

Contrasting Structures, Conditional Strategies: Designing Format-Specific Theories for Competitive Debate

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Abstract

Arguments and techniques from alternative formats are frequently adopted for use in parliamentary debate. This paper provides a framework that debate researchers and practitioners can use when assessing whether approaches from one format are appropriate for use in an alternative event. We show that participants should carefully define the behavior in question, assess the educational implications, and estimate the effects of the new technique on competitive balance. We then apply this analysis to the issue of conditionality and find that the educational and competitive harms of conditionality are magnified in parliamentary debate relative to policy debate due to structural differences across events.

Keywords: argumentation, bias, conditionality, debate, education

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“We have been extremely busy, these last few years, focusing on the mechanics of what this new form of debate will be... However, we are now ready to jump into the next stage of our organizational development. We should reflect more on the scholastic and theoretical implications of what we are practicing.”

— Skip Rutledge, 1999

Introduction

Parliamentary debate was originally designed to both complement and contrast with policy debate. Those who designed the parliamentary format did so with an explicit goal of motivating debaters to behave in different ways and to utilize different types of arguments than are prominent in other formats. However, although *parli* has existed as a distinct activity for nearly three decades, competitors and coaches continue to directly borrow many of their theoretical arguments from the policy community. Theories are rarely designed from scratch or specifically tailored for use in parliamentary debate. Although there are a variety of exceptions—such as the arguments that debaters should answer a minimum number of questions during each constructive or that the negative should not read a ‘plan-inclusive counterplan’ when the resolution requires the affirmative team to defend the entirety of a bill—few have been subject to systematic academic analysis. Furthermore, when *parli* participants adopt preexisting policy debate theories, they rarely pause to consider whether the arguments they have selected are appropriate for use in the NPDA format.¹ Overall, the academic debate literature contains a discouraging paucity of research that either proposes novel parliamentary debate theories or carefully evaluates the translation of policy debate arguments into *parli*.

In this paper, we propose and illustrate a theoretical framework for evaluating whether arguments that were originally designed in other debate formats are appropriate for use in *parli*. We argue that researchers and participants should proceed in four stages. First, they should precisely define the theory or argument under scrutiny. Second, they should consider whether structural differences between formats could magnify or reduce the effects of the new technique on education or argument quality. Third, researchers should analyze whether competitive biases currently exist in *parli*, as these may improve or reduce the desirability of adopting a new technique. Finally, researchers should determine whether structural differences between *parli* and the argument’s originating format will amplify or ameliorate any competitive biases that are associated with the new strategic technique.

¹ Throughout this paper, we use the terms “parliamentary debate” and “*parli*” interchangeably to refer to debates held in the NPDA / NPTE format.

We describe this approach by conducting an analysis of conditionality using our proposed framework. Conditionality serves as a useful example of our evaluative model for several reasons. To begin, it is an argumentative technique that was originally introduced in policy debate but which in recent years has grown increasingly common in the parliamentary format. Furthermore, the issue of conditionality remains highly controversial within parliamentary debate, where disagreement is rampant between those who believe the negative side should be free to switch its advocacy at will and others who argue that negative teams ought to defend a single advocacy for the duration of each round. Finally, the issue of conditionality in *parli* has thus far been largely overlooked by the academic literature. Existing research predominantly falls within two categories: the first set of work assesses the legitimacy of conditionality in accordance with broad norms that govern communicative and scientific analysis.² In contrast, a separate group of scholars consider the competitive implications of conditional argumentation within policy debate. A comparative analysis of conditionality's implications within *parli* has not yet been conducted.

This paper therefore contributes to the parliamentary debate literature in two ways. First, the paper establishes a novel framework for evaluating arguments and techniques that are newly-introduced into *parli* but which originated in another format. Second, the paper provides an analytic baseline that researchers, competitors, and judges can use when considering the desirability of conditionality in *parli*.³

Defining the Issue

When confronting a new theoretic issue or argument, scholars and competitive participants should first attempt to precisely define the term in question. Only after analysts accurately understand the nuances of the term under consideration can they accurately estimate the implications that might result from its adoption. For example, in order to appraise the educational and competitive consequences of utilizing conditional advocacies in parliamentary debate, researchers must begin by analyzing what the term “conditionality” actually entails. In this section, we briefly review several concepts that directly relate to the issue of conditionality in order to lay the groundwork for the analysis that follows.⁴

² For an extended discussion of hypothesis-testing in debate, see Corsi, 1983; Herbeck, 1990; Hollihan, 1983a; Hollihan, 1983b; Rowland, 1981; and Zarefsky and Henderson 1983.

³ This paper is not designed to act as the final word on the issue of conditionality in *parli*. We welcome rejoinders and hope our analysis will encourage further discussion and research on the topic.

⁴ Readers who seek a comprehensive definition of conditionality should see Merrell and Graham, 2015a)

What is an advocacy?

In competitive debate, the term advocacy does not necessarily refer to the argument that the debaters prioritize or emphasize in the round. Rather, an advocacy is a proposal for action that can be adopted by an actor. During a debate round, the affirmative team's advocacy is the plan, whereas the negative side's advocacy is a counterplan or a kritik 'alternative.'⁵ Unlike most other arguments, negative advocacies do not demonstrate the direct costs of the plan but instead signify its opportunity costs.

When a debate round ends, the burden of the judge is to vote for or against the affirmative plan. As such, most substantive arguments link directly or indirectly to the plan in order to either support or refute the plan's desirability and legitimacy. Advantages, for example, demonstrate the plan's desirability by cataloging a specific benefit that would be realized if the plan was adopted; disadvantages do the opposite and outline the various harms that would ensue if the plan was passed. Solvency arguments test the viability of the plan to accomplish the objectives outlined by the affirmative, while inherency and uniqueness arguments provide context for assessing how the plan differs from the status quo and thus the necessity of implementing it. Even topicality is a procedural analysis of the plan's legitimacy: it tests whether the plan is an acceptable example of the resolution and whether the judge has the jurisdiction to endorse the affirmative plan within the confines of the topic.

