

**Digital debate as anti-Black:
Examining governing policies through close textual analysis**

by

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Abstract

Intercollegiate policy debate (ICPD) has long been regarded as an effective activity to encourage high school and college-aged students to engage in advocacy building and critical thinking skills. In recent years, the activity has experienced rapid changes in its composition and execution of arguments because of COVID-19 and its resulting technological shifts. Within these changes, debaters participated in a restructuring of the activity as the challenges of modern life further implicated the procedures and norms embedded in ICPD. This master's thesis seeks to investigate the effect of governing policies in such a change by conducting a close textual analysis of the policies themselves to consider the allowances granted to users of the digital debate platforms to enact anti-Black violence against Black debaters. In examining the JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy through a close textual analysis, I argue that the policy is persuasive of the online landscape for digital debate and provides opportunities for anti-Black violence against Black debaters.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	iv
Acknowledgements	vi
Chapter 1 - Debate	1
The artifact	11
Structure	14
Benefits	17
Disadvantages	20
Chapter 2 - Media History of Debate	24
The origins	24
The computer revolution	30
The Louisville Project	32
The Clash of Civilizations	34
The documentaries	34
The livestreams	45
The Michael Moreno events	46
The COVID-19 pandemic	48
Conclusion	50
Chapter 3 - Anti-Blackness	52
Anti-Blackness explained	54
Natal alienation	59
Absolute domination	60
General dishonor	61
Responses to Afro-Pessimism	64
Chapter 4 - Analysis	74
Rhetorical framework	76
The turn to digital debate	79
Agential Ambiguity (Confidentiality)	85
Data Lifespan	93
Conclusion	97

Chapter 5 - Conclusion	99
Summary	100
Implications	105
Future directions	107
References	113
Appendix A - Speakers, Order and Time	129
Appendix B - Positions within the Round	130
Appendix C - Freedom Papers	131
Appendix D - Michael Moreno	132
Appendix E - Association for Black Argumentation Professionals' "Digital Debate Bill of Rights"	133

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Chapter 1 - Debate

In 2019, Michael Moreno, a high school policy debater, went viral on YouTube, Reddit and Twitter after he published a video to his YouTube account. In this video, viewers watch as he and his debate partner lose a debate round for advocating “race and gender have nothing to do with what is right and wrong”, belittling his opponents and citing problematic arguments from white-nationalists, Jordan Peterson and Ben Shapiro (Moreno, 2019a, 2019b). Moreno and his partner participate in policy debate, an intellectual activity in which two students pair up against two other students to either affirm or negate a given, annual resolution. Policy debate is an activity that is beneficial because students learn to propose and defend advocacies and conduct in-depth research in such a way that is highly critical and competitive. Moreno was negating the resolution “Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially reduce restrictions on legal immigration” versus two students of color from Juan Diego Catholic High School. They were not successful in winning the debate round because the judge ended the debate prematurely, which led to Moreno inciting an argument with the judge then discussing the event with tournament staff and later sharing video of the incident via his YouTube and Twitter accounts.

Policy debate is an explicitly mediated activity with a community of its own because it is intended to craft a space for students to engage advocacies and prepare well-researched arguments in a way that is distinct from the traditional classroom environment. However, Moreno’s viral video was exemplary in that it displayed how the otherwise insular world of policy debate can go public while using popular digital platforms such as Twitter and YouTube. Moreno used audio and video clips that he recorded during the round of his opponents and judge and included text overlay to emphasize selective audio statements. The video is twenty-seven

minutes of Moreno interjecting into a recording of the debate and providing his condescending explanations for what occurred followed by a recording of the debate tournament staff explaining the consequences to his actions (Moreno, 2019a). As of February 2023, the video has amassed over 940,000 views with 48,000 *likes* and countless up-likes on Reddit and retweets on Twitter (Moreno, 2019a). With his sudden popularity amongst fellow conservatives online, Moreno was emboldened and released a series of videos to YouTube chronicling the public backlash to his original post (Moreno, 2019b).

Later that year, Moreno joined the Weber State University debate team as a freshman and recorded audio clips of then Director of Debate, Ryan Wash, in an effort to “expose” Wash as an anti-white racist who promotes abhorrently anti-academic arguments (Moreno, 2019c). Ryan Wash is an award winning debate coach and “openly gay Black debater” who made history by winning the two national championship tournaments in one year and later coaching the next partnership to accomplish the same (Flemming, 2017). Yet again, Moreno shared the video to his various social media platforms and gained notoriety in conservative communities as someone who holds Black and non-white academics accountable for their anti-white ideals and “exposes” them for “who they really are” (Itsnotmyfault, 2019; Moreno, 2019c). The impact to his rhetoric from the videos was clear, as “Weber State University officials” began an investigation into the videos and Ryan Wash received hate mail stating he was racist, bigoted, and a moron (Harvey, 2019). Moreno’s public statements indicate that he intended for his surveillance of Wash to result in an investigation, stating that he reported Wash to his department and declaring “this professor should not be teaching, let alone teaching debate” (Moreno, 2019c). The language and tactics used in these recordings make them tools for racialized surveillance as they can easily be used to incite a violent reaction against Black debaters. Calling Wash an anti-white, “racist

professor” is a targeted attack that seeks to illicit significant responses from white-nationalists (Moreno, 2019c). Attaching this language to a video which references Wash’s place of employment, shares his voice, and job description adds additional details that can be used to locate and threaten Wash. Acts of racialized surveillance, like the video taken of Wash, could possibly become more frequent as ICPD transitions to online platforms for hosting synchronous, virtual debate tournaments which make secret recordings easier to acquire and publicly release (Harvey, 2019).

In the fallout, Moreno has been interviewed by various podcast groups, right-wing news services, and continues to post videos on YouTube detailing the ordeal and racking up subscribers (Itsnotmyfault, 2019; Moreno, 2019b). Moreno no longer competes in college policy debate yet has contributed to the long-held public concerns regarding released recordings of policy debates (Itsnotmyfault, 2019). Michael Moreno is not an isolated event but rather part and parcel of the tense relationship between racialized surveillance and public attention to policy debate. His actions demonstrate the ease through which one can record policy debates using audio and video recording devices.

Shortly after Moreno released the video from Weber State University, the global COVID-19 pandemic began, forcing intercollegiate policy debate and all other academic activities to shut down in-person operations to prevent further spread of the virus (*Higher Education Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)*, n.d.). Shutting down in-person contact for all universities meant that debate tournaments could no longer occur, causing the premature termination to numerous competitive careers. Because of the back-and-forth responsiveness of the activity, an asynchronous option for ICPD is unfeasible and would result in a single tournament taking weeks to complete versus the traditional, single weekend tournament length. As a result,

intercollegiate policy debate's governing bodies began to sanction synchronous, online tournaments in an effort to continue the activity through the pandemic, requiring all debaters to utilize a camera, microphone, and internet connection to join a designated, video conferencing platform in order to participate in the activity of debate (*NDT Book 2020 | National Debate Tournament*, n.d.). Additionally, awards assemblies and opening ceremonies for tournaments were now livestreamed and saved online for later viewing as national championships had also moved to virtual platforms (CEDADebate, 2021a, 2021b).

Although competitive debate had experimented with technologically-mediated performances, such a move was drastic because no large-scale synchronous online tournaments had been sanctioned by national governing bodies. The lack of consensus from community members around the structure and implementation of virtual debate, paired with the unprecedented nature of the pandemic required newly written policies regarding the use of said technology. The first tournament to enact a recording policy in the wake of COVID-19's start was the University of Kentucky who hosted the first, fully online national college policy debate tournament during the pandemic. The University of Kentucky tournament, titled "The J.W. Patterson Debates", is an important tournament because it is the season opener and is large in its number of participants (Gish, 2020). Because it is large and first in the sequence of tournaments, it sets the tone for the season in terms of which teams are expected to perform well and what strategies are successful on the new topic.

With attention to the newly developed digital platforms which Kentucky planned to use for their tournament, they crafted a "audio and video recording" policy which would be used to govern the surveillance practices for the J.W. Patterson Debates tournament (Gish, 2020). The policy is vague and assumes participant consent in stating that "The University of Kentucky,

and/or its agents, may record the tournament for internal, administrative use” while stating that recordings may be published “as needed for tournament administration” (Gish, 2020). The policy does not specify who “The University of Kentucky, and/or its agents” may be and it fails to provide context for what “internal, administrative use” would dictate. Without definitions or additional information, the individuals who are allowed to gather audio and video recordings are left unspecified and open to interpretation.

At no point in the policy does it discuss participants’ ability to consent to tournament staff surveillance, nor does it provide clear language on whether individuals may record debate rounds without the consent of all others involved. Rather, the policy states that “All rounds of the tournament are open for viewing by registered participants” (Gish, 2020). This fundamentally removes the question of consent for debaters who do not want their debate rounds to be viewable by all registered participants and leaves open the possibility that a registered participant might record the debate without gaining consent from all participants. The language here is unclear and offers no method of recourse for someone who has been recorded without consent by a registered participant. While presuming consent for tournament administration to surveil debates, the policy also provides soft-language that discourages but does not prohibit non-consensual recordings, allowing for individuals to conduct surveillance on their own behalf under the pretense of “private educational purposes” (Gish, 2020). The only potential reference to methods of recourse would be when the policy states that “coaches and program directors are encouraged to discuss this audio and video recording policy with their participants prior to the tournament” (Gish, 2020). However, such a statement shifts the ownership for actions resulting from the policy onto the “coaches and program directors” who are now tasked with overseeing the policy rather than the tournament administration governing the tournament (Gish, 2020).

The policy itself caused substantial community uproar due to its mandate that all debates be recorded by the tournament administration regardless of participant consent. In community conversations that followed, many individuals reference the activity's already strenuous relationship with racialized surveillance to voice concerns over how the policy might be utilized maliciously by tournament administration as well as the lack of restrictions on who can record debates without the knowledge of other participants (*College Policy Debate | Facebook*, 2020). After reports that the University of Kentucky tournament staff had released an audio and video recording of a debate round to one of the teams participating without gaining consent from the other team involved, tournament attendees took to Facebook to voice their concerns (*College Policy Debate | Facebook*, 2020). The Facebook group where the discussions occurred is private and as such, names of those involved will not be shared. However, the concerns which arose from a post discussing a lack of community trust in tournament administrations are warranted and worthy of note. Specifically, fears over released tournament recordings and the potential outcomes were expressed. A member of the University of Kentucky tournament staff joined the conversation to provide context and apologize for "messaging up" and the conversation which occurred in the comments section stopped (*College Policy Debate | Facebook*, 2020). Regardless, the loss of faith in tournament administration was evident in the comments previous to the apology.

Moments of surveillance like those conducted by the University of Kentucky remind the community of the *racializing surveillance* within debate (Browne, 2015). Racializing surveillance is best understood through Simone Browne's *Dark Matters* which details the deep connection between racialization and surveillance (Browne, 2015). Specifically, Browne describes racializing surveillance as "a technology of social control where surveillance practices,

policies, and performances concern the production of norms pertaining to race and exercise a ‘power to define what is or out of place’” (Browne, 2015). In other words, surveillance “reif(ies) boundaries, borders, and bodies along racial lines, and where the outcome is often discriminatory treatment of those who are negatively racialized by such surveillance” (Browne, 2015). This is to say, when the surveillance is conducted to secure spaces “shaped for and by whiteness”, it is done so by identifying “out of place” behaviors using racialized social norms and demarcating bodies along racial lines (Browne, 2015). The norms embedded in surveillance technologies that dictate acceptable behaviors is racialized and informed by societal expectations which are inherently whitened in nature (Browne, 2015). The data produced by surveillance is “often marked by gender, nation, region, race, socioeconomic status, and other categories where the life chances of many... are ‘more circumscribed by the categories into which they fall’” (Browne, 2015). Once marked, that data can then be easily shared across platforms and be tagged by networks as searchable using computer or user generated data markers (Beauchamp, 2009; Browne, 2015; Sparrow, 2014). As a result, surveillance takes on a racializing turn when the norms used to code bodies are themselves coded by white civil society’s expectations for white and non-white behaviors (Browne, 2015).

Michael Moreno demonstrates the concept of racializing surveillance within policy debate poignantly, albeit not as a result of the JW Patterson Debates policy. When faced with behaviors he thought was “anti-white” and “racist”, he chose to conduct surveillance with the intent of “exposing” his Black professor for pointing out flaws in his argument (Itsnotmyfault, 2019; Moreno, 2019a, 2019c). The surveillance he conducted without consent from Wash or the other debate team members heard in his videos, was then shared and tagged with incendiary language that made his video highly searchable and thus gain thousands of views (Moreno,

2019c). The data he collected and later shared was coded using data markers which are inherently racialized and made Moreno's video popular amongst right-wing groups and alt-right subreddits (Itsnotmyfault, 2019). Not only were his actions racialized, but so too were the technologies he utilized.

Intercollegiate College Policy Debate (ICPD) has a long and strenuous relationship anti-Blackness as a structure and system of racialized violence. Countless authors have written to this phenomenon, articulating the procedural and structural mechanisms that ensure Black debaters have a difficult and often targeted experience when participating in the competitive activity. The authors who argue for this position come from a variety of scholastic and activist backgrounds, including notable writers such as rhetorician and current assistant professor of communication for the University of Colorado Boulder, Dr. Amber Kelsie, racialized politics scholar and current assistant professor and co-director of forensics at California State University-Fullerton, Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley, as well as Pan-African scholar and current part-time lecturer and director of debate for the University of Louisville Malcom X Debate Program, Dr. Tiffany Dillard-Knox. These three authors articulate a substantial defense for viewing ICPD as a site of racialized violence whereby acts of Black resistance and existence are painted as adversarial to the larger ideals of the activity. This thesis starts with their analysis and seeks to consider the post-COVID manifestations of anti-Blackness within ICPD.

This thesis seeks to evaluate how the digital turn in debate has influenced the activity. In particular, I evaluate the J.W. Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy in the context of a broader media history of debate and argue that debate's structure and content have evolved alongside technology. Furthermore, I intend to show that the racialized nature of policy debate, paired with its inherently mediated history, produces the conditions for heightened

moments of anti-Black violence against Black debaters. In other words, this analysis situates the tournament's policy within the already anti-Black structure of debate to consider the effects of such a policy. To be direct, this thesis conducts a close textual analysis of the audio and video recording policy forwarded by the 2020 University of Kentucky's JW Patterson Invitational Tournament to consider the policy's participation in the anti-Black surveillance practices that already plague the activity of intercollegiate policy debate. In doing so, this thesis forwards two primary research questions. First, in what ways do governing policies for digital communication platforms as spaces for intercollegiate debates invite heightened opportunities to perpetrate anti-Black violence against Black debaters? Second, how do the digital affordances of an online platform imitate or deviate from the policy ideals which govern it?

To evaluate the J.W. Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy, I will conduct a close textual analysis. A close textual analysis is first required to establish the ways in which the policies used to govern a digital space implicate the structure and affect of said space (Lange, 2009). The ideologies embedded in governing policies are that which dictate what is and is not permitted to exist within a given space are key points of focus for how to approach criticizing the medium itself. This is because governing rhetoric is constitutive, meaning they create the terms and conditions upon which one must agree to prior to engaging the space (Gaonkar, 1990). Using a close textual analysis to consider influential ideologies present within a governing policy, this master's thesis seeks to understand the ontology of Digital Debate and the ways in which governing policies open the gates for digital anti-Blackness against Black debaters who use the space.

The process of conducting a close textual analysis has been advantageous for its thematic focus on the terms and phrases included in a given text (Beauguitte et al., 2015; Gaonkar, 1990).

A close textual analysis can best be described as a “research method (that) involves a close encounter with the work itself, an examination of the details without bringing to them more presuppositions that we can help” (Belsey, 2013, p. 160). By considering the “syntax, dictation, imagery, cadence, figures and words” within a given text, close analyses provide the mechanism by which scholars are able to track, unpack, and render intelligible the hidden meanings within a given text (Flores, 2016; Slagell, 1991, p. 156). This practice brings about a wealth of scholarly inquiry, ensuring that critics move away from rigid study and towards a focus on “rhetorical action embodied in particular discourses” (Starkey, 2013, p. 28).

The long track record of close textual analyses aiding in criticizing and rendering visible the ideologies that inform the construction of a text warrants its use in this thesis (Flores, 2016). Namely, a close textual analysis has been and will continue to be useful for modern rhetorical criticism of governing policies because it focuses on a limited artifact and thematic interpretations as a means of guiding study toward a singular goal; isolate discursively present ideologies (Beauguitte et al., 2015). For example, when deployed in the context of the European Union’s maintenance of their “actorness, critical discourse analysis is particularly relevant” as it “scrutinizes visible and opaque structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control that occur in discourse” (Beauguitte et al., 2015, p. 858; Fairclough, 1993). Specifically, this thesis investigates the “practices, events and texts (that) arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power” through discourse (Beauguitte et al., 2015, p. 858). Thus, beginning this thesis with the policies themselves aids in establishing further criticism of the effects of the space governed by said policies, particularly, policies that govern digital debate spaces.

