intensified in 2013 when Emporia SW "United the Crowns" of CPD by winning both the Cross-Examination Debate Association and National Debate Tournament championships in the same season with two different Kritik Affirmatives. While this affirmed efforts to diversify debate and to validate the Kritik, it also shattered the glass ceiling over Kritik arguments and minority success in debate at-large. Uniting the Crowns spilled over to other evidentiary debate like Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum, and some forms of College Parliamentary Debate.

Moreover, representatives of the debate community, including recent National Debate Tournament Champions from traditionalist and predominantly white institutions, publicly denigrate Kritik debate and scapegoated it for a decline in participation. Others have made this same claim even though the biblical end of the event has been prophesied since at least the early 1980's – much earlier than any modern debaters or Kritiks were even thought of (Herbeck, n.d.; Parson, 1996; Louden,1997). The American University remains under fire and will face renewed financial and political pressure because of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The CPD community is not exempt from these concerns and will face increased visibility due the upcoming season of online debate. Together, all these things serve as a reminder to justify the learning community we have created. A reasonable fear of we who are" diversity-enhancing" is that the traditionalists who disengage from us and our pedagogical goals now will not defend our programs tomorrow.

Kritikal debate does not have a direct and singular academic defense of our model. Extant literature on the Kritik is focused on recording history, creating and documenting important theoretical and cultural justifications for Kritikal arguments, engaging in rhetorical criticism, responding to racial hostility , or discussing Kritik innovations (Mitchell, 1998;Haig, 2005a; Haig, 2005b; Reid-Brinkley, 2008; Polson, 2012; Reid-Brinkley, 2012; Smith, 2013; Vincent, 2013; Alston, et.al. 2014; Dillard-Knox, 2014; James, 2017; Kelsie, 2019) My research into this question shows that the CPD community, and proponents of the Kritik specifically, spend insufficient time describing pedagogical value to those outside of our community(Llano, 2014). A priority must be to mount an internal defense of the Kritik-Focus Model (KFM) of debate. A second priority must be translating that defense to external actors. This paper will serve both goals, in part, as an addition to the literature on the Kritik that explicates some of the pedagogical benefits of the KFM.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Kritik is hard to define because part of its strategic and pedagogical value is that it questions everything. At its core, the Kritik is a philosophical argument introduced into a Policy Debate that questions the," cherished assumptions of policy decision making" that undergird the Plan-Focus Model of debate (Hasian and Panetta,1998). Since its introduction in the 1980's the Kritik has become a strategy competitors must be knowledgeable of. An opponent introducing the Kritik into a round can broadly question, "presuppositions and assumptions about rules, frameworks, structures, and systems of thought.", to win (Bennet 1996). While there are many styles and types of Kritiks, they can be categorized into Kritik's of language and value that are used when potentially "dangerous" words or ethical frameworks are part of an opponent's advocacy (Bennet,1996,p 1). Early proponents of the Kritik argued that it is essential that we understand that Kritiks supplement but don't supplant, policy analysis because, "When one implements a policy, one also implements a value system" (Gherke 98, Pg 29). The Kritik was originally introduced by the Negative team to indict an Affirmative Plan. Naturally, the Kritik pushed past that constraint and transitioned to the Affirmative.

Kritikal Affirmatives follow a similar structure to the one used by PFM debates. The Affirmative team finds an inherent problem in the status quo that is causing significant harm and presents a Resolution -based change that can solve those harms*1. The Affirmative articulates their advocacy through what is called a "methodology" (or Method of change) that is advanced with a philosophical framework for evaluating the debate. Affirmative methods are often, "pragmatically grounded in the physical presence of advocates, underwritten by evidence of the advocate's speechmaking capabilities (Gordon,1998). Kritikal Affirmative Methods are similar to plans where the Affirmative team can

still logically be held, "responsible for the consequences of their advocacy" but are vaguer in the area of the mechanism (Brovero,2019). Affirmative Methods are diverse and may be framed as demands, advocacies, or just "arguments". The level of specified detail required for a team to win a ballot is up for debate, similarly to PFM debates, since the Negative can press for those details in cross-examination and in their speeches.