Negative advocacies, however, differ from each of the above examples in that they do not indict the direct costs of the plan or identify barriers to its successful implementation. Instead, they demonstrate the plan's opportunity costs. In other words, negative advocacies introduce alternative actions that would be preferable to the plan but whose implementation is either foreclosed upon or made less desirable as a result of the plan's adoption.⁶ For example, if the affirmative plan was to adopt a comprehensive immigration reform bill, the negative could illustrate the direct costs and challenges plan by reading disadvantages and making solvency arguments. Alternatively, the negative side could use a counterplan or kritik alternative to demonstrate one of the plan's opportunity costs. The negative team might argue that the United States would be better-served if it enacted an alternative proposal rather than the specific policy outlined in the plan. If adopting the plan would prevent the negative's counterplan from being implemented—for instance, because the

⁵ If the negative team chooses not to propose a counterplan or a kritik alternative in their first constructive speech, then by default they have chosen to defend the status quo.

⁶ This point is obscured when judges describe their decisions imprecisely. Judges regularly claim that they are voting negative, "for the counterplan," when in reality the judge has decided to vote against the affirmative plan because the counterplan has illustrated an important opportunity cost of the plan.

two proposals are mutually exclusive or contradictory—and the result of the negative counterplan would be superior to the result of the plan, then the counterplan serves as an opportunity cost because it demonstrates a preferable outcome that must be forgone as a result of the plan's selection. Likewise, if the affirmative plan could be implemented alongside all or part of the negative counterplan, but the combination of both proposals would be inferior to the adoption of the counterplan alone, then the counterplan once again demonstrates an opportunity cost of the plan. In each of the above instances, a rational judge would vote against the plan because the plan's opportunity costs exceed the benefits of the plan itself.⁷

What is an advocacy's status?

The status of an advocacy describes the degree to which it is permissible for the negative side to unilaterally remove that advocacy from the debate round. There are two primary types of status: 'unconditional' and 'conditional.' If the status of an advocacy is unconditional, the negative team must continue to advocate the position for the entirety of the round. Put another way, at the end of the debate the judge may only assess the desirability of the plan relative to the advocacy that the negative introduced in their opening speech. Just as affirmative teams are bound to their respective plans for the entirety of each round, so too are negative teams required to defend unconditional advocacies for the duration of each debate.

Alternatively, if an advocacy is read conditionally, then the negative team can unilaterally remove the position from the round. For example, the negative might initially choose to introduce a counterplan in their first constructive speech. However, once the affirmative side responds, the negative team may decide that the counterplan is no longer strategically viable. As such, they may 'kick' the conditional counterplan and ask that the judge revert to a comparison of the plan against the status quo. In more extreme cases, the negative side will introduce multiple conditional advocacies and ask the judge to compare the plan against any or all of them at the end of the debate.⁸

⁷ Note that the negative can argue that relevant policies are likely to be changed or implemented in the near future as long as those policies are inherent to the status quo. For example, if the resolution requires the affirmative plan to reform U.S. immigration policies, the negative team could forgo a counterplan and argue instead that a comprehensive immigration reform bill is already likely to be adopted by Congress. Thus, passing such a bill could be considered part of Congress' current plans and could legitimately be defended by the negative as a component of the status quo (though the affirmative would be free to question the accuracy of the negative's predictive claims).

⁸ A third variant of status, 'dispositionality,' also exists. In practice, dispositionality strategically resembles

How does conditionality differ from kicking other arguments?

Whereas the negative can unilaterally remove a conditional advocacy from the debate round, they cannot do the same for non-advocacies. When negative debaters “kick” out of most arguments, they are required to explain why those positions no longer have any meaningful impact or importance in the round and why the judge need not consider them when making a decision. The most common way for negatives to accomplish this requirement is to strategically concede arguments that are made by their opponents.

For example, when kicking topicality the negative team typically begins by extending the affirmative “we meet” and conceding that the affirmative plan is topical. By doing so, the negative has explained that the position should no longer influence the judge’s decision because the affirmative burden of topicality has been satisfied. Similarly, when kicking out of a disadvantage the negative team will often extend “no-link” or “no-impact” arguments made by their opponents, thereby demonstrating to the judge that the position is no longer relevant in the context of the round because it either does not interact with the plan or does not result in an impact. In each case, the negative must be careful: although they have sought to explain why the issue is unimportant, the affirmative is free to revisit the position and to explain why it remains relevant. This is particularly true if the negative mishandled or inadequately addressed an affirmative response. For example, if the negative dropped a series of affirmative turns on the disadvantage, a critique of topicality, or reverse voting issues on topicality, the affirmative can revisit each of the positions and explain why those arguments still merit consideration from the judge.⁹ As such, the affirmative can influence the negative’s behavior by making a large number of offensive arguments against a position while declining to make defensive claims. In this case, the negative must address the affirmative side’s offensive arguments and cannot quickly extend affirmative defense in order to “kick out” of the issue. Thus, the affirmative can act strategically to prevent the negative from quickly collapsing in the block.

The same strategic tool is not available against conditional advocacies. When the negative kicks a conditional advocacy, they unilaterally declare that the position has been removed from the round along with all associated arguments. Furthermore, they claim that the position cannot be evaluated or revisited by their opponents. The negative need

conditionality. As such, many of the arguments forwarded in this article apply equally well to dispositionality. However, an extended discussion of the differences and similarities between the two statuses rests beyond the scope of this article.

⁹ Note that reverse voting issues on topicality are illegitimate and ought not be utilized (Merrell and Graham, 2015b). They merely serve as a useful illustration in this context.

not explain their rationale for kicking the advocacy, nor are they required to respond to their opponents' answers against the position before removing it from the round. As a result, the affirmative lacks the capability to influence the negative's strategy by issuing purely offensive answers. Conditionality therefore allows the negative a unique method of collapsing quickly to specific arguments in the block and of gaining an unimpeachable time-tradeoff relative to the affirmative. Additional ways in which conditionality provides a relative strategic advantage to the negative are addressed in the following sections.

Conditionality, Debate Quality, and Debate Education

Debate in general and parliamentary debate in particular were both created to advance diverse educational and pedagogical goals. As such, debate practitioners have a *prima facie* responsibility to evaluate the educational implications of the arguments and strategies that are incorporated into debate. Students and competitors are inherently creative. They endlessly incorporate novel arguments and techniques into their speeches. However, many such strategies have important educational implications. It is therefore incumbent upon stewards of the activity to assess whether the new techniques yield benefits or costs from an educational perspective. Moreover, analysts should pay close attention to whether the argument should be encouraged or discouraged within the specific format of parliamentary debate. For instance, do plan-inclusive counterplans advance education in an event where affirmatives have little opportunity to parametricize the resolution in hopes of avoiding such arguments? In a limited-prep format, is it educational to require the affirmative to consume prep time attempting to identify the most likely source of funding or enforcement of their plan, or is it more educational to grant the negative side links to arguments that are plausibly "normal means"? These and similar issues should be rigorously debated in the academic literature. Within competitive rounds, participants have incentives to skew the discussion in favor of their side; an unbiased appraisal of educational implications can only occur in venues divorced from competition.