To conduct a close textual analysis of the J.W. Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy, this thesis offers a description of the structure and benefits of the activity. After introducing the basics of debate as an intellectual activity, I present the racialization of the activity.

The artifact

This project seeks to investigate the constitutive nature of post-COVID surveillance within ICPD by evaluating the JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy through close textual analysis. I chose to evaluate the 2020 JW Patterson Debates recording policy for a few reasons; first, it was the first tournament to occur fully-online and sanctioned by the NDT and CEDA using an virtual conferencing platform, second, it was the first to release a surveillance policy of its kind, and finally, it caused uproar as it almost immediately followed the incidents perpetrated by Moreno. The follow section unpacks the artifact itself and contextualizes the reasons for its choosing.

The policy itself was posted on the tournament website's homepage with prominence and reads:

All rounds of the tournament are open for viewing by registered participants. The University of Kentucky, and/or its agents, may record the tournament for internal, administrative use. The University of Kentucky will not publish, distribute or retain the recordings, except as needed for tournament administration or as required by applicable law.

Consistent with national speech and debate standards, any participants or other individuals that wish to record any portion of the tournament should obtain the prior

consent of all individuals identifiable in the recording(s). Use of such recordings should be limited to private educational purposes. Recordings should not be published, reproduced or shared with those not participating in the tournament, or uploaded to other online environments, without the prior consent of all individuals identifiable in the recordings.

Coaches and program directors are encouraged to discuss this audio and video recording policy with their participants prior to the tournament, and are expected to take any reasonable and necessary actions to ensure compliance by participants who are affiliated with their respective schools (Gish, 2020).

After the 2020 National Debate Tournament and CEDA National Championships were cancelled due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, a shock was felt by members of the community as seniors were no longer granted a final tournament to conclude their careers and recruitment for future generations of debaters was difficult with the uncertain and unprecedented times. As program directors scrambled to not only manage the university-wide shifts to online learning, they also were tasked with maintaining their debate programs amidst the wavering future of competition. In response, the University of Kentucky took up the task of hosting the first, fully online national competition sanctioned by the NDT and CEDA. Such a move was daunting and required the tournament to utilize the new virtual conferencing software, Classrooms Cloud ran by Pedagogy.Cloud, to host tournament operations (*Classrooms Cloud – Pedagogy.Cloud*, n.d.; Gish, 2020). The software functions using the popular conferencing program, Zoom, and “provides a custom user experience” to be crafted using customer expectations and policies (*Classrooms Cloud – Pedagogy.Cloud*, n.d.). To effectively use the software, the University of Kentucky needed a surveillance policy in order to host the

tournament in accordance with University legal requirements and manage online interactions between debaters on the platform (*College Policy Debate* | Facebook, 2020). As a result, the University of Kentucky created the JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy to oversee the first, fully-online national college debate tournament.

Because the JW Patterson Debates was the first tournament to occur using only digital platforms, the policy they created was also the first of its kind to be put out by a national tournament host and arguably sets the tone for following tournaments. Tournament sanctioned livestreaming had already occurred at the NDT and the CEDA National Championships but were not governed or organized by tournament staff. Specifically, in 2018, Exodus Files Debate, an LLC external to the NDT or CEDA, was granted permission to livestream several rounds at the 2018 National Debate Tournament and the CEDA National Championships in Wichita, Kansas and Puget Sound, Washington, respectively (Monteith, 2018a, 2018b). However, at that point in time, both national championships occurred in-person and had entirely different recording conditions for Exodus Files to operate within. Namely, the presence of a physical camera and microphone, plus a computer used to stream the debate, made it to where it was functionally impossible to livestream a debate in which no debaters knew the round was being recorded. As such, the policies that Exodus Files and similar streaming services operated within were tailored to recording in-person debates and were not applicable to online debate tournaments such as the 2020 JW Patterson Debates. Thus, the University of Kentucky's policy was novel because it was crafted to respond to the unprecedented times of ICPD occurring entirely online.

Finally, the decision to focus on the JW Patterson Debates policy is fueled by community response to the policy and its potentially dangerous effects. When the policy was originally published, the tournament director made a Facebook post in the private, College Policy Debate

Facebook group to announce the policy (*College Policy Debate* | Facebook, 2020). Almost immediately, community members spoke out against the policy, citing its potential to endanger students due to its invasive endorsement of tournament surveillance without consent (*College Policy Debate* | Facebook, 2020). The comments on the announcement post indicate that fears held by community members were informed by previous incidents in the activity where consensual audio and video recording of Black debaters was edited and reshared as justifications for public scrutiny of the activity, describing debate as an “echo chamber” where leftists reside and call for all white people to die (California Network, 2016; *College Policy Debate* | Facebook, 2020). The incendiary language attached to altered video clips of Black debaters had previously endangered Black debaters and justified community fears of mass, tournament governed surveillance.

This thesis seeks to understand the effects of the policy on the manifestation of debate within digital spaces. Particularly, I consider the structure, benefits, and disadvantages to the activity prior to COVID-19 in order to contextualize the shift to digital debate. In the sections that follow, I will unpack the structure of ICPD and identify some of the reasons why debaters chose to stay with or leave the activity. In doing so, I seek to situate the JW Patterson Debates policy as unique and constitutive of the digital environment which would influence the structure, benefits, and disadvantages of participation.

Structure

Intercollegiate Policy Debate is a rhetorical activity that requires two teams, an affirmative team (aff team), and a negative team (neg team). Each team has two college-enrolled students who conduct research and present arguments that disprove or devalue an opponents’

arguments. Two teams are paired against one another to engage in a two and a half hour session, otherwise known as a debate round, at a tournament that is sanctioned and governed by a hosting university (Dillard-Knox, 2014). Included in this pairing, a single or odd-numbered group of tournament-approved judge(s) are assigned to adjudicate the debate and identify a winning team. To truly understand the object of study that is ICPD, a thorough review of the format which structures the activity along with the governing entities is necessary.

The aff team speaks first and encompasses two debaters, the first affirmative speaker (1A) and the second affirmative speaker (2A) (Dillard-Knox, 2014). The neg team gives their first speech after the 1A's first speech (See Appendix A). The neg team includes the first negative speaker (1N) and the second negative speaker (2N). The sequence for the speeches follows a back-and-forth style in which the 1A gives their constructive speech (1AC) and is then cross-examined or questioned by the neg team on the contents and form of the aff team's speech. After the cross-examination period (CX), the 1N gives their constructive speech (1NC), followed by another CX, this time in which the aff team questions the neg team on their most recent speech (Dillard-Knox, 2014). This back-and-forth trend continues, where the 1NC is CX'd and followed by the 2AC, or second affirmative constructive. After CX of the 2AC, the 2NC or second negative constructive occurs. These constructive speeches are referred to as such because they are meant to be nine-minute periods in which teams can construct their argument comprehensively. The CX periods are intended to give each team two, three-minute sessions in which they can clarify, deconstruct, or challenge an opponent's argument. The sequence of constructive speeches is then flipped for the last four speeches, in which the negative team gives their first, six-minute rebuttal speech (1NR). Given that the CX periods are reserved for constructive speeches, the debate continues without any further questioning sessions. After the

1NR, the affirmative team is given a chance to give their first affirmative rebuttal (1AR) (See Appendix A). The last two speeches are then given by the neg team and the aff team respectively, with the 2NR happening and followed by the 2AR which ends the debate. A judge will evaluate the debate and render a decision on who is the winner (See Appendix B). Throughout the debate, each team is given ten minutes of preparation time to use at their will, whether during the first half of the debate when constructives occur or during the latter half of the debate when rebuttals happen. This back-and-forth nature of the speeches requires that debaters adapt their arguments to those of their opponents, given the dyadic structure of debate as a deliberative activity. The only moment in which the back-and-forth nature is broken is during ‘the negative block’, referring to the back-to-back negative speeches that occur with the 2NC followed by the 1NR (Dillard-Knox, 2014). This differential is overcome by the fact that the affirmative gives the first and last speeches, as well as has the ability to determine the overarching direction of the round by giving the first speech (Dillard-Knox, 2014). In this way, both teams are given equal speaking and questioning time, as well as equal in-round preparation time.

Originally intended to be a pipeline for policy and legislative ideas to be iteratively tested by skilled academics, debates within the activity often focused on a plan-based discussion over how the United States Federal Government should respond to a given issue (NDT Book 2020, 2020). Annually, a topic, or resolution, is released that act as a guide for research and preparation for the debate season. Once the topic has been released, teams begin to methodically comb through thousands of pages of literature and news articles to craft their arguments – both for and against the resolution. This process of argument generation culminated in highly analytical debates over the quality of research, or evidence, found and deployed in the debate. Thus,

debaters would spend more time trying to find evidence for all their arguments than they would consider the application of their arguments to their lived experience. This distance between lived experience and the claims of evidence fostered in-depth debates over plan-based responses to hypothetical issues at the cost of genuine, real-world applicability.

Benefits

There are myriad of educational benefits to ICPD. Perhaps most generally, the activity's emphasis on research, speaking, and advocacy skills make debate an ideal intellectual activity. The emphasis on scholarly labor to win a given round leads to debaters "conducting graduate level research around the selected topic and preparing policy briefs, several speeches and multiple argument strategies" where students "prepare arguments on both sides of the topic, affirmative and negative, because (they) will be required to debate each side equally at each tournament" (Dillard-Knox, 2014 pg. 11). The significant research responsibility leads to debaters being highly skilled researchers with knowledge on navigating online and physical library databases, university archives, and the vast number of journal publications with reference to their chosen argument. Combined with the depth of research, the scope of scholarly literature means that debaters have experience with countless advocacies and theories. Once a debater has conducted enough research to support their argument, they then develop the skill of sharing complex information with a variety of audiences. Because judges possess their own unique perspectives and opinions, debaters must become skilled public speakers with the persuasive range needed to effectively advocate their position to a variety of audiences. Knowing when to strategically slowdown in delivering a speech and knowing when to reiterate facts rather than present evidence are both key factors to developing a successful college debate career. Thus, the perception of debate as an "academic training ground for public speaking, literacy and research

skills, and understanding the process of policy making” can be justified by simply evaluating the structure and manner by which the activity is performed (Dillard-Knox, 2014 pg. 2).

Furthermore, the critical thinking skills garnered from debating both sides of an argument, also known as switch side debate (SSD), extend beyond the sphere of competition within the activity. The capacity for students to engage with civic processes and legislative procedures is arguably heightened when the student has experience in competitive policy debate (Hogan & Kurr, 2017). This is because the focus on iteratively testing methods that seek to address and provide solutions to pressing issues yields the capacity to formulate advocacies and situate their ideas for change within a larger schema of political action (Hogan & Kurr, 2017). This is further backed by the rigorous, targeted, and detailed research that debate seeks to produce. The standard for quality evidence is consistently up for debate within the activity, but the ultimate desire to possess analysis that is accurate, detailed, specific, warranted, and written by a qualified author supported by a reputable institution drives students to seek the assumed best research (Cram, 2014). Collectively, the ability to critically think and engage with civic institutions by participating in a yearlong competition to find and deploy the best analysis backed by defensible evidence positions debate in the forefront of academic activities and results in administrative support at the middle school, high school, and post-secondary level.

As an activity tailored to building advocacy skills, students who participate in debate learn to defend their perspectives against opposition. Specifically, debaters conduct hours and hours of research to support their arguments and, in round, are tasked with using that research to respond to opponents’ arguments and further explain their position. The research alone is beneficial, but when combined with the back-and-forth responsiveness of debate, known as clash, the benefits to debate multiply as students learn to use their knowledge to craft rebuttals to

opposing viewpoints and evidence. The advocacy skills garnered through debate are beneficial because they give students the experience necessary to propose solutions and criticize actions which affect them and their communities. Many policymakers are former debaters, demonstrating the scope of advocacy skills fostered by policy debate (Hogan & Kurr, 2017).

Beyond the academic benefits to participating in competitive policy debate, the social benefits are well worthy of noting. As with the communicative focus of the activity, students who participate are inevitably going to meet at least two other people for any given round. When doing simple math, a student who participates in a six round tournament is likely to meet no less than twelve opponents and six judges. When factoring in paneled judges, out-rounds or elimination rounds, and the countless chances to meet people at tournament provided meals and ceremonies, the opportunities to network and generally build community are seemingly endless. Within these moments of networking potential, tight-knit relationships are built that function as key spaces for collective care (Reid-Brinkley, 2008). Additionally, these spaces foster material connections to conditions outside of debate, such as securing employment, housing, medical care, and even legal assistance. The emphasis on engaging differing perspectives yields the capacity to evaluate competing methodologies for addressing issues beyond the confines of debate which magnify the potential for building social connections as it bridges the traditional ideological gaps that would otherwise limit political collectivity (Panetta, 1990).

In this way, debate is a uniquely beneficial activity because it serves as a mechanism for meeting people that one might not have met otherwise. Networking as a college student can be difficult if not fostered through a structured activity like debate. Tournaments host individuals of varying ages, career fields, research interests, and cultures. As such, debaters have the opportunity to meet potential mentors, friends, and future colleagues when participating in ICPD.

For example, debaters can meet instructors who work at institutions they are interested in and can discuss their experiences to develop a more informed idea about their prospective school. Rather than be limited to the resources their own university provides, college students can use debate to consider potential graduate schools and career moves. Some tournaments host parties and events to encourage social interaction and networking, such as the University of Wake Forest's "Shirley" tournament "Survivors Party" which occurs during the final round and is open to all participants of the tournament (*College Policy Debate*, 2022). In this way, as a resource for networking, debate is uniquely positioned to give students the opportunity to meet individuals from a variety of backgrounds and opinions.

Disadvantages

In the previous section, I described some of the benefits to participating in college policy debate. In the section that follows, I will describe disadvantages to participating, focusing primarily on the research burden, time commitment, and most importantly, the racialized events which make debate a potentially violent space for Black debaters.

Debate has numerous benefits, many of which are localized to particular debate teams, or squads, with networking, advocacy skills and research skills being the primary benefits of note. However, the amount of research that debaters conduct can easily be interpreted as overwhelming. Putting in forty-hours a week into cutting cards and doing practice speeches can turn off prospective novice debaters and is not an activity-wide standard. However, the long list of advocacies that one must be prepared to respond to in order to have an easier path to winning tournaments is daunting and requires debaters to be well versed on a variety of topics and theoretical explanations for status quo conditions. Teams often share the responsibility to cut

cards, or prepare evidence, for specific topics and require debaters to contribute to squad *tubs* or a shared archives of cards available to debaters to use for their rounds. While there is no industry standard for how long it takes to cut a card, the very fact that debaters need to prepare their arguments and support their conclusion requires them to take time from their day and dedicate themselves to doing research beyond their coursework. Writing an affirmative, or crafting an entire advocacy with responses to potential opponent arguments, is a large endeavor that can take weeks to complete (Dillard-Knox, 2014). As such, the scope of research needed to easily win debate rounds is significant and can be daunting and distracting of other work a student needs to complete.

Beyond doing research, most debaters engage in practice debates or present practice speeches for their coaches and peers to evaluate. Practice debates, often occurring between two partnerships from the same school, are separate from competitive tournaments and last between two to five hours when including time for coach feedback. Additionally, debaters often complete practice speeches, otherwise known as ‘redos’, where they re-present a speech they gave during competition, this time taking note of the judges comments and improving their speech. Practice speeches can last anywhere from five minutes to multiple hours depending on the depth of coach comments and the frequency by which they ask the student to re-give their practice speech using new feedback. The iterative processes that many debate teams practice indicates an activity-wide time commitment that, although variant based on one’s coaching staff, maintains an expectation of additional research and practices that are beyond one’s other commitments such as coursework and jobs. Factoring in a full weekend’s worth of travel, debaters can expect to commit upwards of 100 hours to debate during the week of a major competition.

While the benefits to ICPD are substantial and the activity continues with research burdens and a significant time commitment, college policy debate is in crisis due to on-going racialized acts within the activity (Kelsie, 2019). In a recent publication discussing the racialization within debate, Dr. Amber Kelsie theorizes “the (im)possibility of debate in our contemporary crisis” as it pertains to the haunting “specter of civil war” (Kelsie, 2019). Kelsie considers the ways in which the argumentation and scholarship present in modern debates attempt to ignore or mis-account for the historical legacy of the Civil War in so far as Blackness is relegated to a space of political stasis (Kelsie, 2019, p. 63). This is to say, the ongoing reinvigoration of anti-Black politics both as an argument to defend and as an orientation to Black sociality provides cause for describing debate as impossible for Black debaters (Kelsie, 2019). In other words, “to say that debate is impossible is then to beckon to war on the horizon” and to “recognize the state of emergency at the end of the state of debate” (Kelsie, 2019, p. 65). In this way, the crisis of debate can best be understood as stemming from the “haunted specter” of Black (non)sociality articulated during the Civil War (Kelsie, 2019, p. 63). The “haunted specter” framework comes from a long line of scholars articulating a theory of power relations referred to as anti-Blackness and serves as a archive of depictions of Black (non)sociality (Kelsie, 2019; Wilderson, 2010). From the increase in anti-Black tactics of exclusion that attempt to isolate and demonize Black debaters to the heightened affordances of digital technology as it provides means to “expose” and threaten violence against non-white debaters, the activity is in the midst of a racialized war on Blackness (Itsnotmyfault, 2019; Kelsie, 2019).