It should be noted that the Plan-Focus Model planted the seeds of Kritikal arguments. When an Affirmative team justifies its Plan by raising the issue of Inherency, they are not limited to Structural (a legal barrier), Attitudinal (oppositional attitude of the American public), or Gap (absence of action in a policy area) Inherency. Affirmative teams have always had the ability to frame their arguments around existential barriers to solving the myriad problems that plague humanity, even if that barrier is humanity itself. Existential Inherency, like all other arguments, has evolved. Moreover, Policy Debate has built-in mechanisms for having debates about the norms and procedures of debate in Topicality arguments. Topicality requires constant innovation and rethinking of the boundaries of the game. The idea of reading a "topical" Plan, a mere subset of the Resolution, could represent the topic was a pre-requisite to Kritikal readings of the topic. Finally, many of Policy debate's most successful programs are linked to Communication departments where communities of learners have always studied debate and public speaking variety of critical lenses (Goodwin,2001 Pg. 63). The development of the Kritik was inevitable; our job it to maximize the benefits of having it.

An educational model is a, " blueprint for the future" (Kwong,2016). The KFM ,then, has to detail what debate looks like when the Affirmative Method is the focus of the debate rather than the Plan. In CPD, the long-standing litmus test for change is how it might affect the a year's worth of rigorous academic debate (Wade, 1996). The most prestigous awards, outside of championships, are based on season-long excellence. Defenses of College Policy Debate's PFM argue that a model of debate is required to meet the following 3 critieria. First, any topic worthy of debate has to be able to sustain a year's worth of argument innovation. Teams should be able to find new arguments on both sides of the topic through intense research. Second, there must be a role for the Affirmative team. The Affirmative team should be able to defend some change to the status quo that is not morally repugnant or otherwise indefensible. Finally, there must be a role for the Negative team. They have to predict, research, and adequately respond to an Affirmative advocacy presented at any part of the season. The Negative should not be required to respond to an uncontroversial argument that is not the Resolution . I argue that the Kritik-Focus Model meets these three criteria.

3. METHOD

Community-Based Action Research (CBAR) is the method used in this paper (Burns, et. al.,2011). It takes the debate community itself as a unit of analysis and documents the experience of those invested in the future of the community. It prescribes the KFM as future action for the betterment of the community.

I polled 10 of the most successful coaches and debaters at the 2019 Blake Winter Invitational, a tournament with a long history of supporting diversity, to start this project. I inquired about the benefits of Kritik debate, which "Flex Teams" (those willing to have PFM and KFM debates) were most successful, and who best represented the traditionalists. In addition to the names I got from this poll, I reached out to those people I knew were doing social justice work, regardless of their ideological predispositions. I conducted 12 interviews. Three interviews were excluded; one person was too far-removed from debate. Two of the interviews created potential conflicts of interest. Because of limited space, only 6 of those interviews are used here. The others will contribute to a second paper.

Each interview was performed by phone or video call, was recorded, and lasted approximately one hour. Any information relayed in the interview that I was asked to exclude was removed. Each person was presented with a rough draft of quotes from their interview and was given the opportunity to confirm their portrayal.

4. MODEL OF DEBATE

To create a blueprint, the Kritik-Focus Model must have a purpose. Proponents of Kritik debate argue that it creates opportunity for *epistemological growth* that students do not experience elsewhere because they are

incentivized by ballots to research a wide variety of arguments that challenge their understanding of the world *1. This is consistent with Roger Solt's (1995, p. A9-10) claim that decisions in any debates represent provisional judgements that produce, "our moral and political belief system[s]". At the end of a season or a career, each person is fundamentally transformed by the conversations they have been a part of. Alternatively, defenders of the PFM argue that competitive equity and a fair decision is the only thing each round should represent. However, the competition for its own sake is unacceptable in an educational activity. Tiffany Dillard-Knox, Director of The University of Louisville Malcolm X Debate Society and former participant in "The Louisville Project" *2 warns us against such a mode of competition:

> "Competition at all costs is dangerous…Our argument was that people wanted to win and would do anything to win regardless of the dehumanizing effects of particular strategies… like the Malthus argument…it was all about winning… Competition at all costs creates harmful effects because we're not thinking about the people we are debating against…"

Prior to Kritik debaters pushing back on competition at all costs, judges would allow students to make racist, sexist, or otherwise discriminatory arguments because, as Director Dillard-Knox explains," … literally anything went". Today, judges are willing to penalize debaters for creating a hostile environment because competition is no longer our sole priority. To avoid this pitfall, KFM will prioritize that the educational environment and the growth of students over any marginal benefits of improved competition.

The Kritik-Focus Model starts with the Affirmative team. It is their burden to choose a critical/cultural perspective based, at least partially, on academic research and apply it to the Resolution. Perspectives run the gamut from Critical Race Theory, Womanism, Latinx, and Marxist perspectives to broader theories of Ontology, Epistemology, and Cosmology. From their critical/cultural understanding of the Resolution, the Affirmative must advocate a Method of change that departs from the status quo. The Negative team has the burden of rejoinder—they must prove that the Affirmative

Method is not desirable. To prove that the Affirmative is not desirable, the Negative must choose a critical/cultural perspective, evaluate the Affirmative, and respond. After a year of Kritikal debates on the Resolution, a single student would have been exposed to dozens of critical perspectives and would have a deep understanding of forgotten or sublimated histories that they do not learn anywhere else. By the end of a debate career, competitors would be incentivized to be proficient and well-read across all parts of the academy. The NDT champion, CEDA, or TOC champion would represent the team with the best ability to evaluate, apply, and articulate critical/cultural theories and methods to global problems.

KFM Affirmative Methods must make a good faith effort to be tied to the topic. Opponents of this argue that this allows the Affirmative to choose an advocacy outside of the topic. I, however, am arguing that we re-think what it means to debate the Resolution. Those who compete under the KFM understand debatable arguments to be limited by something I call the Travel Test. When teams are traveling to competitions and someone inquires about the topic, well-worn travelers know not to rattle off the entire Resolution. Instead, we provide the key words that describe the larger topic being debated. This year's CPD topic is Military Alliances. No proponent of KFM would be surprised to hear an Affirmative that reduces a commitment to the system of Militarism itself. This is a predictable, controversial premise for a Kritikal argument linked to the core of the topic.

PFM advocates object to shifting from "The" Resolution controversy to "A" topic controversy even though they may acknowledge that many Kritikal Methods are controversial. William Repko, Director of Debate at Michigan State University explained his take on this issue:

> "There are debates in critical/cultural theory that don't center on the state but that have a lot of clash. At times I do see non-traditional teams run an Aff that is dipped right from the heart of a fight that's academically occurring in critical/cultural theory. To me, there would be no excuse for a Negative team to stand up and be like 'Topicality' because there are arguments to be had there. And students would learn and grow if the community could agree on a critical/cultural theory [Resolution]"

While Director Repko and I agreed on many issues and solutions for problems facing the debate community, the conditional embrace of the benefits of the KFM was not one of them. One of the very reasons Kritikal Affirmatives are valuable is because they speak truth to power to resist those inequitable arrangements. The voting blocs among powerful traditional schools, which run along the racial lines of the Clash of Civilizations, means that the controversies that appeal to KFM teams will not be chosen. This imbalance in institutional power is what inspired the broad readings of the topic by teams like Louisville, Towson, and Emporia. Much like number runners, the informal consensus among KFM teams about what controversies matter is a means for those without power to claim it by "hacking" the game. The fact that championship winning Kritik teams and coaches are able to identify, predict, and prepare for all of the "unpredictable" and "undebatable" Kritikal Affirmatives means that there is some stable point of departure. Rather than understanding the Resolution in a vacuum, Kritik teams boldly acknowledge that the Resolution is contextualized by recent ground-breaking rounds, the larger history of debate, and academic debates taking place when "The" controversy is considered ripe. The confluence of these factors, and the value that teams find in these debates, is what allows KFM teams to attune themselves to what I think of as a Radical Stasis Point and the mechanics of this model.