In this section, we place the issue of conditionality squarely under the pedagogical microscope. We argue that conditionality decreases the overall quality of debate for a variety of reasons: it serves as a distraction from substantive education, it decreases the overall depth of analysis in debates, and it minimizes negative adaptation and strategic thinking. Although these issues raise serious concerns in policy debate, they are begrudgingly tolerated because conditionality is thought to improve parity between sides.¹⁰ However,

¹⁰ As we argue below, this bias does not appear to exist in parliamentary debate.

the adverse educational consequences of conditionality are amplified in the parliamentary debate format. As such, parliamentary judges and coaches have a larger obligation than their policy contemporaries to carefully weigh the educational and pedagogical implications before sanctioning the use of conditional arguments.

Amplified educational consequences in parliamentary debate

The first general educational harm of conditionality is that it leads to a decrease in substantive discussion and education within debate rounds. When an opponent introduces a conditional advocacy, the affirmative side has a strong incentive to respond by reading theory arguments. Substantive arguments that are levied against a conditional advocacy or its attendant net-benefits are likely to disappear when the negative kicks that advocacy from the round. Status-related theory is the only offense to which the affirmative is guaranteed continual access throughout the debate. Affirmatives also read theory in lieu of substance because strategic negative teams will invariably collapse to whichever advocacy the affirmative team answered poorly. Negatives who read conditional arguments are therefore likely to be much further ahead on substantive arguments than they would be if they were tied to a single advocacy; this dynamic further encourages affirmative rebuttalists to rely on theory arguments rather than substance. This problem is particularly acute in parliamentary debate, where the lack of cross-examination, in-round prep time, and prepared blocks make it more difficult to respond substantively to unpredictable advocacies. The rules of parliamentary debate therefore magnify the effects of conditionality and make it more likely that conditional advocacies will reduce overall education than in policy debate.

Second, conditionality decreases the depth of education in debate rounds. When the negative team introduces a conditional advocacy, the affirmative side is forced to divide their responses and analysis. Rather than spending an entire speech refuting a single advocacy, the affirmative's coverage is divided among multiple potential scenarios.¹¹ This is particularly problematic because negative teams have an incentive to read conditional advocacies that are inconsistent with other arguments in the round in order to further divide affirmative time. In addition to reducing the depth of affirmative analysis, conditionality also reduces the depth of education provided by the negative. Conditionality spreads LOC analysis thin between a variety of positions; the audience and debaters are also deprived

¹¹ Even when the negative introduces only a single conditional advocacy, the affirmative must respond to both that advocacy and the status quo. Conditionality also encourages MGs to forego many of their best arguments against each negative advocacy in order to spend time creating durable theory-related offense.

of an extended discussion of whichever advocacies the negative kicks in the block. In the context of policy debate, the decreased depth of education caused by conditionality is regrettable but tolerable because teams continue to learn about the resolution over the course of the year.¹² However, marginal decreases in the depth of analysis within parliamentary debate are much more costly. In *parli*, breadth of education is guaranteed as a result of topic rotation. Every debate round revolves around a distinct topic, thereby introducing participants to a variety of issues during a given tournament or season. On the other hand, depth of education on any specific topic is only made possible when teams select a single LOC advocacy, present and defend it in detail, and allow the affirmative to be compared directly against that advocacy for the entirety of the round.¹³

Third, conditionality allows negative teams to sidestep strategic adaptation and delay strategic thinking. Unconditional negative teams must adapt to the PMC and act strategically rather than adopt a ‘shotgun approach’ in the opening speech—in other words, including a wide variety of disconnected arguments in order to “see what sticks.” Requiring the LOC to quickly tailor its engagement with the affirmative is unique to *parli* because topics and affirmative plans are continually changing, disclosure is not a community norm, and in-round prep time does not exist. This creates a unique opportunity to encourage quick strategic thinking by the opening negative speaker relative to policy debate, where the INC speech is typically set well in advance of the round. As conditionality grows increasingly widespread in *parli*, negative teams will begin to read larger numbers of advocacies that are not well-tailored to the affirmative case because they can kick whichever advocacies are least successful. This will reduce strategic decision-making to a simple matter of “going for what the affirmative dropped,” and will thereby encourage cheap-shot debating where speaking as quickly as possible in order to prevent coverage by one’s opponents is the best inroad to the judge’s ballot.

¹² Nevertheless, the impact of conditionality on education remains a serious issue in policy debate. Indeed, even Roger Solt (2003), an advocate of limited forms of conditionality in policy debate concedes that “[E]ven two policy alternatives can’t be exhaustively evaluated [within the time limits of a debate round]... it is therefore best to force each team to do its own ‘scan’ of the available policy options, select one and debate it to the maximum depth possible.”

¹³ The lack of so-called ‘backside rebuttals’ also exacerbates the educational impacts of conditionality in *parli* relative to policy. With an additional set of rebuttal speeches, policy negative teams can expand and develop their arguments in the block, thereby recovering some of the lost depth caused by a bifurcated INC. In *parli*, however, it is strategically undesirable for the negative block to significantly expand arguments beyond their initial presentation in the LOC because the PMR can label such expansions “new arguments” and earn the right to so-called “golden” responses. At the very least, skilled PMR rebuttalists will dictate the terms of comparison with any MO or LOR expansions.

Potential responses regarding education and debate quality

Supporters of conditionality seek to justify it on a variety of grounds. First, they claim that conditionality facilitates strategic thinking by both teams. Second, they claim that conditionality is the most real world approach to policymaking. Finally, conditionality is said to prevent negative teams from reading generic arguments by allowing them the flexibility to kick undesirable advocacies. We examine each of these arguments in turn.

First, advocates of conditionality argue that the strategy encourages ‘strategic thinking’ by both sides in the debate. In particular, negative teams often argue that by making the debate more difficult for the affirmative, conditionality helps their opponents develop better strategic skills.¹⁴ However, this justification overlooks the obvious—in a competitive environment teams already have ample incentives to behave strategically. The argument that conditionality forces the affirmative to wield better strategies would only hold water if affirmative debaters currently enjoyed so large a competitive advantage relative to the negative that they were able to behave carelessly. As we explain below, this does not appear to be the case. In fact, counter to its supporters’ justifications, conditionality actually *decreases* the strategic tools at the affirmative’s disposal by preventing teams from using straight-turns to compensate for negative time-tradeoffs or to protect against the strategic collapse in the block. Rather than a variety of options, MGs who hope to strategically optimize have little choice but to resort to conditionality-bad theory as a guaranteed outlet for offense.