This project seeks to investigate the governing policies which constituted the digital terrain for debate in the midst of COVID-19 by analyzing the text of the 2020 JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy to identify technological allowances which would

grant users of the platform the ability to execute anti-Black violence against Black debaters. Using Dr. Kelsie's framing of debate being in crisis alongside recent and historic examples of racialized violence, I first unpack the structure of ICPD and the history of mediated technologies within debate. After which, I situate anti-Blackness within an afro-pessimists framework to contextualize the resulting violence against Black debaters. Next, I will utilize two research questions to guide my evaluation of the governing policies used to textually manage the space as potential mechanisms for perpetrating anti-Blackness. First, in what ways do governing policies for digital communication platforms as spaces for intercollegiate debates invite heightened opportunities to perpetrate anti-Black violence against Black debaters? Second, how do the digital affordances of an online platform imitate or deviate from the policy ideals which govern it? Finally, I will provide conclusions and future directions for the continuation of digital debate.

Chapter 2 - Media History of Debate

In the previous chapter, I unpacked the structure of intercollegiate policy debate to situate the academic and social benefits alongside the discriminatory disadvantages to participating in the activity. In doing so, I contextualized the actions of Michael Moreno within the onslaught of the COVID-19 global pandemic to frame the creation of the JW Patterson Debates policy.

In this chapter, I will construct an in-depth media history of debate. To do so, I will first describe the origins of ICPD as a mediated activity and craft a timeline of the evolution of ICPD's structure and governing bodies. I will consider the evolution of ICPD until the status quo in regards to the technology used to govern, witness, and participate in the activity. In doing so, I will contextualize moments of racializing surveillance alongside positive public representations of the activity. Then, I will situate the COVID-19 global pandemic as pivotal in shifting ICPD to an online landscape in the wake of the Michael Moreno reminder of the racialized history of surveillance within debate.

The origins

Now, intercollegiate policy debate brings together students from across the nation. Prior to 1945, collegiate debate was considered an activity isolated to a university's population (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). Prominent schools such as West Point, the Michigan Institute of Technology (MIT), and Yale University, engaged in sparse competitions that were loosely regulated by the hosting institution (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.; NDT Book 2020, 2020). At the start of World War II, the student populations rapidly dwindled, threatening the viability of inter-campus travel and competitions for debate (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). In 1945, once the pressures of the war had subsided, West Point reorganizes their West Point Debating Society to

allow more cadets to participate in extra curriculars (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). In doing so, West Point conducted a survey of previously competing institutions to gauge their interest in a formalized college debate league and decided to create a national debate tournament to culminate the end of the competition season (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). By the start of the academic year in 1947, the West Point Debating Society had changed their name to the West Point Debate Council and solicited 29 teams divided across eight newly-created districts to participate in the birth of the NDT (NDT Book 2020, 2020).

In 1948, the West Point Debate Council instituted new policies to assist in regulating the NDT, including rules regarding topic selection and partnerships with public news organizations (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). For topic selection, the process was rewritten to focus on variety in arguments and flexibility in research requirements. Namely, the West Point Debate Council opted to forgo the previous standard of creating a new topic for each tournament in favor of a single, static topic that would be debated only at the NDT (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). Additionally, the West Point Debate Council partnered with the CBS interview show, *We the People* to feature the participants of the final NDT as guests on national television (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). In 1950, the West Point Debate Council continued to change the rules regarding the NDT, adding the presence of sub-topics to the selection process and altering the consistency of topic use (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.; NDT Book 2020, 2020). However, by the start of the 1951 competition season, the West Point Debate Council had returned to its most-favored policy regarding topics and solidified the use of a single, nation-wide topic that would remain unchanged from tournament to tournament (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.).

In 1952, history was made after the University of Redlands team became the first team to ever win back-to-back national championships at the NDT (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.).

Following the historic win, the Speech Association of America announced that the national topic for the 1954-55 collegiate debate competition season would be about expanding diplomatic recognition to the communist government of China (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). Given the topic's extreme public relevance, the committee hoped there would be a spark in participation rates from schools who previously had opted out of supporting policy debate (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). However, following the decision, the Department of the Army issued a memorandum prohibiting United States Military Academy cadets from publicly debating the topic, ultimately followed by a similar statement by the United States Naval Academy (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). In the wake of Army and Navy regulations prohibiting cadets from publicly debating the topic, the NDT withheld national attention in an effort to maintain participation rates that were highly influenced by cadets (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.; NDT Book 2020, 2020). This trend would continue as the 1955-56 and 1956-57 seasons would be exempt from CBS's *We the People* show (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). However, while CBS opted to discontinue the NDT's participants being featured on their show, the New York Times' *Youth Forum* invited the 1957 NDT finalists to be interviewed as guest experts on the year's resolution (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.). This was later followed by television and radio coverage of the 1958 NDT, most notably the Today Show and the College News Conference (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.; NDT Book 2020, 2020). With growing public attention provided by both the historic Redlands' win and the recent news coverage, the collegiate debate circuit grew exponentially and added Alaska and Hawaii to the district divisions (Lincoln & Schandler, n.d.; NDT Book 2020, 2020).

After successfully hosting over twenty national tournaments, organizing a nation-wide competition circuit, and bringing newfound public attention to the activity, the West Point

Debate Council made the difficult decision to hand control of the NDT to the American Forensic Association (AFA) in 1967 (NDT Book 2020, 2020).

In 1967, the AFA made significant changes to the operations of the NDT (NDT Book 2020, 2020). First, the AFA chose to bypass West Point's tradition of having static hosts for the tournament (NDT Book 2020, 2020). By initiating a system of rotating tournament hosts, the AFA attempted to make the tournament location more accessible to institutions that were not already on the east coast (NDT Book 2020, 2020). This led to the University of Chicago co-hosting the 1967 NDT with Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois (NDT Book 2020, 2020). The historic first-ever non-West Point NDT was considered a huge success, bringing in more schools than ever before (NDT Book 2020, 2020). The decision to rotate tournament hosts has remained in effect today.

Second, the AFA established the NDT Committee as a governing body to oversee the tournament operations and planning (NDT Book 2020, 2020). Taking effect in 1968, the NDT Committee was tasked with clarifying tournament rules, ensuring proper planning for judging and competitor assignments, and guiding team coaches through the processes of the tournament (NDT Book 2020, 2020). While seemingly insignificant at first, the NDT Committee revolutionized the qualification process to include post-district at-large bids, or invitations, for teams to utilize to attend the NDT (NDT Book 2020, 2020). This process added an additional option for students to use to try to qualify and was a move to include more participants in national competition (NDT Book 2020, 2020). In 1970, the NDT Committee once again altered the qualification process, this time adding the policy that allowed any given school to qualify two teams to the NDT using any of the options originally provided (NDT Book 2020, 2020). In

tandem, the rotating hosts and expansive qualification processes led to a sizable increase in participation, both in number of schools and individual teams (NDT Book 2020, 2020).

In 1971, the public attention afforded to the NDT had waned and shifted the dynamic of college debate (NDT Book 2020, 2020). The combination of rotating hosts, shifting rules, and lack of push for national news coverage had caused the general public to lose interest in the activity (NDT Book 2020, 2020). The New York Times and the Today Show had cancelled their college news shows and the NDT finalists were no longer interviewed as experts on the year's topic (NDT Book 2020, 2020). While public attention waned, the insulating factors to ICPD flourished under the AFA as debaters no longer felt the need to tailor their arguments to a public audience (NDT Book 2020, 2020). This caused the dynamic of debate to shift away from a public-facing activity and towards an insulated, secular sport that used complex terminology and rigorous research standards (NDT Book 2020, 2020). In response to the shift away from public-facing scholarship, the Southwest Cross-Examination Debate Association was born in 1971 (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022; NDT Book 2020, 2020; Southward, 2005).

The Southwest Cross-Examination Debate Association (SCEDA) was established by the University of California State-Long Beach debate society and was under the direction of former director of debate, Jack Howe (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022). The organization focused on public-facing research and advocacy building while providing stable competition standards for students to engage with (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022; NDT Book 2020, 2020). Initially a small, regional competition circuit, the SCEDA quickly became popular as a viable alternative for teams who struggled to qualify for or travel to the NDT (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022; NDT Book 2020, 2020). While distinct in district format and procedures, the SCEDA followed similar competition rules as the NDT such as the two-person

structure for teams and the hiring of coaches to serve as debate judges (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022). One of the key distinctions, however, was the use of cross-examination time, also known as questioning time (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022). Under Jack Howe's direction, SCEDA utilized the cross-examination period to allow students to deeply engage their opponents arguments while explaining the complexity of their own (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022). In this way, SCEDA capitalized on the institutional support for public debate and established a viable alternative to the NDT for students to choose to compete in (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022).

After SCEDA renamed themselves the Cross-Examination Debate Association (CEDA) in 1974, the popularity of the organization grew to counter the monopoly of the NDT (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022; NDT Book 2020, 2020). By 1975, the NDT Committee was rivaled by CEDA in ways that were structural and difficult to resolve in a single year. To compete with CEDA, the NDT Committee revised their entry process once more, this time including a third option for students to use to qualify (NDT Book 2020, 2020). Additionally, the NDT changed the structure of their national tournament, moving from an intensive three-day tournament to a four-day tournament with ample time between rounds for students to get food, rest, and prepare for their next debates (NDT Book 2020, 2020). Although popular amongst debaters, the NDT struggled to maintain steady participation (NDT Book 2020, 2020). The meta-competition between the NDT Committee and CEDA was formidable and caused both organizations to adapt to the demands of their concentrated audience members (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022; NDT Book 2020, 2020; Southward, 2005).

In 1981, both organizations had cultivated a rich competition circuit between institutions and had fostered scholarly development unlike ever before (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*,

2022; Southward, 2005). CEDA had just hosted their first ever national championship tournament and crowned Robert Hartmann and Arthur Wong of the University of California-Los Angeles as champions of their circuit and the NDT Committee had just invited the Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha and Pi Kappa Delta speech fraternities to send a team to the NDT (NDT Book 2020, 2020; *Past CEDA Champions – Cross Examination Debate Association*, n.d.). Both organizations were still in competition with one another, although each had maintained fairly steady in their participation rates (*CEDA Constitution and By-Laws*, 2022; NDT Book 2020, 2020). However, in 1984, the NDT would engage a radically new technology that would bring them back to the top of the competition (NDT Book 2020, 2020).

The computer revolution

In 1977, household computers had just hit the public market, allowing individuals and organizations to purchase the new data processing device for personal and public use (Comen, n.d.). In 1984, the NDT Committee purchased a computer to be used to calculate the win percentages and team rankings for the NDT (NDT Book 2020, 2020). Colloquially known as “the computer revolution”, the incorporation of household computers allowed the NDT to run their organization in a highly efficient manner that was unmatched by CEDA (NDT Book 2020, 2020). By 1986, the NDT’s use of computers was in full-effect, helping with both tournament administration and with managing the organization writ large (NDT Book 2020, 2020). This change shifted the meta-competition between the NDT and CEDA to give the NDT an edge in both organizational efficiency and tournament direction (Cirlin, 1986; NDT Book 2020, 2020).

By 1991, computing devices became ever more available to the general public, including coding systems that allowed users to create their own systems for calculating and evaluating data

(Cirlin, 1986; NDT Book 2020, 2020). The creation of Lexis/Nexis gave way to new processes for gathering and producing research for debate (NDT Book 2020, 2020). In using Lexis/Nexis, debaters were able to create documents that compiled their evidence and utilize the internet to conduct “thorough and timely research” that held with it the expectation of higher quality arguments in debate (NDT Book 2020, 2020). The “computer revolution” had taken debate by storm and provided expansive avenues to engage an opponents’ argument and organize tournament administration.

By 1996, the “computer revolution” had complicated the meta-competition between CEDA and the NDT and provided both organizations with the capacity to innovate their structure and the design of tournaments (NDT Book 2020, 2020). The NDT had not only reformulated the structure of their tournaments by adding student awards and ranking systems, they had also taken heed of CEDA’s lead with regards to incorporating questioning periods, or cross-examination time, into their round procedures (NDT Book 2020, 2020). At the same time, CEDA had begun hosting annual national tournaments using the NDT’s tradition of rotating hosts to account for travel accommodations and demands while utilizing computers to calculate tournament rankings and judging assignments (Cirlin, 1986). Here, the battle between CEDA and the NDT begins to wane as both organizations struggled to keep up with their rate of expansion and the quality of competition their students had come to love (NDT Book 2020, 2020). As a result, in 1996, the NDT Committee voted to cooperate with CEDA on establishing an annual topic that would be used by both organizations (NDT Book 2020, 2020). In doing so, the NDT Committee and CEDA began a partnership that would last for decades to come.

In tandem, the singular topic to be used year-long by both debate organizations and the growing presence of publicly available computers caused a shift in the content of debates. This is

because the ability to limit the scope of one's research while expanding one's access to in-depth research allows a debater to dive deeper into the topic and generate unique, qualifiable arguments. As a result, the content of debates was less predictable and gave way to innovative criticisms of commonly debated beliefs. Thus, by 1999, the first ever "kritik", or argument critical of the values, beliefs, and ideals of society, was presented in competition (NDT Book 2020, 2020). While it is unclear as to who presented the first Kritik and what its contents were, it is clear that the cause of such argumentative change was brought about by the evolving ability of debaters to engage vast amounts of scholarship.

The Louisville Project

In 2000, Dr Ede Warner, former director of debate at the University of Louisville, changed debate in a way unseen before by first focusing on increasing Black participation and then utilizing the space of debate to call for Black liberatory practices (Dillard-Knox, 2014). Dr Warner's focus on increasing Black participation in college debate was revolutionary in that it radically changed the demographics of the activity, thus, inviting equally revolutionary conversations to begin against the backdrop of academic empire (Dillard-Knox, 2014). After tailoring the University of Louisville's debate program around recruiting Black debaters, "the team began challenging the techniques and methods of Intercollegiate Policy Debate while developing new methods of engagement" that "included the use of Black oral traditions such as music, poetry and narratives" (Dillard-Knox, 2014). By inviting questions of lived experience as components of plan-based arguments, Louisville set a new standard for what should be considered evidence (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2008). The prevalence of computers and the fast-paced innovation of technology aided Louisville debaters in constructing their arguments as they provided the devices necessary to play music in a debate round, create

documents of their compiled analytics, and share their work with colleagues (Dillard-Knox, 2014). Each of these technologies were key for Louisville's argumentative development and affective deployment.

By 2002, these rhetorical traditions had not only provided an avenue for bypassing the normative demands of United States policy and litigation research but also a salient method for applying critiques of dominant narratives overwhelming those of the minority (Bankey, n.d.; Dillard-Knox, 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2008). Dr. Warner took note of the impending influx of Kritik-based arguments and combined such a push with the need to increase Black participation to create space for Black collective care and advocacy within a racialized environment (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2008). In doing so, by 2004, Dr Warner coalesced a movement of Black experientialism within debate, pushing for challenges against the academic empire by demanding that debate act as a space where difference of style is not only allowed, but encouraged. In this way, the demographics as well as the style of debate as a game changed drastically.

By changing the rhetorical traditions of the activity, Louisville was able to craft their arguments around real-world lived experience and became very successful at dismantling the logic embedded within policy debate's structure of ivory tower elitism. This success was due to the ability to engage in Black expressionism in ways never before championed in college debate (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Zompetti, 2004). When Louisville debaters would begin their 1AC with poetry that questioned the need for considering the United States Federal Government as an agent worth demanding action from, opponents were captivated and stunned that their vast slew of evidence was unable to predict such a challenge (Dillard-Knox, 2014). The ability for Louisville debaters to utilize the space of debate to interrogate systems of violence that structure

their lived experience was unmatched by any other institution at the time and led to countless teams breaking down the barriers to success that traditionally reserved recognition for white, privileged bodies (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2008).

The Clash of Civilizations

As Louisville debaters continued to win debate rounds, traditionalists within the community established a new type of argument specifically made to defend the very norms Louisville was dismantling. As Dr Shanara Reid-Brinkley argues, the "clash of civilization" debates began, meaning debates in which the traditional norms were no longer unquestioned and were now acting as arguments that must be won to be valued (Reid-Brinkley, 2008). In other words, debaters who would have otherwise expected to engage in normative debate styles that engaged questions of *what* the United States federal government should do were now tasked with defending *why* the United States Federal Government served as the only agent of action within the round. In this way, the Louisville Project deconstructed the stylistic norms that formulated a distanced, hypothetical agent of ubiquitous capacity that was the only possible subject capable of change worth discussing. This rhetorical shift was guised as an attempt to preserve competitive standards while minimizing hostility in debate rounds. As a result, the rhetoric of these "clash of civilization" debates possessed the capacity to influence the perception of debate as an activity at the individual level (Frey, 2004; Reid-Brinkley, 2008).