Director Repko also finds that engaging the Kritik does require more from coaches and students. We talked briefly about his team's shift in preparation after Georgetown AM won the 2012 NDT on the Complexity Kritik. He notes that," … [A] lot of my time I spent pouring my familiarity into the heads of our students. There's a learning curve…" As someone who has been consistently been direct about his hesitance to fully embrace the KFM, I do take his concerns about time and competition shaping incentives seriously. There are some Affirmatives where one of the "gears", as he calls it, is to not defend a, "perspective from the literature but to defend an opinion of the affirmative". There is a risk that some Affirmative teams would escape to the margins of the topic to avoid a debate. These teams, however, are engaging the Negative in bad faith and would not be utilizing the KFM since they are not defending a Resolution-based change to the status quo that resolves a significant harm.

The KFM does not attempt to duplicate the same level of policy precision that advocates of the PFM claim to. However, KFM does not dismiss the need for policy details to be germane to the Method of the Affirmative. I spoke to Robel Worku, a labor organizer in Denver, Colorado, about the role that details play in social justice. As a former qualifier to the Tournament of Champions and the NDT, he spent his time in debate engaging the PFM. He shared with me that "**…** policy details are important" specifically when speaking with legislators. Moreover, dismissing details," in the project of organizing and building power "lets people with power set the terms of discussion which," leaves power at the table." However, Robel does remember debating and watching Kritik teams such as West Georgia DF that would always articulate their arguments (Afropessimism, Critical Race Theory, Red Pedagogy) in the context of policy. Understanding the role that mechanisms play in ensuring enforcement or amending agreements is important and can be a valuable part of Kritik debates. However, he does not think that the focus on semantics in Topicality/Framework (TFW) debates is helpful in increasing understanding of those details.

Srinidhi Mupalla, a software engineer, wanted debaters to temper their instinct to argue that maximizing details via an *exclusive* use of PFM is in anyone's best interest. In high school Srinidhi qualified to the TOC as a PFM debater in the D.C. area and went on to create one of the most successful flex teams as one half of Berkeley MS *3. He compared the details that you learn in Policy Debate to those works of literature:

> "I read that when you read a book or a novel, generally, over time you don't really remember the details, but you remember the shift in perspective or thinking. …[E]ventually you'll forget all the little factoids learned and all you'll have is the singular perspective that you got from that. But if you do different kinds of debate you learn all the different perspectives… I don't really remember the details of [Ballistic Missile Defense] anymore… That stuff is useful, but you'll get that anyway. You don't need 8 or 9 years of that..."

As our conversation continued, Srinidhi explained that there are diminishing returns when exclusively engaging in PFM. Unless a team was

"exploring across the academy" he did not feel like they would be able to produce nearly a decade of "meaningful education". His college debate partner Violet Spurlock, a former TOC champion and non-profit researcher, referred to their Marijuana Affirmative on the Legalization topic in 2014 that focused on building rhetorical strategies to,"… shift the [legalization] movement towards decarceration and anti-racist ends …". She argued that it allowed them to learn about legalization policy from the perspective of activists, policymakers, and special interest groups while understanding how discourse around policy shapes implementation.

5. BEING NEGATIVE

This paper has already established that there are often debatable controversies in the literature that give the Negative ground. By re-thinking what it means to evaluate the Resolution from a Radical Stasis Point and by reading across the academy, Negative teams can win within the KFM. There are countless Kritikal First-Round teams that prove that this is possible. TFW should be an option of last resort under the KFM (unless you are debating an undisclosed Affirmative) because it is overwhelmingly used to disengage from the content of the Affirmative (Odekirk & Reid-Brinkley, 2012). There are three types of Kritik arguments that always engage the Affirmative—Case Turns, Counter-Methods, and Ethics Argument. Each of these operate similarly to PFM Disadvantages, Counterplans, and Structural Kritiks, respectively. Where teams generally falter is thinking through link the arguments that indict the Affirmative Method.