Those who support conditionality also allege that the technique promotes strategic thinking for the negative side. However, conditionality actually reduces strategic thinking for the negative because teams are no longer required to answer arguments that they are losing. In a world without conditionality, negative teams must select their opening strategy carefully, by weighing the likelihood that opponents will successfully respond to each position that is introduced. They must also choose carefully when selecting which positions to pursue in the block and estimating how long it will take to answer affirmative arguments and kick out of each unwanted position. Conditionality reduces the strategic calculus by allowing negatives to collapse directly to whichever argument or position that the affirmative team mishandled. The requirement to exhibit foresight and carefully consider the utility of arguments before presenting them in the round is substantially reduced in a world of conditional advocacies. Only when debaters are held accountable for their arguments during debate rounds do they begin to understand the strengths and weaknesses inherent to their

¹⁴ Few teams seek to make debates more difficult for *themselves* in order to reap similar educational benefits.

own positions and learn to defend their claims against opposing viewpoints.¹⁵

Second, proponents of conditionality claim that it is the most realistic approach to policymaking and that it facilitates a search for the best policy option. These claims, however, draw an inappropriate analogy. Realistic policymaking is a skill to be admired, but it should not be emulated at all costs. Various rules directly inhibit competitive debaters from searching for the best policy option when doing so would jeopardize overall fairness in the round. For example, allowing the affirmative team to shift its plan midway through the debate would allow the affirmative to identify a more desirable policy option, but this process is not allowed because it would be highly abusive to the negative side. Indeed, even the resolution itself impedes the affirmative's search for the "best policy" by limiting the range of available plans to a narrow set of topical proposals. Rules and norms that limit a search for the best policy are particularly widespread in parliamentary debate. One need only look to factors such as limited pre-round prep time, lack of printed materials in-round, changing topics, and even an early belief in the importance of value and metaphor debates as evidence that a search for optimal policy is not the activity's *raison d'être*.¹⁶

Finally, conditionality is said to increase argumentative creativity and to prevent negative teams from relying on generic advocacies. This analysis is functionally backward: in any give round, the strategic teams should present whichever arguments they believe are most likely result in a winning ballot. At present, generic counterplans and kritiks are useful in parliamentary debate because affirmative teams continue to answer them poorly. As such, very little penalty is attached to generic negative strategies that are read unconditionally. However, as affirmatives become more adept at answering generic counterplans and kritiks, teams will be less apt to read such arguments unconditionally for fear that their opponents respond successfully. Conditionality, on the other hand, encourages the continued use of stale, generic arguments because there is no penalty attached to trying and kicking a generic counterplan that the affirmative saddles with offense. Even in his assessment of conditionality in policy debate, Aaron Hardy (2010) argued that giving the negative "carte blanche to introduce as many [advocacies] as time permits in each debate creates a number

¹⁵ Unconditional advocacies encourage their own forms of strategic thinking. For example, it is often possible for the negative to concede no-solvency arguments against their own counterplan or kritik alternative that would allow them to sidestep much of their opponents' offense against the advocacy; strategic teams will learn to do this without relying on conditionality as an artificial means of accomplishing the same goal.

¹⁶ Although conditionality theoretically allows the negative team to consider several alternatives before endorsing the most realistic policy, this is not how the technique functions in practice. Instead, debaters knowingly advocate and collapse to whichever arguments are poorly answered by their opponents, even when they acknowledge that those advocacies would not be optimal in the real world.

of drawbacks. It fosters a debate curriculum which discourages on-point research in favor of generically applicable argumentation... It also discourages the development of in-round strategic thinking skills which require seeing interactions and synthesis between multiple different positions.” We agree with Hardy that, on balance, conditionality results in a trend in favor of generic argumentation and impedes the development of strategic skills, thereby reducing the value of debate as an educational tool.

Evaluating Competitive Bias

The next factor that judges, competitors, and researchers should consider when evaluating whether a particular technique should be introduced into a different format is the issue of competitive bias. Debate theory begins with the premise that rounds are oppositional. As long as the traditional tournament format—a series of prelims followed by successive elimination rounds that culminate in a final debate—is retained, debate formats must seek to maintain parity between sides.¹⁷ Every round has a zero-sum outcome, with a single winner and loser, and so any strategic benefits that are provided to one team necessarily create reciprocal penalties against the opposing side. Judges and participants create both official and unofficial restrictions on in-round behaviors in order to establish a level playing field for the affirmative and negative.¹⁸

Consider an event in which negative teams won 100% of the time. In this case, winning the coin flip for sides prior to an out-round would be tantamount to winning the judge’s ballot and advancing to the next phase of the tournament. If debates were this skewed, we would reject the notion of genuine competition as ludicrous. Was the tournament champion truly better than the team that finished second, or were they merely fortunate to wind up on the preferred side? The majority of those who participate in the activity do so because they believe that hard work and talent will be rewarded. Ballots instruct judges to vote for whichever team “does the better job of debating.” Although there is much debate on what this measure entails, it surely does not include winning the coin flip (Henson and Dorasil, 2014). In a format with excessive side bias, fewer students would be motivated to partici-

¹⁷ Note that the goal of theory is not to create parity between teams, but to ensure that both *sides* have an equal opportunity to access the ballot. Individual teams possess inherent advantages in knowledge, skill, strategic thinking, persuasive ability, etc. However, when the affirmative and negative sides are considered in the abstract they should have access to arguments and opportunities that preserve competitive equity.

¹⁸ Rules of topicality were created to ensure that both sides have an opportunity to prepare for and compete in debate rounds. Unofficial norms of behavior also exist. For example, *parli* judges commonly require teams to answer at least one question during each constructive speech and to provide written copies of their advocacies to the opposing side, but neither of these behaviors are officially listed in the rules.

pate in an activity whose outcomes were to a large extent determined by chance rather than effort or skill. Fewer coaches or competitors would be willing to put maximum effort into researching, preparing, and perfecting their strategies. Fewer administrators would willingly support an activity that they felt was “rigged.” Finally, and perhaps worst of all, a greater number of frustrated and disgruntled competitors would complain about decisions or question the legitimacy of results if they knew that those results were systematically unfair. Participation, motivation, and the hallmarks of community are all dependent upon the assumption that the activity itself is as impartial as possible.