The documentaries

In 2004, the newfound popularity of the activity led to the College Sports Television production company to produce the first ever, hour-long documentary about college policy debate (NDT Book 2020, 2020). As the "first and only 24-hour college sports network" at the

time, College Sports Television (CSTV) had done “a magnificent job of using the latest technology to transform itself into the leading college sports media company and, in the process, change(d) the sports media landscape” (*CSTV Is First Independent Network to Sign Distribution Agreements With Five Largest Cable Operators and DirecTV | Charter Communications Inc.*, n.d.). CSTV, as an independent network with distribution agreements with DirecTV, Comcast, Time Warner, and Cox Communications, had the capacity to bring the public attention afforded to debate to unseen heights (*CSTV Is First Independent Network to Sign Distribution Agreements With Five Largest Cable Operators and DirecTV | Charter Communications Inc.*, n.d.). With their sizable funding, expansive infrastructure, and large distribution networks, CSTV was successful in their coverage of common household sports like football, soccer, and basketball and was eager to dive into niche sports such as ICPD (*CSTV Is First Independent Network to Sign Distribution Agreements With Five Largest Cable Operators and DirecTV | Charter Communications Inc.*, n.d.).

CSTV set out to capture the stories and characters that encompass the 2004 NDT hosted by Gonzaga University from March 25th to the 28th (CBS Television, 2004). By using interviews from debaters, coaches, and tournament administrators, CSTV produced an hour-long documentary that followed schools such as California State Berkeley (CS Berkeley), Michigan State University (Michigan State), Northwestern University (Northwestern) and the University of Louisville (Louisville) (CBS Television, 2004). While covering the 2004 NDT, CSTV shows clips of Michigan State, CS Berkley, and Northwestern traveling to the tournament while the narrator describes the event as the “culmination of the year-long struggle for debate supremacy” (CBS Television, 2004). The activity of debate is framed by the documentary as one where debaters are “firing arguments faster than the untrained ear can process” (CBS Television, 2004).

Clips are used that show debaters speaking at high rates, a technique in policy debate known as *spreading* or speed-reading (CBS Television, 2004). The excessive rate of delivery is accompanied by old-school plastic storage tubs, colloquially known as ‘tubs’, that are used to store expandable file-folders, or *expandos*, filled with printed pieces of evidence (CBS Television, 2004). The aesthetic of hardened researchers competing in a spreading race is clear within the documentary. However, this is later contrasted by the documentary’s description of Louisville’s arguments, where the all-female, top-ranked partnership from the school says, “(debate) feels like a war” (CBS Television, 2004). The narrator for the documentary calls Louisville Director of Debate, Dr. Ede Warner “a revolutionary” with “insistence on activism and change within debate” and later shows Dr. Warner’s team winning their octo-final round of the NDT while the narrator says that Louisville has “defeated another giant and continues to rock the debate world. The Louisville Project is working” (CBS Television, 2004). While the coaches for Michigan State and CS Berkeley are shown discussing their teams’ success and difficulties throughout the tournament, Dr. Warner is shown discussing the triumphs of his team and the anger he had for his team’s final round, saying “What we are trying to say is, speaking isn’t enough, and until people stop saying speaking is enough action, this community will never ever change. It is frustrating to hear in round after round the vision created by the crafting 2NR as enough to produce change in a community where, y’all are my friends but you all know this is bullshit, and it hurts us as a community” (CBS Television, 2004). In his frustration, Dr. Warner is shown talking to his team after the devastating loss, whereas most coaches are not featured in the same situation with their teams as elimination rounds continued (CBS Television, 2004). This contrast in description is an exemplar of the documentary’s desire to depict not only the

tournament progress to crown a champion, but also the characters who make up the annual competition.

Following the success of the 2004 documentary on the NDT, CSTV agreed to produce a second, hour-long documentary over the 2005 NDT (CBS Television, 2005). This time, CSTV chose to follow schools such as Louisville, California State University- Fullerton (Fullerton), the University of West Georgia (West Georgia), the University of Kansas (KU), Harvard University (Harvard), Dartmouth University (Dartmouth), Northwestern, and Michigan State (CBS Television, 2005). Again, CSTV followed these teams through their travels to the tournament, progress throughout the tournament, and ultimate conclusion in the tournament (CBS Television, 2005). This level of attention is considerably higher than in 2004 as the 2005 documentary features a lot more variety in the schools they interviewed and followed (CBS Television, 2005). By doing so, the 2005 documentary included a wider variety in the style of argumentation featured (CBS Television, 2005). West Georgia is self-described as “class clowns” and are shown giving a “mock eulogy” for a Emory University debater who “due to academic reasons, could not attend the NDT” during a debate round (CBS Television, 2005). In response to West Georgia, Michigan State is shown calling West Georgia’s argument “dogmatic and stupid” before the documentary shows West Georgia losing the debate (CBS Television, 2005). Additionally, Louisville’s all-female top-team is followed, with clips showing them rapping and giving their speeches at the slower rate of delivery depicted in the previous documentary (CBS Television, 2005). With less emphasis on Dr. Warner himself, Louisville is primarily featuring during their struggles throughout the tournament, with interviews focused on them needing to win the next debate in order to make it to elimination rounds (CBS Television, 2005). In a debate between Fullerton and Louisville, Fullerton is seen deploying a similar style to debate as

Louisville and is described as being companions in the fight for racial justice in debate (CBS Television, 2005). After Louisville is defeated by Fullerton, Louisville's debaters describe the love that they have for their friends from Fullerton (CBS Television, 2005). This contrast mimics that of the previous documentary while adding an additional layer of emotional attachment to the teams featured as the teams depict a wider variety of characters than before (CBS Television, 2005).

In 2006, CSTV produced their final documentary over the NDT, this time choosing to frame debate around the on-going clash of civilization discussion (CBS Television, 2006). As “an activity driven by the participants”, debate is depicted as a battle to be the fastest, most researched speaker (CBS Television, 2006). While previous documentaries had little mention of ‘the game’, the 2006 rendition included a significant amount of interviews over debate as *the game* (CBS Television, 2006). Schools like Missouri State University (MoState), Idaho State University (Idaho), Harvard, Kansas, and Michigan had students featured in the documentary describing *the game* as “a game of arguments, it’s a game of intellect, it’s a competition where you are tested by your research skills” (CBS Television, 2006). In unpacking ‘the game’, interviewees said that the game involved “pretending you are a person who has the ability to effect actual government policy” and defending arguments that you personally do not believe in but rather are defending in order to win the debate (CBS Television, 2006). In justifying this framing, one interviewee said, “it’s fundamentally a competition but in order for it to be judged fairly, it has to be a game” (CBS Television, 2006). By choosing to emphasize *the game* of debate, the 2006 documentary is distinct from previous versions as it juxtaposes the characterized direction with holistic claims about debate (CBS Television, 2006). Idaho is highlighted in this depiction as they are framed as “a source of pride for their entire state” for

having “made a name for themselves with their outrageous antics” and seeking to “change the game” (CBS Television, 2006). Interviews from Idaho debaters referenced the joy of frustrating other teams with their “purpose of distracting from the topic” (CBS Television, 2006). Kansas debaters and Dartmouth coaches are seen describing Idaho’s style as “shady” and difficult to evaluate as a judge (CBS Television, 2006). The rhetoric of two-sides of debate is inline with the clash of civilizations in so far as the game signifies the traditionalist side of debate contrasted against the teams that employ personal arguments, and the documentary was successful in depicting such a clash.

“America loves a winner but can’t tolerate a loser” is the tagline for the novel 2008 documentary, “The Debate Team” (*Debate Team Documentary New News*, n.d.; Ray Behnke, 2020). The documentary follows the 2005 CEDA National Tournament participants as they fight to be crowned “the people’s champion” amongst 180 teams (*Debate Team Documentary New News*, n.d.; Ray Behnke, 2020). Taking a different approach to depicting a national debate tournament, Douglas B. Robbins produced the documentary over the course of three years before entering it into various film festivals (*Debate Team Documentary New News*, n.d.; Ray Behnke, 2020). Robbins’ approach was novel in so far as it was not produced for cable television but rather, it was created to be mass produced on DVDs and sold online (*Debate Team Documentary New News*, n.d.). This gave Robbins the ability to craft a higher resolution image with more variety in interviews and storyline content (*Debate Team Documentary New News*, n.d.; Ray Behnke, 2020). The clips that make-up the documentary feature debaters speaking and a screen graphic showing closed captions of the speech (*Debate Team Documentary New News*, n.d.; Ray Behnke, 2020). Graphics are also used to blur the face of debaters who presumably chose not to agree to be featured (*Debate Team Documentary New News*, n.d.; Ray Behnke, 2020).

Additionally, deleted scenes are available on the documentary's official website which expands the content that consumers can choose to engage with (*Debate Team Documentary New News*, n.d.). While the teams featured are mostly the same between the two documentaries, the new techniques in filmography and marketing deployed within "The Debate Team" were successful in distinguishing Robbins' work from that of CSTV (CBS Television, 2005; Ray Behnke, 2020). The DVD sales for "The Debate Team" are not available online, but the number of comments on publicly broadcast versions on YouTube suggest a high level of popularity afforded to the film (*Debate Team Documentary New News*, n.d.; Ray Behnke, 2020). The combination of public film festival awards, novel filmography, and general public interest in ICPD at the time generated the popularity that propelled Robbin's work into the 2020's when it was re-released on YouTube and amassed over one thousand views to date (*Debate Team Documentary New News*, n.d.; Ray Behnke, 2020).

Aided by computers and rapidly developing personal audio and video recording devices, the clash of civilizations excelled to new heights that brought discursive and material violence to Black members of the debate community. In 2008, at the CEDA National Tournament, Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley, coach at the time for the University of Pittsburgh, was controversially 'struck', or removed by a debating team, from judging the semi-final round between Fort Hays State University, led by Bill Shanahan, and Townson State University (*Kansas University Fires Debate Coach Who Lost Temper Over Racism Accusation*, 2008). In the video that has now seen over ten-thousand views, Dr. Reid-Brinkley is seen in a verbal altercation with Shanahan (*Kansas University Fires Debate Coach Who Lost Temper Over Racism Accusation*, 2008). Once Shanahan stands up and within a yard of Dr. Reid-Brinkley, Shanahan can be seen becoming erratic, jumping up and down, and eventually mooning Dr. Reid-Brinkley while Shanahan

screams “Oh, I’m an asshole?” (*Kansas University Fires Debate Coach Who Lost Temper Over Racism Accusation*, 2008). The altercation was video taped and later released online through YouTube (*Kansas University Fires Debate Coach Who Lost Temper Over Racism Accusation*, 2008). Once Fort Hays State University administrator’s were made aware of the video, Shanahan was terminated (*Kansas University Fires Debate Coach Who Lost Temper Over Racism Accusation*, 2008). The video itself has amassed countless views as it has been shared, edited and re-released on various platforms such as reddit, Facebook, and twitter, most entitled “Angry Professors” (amytown, 2009).

As controversies continued to occur within ICPD, public attention previously garnered by CSTV documentaries continued to justify further use of documentary equipment as teams and universities sought public recognition of their debate success. More documentaries were created, more videos were released, and more cameras were present in debates to capture the triumphs, failures, and emotions of debaters and the culture within ICPD.

In 2011, director and producer, Debra Tolchinsky, released the film “Fast Talk” which follows the Northwestern University debate team “as it tries for a second consecutive championship” while considering the rapid delivery style of modern ICPD (Tolchinsky, 2011). The documentary-style production features debaters, coaches, and alumni from the Northwestern debate team as they describe their relationship to debate, why they joined, why they stayed, and why they talk so fast (Tolchinsky, 2011). In the opening sequence, Tolchinsky describes their initial expectations when beginning the process of creating the documentary, stating “When I initially set out to make a film about college debate, I imagined people at podiums talking about issues I could understand in a way I could understand. Seeing it now left me gasping and made me wonder what the heck had happened to college debate and why do these people talk so fast?”

(Tolchinsky, 2011). The perspective Tolchinsky describes is not unique and rather is a common perception the non-debating public holds on ICPD. Highlighting both the extremely competitive nature of the activity along with the rapidly evolving approaches to winning debates, the film is both a praise and criticism of ICPD's evolution through the years. Specifically, Tolchinsky questions whether all debaters speak at such a rapid pace and ponders the effects of competition on the public-speaking aspects of the activity (Tolchinsky, 2011). In doing so, Tolchinsky narrates, "Although I still didn't understand the intricacies of the game, I felt like I had a grip on the basics and could start to think more about fast talk, and that's when I discovered not every team talks fast" (Tolchinsky, 2011). After which, a clip of a Black, unnamed University of Louisville's debater giving a speech at a slower rate of delivery is played followed by a white member of the Northwestern debate team, named in the clip as John Warden, doing the same while stating that "personal experiences" should not be incorporated into competitive debates (Tolchinsky, 2011). These clips are from an unidentified "regional tournament" in which two Black debaters from the University of Louisville were debating against two white debaters from Northwestern and feature both the slow delivery rates and the narrative-like style of Louisville's arguments (Tolchinsky, 2011). Unsurprisingly, neither of the Louisville debaters are named in the clip, while both of the Northwestern debaters are (Tolchinsky, 2011). Additionally, the documentary follows these clips with a talking-head interview of white Northwestern debater describing Louisville's arguments in a reductive manner, saying "I debated a Louisville team once who was like 'we're Black, we can't talk fast and it is mean that you are talking fast' and I don't think there's any, like, linguistic difference that make it so that, you know, white people or males are better debaters than others" (Tolchinsky, 2011). Tolchinsky implicitly refutes this description by following the talking-head with a narration saying "I learned almost all fast talkers

attended expensive summer institutions prior to college, which maybe meant fast talkers where also privileged talkers” (Tolchinsky, 2011). In this way, “Fast Talk” is unique as it not only provides two opposing styles of debate but also weighs in on the perspectives of both ideological sides of the culture of talking fast within debates.

Beyond the partial discussion of racial influences to debate, “Fast Talk” also weighs in on gendered perspectives of debaters. One particular clip features a sizable audience of maybe 10-15 people watching a feminine debater, later identified as Mary, present a practice speech while two male debaters hold water guns pointed at the speaker, ready to squirt the speaker for any mistake made during the speech (Tolchinsky, 2011). When Mary says they do not want to do this because they stutter, the audience and individuals holding the squirt guns begin to pressure Mary into continuing by referencing other debaters who completed the practice drill and assuring Mary that this is meant to make them better (Tolchinsky, 2011). The gendered dynamics at play in the clip are salient as Mary finishes the drill and appears visibly upset after being pressured into doing so (Tolchinsky, 2011). With few Black debaters referenced in the documentary along with little positive representation of women debaters, this film seemingly reifies the racial and gendered expectations of ICPD by primarily featuring successful, white, masculine Northwestern debaters.

On January 25th, 2011, the JasonBadgett YouTube channel released a eleven minute long video produced by the University of Kansas’s (KU) OldFather Studios that highlighted the “most under-appreciated (debate) teams at the University of Kansas” (*Kansas Debate*, 2011). Entitled “Kansas Debate: For the Love of the Argument”, the video features talking-head interviews of current head coach, Scott Harris, alongside at-the-time debaters including Dylan Quigley, Melanie Campbell, Mark Wilkins, and many others as they describe the love they have for the

activity (*Kansas Debate*, 2011). Focusing purely on KU debaters, the video describes the strenuous demands of being a top-tier debater on the road to winning the national championship while painting the program as one that is family-oriented and a dedicated group of true-to-heart teammates (*Kansas Debate*, 2011). Very few videos exist in which a university's media department follows and documents the success and culture of their college debate team, making the KU video unique and one to model as a mode for increasing recruitment numbers as well as public attention towards the activity's social and educational benefits.

On December 13th of 2012, the Gonzaga University Debate Program traveled to Atlanta, Georgia to attend the NDT and brought along a university camera crew to document their trip (GUTV Gonzaga University Digital Media Program, 2012). The eleven and a half long production features news-style commentary and after-the-fact interviews to create the story of Gonzaga's historic success at the 2012 NDT (GUTV Gonzaga University Digital Media Program, 2012). Beginning by unpacking the event sequence of the NDT, the video captures moments from the opening ceremonies, morning before 'Day 1', and the process of doing onsite practices to prepare for each debate (GUTV Gonzaga University Digital Media Program, 2012). The video is public-facing in that it explains both the structure and intricacies of ICPD (GUTV Gonzaga University Digital Media Program, 2012). Key themes from the video include the extreme dedication and workload of nationally competitive coaches along with the unique relationships established between long-term debaters (GUTV Gonzaga University Digital Media Program, 2012). Coaches are seen emphasizing both the long-hours spent doing research for their teams and the emotional connection to the growth and success of their teams (GUTV Gonzaga University Digital Media Program, 2012). Opposing teams are continually seen having their careers ended by terminal losses, meaning they had their final debate of CEDA eligibility

and loss to Gonzaga to make it happen (GUTV Gonzaga University Digital Media Program, 2012). That is until Gonzaga's top team and primary focus of the documentary lose on a three to two decision in quarter finals of the 2012 NDT, effectively ending both debaters' career (GUTV Gonzaga University Digital Media Program, 2012). The bittersweet moment is captured by the camera crew and is narrated as a "crushing blow" (GUTV Gonzaga University Digital Media Program, 2012). While amassing 3,705 views on YouTube, the video is an excellent example of the short-filmed documentary-style depictions of collegiate debate (GUTV Gonzaga University Digital Media Program, 2012).