Violet explained, as an incredibly flexible and successful 2N, that you need to first broaden your idea of what a link argument is. At first, she struggled with identifying places to clash with Kritik Affirmatives but realized that there are different "levels" of links that you can think through. Violet suggests that teams, "Think about the rhetoric of [the 1AC]. What kinds of language, metaphors, constructions of identity, value, and community are being invoked in this argument? How can we talk about the way that those rhetorical constructions shape the actual performance of the advocacy?" Moreover, Violet believes the easiest way to beat a Kritikal Affirmative is to respond to the 2AR, not the 1AC. By scouting other teams, historicizing the concepts and terms they use, and finding

academic support for your links arguments she says you can find a specific strategy for every Affirmative.

Alternatively, there is nothing wrong with a generic strategy in either a PFM or KFM. PFM teams generally argue that the Negative ground in Kritik debates is bland and unappealing. This claim would be more persuasive if there were not as many versions of the Antiblackness Kritik to learn, outside of any other argument, as there were viable Politics scenarios during the 2019-2020 debate season. The challenge of the Kritik is finding literature that interests you and establishing conversations between that scholarship and the other team's.

Dr. Sean Kennedy of Kansas KQ, one of most winningest and flexible teams of the decade, shared some of his thoughts about approaching the role of the Negative. As someone who coached multiple First-Rounds, Copeland Panelists, and top speakers under both the PFM and KFM his thoughts here are uniquely valuable for thinking through debate pedagogy. The first time he remembered debating a Kritkal Affirmative that was completely outside of his sphere of training, he was Negative against the 3-Tier Process Method *4. Before the round his coach, a Kansas debater, told him to try his best to engage, to be open-minded, and to move on the fly. When the Affirmative asked him to use certain types of evidence or styles of argument he did. From that one debate he learned a lesson about being Negative. He said from then on, "…[m]y thing was always just if the other team is doing this thing that is a little different from whatever the norm is just try and roll with it". In the early 2000's this approach was rare; most coaches and judges were trying to suppress the spread of the Kritik.

Moreover, Dr. Kennedy could not recall a time when a coach or lab leader at summer workshop told him that he could not engage Kritikal Affirmatives. By the time he was in college he thought of himself as just a debater, not wed to either side of the culture wars, engaging other people on the merits of their arguments. As a coach he taught his Kritikal students to manage the workload of Kritik debate by breaking possible affirmative cases up into "genres", preparing for those areas broadly, and continuing to get more specific as you progress. Debating "genres" of arguments under the KFM is hard because it is uncomfortable to rethink cultural assumptions. Srinidhi, with distance from his years as a competitor, realized that,

"Kritik debate requires one more element of critical thinking. You have to think about the thing you're reading, yourself in relation to it, and yourself in relation to the other people that you're debating …It asks more in evaluating something previously unknown …" However, this is a feature of KFM, not a bug. To achieve the goal of epistemological growth, students must struggle with tough ethical and theoretical questions.

6. TOPICALITY AND FRAMEWORK

A major objection to the Kritik-Focus Model of debate is that Topicality and Framework arguments that mandate the focus on the debate be the PFM are considered an option of last resort. The status quo of debate for the last twenty years for many teams has been to use TFW as a first option, regardless of the content or value of the Affirmative Method they faced in a debate. The reliance on TFW is ideological and relies on the enthymemes of "clash" and "preparation" that reflect the echo chamber of the traditionalists. Alternatively, many judges have increased burdens for Kritikal explanations of an inclusive model of debate. When given a "right" to TFW as a first option, the pedagogical benefits of the KFM can be skirted since traditionalists will return to their comfort zone. Unlike the university, students in debate should not have the ability to self-select out of conversations that center race, gender, class, or other critical points of departure*6. While we should not preclude TFW in all instances, we should hesitate to think that debating in the echo chamber of tradition is inherently valuable or fair. It is inherently unfair to students to allow them to go an entire season or debate career without gaining the education, critical thinking skills, or experiencing the epistemological growth provided by the KFM because of their fear of the unknown.