Where we draw the line between a fair event and a substantially flawed event is an open question. If one side was consistently favored 60-40, this would amount to a serious concern for most competitors. In a tournament with five prelims, for example, whenever two teams entered a “break round” with 2-2 records, the team assigned to the favored side would enjoy a significantly larger chance of advancing to elimination rounds. For most observers, this degree of bias would be unacceptable. But what about a 55-45 split, or 52-48? At increasingly close levels, competitive bias may initially *seem* less significant, but even a narrow skew can have profound consequences across an entire tournament or season. Although no event will ever achieve consistent perfection, debate organizations should aim for an affirmative-negative split that is as close to 50-50 as possible.¹⁹

In addition to informing the way that activity administrators should seek to shepherd the development of parliamentary debate, the influence of side bias should also affect the manner in which judges evaluate individual rounds. Because maintaining a level playing field between sides is of preeminent concern, judges should not allow debaters to justify theoretically-questionable tactics merely by explaining that such behavior is *useful* for their side. Instead, debaters should explain why allowing a particular tactic is *necessary* if they are to successfully compete, or, alternatively, why preventing them from using such an approach would place their side at a significant disadvantage. In the case of conditionality, the negative side should explain why an inability to use conditionality would consistently place negative teams at a disadvantage relative to affirmatives and, additionally, why conditionality is justified in order to re-level the playing field between sides. To paraphrase Strait and Wallace (2008, p. 20):

¹⁹ For example, Henson and Dorasil (2014) recently conducted an analysis of various forms of bias in high school Lincoln-Douglas debate by examining votes at the Tournament of Champions. They identified a significant negative bias in the activity and, as a remedy, proposed a variety of significant structural changes to the event, from changing the lengths of each speech or even adding additional speeches. The proposal we offer for *parli* would be much easier to implement.

“[U]nless the negative can show that [conditionality is] absolutely critical to preserve participation in debate (for example, if the affirmative would win almost every debate without [conditionality], claims that [it is] 'not that bad' does not prove that [it] is necessary. It is the negative's burden to justify its use of [conditionality], not the affirmative's burden to de-justify [it].”

In other words, if they are to legitimize the use of conditionality the negative team must demonstrate that two arguments are true. First, conditionality is necessary to establish parity between the two sides in the debate. Second, conditionality will not lead to an over-correction in which the negative enjoys a strategic advantage relative to the affirmative. In this section, we argue that although these requirements are satisfied in policy debate, we should be skeptical of each claim in parliamentary debate.

Estimating side bias in policy and parli

We present a brief analysis of side bias in both policy and parliamentary debate using results from the 2013, 2014, and 2015 national tournaments of each activity. Our results suggest that a strong affirmative bias exists in policy debate, but that the same affirmative bias does not exist in parli.²⁰ Importantly, we do not intend for these results to be interpreted as the final say on side bias in either activity. Indeed, we strongly encourage other researchers to conduct more thorough and sophisticated analyses that explore results from the regular season or at different levels of competition. However, because understanding competitive balance and identifying a baseline for fairness is an essential step in analyzing theory debates, we feel compelled to present these results as we are unaware of any other recently-published work on the subject. Furthermore, although we hope that future analyses will extend this work, we nevertheless contend that the results we present are sufficiently strong that they merit discussion.

In order to address the issue of side bias, we compiled data from all of the debates that occurred between 2013 and 2015 at the two major parliamentary debate national tournaments—the National Parliamentary Debate Association National Tournament (NPDA) and the National Parliamentary Tournament of Excellence (NPTE)—as well as the two pre-eminent policy debate national tournaments: the Cross Examination Debate Association National Tournament (CEDA) and the National Debate Tournament (NDT).²¹ Collectively,

²⁰ To the extent that any competitive bias exists in parli, our tests suggest that favors the negative side.

²¹ The majority of round-by-round results are available through www.parlitournament.com and www.tabroom.com for parliamentary debate and policy debate, respectively.

these amounted to a total of more than 2500 parliamentary debate rounds (and 4100 ballots) and more than 1800 policy debate rounds (and 5500 ballots). We pooled the results from each debate format in order to create a total win/loss ratio between the affirmative and negative in either event. Looking at aggregate results helps to minimize the influence of random “spikes” in the data. A particularly biased resolution might skew the results from an individual round or tournament. However, these effects should wash out when we pool results across a large number of debates. As a result, whatever biases we observe are likely to result from structural characteristics of the debate format.²²

We performed a two-tailed binomial test to evaluate whether statistically significant levels of bias were present in the results. This test was developed by Clopper and Pearson (1934) and is a useful means of evaluating whether observed dichotomous outcomes differ from an assumed distribution. For example, the test can be used to gauge whether a coin is fair. If you flipped a coin 100 times and recorded 55 heads and 45 tails, you can use a two-tailed binomial test to evaluate whether the outcome you observed is statistically distinct from the anticipated 50-50 ratio or if the results are still within a normal range of deviation. As a result, this test is an ideal method of evaluating whether the affirmative-negative split that we observe is statistically different than the even split between sides that we would expect in the absence of side bias.

The results of the two-tailed binomial tests are presented in Table 1. The first column shows a 95% confidence interval for the affirmative win percentage. In other words, when we observe results similar to those in our sample, in 95% of cases the “true” underlying amount of bias will fall within the listed interval. The second column shows a p-value for the hypothesis that the true winning percentage for each side is equivalent to 50-50. This is the likelihood that the bias we observe could happen by chance if the event is actually fair.

The data strongly indicate that policy debate is skewed in favor of the affirmative. The affirmative won roughly 53.84% of the 5505 ballots that we observed and 54% of all rounds. This falls well outside of the normal 95% confidence interval and allows us to soundly reject the idea that policy debate is unbiased. In fact, if the two sides in policy

²² We deliberately limit our sample to national tournaments in order to better observe structural biases. These tournaments fall at the end of the competitive season and include the strongest teams in the country debating in front of the most qualified judges. Thus, these are the rounds in which competitors are most likely to perform at the upper limits of their capability and to successfully exploit any strategic advantages that are available for their side. One would not attempt to evaluate structural biases by observing a debate between novices, because those teams are unlikely to fully exploit the full range of strategies that are available. An accurate account of side bias in debate should be limited to rounds between experienced competitors. We believe that the national tournaments provide the best opportunity for such analysis.