The livestreams

Following the popularity of college debate documentaries, various individuals and organizations began to live-stream debates in an effort to aid instruction of new debaters as well as show transparency into the on-goings of a live, real-time debate. On April 2nd of 2013, a YouTube channel called Debate Stream was created to *showcase* "some of the best debates in the country" (Debate Stream, 2013). As one of the largest, publicly available source for livestreamed debates, Debate Stream has travelled to various national high school and college tournaments to stream debates for almost a decade to acquire over 635,000 views (Debate Stream, 2013). While it is unclear whether Debate Stream was the first debate-specific live streaming channel, it is clear that the number of prominent rounds available make it one of the most popular to date. In tandem with Debate Stream, others began to stream debate rounds, likely seeking similar goals to Debate Stream. Of those, few gained significant popularity in terms of total views, with the notable exception of the Joe leeson-schatz channel and the Exodus Files organization's three channels. The Joe leeson-schatz channel, created by Director of Debate at Binghamton University in 2006, has amassed a total of 163,648 views across seven years of livestreaming

(Joe Leeson-Schatz, 2016; Leeson-Schatz, 2006). Exodus Files, an organization created by three former Emporia State University debaters in 2017, streamed across three total channels, allowing them to livestream three debates at any given time (Exodus Files, 2017). In doing so, Exodus Files grossed over 210,000 views through three years of service (Exodus Files, 2017; Exodus Files 1, 2018; Exodus Files 2, 2018). The popularity of livestreamed debates is without argument as the number of channels, streams, and pre-recorded videos available on websites such as YouTube points to a public desire to watch policy debates. However, as proven above, such publicity is not always in good spirit with the intention to share the benefits of the activity.

The Michael Moreno events

In a debate versus Juan Diego Catholic in 2019 at the Arizona State University Invitational, Michael Moreno and Weston Burnett from Layton High School read arguments citing Ben Shapiro and Jordan Peterson which prompted the judge, Alex Fan, to end the debate prematurely and report the incident to the tournament directors, also known as "tab" (Itsnotmyfault, 2019). After being reported to tab, the decision was made that Moreno and Weston would receive severely low speaker points and be declared losers of that particular round (Itsnotmyfault, 2019). Immediately following the tournament, Michael Moreno released a video of the round, which no one had known existed prior to its release, including the debaters and judge featured in the video (Itsnotmyfault, 2019). In this video, which can be found through the screen clip in Appendix D, Moreno edited the full recording of the round to only include excerpts preselected to aid his overall argument of exclusion and predisposition against white debaters who are conservative in their political opinions. After releasing the video to countless self-proclaimed rightwing news companies, Moreno was featured in an interview where he calls

for fellow right wingers, Ben Shapiro and Jordan Peterson to join in his crusade against identity based arguments in debate (Itsnotmyfault, 2019; Moreno, 2019a, 2019b).

Later that year, Moreno utilized Weber State University's Walk-On policy regarding their Policy Debate Program and joined the team at the beginning of the 2019-2020 season (Itsnotmyfault, 2019). The, at the time, Director of Debate (DoD), Ryan Wash, is well known for being a widely celebrated critical debater who ended his career on a historic run as he won the two national championships available to intercollegiate debaters at the time, the National Debate Tournament (NDT) and the Cross Examination Debate Association National Tournament (CEDA) in 2016. Being the first team to do this, Ryan Wash and his partner Elijah Smith are now known to have 'united the crowns', achieving this for the first time in college policy debate history, Wash and Smith are famous in the community for their style, skill, and overall success (Itsnotmyfault, 2019; NDT Book 2020, 2020). In October of 2019, Moreno posted a video to YouTube featuring Ryan Wash giving a lecture during their pre-season preparation sessions (Moreno, 2019b, 2019c). In this video, Moreno pulls one-liners from the lecture and attempts to paint Wash as anti-white, unskilled, and overrated (Itsnotmyfault, 2019). Throughout the video, it becomes clear these quotes from Wash are pulled out of context given the nature of Wash's style of debate being one of critical origins. However, as is the style of Moreno, the video was released and disseminated to university leadership with the intent of getting Wash removed from the position. While it is unclear whether Moreno's outcry resulted in Wash's termination, Wash was ultimately investigated by Weber State University administration and no longer works for the institution (Lonas, 2019; Moreno, 2019b, 2019c).

The COVID-19 pandemic

On March 10th, 2020, COVID-19 had been declared a global pandemic and shut down universities, causing the CEDA Executive Committee and the National Debate Tournament administration to reconsider hosting their national tournaments (Cross Examination Debate Association, 2020a). Both organizations ultimately cancelled their physical national tournaments and took to Facebook to share the news, with the NDT making their announcement on March 11th and CEDA posting on March 12th (Cross Examination Debate Association, 2020b; NDT Book 2020, 2020). Additionally, both shared similar sentiments towards the decision, while CEDA Executive Committee stated independently that concerns over “health, safety, and liability” caused by COVID-19 “prevent(ed) a physical” tournament (Cross Examination Debate Association, 2020b). The NDT released a letter to the public posted to Facebook on March 13th, 2020 which recapped the decision and further explained the justification, stating that “multiple NDT participants were required to withdraw (from the tournament) because of university-imposed travel bans” (National Debate Tournament (NDT), 2020).

The decision to cancel the national tournaments was important, not only because it cancelled the two national championships for the first time in history, but also because it resulted in the award ceremonies, committee meetings, and community events shifting online. Shifting key organizational events online meant that members of the community who planned to participate in the events had to utilize Zoom, the video conferencing software used by CEDA and the NDT. Additionally, the option of asynchronous awards ceremonies allowed both organizations to share annual awards announcements via pictures or pre-recorded videos that were shared to the organizations’ social media accounts and posted on their respective websites (Cross Examination Debate Association, 2020c; NDT Book 2020, 2020). This provided a digital

means for individuals to congratulate award winners by sharing the post that announced their award, resulting in a significant increase in media engagement with CEDA and likely NDT social media accounts (Cross Examination Debate Association, 2020d). In this way, the cancellation of the 2020 national championships provided an avenue for both organizations to utilize social technologies already available to them in ways that were novel yet retained some of the sentimentality that organization members had towards the ceremonies and traditions which constituted the annual competitions.

On May 29th, 2020, Soham Govande published Cardr, “an evidence collector for high-school and college debate” after “recognizing the need for a simple and user-friendly solution” to “making it easier for students to cut debate evidence” (Govande, n.d.; *Whois Cardrdebate.Com*, n.d.). The program can be downloaded for free and can be utilized through a Google Chrome browser extension to access the content of a third-party webpage and “automatically gathers page information such as author, date, and publication and then allows you to directly import the card into Word” (Govande, n.d.). Specifically, “Cardr is curated to work on 50+ news and thinktank websites, but works on almost every site” to allow users to expand their research sources while skipping the tedious and repetitive process of having to generate a citation for their evidence (cite) and highlighting and underlining key parts of the evidence (cutting cards) (Govande, n.d.). While imperfect, the program is useful for those in the early stages of their career as they learn to quickly and efficiently cut quality cards for their arguments. Cardr is yet another program that was created by a debater, for debaters with the intent of increasing efficiency within research.

On August 22nd, 2022, the indexing and storage website, Debatev.com, was published and allowed users to search for pre-cut (highlighted and underlined) debate evidence (cards)

using a simple keyword search (*Whois Debatev.Com*, n.d.). Created by Dens Sumesh, Akaash Kolluri, and Rohan Agrawal, the program utilizes publicly available cards posted on evidence sharing websites such as openCaselist.com (Sumesh et al., 2020/2022). The webpage itself is easy to use and features no more than a search bar, login option for saved searches, and information on the website's creators and programming (Sumesh et al., 2020/2022). As a tool for debaters, Debatev.com is useful for doing last-minute evidence searches and for compensating for a team lacking in the number of researchers and card cutters.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I unpacked the mediated history of ICPD. In doing so, I crafted a timeline of ICPD, beginning with its origins and spanning to the status quo's technologically embedded activity. The origins of the activity detail the creation of intercollegiate competition and situate the original intent for debate to be a space to engage policy proposals regarding United States military actions. Following its creation, various organizations were established and tasked with overseeing ICPD operations and governing an annual national tournament and determining the resolution. As the organizations governing ICPD continued to evolve, so too did the technology that the general public had access to. Once the computer revolution began, the research processes for ICPD began to shift, allowing for more evidence to be available for presentation in round. The newfound ease for accessing widespread literature meant that arguments proposed in round were able to evolve and dive deeper into evidence. The combination of previous public attention towards the activity and the newly expanded research capabilities generated the slew of documentaries that showcased the unique, fast-paced competition of ICPD. As audio and video recordings of college debates continued to spread, so too did the racialized remarks made in reaction to Black debaters and the Louisville Project's success at increasing "meaningful black

participation” in the activity (Dillard-Knox, 2014). Ultimately, COVID-19 changed the game by moving all in-person debate tournaments online and fundamentally requiring audio and video technology to be used to participate in ICPD.

In the next chapter, I will unpack the concept of anti-Blackness using an afro-pessimist lens. In doing so, I will discuss the work of Frank Wilderson III to situate my analysis of racialized violence in the context of historically reinforced systems of anti-Black sentiments and actions. I will pay particular focus to the primary tenants of anti-Blackness, being that of natal alienation, absolute domination, and general dishonor (Wilderson, 2010). Then, I will discuss additional factors of anti-Black violence, being that of fungibility and gratuity, to frame the likelihood of anti-Black violence in moments where it is possible (Hartman, 1997; Sexton, 2011; Wilderson, 2010). Finally, I will describe and respond to counter-theories for explaining anti-Blackness as a system and force for racialized violence.

Chapter 3 - Anti-Blackness

College policy debate is an intellectual activity in which participants deploy a number of arguments and argument styles to evaluate a resolution. In addition to discussing matters related to the resolution, ICPD has also been subject to debate about its own nature as an activity.

Debaters have used debate to discuss social matters happening inside and outside of the debate round. As discussed in the introduction chapter of this thesis, debates that challenge the normative, policy-driven discussions have become prevalent due to the success of the Louisville Project. Often, debaters act as scholars by importing philosophical frameworks into these debates. In this way, debate becomes a site for scholarly inquiry about itself and about the world around it. This chapter continues this tradition by exploring the philosophical implications of debate and in particular, of debate as a mediated activity. While there are many vantage points from which to evaluate the social and cultural impacts of online debate, I have chosen to focus on the intersections of media and race. I have done so because the evolution of technology's influence into the structure and content of debates occurs alongside racially violent reactions to Black debaters suggests a relationship worthy of study.

This thesis investigates anti-Blackness in debate by evaluating the policies used to govern the online platforms used for digital debate during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. In the previous chapter, I described an in-depth history of intercollegiate policy debate. Specifically, I identify a computer revolution which caused an increase. Finally, I framed COVID-19 as a turning point in that it required the invention of new virtual conferencing software to host online debates to be governed by newly created policies. I suggest that debate is always already a mediated activity because the structure and content of debate has changed drastically in tandem with technology's influence. By offering a media history of debate, I argued that the public

representations of debate have historically been used to not only prop up the activity but to demonize and target Black debaters. In this chapter, I will explain why the media history of debate is inherently raced. That is, I will explain why racialized surveillance of Black debaters participates in a system of anti-Black racism that seeks to reinforce Blackness as criminal and deviant.

My primary argument in this thesis is that debate is anti-Black, and that policies or procedures that seek to expand access to debate through technology are implicated in this anti-Blackness. In order to make this argument, however, I need to first name and describe anti-Blackness in general and in debate in particular. In this chapter, I first explain the concept of anti-Blackness. Then, I unpack afro-pessimism as the literature base which grounds my explanation of anti-Blackness. In doing so, I define the foundational pillars of anti-Blackness and articulate framing mechanisms to be used when evaluating the existence of and implications to anti-Blackness. Finally, I situate anti-Blackness within debate by identifying historic examples in which the media produced about debate was used as a tool to enact anti-Black violence, particularly focusing on the actions of Michael Moreno and his surveillance of the Weber State University director of debate. I then conclude by considering alternative frameworks to explain anti-Black violence and render afro-pessimism the most effective in conducting an investigation into the prevalence of anti-Blackness within debate.

This work is particularly important because of the already prevalent instances of racialized violence within ICPD. The development of targeted *framework* arguments that defend normative styles of delivery and evidence generation in response to the Louisville Project's focus on increasing "meaningful Black participation" by importing "Black oral traditions" into the debate space is evidence of a reactionary approach to Black debaters (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Reid-

Brinkley, 2008). This is to say, the clash of civilizations that began as a result of the Louisville Project points to a desire to preserve the whitened structures and ideologies which discourage and prevent “meaningful Black participation” (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Reid-Brinkley, 2008). The representations of Black debaters in the CSTV documentaries between 2004 and 2006 depict Black debaters as radicals fighting for racial justice and shows white debaters calling their arguments “dogmatic and stupid” (CBS Television, 2005). Additionally, the right-wing reactions to the University of Georgia’s arguments against the devaluation of Black life in 2016 and the threats Wash received after being featured in Moreno’s 2019 expositions are indicative of the ongoing issue of audio and video recordings of Black debaters being *released* to white-nationalist news organizations and resulting in threats against Black debaters (Crawford, 2016; Harvey, 2019).

Anti-Blackness explained

Anti-Blackness is commonly understood as a structure of racialized violence that emphasizes the targeted, and extreme “kind of racial prejudice directed towards Black people” (Morris, 2020). Commonly referred to as “anti-Black racism”, anti-Blackness moves beyond traditional conceptions of racism to include the spectrum of violence which seeks to exclude, demarcate, and/or eliminate Black humanity (Iyko Day, 2015; Morris, 2020; Reid-Brinkley, 2008; Wilderson, 2010). There is some disagreement about how to define anti-Blackness as a concept, namely disagreement over whether anti-Blackness is merely a manifestation of contingent racism or if it is structure (*Confronting Anti-Black Racism*, n.d.; Morris, 2020). Various authors have used the work of Dr. Akua Benjamin to guide their definitional practices

around the common theme of “beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination directed at people of African descent” that “are held by individuals and also are embedded in the policies and practices of institutions” (*Confronting Anti-Black Racism*, n.d., p. 1,2). Defining anti-Blackness as a set of “beliefs, attitudes, prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination” is useful because it contextualizes the intention versus unintentional characteristics of anti-Black violence (*Confronting Anti-Black Racism*, n.d.). Focusing on “people of African descent” is a common theme of definitions because it localizes the implicated group of people and provides room for nuanced explanations of violence based on an individual’s specific relationship to their African descent (*Confronting Anti-Black Racism*, n.d.). In other words, it allows for contextual conversations regarding colorism which can be useful in providing specific interpretations of violence against darker skinned Black people versus light-skinned people of African descent. Additionally, this definition is useful because it addresses the social and structure means through which anti-Blackness manifests itself. In other words, anti-Black racism is a system of personal orientations to Blackness that manifest in institutions and their policies. For the purposes of this thesis, I use this definition of anti-Blackness because it is functional in its descriptiveness and contextual reflexivity of media representations.

However, this definition of anti-Blackness still points to a degree of possible reform to the structure and prevalence of anti-Blackness. The perception of changing or resolving anti-Blackness becomes possible as the defined source is that of human interpretation. This is problematic it assumes that anti-Blackness exists as a social construction that can be socially overcome. However, historically “anti-racist” events such as the Civil War and the Civil Rights Movement have failed to “change the position of African Americans within civil society” as proven by both the modern instances of lynching akin to that of pre-Civil Rights era practices

and “the crackdown on Black political movements” (Kennedy & Diaz, 2021; Weier, 2014). In other words, past actions to eradicate anti-Blackness have failed and rather resulted in a change to the means by which Black people are stripped of humanity and rendered fungible objects used to sustain civil society (Weier, 2014). The labor of slavery was replaced with the criminalization of Black political action and resulted in prison labor akin to that of slavery (Weier, 2014). This suggests that anti-Blackness functions beyond a set of beliefs and rather manifests as a gratuitous system wherein moves to make racial progress are either cracked-down upon or merely morph the means by which anti-Blackness occurs (Weier, 2014).

Within the framework of anti-Blackness, there are a myriad of theoretical approaches to describe its fundamental features. This project forwards a definition of anti-Blackness that is understood through the lens of afro-pessimism. Afro-pessimism is “a heuristic strategy for diagnosing how Black people are positioned, contained, and punished within prevailing discourses and arrangements” that “provides a way to register how (Black people) are both excluded from and necessary to the category of the Human (Winters, 2020). The Human, as understood by afro-pessimism, refers to white and nonblack individuals who are endowed with rights, autonomy, and are recognized as productive subjects (Wilderson, 2010, 2020; Winters, 2020). Afro-pessimism considers the scope of Black agency and (in)capacity in the aftermath of Slavery and frames the “category of the human” as constituted by dislocation of Black Humanity (Wilderson, 2010, 2020; Winters, 2020). This is because the “category of the human” is defined by the damnation of Blackness as demonstrated by the social and material hierarchy created by the Middle Passage (Hartman, 1997; Wilderson, 2010; Winters, 2020). Rather than prescribe to a progressive narrative of Black liberation, afro-pessimism argues that “Black people are ‘always already positioned as slave(s)’ in that their position within white civil society is still that of the

‘social death’ that defined slavery” (Weier, 2014; Wilderson, 2010). In other words, Black liberation assumes a sense of political recognition and agency that is inaccessible to the Black people today the aftermath of slavery still positions Black people as the antithesis of Human (Weier, 2014; Wilderson, 2010).