Tying the KFM to the incentive structure of debate while substantially increasing the burden on students who would read TFW as a first option is necessary to avoid self-selection. We can take the 2020 Copeland Panel as a case study of argument avoidance. The Copeland winning team Berkeley FG had approximately 40 Negative debates and were slotted to negate against Kritik Methods 10 times. In each instance they used TFW to self-select out of critical conversations. The 5th and 4th Place teams, Kansas BD and Berkeley NR, Kritik teams, did not read TFW the entire year; they invested their

time in creating more 12 distinct Kritikal strategies. The 3rd Place team Northwestern JW went for the 1-Off Kritik in at least 2 debates against traditional teams but never against the half dozen Kritikal teams. Finally, the 2nd place team of Emory GS lost an early elimination debate at a major against a Kritikal First-Round team because they were ideologically invested in the idea of TFW and uninterested in the would-be round winning Kritik that was under covered by the 1AR.

The clear problem with prioritizing TFW arguments, as Violet explained, is that they," are just presumptive." Students that prioritize TFW, "decide what debate is" rather than having," openness about what debate could be" (Violet). Robel had a similar line of thinking about traditional debate and the fact that it," pre-suppose[s] a certain value set". Upon reflection on his time as a traditional debater he feels that," If debate actually believes it is an activity that tests ideas and really encourages each other to fine tune what those look like, I feel leftist scholarship necessarily has to be a part of that." Argument engagement, alongside the pedagogical perks, also increases one's chance of winning debates. Director Repko worked with one student on reading the Kritik on the Negative who saw his," …win percentage sky-rocket as soon as he gave himself options." Students and coaches who have learned to engage Kritikal Affirmatives are rewarded for their efforts under the KFM.

7. CONCLUSION

The Kritik-Focus Model of debate is a necessary addition to our collective defense of College Policy Debate. It is indebted to the work of those who fought to create space in our community to ask questions, push boundaries, and to learn deeply about injustice. Using Community-Based Action Research I have laid out formal articulation of a model of debate that maximizes the epistemological return on, what I hope can be, our collective investment in the Kritik as a source of epistemological growth.

This model of debate meets the criteria for change: sustain a season of academically rigorous debate, an ethical role for the Affirmative, and a clear and engaging role for the Negative. Without the option of self-selecting out of critical conversations, debaters would have to meet a higher burden of academic rigor over the course

of a year and a career. Affirmatives limited by the Radical Stasis Point that has empowered black and minority students would advocate clear changes from the status quo. The Negative, with a broader understanding of what engagement means, would directly clash with genres of Affirmative arguments using Case arguments, Counter-Methods, and Ethics arguments. As many Kritikal First-Rounds, Copeland Panelists, and CEDA and NDT champions have proven— the Negative can and will continue to win in Kritik debates.

While there is certainly more work to be done on articulating the Kritik-Focus Model of debate, this paper serves as the beginning of a community conversation about the Kritik in 2020 and beyond.

ENDNOTES
1. I am indebted to additional conversations in late 2019 with Shunta Jordan, Christopher Randall, Daryl Burch, Edward Williams, Aaron Timmons, Edward Lee, Hannah Stafford, Shane Stafford, and Sandra Berkowtiz for my understanding of epistemological growth in students.
2. There are more esoteric Affirmative and Negative Kritiks that might question the idea of "solving" or even calculating "harm", but those arguments rely on this structure.
3. See her thesis to understand how she troubles the term "Project" (Dillard-Knox, 2014, Pg 37).
4. Berkeley MS qualified to the NDT 4 times and were on the Copeland Panel multiple times. They received multiple prestigious Round Robin invitations, were in deep elimination rounds of every major national tournament, and Violet Spurlock claimed Top Speaker at the NDT.
5. The 3-Tier Process Method has been covered extensively in the work of Director Dillard-Knox in her thesis (2014) and the dissertation of Dr. Reid-Brinkley (2008)
6. Tommy Weddington, coach at Rochester, provided me with the line of thinking about self-selection at the 2019 Yale Open.

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