Table 1
Two-Tailed Binomial Tests for Bias

	95% C.I. for aff. win %	p-value in an unbiased event
Policy Ballots %:	52.51% – 55.17%	$1.268 * 10^{-8}$
Policy W/L %:	52.17% – 55.83%	$1.738 * 10^{-5}$
Parli Ballots %:	46.72% – 49.77%	.0248
Parli W/L %:	46.20% – 50.13%	.0678

were equally matched and we repeatedly gathered samples of similar size, we would only expect to see an affirmative ballot count this skewed once in every 78,864,353 trials. Put another way, the chance that an unbiased event would randomly create a set of results that are as highly skewed as the policy debate ballot count is roughly equivalent to the odds that a fair coin will land heads 26 times in a row. It is far beyond reasonable doubt that policy debate is skewed in favor of the affirmative side.

We expected to find no detectable levels of bias in parliamentary debate. However, the data actually suggest that parliamentary debate suffers from a mild negative bias.²³ Overall, affirmative parli teams secured only 48.25% of ballots and 48.16% of wins. According to the negative binomial test, the probability of observing this degree of bias from a sample of 4147 *unbiased* ballots was only 2.48%, while the probability of observing this degree of bias in overall wins was 6.78%. As a result, we believe there is at least some evidence of a negative bias in parliamentary debate.²⁴ Understanding the underlying bias that exists in either event is a necessary precondition when evaluating the implications of incorporating new techniques. We apply these results to an analysis of conditionality in the

²³ Importantly, we do *not* argue that the bias we observe in parli is attributable to conditionality. Without accurate reports that document whether conditionality was or was not utilized in any given round, it is impossible to quantitatively measure the impact of the argument. However, we believe our results do suggest that the current level of conditionality occurs in a parliamentary debate environment that is already mildly biased toward the negative side. Furthermore, we believe that the full biases associated with conditionality have not yet been fully realized because relatively few teams have thus far discovered how to fully exploit the strategic benefits of the tactic. As a result, the expanded use of conditionality in parli will only serve to further extend the negative’s advantage.

²⁴ Although the 48-52 split between the affirmative and negative is statistically significant, some may believe it is not substantively large enough to merit attention. However, when the bias is applied over the course of an entire tournament or season the implications are alarming. The presence of a 48-52 skew would imply that at least 57 extra ballots were awarded to the negative rather than the affirmative at the 2015 NPDA and 2015 NPTE tournaments alone. In other words, up to 114 students can reasonably feel annoyed that they lost a ballot simply because they were on the unlucky end of the pairing for sides.

following section.²⁵

Conditionality and Competitive Bias Across Formats

Across all debate events, conditionality skews the competitive balance of the round toward the negative side. First and most generally, it allows the negative to introduce multiple advocacies and then selectively choose between those advocacies based on what the affirmative team answers poorly. Second, conditionality allows the negative to jettison advocacies and associated arguments without answering their opponents' responses to those positions. This provides a unique method of nullifying affirmative speech time, circumventing offense, and decreasing clash. Finally, conditionality allows the negative team to read inconsistent and contradictory arguments, thereby placing the affirmative in a double-bind: in order to answer one advocacy, the affirmative must link themselves harder to the alternative advocacy.

Although these effects make conditionality a controversial issue in policy debate, prevailing sentiment is that the technique is justified because negative policy teams are otherwise at a significant disadvantage.²⁶ Put another way, in the absence of conditionality negative teams simply would not have a fair shot at winning debate rounds. However, the same type of affirmative advantage does not exist in parliamentary debate, where prevailing biases appear to lean in favor of the negative. In addition, the competitive imbalances that are created by conditionality are significantly amplified in parli relative to policy due to structural differences between the two events. For these reasons, judges and coaches should treat conditionality with greater skepticism in parliamentary debate than they do in policy.

Amplified competitive biases in parliamentary debate

The policy debate format prevents conditionality from becoming too powerful. In

²⁵ The 2016 national tournaments occurred after this article was reviewed. As such, we did not directly incorporate data from those tournaments into our analysis. However, the results were broadly consistent with our findings from the 2013-2015 period. Just over 52% (731/1401) of the ballots that were assigned at the 2016 NPTE and NPDA were awarded to the negative side. In contrast, roughly 51% (829/1626) of ballots that were assigned at the 2016 NDT and CEDA tournaments were awarded to the affirmative.

²⁶ Although the opinion that conditionality's justifications outweigh its potential for abuse is widely held in policy, this should not be mistaken as evidence that the issue was not fiercely contested or that the debate has been entirely resolved. Conditionality remains a closely debated issue and affirmative teams continue to win high-profile rounds by arguing that conditionality is bad. Furthermore, many agree that teams ought not be allowed to introduce an unlimited number of conditional advocacies, though a fixed upper limit has not been agreed upon and justifications for its determination are arbitrary.

policy, teams debate a single topic for an entire year, the breadth and stability of which encourages the development of unique and intricate affirmative cases. In addition, teams can access an open-source ‘caselist’ of opposing arguments; teams have the ability to predict viable negative strategies and prepare affirmative responses well in advance of competition; and teams enjoy the use of evidence, prepared blocks, in-round prep time, cross-examination, and an additional set of rebuttal speeches during rounds relative to *parli*. Thus, policy provides the affirmative with sufficient tools to contend with conditional arguments. Although conditionality does provide some assistance to the negative side, the benefits of conditionality are not overwhelming.

In contrast, various structural distinctions in *parli* tip the balance of the issue against conditionality, including the current negative side-bias in the event, a single set of rebuttal speeches, lack of clarity regarding advocacies, limited affirmative preparation, narrow topics, lack of blocks or in-round evidence, and the shorter-length of each round.²⁷ These systematic differences in format make conditionality much more powerful in parliamentary debate than in policy, creating nearly insurmountable advantages for the negative side. In this section, we discuss each of the structural distinctions in turn and how they affect the debate from topic release until to the final rebuttal.