Broadly, afro-pessimism is a branch of Black studies that was inspired by Saidiya Harman’s *Scenes of Subjection* and Orlando Patterson’s *Slavery and Social Death* (Weier, 2014; Wilderson, 2010). Blossoming “at the turn of the millennium”, afro-pessimism responded to claims of “a post-racial United States and the failure of existing political and cultural theories to explain” the on-going “prevalence of racial discrimination in the United States” (Weier, 2014). Foundational afro-pessimist authors, Jared Sexton and Frank Wilderson III, have gained popularity within the literature base as they draw connections between historic examples of spectacular anti-Blackness and modern, everyday moments of violence to craft a theory of Black political (non)ontology (Hartman, 1997; Sexton, 2011; Weier, 2014; Wilderson, 2010, 2020). Wilderson, currently working as “a professor of African-American studies at the University of California, Irvine”, is often cited as the founder of afro-pessimism (Cunningham, 2020). Wilderson has published various works to articulate the “philosophical school”, most notably in 2010 with his book, *Red, White, and Black* and in 2020 with his book entitled *Afropessimism* (Cunningham, 2020; Wilderson, 2010, 2020). Wilderson draws upon his own experiences and media representations of Blackness to craft his approach to explaining “racial discrimination in the United States” and the existence of Black social death (Cunningham, 2020; Weier, 2014; Wilderson, 2010, 2020).

A key precept of afro-pessimism is that of ontology (Sexton, 2011; Warren, 2015; Weier, 2014; Wilderson, 2010, 2020; Winters, 2020). Afro-pessimism is a theory which “acknowledges

that the Black-as-object is situated outside of space, time, and the world, and therefore, the black “does not exist” in the world because it lacks symbolic placement” (2015, pg. 9). This is because, “Whereas Humans exist on some plane of being and thus can become existentially present through some struggle for, of, or through recognition, Blacks cannot reach this plane” (2010, pg. 46). In other words, afro-pessimism generates a theory of political (non)ontology whereby the “Black-as-object”, or non-human, is denied access to the “plane of being” wherein one is inherently recognized as a subject (Warren, 2015; Wilderson, 2010). Ontology itself, meaning a state of being or the recognition that one is a subject, “always already was” exclusionary of Blackness due to the brutal dehumanization of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (Wilderson, 2010). The constant, irreversible and indiscriminate acts of violence against enslaved Black people was beyond murderous and torturous, it produces the “Black-as-object” (Warren, 2015; Wilderson, 2010). Slaves were both symbolically and literally made into objects as trophies were collected from public executions and the dead bodies of the enslaved were used to make “purses of skin” and “grease from the flesh” (Berry, 2016). Here, Wilderson’s argument becomes ever more salient; Black *people* are not in fact *people* because to be a person means to have access to the degrees of recognition inherently afforded to non-Black people. In this way, Wilderson grounds definitions of anti-Blackness in claims of irreversible and unwavering acts of violence that further the ontological positioning of Black people as non-human (Weier, 2014; Wilderson, 2010). Wilderson, drawing upon the Mid-Atlantic Slave Trade and era of chattel slavery, goes on to say, “Spillers, Fanon, and Hartman maintain that the violence that continually repositions the Black as a void of historical movement is without analog in the suffering dynamics of the ontologically alive” (2010, pg. 46). Thus, to say that Black *people* are *people* is to say that Black bodies are “... not natively alienated, generally dishonored, or open to gratuitous violence,” a

statement which Wilderson regards as reserved for those who are white or non-Black (2010, pg. 46).

This thesis investigates anti-Blackness within digital debate and utilizes the theory of afro-pessimism to ground its investigation. In this section, I unpack the concept of anti-Blackness and afro-pessimism. Specifically, I explain the lineage of the theory and its particular focus on political ontology. In the next section, I will go further into afro-pessimism by describing the tenants of anti-Blackness. These tenants, being natal alienation, absolute domination, and general dishonor, are necessary in conducting an investigation into anti-Blackness because it provides the framework through which governing policies can be analyzed.

Natal alienation

Wilderson argues that there are three pillars to anti-Blackness support the historical accumulation of violence committed against Black bodies without replication on non-Black bodies. Gratuitous violence through natal alienation, absolute domination, and general dishonor forms the foundation through which this project theorizes the ontological positioning of Black bodies and thus the system of anti-Blackness. Reserving the realm of humanism to non-Black bodies is not a concept established or reversed in a single action. Natal Alienation is to have no familial ties recognized by the world/civil society (Wilderson 2010). This is because Slave Masters during chattel slavery would steal newborn babies from enslaved mothers and have another enslaved woman raise the child, thus, severing the bond between mother and child (King Watts, 2017). Fred Moten, referencing Wilderson's work, describes natal alienation as "the response to, and the attempt to regulate" slavery (2014, p. 55). In doing so, Moten posits natal alienation as a reinforcing mechanism to anti-Blackness, rather than the pure locus and stasis

from which anti-Blackness results from (Moten, 2014). This is because the initial enslavement of Black people, in which the Mid-Atlantic Slave Trade began, started the process of severing connections to familial ties, culture, and further relegated the Black to the space of non-Human as these characteristics are revered as the foundations upon which one defines themselves. This severance, or alienation, occurred materially in which the actual artifacts of a Slave's previous life were burned, dropped in the ocean, or simply lost in transit to the New World (Fomin & Ndobegang, 2006). However, natal alienation takes a much more insidious manifestation in its destruction of bloodlines and traditions which otherwise would assist in counteracting the de-individuation that occurred during chattel slavery. This project considers natal alienation in this fashion; a mechanism through which Black individuals are stripped of individuality and connection. While damning enough on its own, natal alienation is not sufficient to warrant the totality of the argument of this project because it only represents a singular mechanism through which anti-Blackness as an ontologically structured system of violence manifests itself.

Absolute domination

Absolute domination is to be subject to the total will of another in which the Slave Master can do whatever he wants with the Slave's body (Wilderson 2010). This demonstrates the justification for lack of redeemability in the Slave Master because the ability to free the Slave and lynch the Slave are branches of the same possession of complete power. Absolute domination is best exemplified in Slave freedom papers in which Slave Masters would declare the freedom of specific Black people which allowed previous enslaved Black people to cross the Mason-Dixon under the ruse of liberation only to be torn into pieces when Black bodies were caught by Slavecatchers (*Tearing up Free Papers [Graphic]*. | *Library Company of Philadelphia Digital Collections*, n.d., see Appendix C.). Freedom papers signify the symbolic and material

ability for Slave Masters to provide solace to slavery while also possessing the ability to revoke it in an instant. Wilderson discusses freedom papers when describing the emptiness of the symbol of freedom for Black people, stating, "...political discourse recognizes freedom as a structuring ontologic and then it works to disavow this recognition by imagining freedom not through political ontology – where it rightfully began – but through political experience (and practice); whereupon it immediately loses its ontological foundations" (2010, pg. 35). Here, it becomes clear that the utility of *freedom* only serves to reinforce the rhetorical ability for structures of whiteness to enact absolute domination against Blackness by choosing when and in what fashions anti-Blackness manifests itself; in ability to provide false freedom alongside inherent damnation. This determination is necessary when supplementing the justification for replacing racism with anti-Blackness in rhetorical criticisms. As one utilizes liberal rhetoric in an attempt to provide solace, with terms including freedom and 'race', the only reprieve provided is to the author themselves in relieving their guilt for possessing absolute power over the rhetorical framing of blackness which one seeks to address.

General dishonor

The final pillar upon which Wilderson argues one should theorize afro-pessimism, is general dishonor which is the perpetual state of symbolic exclusion from humanity as demonstrated in the disregard for black individuality when seeking a locus for violence but rather resolving the desire for violence on anyone who is Black (Wilderson, 2010). General dishonor can be understood through the gratuitous nature by which Black bodies are made fungible and utilized as objective sites welcome to violence. This disregard for individuality is a result of the fungibilization of Black bodies (Hartman, 1997). In the context of anti-Blackness, fungibility refers specifically to the condition of the Slave whose body is a commodity to be molded and

shaped and used for any given desire of the Master (Hartman, 1997). As a versatile term, fungibility can be understood as the homogenization of Black people as object. Fungibility means that the locus of violence itself disregards other factors and settles on the mere presence of Blackness. To reiterate, the only reason Black people are killed at a far higher rate, incarcerated at a far higher rate, and discriminated against at a far higher rate is simply because they are Black. Other factors may contribute, but there is no reason why one slave's flesh was used for oil other than the inherent desire to produce excessive violence against Blackness, reducing Black bodies to objects and rendering anti-Blackness normalized and preferable.

As a framing mechanism for modern instances of anti-Blackness, both structural and social, the term general dishonor is correlated with social death, or the denial of all other characteristics of a Black *individual* in tandem with asserting Black people have access to social progress and recognition without basis (Sexton 2011). This is to say, no matter a Black *person's* personality, class, gender, or age, they will always be criminal, violent, untrustworthy, and disrespectful. Thus, in a modernity constructed by and for Whites, one in which Black people are not allowed to be *people*, any closeness Black bodies obtain to being recognized as humans is shut down through a litany of means purely because they are Black. Here, general dishonor becomes salient as the third and final pillar utilized when arguing the perseverance of an anti-Black reality.

In summary, anti-Blackness is the system of violence which gratuitously strips Blackness of its cultural signifiers and renders the "Black-as-object" ripe for exploitation (Warren, 2015; Wilderson, 2010). Afro-pessimism is the theory of Black political (non)ontology which theorizes modern racial discrimination to be the result of the dislocation of Black Humanity during the era of chattel slavery (Sexton, 2011; Weier, 2014; Wilderson, 2020; Winters, 2020). Specifically,

afro-pessimism provides a theoretical framework for evaluating anti-Black violence in so far as it provides fundamental tenants useful for identifying and tracing the prevalence of anti-Blackness (Weier, 2014; Winters, 2020). This thesis utilizes the three tenants of natal alienation, absolute domination, and general dishonor to investigate anti-Black sentiments within the surveillance policy for the JW Patterson Debates tournament.

Afro-pessimism is particularly useful theory for conducting such an investigation because it is historically situated and contextually reflective. This is to say, afro-pessimism grounds its explanations of violence in a comprehensive analysis of the trans-Atlantic slave trade to trace and locate Black in-Humanity as structuring mechanism for the United States. It “sketches a structural map of human experience” wherein “the experience of slavery as it has appeared across time and space” can be understood as the mechanism which perpetuates racial discrimination in the status quo (Cunningham, 2020). As a theory with explanatory power, afro-pessimism provides the necessary framework used in identifying anti-Blackness in its modern context. While afro-pessimism provides a comprehensive approach to understanding anti-Blackness, it avoids being prescriptive of the Black experience and rather focuses on the structural conditions of anti-Blackness which seek to limit or demonize Black sociality. In this way, afro-pessimism addresses questions of Black agency by describing the ways in which Black agency is denied by a political paradigm that built itself off Black suffering (Cunningham, 2020; Winters, 2020). In this way, afro-pessimism can attune to moments of Black liberatory potential while considering the ways in which that potential is structurally made impossible. Thus, as a theory with sufficient explanatory power for modern instances of anti-Black violence and a framework for identifying and tracing the prevalence of structural anti-Blackness, afro-

pessimism is a useful tool for conducting an investigation into the surveillance rhetoric of the JW Patterson Debates.

While this framework of afro-pessimism is useful for investigating the existence of anti-Blackness, scholars have pointed out some drawbacks to using the framework. In the next section, I will unpack the alternative conceptions of anti-Black violence as understood through the focuses of class, political progress, and fugitivity.

Responses to Afro-Pessimism

Various authors have written in opposition or direct response to afro-pessimism and the concept of anti-Blackness. Notably, Jose Sanchez, Lewis Gordon, and Fred Moten engage Wilderson's perception of Black (non)ontology to posit a distinct perception of violence against Black beings and the forces which cause it (Wilderson, 2010). While these thinkers offer a number of critiques of afro-pessimism, they can be summarized as indictments into afro-pessimism's holistic perception of the Black experience and alternative frameworks for explaining the prevalence of anti-Black violence. In the next section, I will take each of these in turn to consider the utility of afro-pessimism. Specifically, I will respond to claims that afro-pessimism "flattens blackness" and address arguments that a class-based analysis would best articulate modern violences (Sanchez, 2022). Then, I will consider the scope of Black agency in response to afro-pessimism by addressing the concept of *paraontology* as it functions as an alternative framework for describing Black (non)ontology and the maintenance of civil society (Moten, 2008).

Perhaps one of the most pervasive critiques of anti-Blackness as described by afro-pessimism is that it universalizes and homogenizes the Black experience. While one of the benefits of afro-pessimism is its ability to grapple with structure, some scholars suggest its

framework is too totalizing and assumes a homogenous Black experience with violence that disregards the particular nuances of everyday life for Black people. For instance, while racism is organized structurally, performances of identity are multifaceted. Jose Sanchez, author and prominent afro-pessimism critic, argues that afro-pessimism “flattens blackness” (Sanchez, 2022). To flatten Blackness, as Sanchez argues, would mean the process of “grouping together all Black people today as slaves” and disregarding the particular nuances of identity performance for Black individuals (Sanchez, 2022). This would include an ignorance to one’s gender, sexuality, socio-economic position, religion, and any other characteristic that might influence one’s relationship to systems of power. This claim is further backed by an on-going reference to Black Palestinians who, according to Sanchez, find their experiences analogous to other persecuted minority groups such as “Asians, indigenous Americans, and other nonblack people of color” (Sanchez, 2022). In this way, arguments against afro-pessimism that claim it “flattens Blackness” and incorrectly diagnoses violence based on race when other structural inequities such as class are active factors (Sanchez, 2022).

Flattening Blackness is a significant perceived drawback of afro-pessimism because it would “render a socialist anti-racists politics null and void” (Sanchez, 2022). Sanchez directly responds to Wilderson’s description of the ontological divide between Humans (non-Black beings) and Slaves (Black bodies) as the foundation through which power and sociality operate (Sanchez, 2022; Wilderson, 2010). Sanchez goes on to state that the assumption that all Black bodies “from striking Black Starbucks baristas to Black presidents, millionaires, and landlords” experience the same dynamics of anti-Black violence results in the same “flattened definitions of Blackness preached by white supremacists” and makes “black people become a race of eternal victims” (Sanchez, 2022).

Beyond arguments that afro-pessimism ‘flattens Blackness’, Sanchez forward a class-first analysis of systemic violence to explain modern racialized violence (Henwood, n.d.; Sanchez, 2022). In doing so, Sanchez argues that afro-pessimism, in its flattening of Blackness, disregards class as a predominant factor in modern violence given the deeply entrenched neoliberalism of the status quo (Sanchez, 2022). Sanchez points out the lack of significant consideration for Wilderson’s experiences to be caused by the material conditions of class, stating that such an oversight implicates the explanatory power of afro-pessimism (Henwood, n.d.; Sanchez, 2022). Sanchez’s work points to a larger argument that class structures influence and cause modern instances of racialized violence which is a clear indict to the theory of afro-pessimism and worthy of response (Henwood, n.d.; Sanchez, 2022).

The claim that class functions as a predetermining factor to anti-Black violence and racism is most often warranted by the capital forces which gave way to the Mid-Atlantic Passage as a mechanism for trading enslaved Black people (Reed, 2013, 2018; Wood, 2015). Referencing profit motives as the reason starting the trade of enslaved African people, the argument of capitalism overriding anti-Blackness as a libidinal force for violence is frequently brought up in reaction to the gratuitous nature by which afro-pessimism forwards an operational definition of anti-Blackness (Wood, 2015). The argument itself is simple and states that gratuity itself was never present and rather argues that enslavement was generational and individuals were subjected to it because of an attachment to a pre-existing structure formulated to ease production and heighten profit rates for the agriculture market (Wood, 2015). While historically situated, class as a structuring mechanism fails to account for the scope of gratuity and assumes generational states of being are conditional and not the point of ontological rupture (Wilderson, 2010). This is to say, the Middle Passage was the “onslaught of modernity” and reformulated the

possibility of Black sociality even amidst a “post-slavery” era (Wilderson, 2010). While class provides the proverbial means for progress in the form of wealth accumulation and status development, it fails to attune to the continual moments of anti-Blackness experienced even by the wealthiest and most well-known Black individuals. This means that, although capitalism may have been a contributing factor to the Middle Passage, it fails to explain the gratuitous nature of anti-Blackness as class can no longer provide solace or solution to racialized violence. Thus, afro-pessimism’s concept of fungibility and gratuity are best situated to explain modern instances of anti-Blackness as it best articulates the libidinal desires to enact violence against Black flesh regardless of its class.

Afro-pessimism has a comprehensive defense against claims of capitalism creating the conditions for modern anti-Blackness. In addition to Wilderson’s work, various authors have contributed to the discussion a co-constitutive relationship between capital and slavery, arguing that claims of a class-conscious generation resolving the material conditions of slavery are part and parcel of whitewashed American view of slavery (Hart, 2018; Linscott, 2017; Wilderson, 2010). Specifically, such a position discounts the “consequences of slave-driving and slave-driven capitalism both for (the) United States and the Atlantic world” (Hart, 2018). This is further understood through the “specific labor extraction technologies, such as the ‘whipping machine,’” which are linked “to soaring rates of profit” (Hart, 2018). Here, the explanatory power of afro-pessimism is reinstated as claims to a class-focused approach to anti-Blackness can be subsumed and further articulated within the realm of gratuity and fungibility articulated by Wilderson’s theory (Hart, 2018; Wilderson, 2010).

In addition to criticisms of afro-pessimism’s arguments about class, claims that afro-pessimism falsely correlates moments of anti-Blackness with structural conditions of anti-

Blackness are made. Lewis Gordon criticizes the field of thought to say “‘*an antiblack world*’ is not identical with ‘*the world is antiblack*’” (Gordon et al., 2017). Such a statement is summative of Gordon’s most responsive argument against afro-pessimism. That is to say, Gordon recognizes and attunes to the violences that have been historically enacted against Black bodies and departs from Wilderson’s perception at the point of fatalism (Gordon et al., 2017). Put simply, Gordon believes that the damnation of anti-Blackness is merely a contingent state rather than an ontological state of being (Gordon et al., 2017). Citing the #BlackLivesMatter movement, Gordon frames the existence of anti-Blackness as malleable and reversable, claiming that progress for combatting a racial state is not only possible but probable when understood as a condition of the status quo rather than a state of permanent being (Gordon et al., 2017). In doing so, Gordon shifts the conversation away from a system of violence termed anti-Blackness towards a ephemeral concept of “antiblack racism” to ground the articulation that such violence can and should be fought against (Gordon et al., 2017). In doing so, Gordon points to the question of political commitment being foreclosed upon within an afropessimist perception of reality, framing the concept of absolute domination as a feature of the articulation of white agency rather than the existence of it (Gordon et al., 2017). Thus, Gordon’s larger argument is simply that antiblack racism is a symptom of the world rather than a defining characteristic and as such, it can be altered and challenged in the name of Black liberation (Gordon et al., 2017).

There are various problems with Gordon’s conception of “‘*an antiblack world*’” (Gordon et al., 2017). Namely, Gordon’s approach to conceptualizing Black social death as a contingent phenomenon capable of resolution leaves open the question of reversable progress (Gordon et al., 2017). This is to say, under Gordon’s perception of anti-Black racism, the presumed progress that Black beings have been given, such as the thirteenth amendment abolishing slavery, can be

reversed or taken away by the white structures which put it in place to begin with (Gordon et al., 2017). The same can be said about all points of progress that Gordon articulates, from Barack Obama being the President of the United States to the success of the #BlackLivesMatter movement bringing attention and action against police brutality (Gordon et al., 2017). Because of this, Gordon's argument about contingent moments creating the conditions for anti-Black violence falls short of recognizing the nonlinear ways power can be given and taken away by white elites.

Additionally, Gordon's argument shifts the onus for progress off of a societal and ontological disposition and onto the individual. This is to say, to claim that progress is possible and something to be "fought" for is to place blame for status quo violences on the Black individuals who must not be fighting to resolve and prevent said violences (Gordon et al., 2017; Sexton, 2011). Shifting the onus for progress onto the Black individuals who are the recipients of anti-Black violence turns, or reverses, the argument that anti-Blackness is contingent because it highlights the overwhelming ability for white structures of civil society to locate Black liberatory practices both within a realm of positive engagement and negative reinforcement of status quo conditions (Wilderson, 2010). While Gordon's overall argument is persuasive of an ahistorical analysis, it fails to account for the scope of gratuitous violence as articulated in Wilderson's conception of anti-Blackness and the (non)ontology of Black being (Gordon et al., 2017; Wilderson, 2010).

Critiques of afro-pessimism have influenced the formation of alternative frameworks for Black sociality. For instance, some scholars critical of the conception of (non)ontology and absolute domination postulate that Blackness possesses ephemeral, fugitive sociality in the face of social death. Grappling with the afro-pessimistic conception of (non)ontology, Fred Moten

contends that the relationality between Blackness and being is one of “paraontology” (Harney & Moten, 2013; Howard, 2020; Moten, 2017). In doing so, Moten departs from Wilderson’s defense of the totalizing nature of anti-Blackness to articulate a fugitive position of Blackness wherein “blackness and antiblackness remain in brutally antisocial structural support of one another like the stanchions of an absent bridge of lost desire” (Harney & Moten, 2013; Howard, 2020). This is to say, “ontology, from Moten’s standpoint, is not just unable to think antiblackness, but rather produced and given by that incapacity” (Howard, 2020). This paradoxical relationship between structure and position is what generates Moten’s novelty in the face of afro-pessimism. In other words, when faced with the overwhelming nature of white civil society locating Black being in the space of non-being, Moten seeks to “‘refuse subjection to ontology’s sanction against the very idea of black subjectivity,’ by exhausting ontology itself” through radical critique and ephemeral sociality (Harney & Moten, 2013; Howard, 2020). The moments of liberatory practice, understood by Moten, are enactments of the fugitive nature of Blackness resisting the predetermination of political-ontology attempting to lock Black being into a controlled mode of political engagement (Harney & Moten, 2013; Wallace, 2018). This mode of embodiment can best be understood through the analytic of the university versus the *undercommons* wherein the university, or academia writ large, functions both as a “a place of refuge” and a place of “fugitive planning” for radical engagement with sociological ‘enlightenment’ (Harney & Moten, 2013; Wallace, 2018).

Moten and Harney’s articulation of the *undercommons* is perhaps the best response to the theoretical framework of this thesis due to its contextuality within the university as well as its conception of fugitivity. Within their seminal 2013 work, rightfully entitled “The Undercommons”, Moten and Harney rewrite the conventional terms of *study* associated with

academia to exemplify the fugitive nature of Blackness in the face of university standards for enlightenment (Harney & Moten, 2013; Wallace, 2018). Specifically, Moten “suggest(s) alternatives: to gather with friends and talk about whatever you want to talk about, to have a barbecue or a dance --- all forms of unrestricted sociality that they slyly call ‘study’” (Harney & Moten, 2013; Wallace, 2018). Moten formulates this conception of *study* in conjunction with an “exploration of a tension emergent in the field of black studies” with regards to “the theoretical status of the concept of social death” (Sexton, 2011). In other words, Moten and Harney are concerned with the growing trend of social death studies which proposit a fundamental and overriding antagonism between moments of social life and the anti-Black structures which situate social death (Harney & Moten, 2013; Sexton, 2011). This cataclysmic conception of ‘study’ embarks on a journey between social life and social death to ground tactics and strategies which “dances with” and “dismantles” “the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places we know lie outside (academia’s) walls” (Harney & Moten, 2013; Howard, 2020; Sexton, 2011). In this way, Moten and Harney’s work in “The Undercommons” is responsive to and attentive of both white academia’s framing of Black studies as well as Black studies’ framing of white academia (Harney & Moten, 2013). While it is unclear how Moten and Harney would situate this thesis and its theoretical framework, it is clear that this thesis participates in the antagonism between social life and social death by forwarding a Wildersonian conception of social death which predetermines and limits the capacity for social life within the academic activity of ICPD.

Moten and Harney might go so far as to describe debate as microcosm of academia in so far as it structures academic engagement while presuming space and room for moments of *study* which forward Black social life (Harney & Moten, 2013; Sexton, 2011). I am not Black and

therefore cannot speak to the validity of such a claim but rather can speculate on its potential as understood through Moten and Harney's work on "The Undercommons" (Harney & Moten, 2013). I can recall various points in time in which examples of Moten's *study* are possible in so far as Black debaters, coaches, judges, and alumni alike participate in dances, barbeques, brunches, after-round socials, and pre-tournament gatherings (Harney & Moten, 2013; Howard, 2020; Sexton, 2011). I cannot speak to detail of these events, but I speculate that such moments point to spaces of social life within a structure and activity which limits and even prohibits Black sociality. In this way, Moten and Harney are responsive to and possibly descriptive of ICPD's participation within white academia. While there cannot be a conclusion in the descriptive capacity of "The Undercommons" in relation to ICPD in this thesis, it is clear that the theoretical framework of this thesis is situated within the very antagonism that Moten critiques and the activity of ICPD equally participates in a limitation on Black social life with regards to the larger conception of social death (Harney & Moten, 2013). Attempting to render a conclusion on whether social life is possible and existent within ICPD would be a disservice to both the works of Moten and Harney and the theoretical framework provided previously in reference to Wilderson's work on afro-pessimism.

Afro-pessimism is a dense and complicated theory for understanding and situating anti-Blackness in a modern context yet is necessary for grounding the implications to digitally mediated acts of racialized violence against Black debaters due to its historical contextuality and comprehensive descriptiveness. The primary concepts used to situate anti-Blackness within an afro-pessimist framework, being that of gratuity, fungibility, absolute domination, natal alienation, and general dishonor, are useful in providing context for the actions which follow a public display of anti-Black violence, particularly within digitally mediated debates. By first

explaining the history of mediated technologies within ICPD, this thesis understands and utilizes afro-pessimist theory to ground and frame the potential implications to digital debate in so far as it participates in a larger structure of white civil society which seeks to eradicate, limit, and criminalize Black sociality. In the next chapter, I will unpack the J.W. Patterson Invitational's Audio and Video Recording Policy to consider the ways it constitutes a digital terrain that is conducive of anti-Black violence against Black debaters.

Chapter 4 - Analysis

This thesis investigates anti-Black violence in the debate community. In particular, I study post-COVID-19 audio and video recording policies for their anti-Black affordances. In the previous chapter, I introduced the concept of anti-Blackness as a structural condition that forms the foundation upon which sociality can occur. In this chapter, I apply the concept of anti-Blackness to a particular media artifact: the JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy. Although debate is an inherently mediated activity, the form of its mediation has changed over time. As the media history in chapter two demonstrates, debate's mediation often reflects the evolution of publicly available technologies outside of debate and has moved to a digital communications platform. Moreover, debate is a self-reflective mediated activity such that individuals inside of the activity are constantly rewriting the norms and content of debate. Given these two features, I have chosen to focus on the governing policies which are used to envision, construct, and oversee the online platforms used in the turn to digital debate. The policies themselves are necessary and beneficial to study because they are constitutive of the virtual terrain and implicate the activity of debate.

In this chapter, I take a rhetorical approach to the JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy. Rhetoric is a useful tool for analyzing both the written text of the policy and the media environments they constitute (Charland, 1987; Flores, 2016; Gaonkar, 1990). To make this claim, I contextualize the post-COVID-19 audio and video recording policies as rhetorically constitutive. In the chapter, I suggest that these documents are not only descriptive or objective rules but are in fact persuasive (Charland, 1987; Gaonkar, 1990). That is, in this chapter, I focus on how these policies and procedures are constitutive of the activity of debate. Moreover,

because the focus of this thesis is limited to post-COVID-19 landscape, I focus my comments on the policies that govern the online terrain upon which digital debate exists.

My argument is that the JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy constitutes a digital terrain which affords racializing surveillance that generates anti-Black violence against Black debaters. In doing so, I argue that the policy is not only descriptive but persuasive of the space for digital debate and implicates the surveillance practices which occur within virtual debates. In other words, the policy is constitutive of the digital environment through which debate operates and as such, possesses the power to manipulate the space to be conducive of non-consensual surveillance of debaters. By reading the JW Patterson's audio and video recording policy through an afro-pessimist perspective, this project contends that logics of anti-Black racialization through surveillance are intertwined in the rhetorics which govern digital debate. The assertion of consent being inherent at all points in data transmission, ambiguity and resulting confidentiality in the identity of agents of action, and the conditions which warrant releasing the recordings are evident throughout the policy and exemplify the ways in which parasitic attachments to controlling the Black as object guide the governing practices of debate.

This chapter will consider data created by surveillance practices sanctioned by the JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy in so far as it necessitates the collection of information on participants and generates data that can be distributed by ambiguous agents for an indeterminate amount of time. In doing so, I will begin my considerations by focusing on the points of networked interactions which would afford data collection, otherwise termed "points of capture" (Sparrow, 2014). Next, I will identify the opportunities for data capture constituted by the policy. Then, I will analyze the lack of clarity in the language used to identify potential surveillants and identify such ambiguity as a factor in allowing anti-Black violence to occur.

Finally, I will discuss the lifespan of data as one that is unlimited and likely to magnify the scope of any leaks which result from the condoned actions of the policy and the rhetorical capacity of the data itself.

Rhetorical framework

This thesis forwards a rhetorical framework that understands rhetoric to be materially and digitally constitutive. First posited by James Boyd White, the theory of constitutive rhetoric considers “the ways we constitute ourselves as individuals, as communities, and as cultures, whenever we speak” (White, 1985). In other words, the “rhetoric is a material social process that constitutes (or generates) a wide range of objects – beliefs, attitudes, actions, events, texts, selves, and even communities” (Gaonkar, 1990). This is to say, discourse used to describe objects is not only shaped by the object but shapes the object itself. For example, when analyzing the 1979 Parti Québécois White Paper, “Quebec-Canada: A New Deal,” Maurice Charland considers the scope to which the paper “articulates the meaning of being ‘Québécois’” such that it “inscribes real social actors within its textualized structure of motives and then inserts them into the world of practice” (Jasinski & Mercieca, 2010). Charland considers the rhetoric used to describe “the meaning of being ‘Québécois’” as constitutive in that it defines the Québécois people and gives meaning to their subjecthood (Charland, 1987). This process of identification and assigning meaning is what constitutes objects or identities and is thus materially generative in that it defines the existence of said objects or identities.

When put into the context of race, the theory of constitutive rhetoric is useful for considering the ways in which the social construction of race is maintained and effects material consequences. Dr. Ersula Ore contributes to discussions of constitutive rhetoric in their book,

Lynching, by considering the scope of language to generate material violences (Ore, 2019). Specifically, Ore contends that rhetoric is constitutive of identity and plays a part in the enactment of material actions relative to identity (Ore, 2019). In doing so, Ore grounds their work in a focus on the rhetoric of lynching and states that the death of Trayvon Martin was quickened due to George Zimmerman's "description of Trayvon as a black boy 'up to no good'" (Ore, 2019). Here, the constitutiveness of rhetoric becomes clear as the process of identifying Trayvon as "up to no good" rhetorically located Trayvon as a threat to Zimmerman and his community which allowed Zimmerman to justify eradicating the threat and shooting Trayvon multiple times (Ore, 2019). Ore describes this as a way of "profiling Trayvon to his death" in so far as the meaning attached to the rhetoric used by Zimmerman functioned similarly to the weapon used to slay Trayvon (Ore, 2019). This approach to constitutive rhetoric is important because it attends to the need for race to be considered socially constructed and materially implicative (Báez & Ore, 2018; Houdek, 2018).

The theory of constitutive rhetoric is compatible with afro-pessimist literature as it provides context for the material consequences to Black representations. The death of Trayvon Martin being quickened by the language used by Zimmerman to describe Martin is a result of the anti-Black ideologies embedded within Zimmerman's language (Ore, 2019). This is to say, Zimmerman rhetorically locates Martin as a criminal and a threat within the embedded anti-Black sentiments held by the terms *criminal* and *threat*. In other words, the language used to describe Martin is couched in anti-Black meanings which are then attached to Martin and used to justify his death. Because rhetoric is constitutive, the language used to describe Martin materially resulted in his death because it rendered him a threat worthy of expulsion. Anti-Blackness is the

ideology that informs the meanings attached to rhetoric and contextualizes the material consequences to language.

Rhetoric is constitutive of surveillance practices and the implications to data created by said surveillance. In other words, rhetoric generates the conditions for surveillance by governing spaces and as such, the data created by that surveillance is informed by the affordances of the rhetoric which allowed its creation to occur. For example, if a surveillance policy explicitly states that no video surveillance can be conducted within a virtual space then not only is the surveillance governed by the rhetoric but the data created by that surveillance is then implicated by the rhetoric which allowed it to occur. In which case, the data created would be lacking any video recordings. In this way, rhetoric, being constitutive of identities and communities, is equally constitutive of the categories and norms which guide the demarcation practices inherent to surveillance. In other words, surveillance reinforces norms by demarcating what “in or out of place” and does so through the rhetorically constructed identities (Browne, 2015). As practices and performances are rhetorically constituted as criminalistic, surveillance practices will reinforce those boundaries (Beauchamp, 2019; Browne, 2015). This is particularly magnified within rhetorics which govern racializing surveillance practices as they are endowed with explicit constitutive power in that they dictate what subjectivities are just or civil and those which are not and require oversight (Browne, 2015; Ore, 2019).