First, narrow resolutions and limited prep time in *parli* create a bias against the affirmative. Policy resolutions typically provide the affirmative with a large degree of flexibility. Teams can therefore strategically select a plan and advantages that are specifically designed to avoid or otherwise hedge against negative arguments. By comparison, parliamentary debate resolutions are much narrower. They have grown sufficiently specific that it is now fairly common for the affirmative side to be forced to defend a single topical plan. Such restrictions on affirmative flexibility mean that teams cannot tailor their plans to account for potential negative strategies and are required to defend highly-specific advocacies, the implications and nuances of which they may not fully understand. Thus, a negative team that presents multiple conditional advocacies should have an easier time leveraging them successfully against the affirmative in *parli* compared to policy.

Second, limited prep time and changing topics create significant preparatory burdens for *parli* affirmative teams relative to their policy counterparts. These factors make counterplans and counter-advocacies much more effective in *parli* than in policy, vastly magnifying

²⁷ Some have proposed that the structure of parliamentary debate could be changed in order to make the event more similar to policy. However, we believe that limited prep time, changing topics, lack of in-round prep, and lack of evidence are all central tenets of parliamentary debate that deserve retention.

the potency of conditionality. With only twenty to thirty minutes of available prep time, much of the affirmative's time is devoted to understanding the topic. As a result, MG frontlines against possible counter-arguments typically range from shallow to nonexistent. Thus, negative teams are likely to enjoy a near-monopoly on familiarity with their own advocacies and arguments.²⁸ Ideally, a skilled affirmative team should be able to leverage components of its case against the negative, but time constraints also often result in weak affirmative cases. Whereas policy teams have months to prepare, develop, and perfect their affirmative arguments, parli teams often have only minutes. As a result, it is very difficult for even a highly-skilled parli MG to competently refute nuanced counter-advocacies. This suggests that individual counterplans and kritiks are more likely to succeed in parliamentary debate even when they are not being read conditionally. Allowing the negative to make contradictory arguments or to present several advocacies that the MG must simultaneously contend with exponentially increases the MG's burden and creates a much larger challenge when dealing with conditionality in parli relative to policy.²⁹

Third, pressure on the MG is exacerbated by the lack of blocks or in-round prep time in parli. When policy 2ACs engage negative advocacies, they more often than not have front-lines prepared that allow them to coherently deliver a series of strategically-selected and consistent answers. Policy debaters also have access to prep time during the round if they need an opportunity to consult with their partner. As such, policy 2ACs are better able to respond effectively when they confront several contradictory negative advocacies than are parli MGs. Without blocks or prep time, it is much easier for an MG to make a mistake or to accidentally present arguments that contradict with either one another or the affirmative plan. Mistakes are particularly likely to occur when answering conditional arguments. Rather than comparing the plan against the status quo as was the case in the PMC, the MG must now compare the plan and its advantages against each of the advocacies that are advanced by the negative. In short, it is much more difficult to deliver a strategic and coherent MG against a variety of conditional advocacies in parli than in policy.

²⁸ Narrow parli resolutions further exacerbate this preparatory skew.

²⁹ Although some may allege that the trend of pre-releasing resolutions will remedy the preparatory imbalance in parli, we argue that this is not the case. Topics are often released less than a month in advance of a tournament. Two to three weeks of preparation time for 15-20 topics still amounts to only a few days of work on each topic, depending on how the load is distributed among students. That may allow the affirmative to explore a bit more, but it is not nearly enough time to remedy the difference entirely. On the other hand, it is sufficient time for negative teams to write case-specific links for their preferred generic arguments. Finally, pre-released resolutions are more likely to be narrow than topics that are released at tournaments, further skewing the balance.

Fourth, MGs also face unique pressure in *parli* due to a lack of clarity. Policy debaters enjoy several advantages relative to *parli*, including cross-examination, ability to examine their opponent's evidence, and opportunity to consult a caselist of likely negative arguments prior to the debate. All of these actions allow policy debaters to better understand the nuances of the advocacies they confront. As an example, in policy it is possible to clarify during cross-examination the status of each negative advocacy, how the other arguments in the round interact with each advocacy, which arguments serve as net-benefits to each advocacy, the details of how each advocacy would operate or be implemented, and a variety of other issues that aid the affirmative's ability to refute each position. Points of information in parliamentary debate do not facilitate the continued dialogue and clarification that are possible in cross-examination. *Parli* teams often allow only one—and at most a few—questions from their opponents. *Parli* teams also lack an opportunity to ask for evidence or consult a caselist before debates. Given the confluence of factors that can impede in-round understanding of an opponent's argument, it is much harder for an MG to correctly understand and cogently answer all of the negative's various positions than it is for the 2AC to answer the 1NC arguments.

Fifth, the debate format in *parli* is abbreviated relative to policy. This places higher requirements on the affirmative team and magnifies the impact of conditionality. Because *parli* lacks a second set of rebuttals, the PMR is forced to answer the negative block, engage in argument comparison, re-explain PMC and MG scenarios, and also provide voting rationale. In effect, the PMR must fulfill the roles of both the 1AR and 2AR in policy.³⁰ This burden is particularly onerous given that conditionality requires the MG to compare between the plan and multiple alternatives. In policy, comparisons between the plan and each alternative advocacy—as well as their attendant net-benefits or impact scenarios—can occur in a multi-stage process throughout the 2AC, 1AR, and 2AR as the negative gradually

³⁰ The PMR faces a somewhat more favorable time-tradeoff than the 1AR, but a direct comparison is somewhat faulty for several reasons. First, in policy debate the final negative collapse does not occur until the 2NR, which is equal in length to the 2AR. As a result, both teams in policy have an equivalent amount of time in their final speeches to reframe the debate and engage in argumentative comparisons. By contrast, the PMR is the final speech in *parli*, but it directly follows the opposition block. Second, time tradeoffs are more difficult to contend with in *parli* than policy. In particular, citing and extending arguments takes longer in the PMR than in the 1AR because *parli* debaters lack evidence and authors whose names they can reference. Last of all, because of the abbreviated format in *parli*, judges place more pressure on the MG and PMR than they do on the parallel speeches in policy debate. In policy, a 1AR can extrapolate from or cross-apply 2AC arguments in new ways because the negative has another opportunity to address such comparisons. Contrastingly, *parli* judges are skeptical of new PMR comparisons or applications that the negative will not be able to answer, so MGs are under additional pressure to provide such analysis up-front.

settles on a preferred advocacy. In *parli*, however, judges often expect such analysis to be front-loaded into the MG. Thus, differences in format magnify the effects of conditionality in *parli* relative to policy.

Finally, we argue that biases against the affirmative are likely to increase in *parli* as time continues.³¹ First, negative teams will become increasingly skilled at reading generic *kritiks* derived from esoteric literature bases that affirmatives will have difficulty answering. Second, negatives will become more strategic at reading arguments conditionally, requiring affirmatives to either make contradictory responses to each advocacy or to forego their preferred answers. Third, current trends in favor of allowing only a single question, speaking at high rates of delivery, and constructing narrow resolutions will place additional pressure on MGs and impede in-round clarity if they continue to grow.

Potential responses regarding competitive bias:

Supporters of conditionality often offer two fairness-related responses. First, negative teams may argue that conditionality is “key to negative ground.” However, such a claim is without merit. The evidence suggests that negative teams can and do succeed without conditionality. A variety of teams and programs have achieved significant success despite declining to read conditional arguments. Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge negative biases have prevailed in parliamentary debate since well before debaters began to read conditional advocacies. If the negative side consistently wins more *parli* rounds than the affirmative, the negative can hardly claim that conditionality is a necessary tool in its arsenal. If conditionality continues to spread, it will only serve to push existing biases further in favor of the negative side.

Furthermore, the ground for each side is determined first by the resolution and thereafter by the affirmative plan. The ability to jettison advocacies at will does not alter the amount of core ground that is available to the negative. Mandating that advocacies be presented unconditionally merely reinforces an already-existing requirement: that the negative should carefully select its LOC strategy. Determining which positions will be read in the LOC is an issue of strategic choice-making; as soon as one argument is introduced, other inconsistent arguments cannot be included as part of that strategy.³² At an even more fun-

³¹ As the negative bias continues to increase, we expect to observe an increase in the number of affirmative teams who engage in ‘identity’ and ‘postmodern’ debates. Aware of the negative bias, *parli* teams will believe that shifting the topic of the debate, changing the role of the judge, or indicting the structure of the activity itself are their only realistic means of winning.

³² For example, although the negative could argue *either* that the plan would cause an overall increase in

damental level, time limits require negatives to make sacrifices regarding their strategy and the arguments they will include in the eight minutes available to them. Requiring that advocacies be defended unconditionally is no different; the range of advocacies at the negative's disposal remains constant, they must merely select a specific advocacy from among those options rather than present all of them simultaneously.

Second, negative teams often lament that conditionality forces them to defend an advocacy for the entire round, even after it has been proven undesirable. However, we argue that strategically presenting and then defending arguments is central to debate. The complaint offered here would be nonsensical in all other debate contexts. If the negative read a disadvantage or impact scenario that ultimately proved useful to their opponents, the negative could not ask the judge to disregard the argument merely because it was no longer beneficial to their side. Rather, debaters should take care when they select arguments prior to the LOC and should consider in advance how the debate round may play out. Teams can avoid being tied to "undesirable" advocacies by selecting their strategy more carefully during prep time. Debaters who regularly find themselves "trapped" defending counterplans or kritiks that the affirmative has proven undesirable are often teams that exercise minimal discretion when selecting which advocacies to read. Strategic debaters will eschew positions that are unlikely to be decided in their favor. As such, they need not rely on conditionality to protect themselves.

Conclusion

When arguments and strategies are incorporated into a different debate format than the one in which they originally emerged, participants have a responsibility to consider whether the introduction of those positions will affect the long term health of the activity. In large part, these discussions should occur in academic journals as opposed to debate rounds, where competitive interests all too often supersede sober analyses. In this article, we provide a framework that judges, coaches, and researchers can use when evaluating newly-introduced arguments. We argue that when new tactics are theoretically questionable, the burden of proof should rest with those who advocate the new argument rather than those who oppose it. Supporters of the new strategy should explain why the technique will improve existing debates in terms of education and competitive equity, and should attempt to demonstrate that the benefits of the new tactic outweigh its costs.

political capital for the President or that it would result in an overall decrease in political capital available to the President, the negative cannot make both arguments as part of a single coherent LOC strategy.

We applied this framework to the issue of conditionality. We found that various factors exacerbate the harms of conditionality in parliamentary debate relative to policy debate. These harms include an erosion of education and reduction in the overall quality of debate, as well as the creation of a strategic imbalance that biases debate against the affirmative side. We argue that both of these issues are concerns that merit serious consideration by debate practitioners. In the past, the perception that a particular debate format has strayed too far from its educational roots or has become increasingly unfair for competitors has often been met with an exodus of academic funding and a migration of student participation from the activity toward more promising alternatives. A similar result in parliamentary debate would be most unwelcome, particularly as the activity still has much to offer as an educational and competitive platform.

Unfortunately, given the competitive advantages to be gained via conditionality, competitors and coaches face significant incentives to pursue conditional approaches. Given these concerns, we propose that judges should consider stipulating in their philosophies that they will reject conditional advocacies just as they would reject appeals for rules violations or would object to harassment.³³ This is particularly important given that the debaters who are best-positioned to abuse their opponents with conditional strategies are often the ones most adept at discussing debate theory. As such, debaters who utilize conditionality will often successfully justify the tactic in rounds against less skilled opponents. Thus, the refrain that ‘conditionality will stop being useful when teams begin to answer it successfully’ is unlikely to prove true in the foreseeable future and the negative bias in parl that is associated with conditionality will only continue to increase if left unchecked.

Similarly, coaches and teams should also consider setting aside their pursuit of immediate competitive advantages by confining themselves and their teams to unconditional approaches in order to preserve the long-term health of the activity as a whole. Regardless of their choice on this matter, all teams should recognize the necessity of teaching students at an early age to argue “conditionality bad.” Given that the vast majority of justifications

³³ We hope that debaters will read judges’ philosophies and adapt accordingly, so that actual judge intervention is never necessary. However, a norm of voting against conditionality—even if it requires in-round intervention—would not be without precedent. The vast majority of judges already enforce a variety of unspoken expectations that do not reflect the rules that govern our activity. For example, most judges expect teams to accept and answer questions even though the rules do not actually require debaters to do so. Similarly, many judges force teams to introduce all of their main arguments in the opening speeches and reject the strategic ‘sandbagging’ of entirely new positions until the MG or MO, even though the rules explicitly allow teams to introduce new arguments in all constructive speeches. Finally, many judges penalize teams for disrespectful, aggressive, or otherwise inappropriate behavior during debates, even though the rules of competition implicitly disallow judges from issuing such penalties.

for conditionality focus on its application in policy debate, debaters will likely be well-served by including an explanation of why it is uniquely abusive in parliamentary debate. Hopefully this paper provides them with a starting point for that analysis.

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