To consider the scope of racializing surveillance within the JW Patterson Debates governing policy, I refer to the work of Elijah Sparrow who discusses the particularities of surveillance within digital communications. Namely, Sparrow argues, “when communication is digital, surveillance lies at its very heart” (Sparrow, 2014). This is because the data transmission process between networked systems causes “the information at every step (in transmission) to be

exposed for easy capture” (Sparrow, 2014). In other words, points of capture emerge when data is shared between systems and those points are moments in which surveillance can occur (Sparrow, 2014). When identifying points of capture allotted by a governing policy for virtual spaces, it is important to consider the points of data transmission required for an individual to access and participate in the affordances of that space. I use this understanding of points of capture to consider the moments of surveillance afforded by the JW Patterson Debates policy and the implications to ambiguous agents conducting such surveillance.

The turn to digital debate

The need for a policy that regulated the use of surveillance technologies within debate was clear given prevalence of publicly available livestreams of debate and the success of Black critical debate.

The practice of livestreaming debates has been in play for over a decade and is likely to continue within the turn to digital debate. There are currently over a dozen YouTube channels with ICPD livestreamed rounds available for viewing and many of those accounts are still active today. There is no way to determine exactly how many debates have been livestreamed to date because many accounts are tangential and created for the sole purpose of streaming a singular tournament whereas larger accounts, such as Exodus Files, CEDADebate, Debate Stream, and Vintage Debate Vids, each have streams from a variety of tournaments across multiple years (*CEDADebate - YouTube*, n.d.; *Vintage Debate Vids - YouTube*, n.d.; Debate Stream, 2013; Exods Files, 2017; Exodus Files 1, 2018; Exodus Files 2, 2018). As recently as the 2023 NDT, the practice of streaming debates was active as yet another YouTube account was created for the purpose of publicly streaming the tournament (Wilkus, n.d.). At this point in time, there is no

indication that livestreaming ICPD will stop in the near future. Rather, the prevalence of accounts and the duration of their operations suggests that the practice of livestreaming is ongoing and likely to continue into the era of digital debate.

However, the practice of livestreaming ICPD has produced backlash against Black debaters because the video produced can then be edited and shared in malicious ways. For example, in 2008 when Bill Shanahan was recorded as he “explode(d) into a feral, expletive laced tirade” against Dr. Shanara Reid-Brinkley and ultimately mooned Reid-Brinkley and the rest of the crowded room (CBS News, 2008). The video amassed 88,000 views in less than a week and resulted in Shanahan’s termination (Domencic, 2008). Additionally, in 2012, video was released which featured two Black, University of West Georgia debaters arguing against white privilege and resulted in significant public backlash (Dyer, 2016; Wolff, 2016). The video was shared on multiple platforms and included the names of the two debaters (Dyer, 2016; Wolff, 2016). While the video is no longer available due to a copyright claim, it continues demonstrate the dangerous effects to video taping college debates.

In addition, the need for a policy that contends with racializing surveillance in debate is amplified by the success of Black debaters because Black debaters should not be subjected to violence by an activity that can only credit Black debate for its most historic achievements. Black debaters have and continue to shape the terms of success within the activity of ICPD. In 2013, Emporia State University debaters, Ryan Wash and Elijah Smith were the first debaters to ever unite the crowns and win both national championships in the same year (*Debate National Champions - Emporia State University*, n.d.). In 2014, Towson University debaters, Ameena Ruffin and Korey Johnson became the first Black women to win the CEDA National Championship (Obell, 2020). In 2017, University of Rutgers-Newark debaters, Nicole Nave and

80

Devanne Murphy were the second team to unite the crowns and Nave was the first Black woman to win the NDT (*Undisputed Nat'l Champs*, 2017). These are all examples of how Black debaters have made history in the activity in a way that is unmatched by any other debaters. Their success was long-fought and paid homage to the hard work of Black debaters before them who triumphed against and struggled within the racialized activity (CEDADebate, 2017). Today, the tradition of Black success within debate continues with the 2023 National Debate Tournament champions from Wake Forest University, Tajaih Robinson and Iyana Trotman (Trotman, 2024). Iyana Trotman is only the third Black woman to win the NDT and, along with Robinson, used the platform of the finals debate to emphasize that Black success in debate is here to stay (Jacob Wilkus, 2023). In essence, Black debate is beneficial for the activity of ICPD because Black debaters not only challenge the problematic structure and characteristics of ICPD but do so in a way that garners historic success. In this way, debate as an activity is indebted to Black debate and is implicated in the racialized surveillance practices which have historically been violent against Black debaters. As the turn to digital debate continues, policies are needed in order to grapple with the anti-Black effects of surveillance against a community who holds the most value to the activity.

In the turn to digital debate, the JW Patterson Debates tournament, hosted by the University of Kentucky, is of importance because it serves as a season opener and thus, sets the tone for following tournaments in terms of enacting policies that address community concerns. Occurring in September of 2020, the JW Patterson Debates tournament was the first, fully-online, CEDA sanctioned college debate tournament. Being the first to attempt such a feat is not out of character for the JW Patterson Debates tournament. Named after Dr. J.W. Patterson, the tournament has been a testing site for various education and community building strategies

within debate. For example, in 2014 the tournament hosted a “novice teach-in” wherein first-year debaters were provided with four lecture sessions led by coaches and judges during the tournament (*JW Patterson Debates At Kentucky 2014*, 2014). This uncommon approach to making debate accessible is demonstrative of the values held by Patterson and his desire to encourage debate participation (*JW Patterson Foundation*, 2023). Specifically, the values held by the organization are that of “bringing together the best debaters in the country” and making the “foundational life skills” of debate “accessible to all students” (*Our Mission | JW Patterson Foundation*, n.d.). As such, the move online was in tandem with the tournament’s long-held values because it sought to preserve the accessibility of the activity. The tournament itself attracts competitors from across the country and is held alongside the University of Kentucky’s prestigious annual Run for the Roses round-robin style tournament (*Kentucky Run for the Roses*, 2021). Combined, the University of Kentucky holds significance as a debate institution because it has long upheld the values of expanding access to debate and has been a site for innovation in debate education.

In 2020, when tasked with hosting a national college debate tournament amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Kentucky took the opportunity to attempt a fully online JW Patterson Debates. In doing so, the University of Kentucky debate program had to grapple with the effects of COVID-19 on the operations of debate tournaments. Namely, COVID-19 foreclosed upon the widely held traditions of in-person debates. Students could no longer build community as they travelled to the tournament and coaches could no longer reunite with old friends over drinks at the hotel bar. Judges could no longer relax with one another in the tournament’s hospitality room. Tournament award ceremonies could no longer be subsumed by a cacophony of applause in a banquet room. These traditions were engrained in the process of a

college debate tournament and could no longer occur due to the virality and spread of COVID-19. The move online brought new traditions that included the setting up of computers, external monitors, webcams, microphones, headphones, and other networked technologies. Rather than hastily navigating the hosting-university's campus, debaters now had to navigate digitally created rooms to find their opponents and judges. The move online fundamentally altered the structure and operations of college debate tournaments because it removed the in-person aspects of debate and replaced it with digitally mediated interactions.

In November of 2020, the University of Kentucky debate program released their "Audio and Video Recording" policy in preparation for their upcoming intercollegiate policy debate tournament, the JW Patterson Debates (Gish, 2020). The policy reads:

All rounds of the tournament are open for viewing by registered participants. The University of Kentucky, and/or its agents, may record the tournament for internal, administrative use. The University of Kentucky will not publish, distribute or retain the recordings, except as needed for tournament administration or as required by applicable law.

Consistent with national speech and debate standards, any participants or other individuals that wish to record any portion of the tournament should obtain the prior consent of all individuals identifiable in the recording(s). Use of such recordings should be limited to private educational purposes. Recordings should not be published, reproduced or shared with those not participating in the tournament, or uploaded to other online environments, without the prior consent of all individuals identifiable in the recordings.

Coaches and program directors are encouraged to discuss this audio and video recording policy with their participants prior to the tournament, and are expected to take any reasonable and necessary actions to ensure compliance by participants who are affiliated with their respective schools (Gish, 2020).

The policy includes three main points. These points are broken down independently in each of the paragraphs within the policy. The first paragraph's key point is that all rounds are not only subject for viewing by registered participants but also may be recorded by "The University of Kentucky, and/or its agents" (Gish, 2020). The second paragraph's key point is that any individual wishing to record the tournament on their own "should obtain prior consent" and that all recordings created by private individuals "should not be published" (Gish, 2020). Finally, the third paragraph's key point is that individual program directors and coaches "are expected" to ensure that participants affiliated with their program are in compliance with the policy (Gish, 2020). These main points functionally summarize the policy and outline the larger intent for its creation; to allow the university to record debates without consent while encouraging individual recordings to gain consent all while asking program directors and coaches to ensure compliance with the policy.

Backlash

Immediately following the release, members of the community took to Facebook to voice their concerns regarding the ethicality of surveillance policies in an era of rampant leaks resulting in Black debaters being criminalized and targeted by non-debate community members, namely, right wing and conservative audiences who were provided with video and audio clips of Black debaters discussing Blackness (*College Policy Debate | Facebook*, 2020; Reid-Brinkley, 2012). As the discussion unfolded within the comment section, it became clear that the debate

about anti-Blackness being embedded within surveillance logics was alive and well. This is because members expressed concerns over videos being shared maliciously and with the intent to incite violence against Black debaters featured, as videos have in ICPD's past (*College Policy Debate* | Facebook, 2020). With regards to intercollegiate policy debate, this project seeks to be conclusive with regards to the presence of anti-Black ideologies within policies of governance.

Agential Ambiguity (Confidentiality)

To best understand the implications of the JW Patterson Debates surveillance policy, I begin by considering the moments in which surveillance can occur, or the points of capture, afforded by the mandated networked technologies required in the turn to digital debate. Points of capture can best be understood as points within a network of technologies that possess low security requirements and can be accessed by an external entity with the intent of gaining or collecting information on a given user of a digital platform (Sparrow, 2014). Interconnectivity and operability increases the number of possible points of capture because networked technologies must interact with one another and share information internally to make interactions function (Sparrow, 2014). For example, when creating a Facebook post and using Facebook's *share to Instagram* option, a user is able to create and post content on Facebook's platform and Instagram by using the interoperability of each platform's software. To do so, the user must be logged into their Facebook and connect their Facebook account to their Instagram account which shares account information for both platforms with each other. As a result, the user's Facebook has access to information from the user's Instagram and consented to networking the two platforms with the intent of increasing the ease of operating both platforms simultaneously.

Points of capture, when approached with the framework of afro-pessimism, would be the injunctions within networked social interactions wherein information is collected and used to control or oversee Blackness (Browne, 2015). Specifically, the mediated nature of debate possesses a biopolitical power to direct debaters through regulated points of interaction such as having to use Tabroom to receive round information and an email chain or cloud-based document sharing software to circulate evidence and speech documents during the debate. As a result, points of capture can be considered the points at which digital interactions are mediated across platforms and using multiple data inputs such as a camera and microphone. Data generation through surveillance is inherently a racializing practice because it requires the use of data markers which identify, label, and trace the interactions of digital users. In the context of video imagery and audio recordings, data can easily be identified not only through digital means but also through individuals using their knowledge of the activity to find out who was present in a given recording. Meaning individuals featured could easily be identified from the data shared even though the data does not directly name them. In the instance of the JW Patterson Debates policy, the video and audio data collected can then be used to identify specific debaters and judges because the information gathered in the recordings uses metadata collected from participants' linked Tabroom accounts as well as imagery and vocal cues that can aid in identifying individuals. The contextual information provided elsewhere in the data, such as one's location, occupation, and vocals could be sufficient for identification. For example, while Michael Moreno does not directly name Ryan Wash in his video "exposing" Wash as a "racist professor", he provides contextual information that allows someone to easily identify the voice in the recording as Wash (Moreno, 2019c). In this way, points of capture can be considered the points of networked interactions where debaters are surveilled and racializing data is generated.

When put into context of participating in a digital debate tournament, one must have certain pieces of hardware to be able to sustain connection and involvement in the round. This includes but is not limited to; a computer with audio input (preferably high quality, external, and attached to headphones), video input (whether internal webcam or external device), audio output (headphones with attached, line-in microphone is recommended), as well as the affordances to run a variety of programs and applications, including but not limited to; Zoom, Microsoft Word, and Discord or sometimes FaceTime. These pieces of technology must all work in tandem to create audio and video renderings which can then be streamed through virtual conferencing software. Students are often tasked with managing their own technology and ensuring that their microphone and camera are working properly. While some debate partnerships opt to use a designated streaming computer that is only used to virtually conferencing into the debate, many debaters use one computer to both access their research and connect to the virtual debate space. This complex interplay of technology means that multiple devices must network and transmit data between connections in order for the debater to join the debate space.

Tabroom is an online tabulation software that ICPD uses to coordinate tournament entries and share information between tournament staff and attendees. Debaters, coaches, judges, and spectators are required to create accounts on Tabroom.com in order to sign-up for, access ballots for, and participate in ICPD tournaments. Debaters use tabroom accounts to get information about their upcoming debate rounds and receive feedback from judges via tabroom's ballot tabulation features. Judges use tabroom to also access information about their upcoming round but also to share with tournament staff their designated winner for each of their debates. They do so through online ballots that are shared to them and monitored by tournament staff through tabroom. For online debates, a tabroom account is necessary to access the Zoom-room generated

by the Classrooms.Cloud software. A debater accesses the room logging into tabroom and using the integrated Classrooms.Cloud link shared with attendees of a given tournament. The link uses debaters' tabroom accounts to generate a name and place the user in the right tournament Zoom session. Once into the virtual room, Classrooms.Cloud accesses a user's microphone and/or video camera to display their presence and allow the user to conference with other members. This long list of hardware and software interfaces all have the capacity to be used as points of capture (Sparrow, 2014).

The JW Patterson Debates hosted their tournament using the Classrooms.Cloud web interface which uses a Zoom-room-model and integrated Zoom client access to create multiple virtual rooms for debates to happen within. The JW Patterson Debates tournament used Classrooms.Cloud and the integrated Zoom client software to record all rounds (Gish, 2020; *Tabroom.Com*, n.d.). The video recorded from any rounds would then include the audio from the debate and video from any participant with their camera on. Regardless of whether an individual consents to having their audio and video recorded by ambiguous agents of the University of Kentucky, the policy states that "all rounds" *may* be recorded which would include audio and video.

There is no rule for whether or not a debater or judge is required to have their cameras on while in the digital debate space. Rather, individuals decide based on a range of circumstances not limited to; internet stability and strength, one's current location, and personal preference. The policy does not speak to a requirement nor does it directly state that judges should not evaluate teams on whether or not they have their cameras on. Rather, it has become common practice for tournaments to discourage judges from acting on biases related to technology usage while filling out ballots. While there is no on-going debate about cameras being on or off, there equally is no

established policy that speaks to whether students or judges are required to have their cameras on. Rather, there is a norm for debaters to turn their cameras on when delivering their speech as well as for judges to keep their cameras on while listening to speeches so that students can read their judges' facial expressions and nonverbals while delivering their speech. While there is no requirement for cameras, all debaters need audio devices and computers to log-onto the virtual conferencing platform hosting the digital tournament. This complicates readings of the JW Patterson policy because it implicates the number of possible points of capture accessible to ambiguous agents.

The policy starts with the statement that “all rounds” may be recorded by “the University of Kentucky and/or its agents” (Gish, 2020). Many questions arise as to *who* is the University of Kentucky? *Who* are its agents? To answer this, the policy gives no hints. The policy offers no clear definition as to who the agents of the University of Kentucky are, nor does it point to any documents clarifying the tournament administration staff. Rather, it allows for a broad prospect of individuals who could utilize the tournament-ran audio and video surveillance of all rounds as points of capture to produce racializing images and depictions of Black debaters. It simply reiterates the same phrasing used when describing the institutions who conduct the mass surveillance of the tournament. In other words, the ambiguity as to *who* is afforded the ability to conduct surveillance under the veil of “The University of Kentucky, and/or its agents” is concerning because it hints towards an omnipotent surveillant who can conduct surveillance in a stealthy, innocuous manner absent any indication as to who is the person actually pressing the *record* button (Gish, 2020). The lack of a clearly identified agent within the policy is in line with tactics of larger, institutional policing because it semiotically distances the surveillant from their individuality and complicates any attempt at recourse taken by those who are being surveilled.

Institutional policing of Black academics has been prevalent since the inception of structured education in the United States and the JW Patterson Debates policy is part and parcel of anti-Black surveillance within academia. While some claim that digital spaces are free of discrimination, equally accessible, and even ‘pro-black’, the list of anti-Black surveillance practices within debate paint a different picture. Namely, reactions to doctored recordings of the University of West Georgia’s arguments against white supremacy point to a history of racializing surveillance of Black debaters happening behind the curtain of anonymity commonly utilized in online spaces (California Network, 2016). In considering the implications of the omnipotent but un-identifiable *who* that is conducting the surveillance, it is clear that the creators of this policy are utilizing the digitality of the space to hide surveillants under a massive curtain.

The policy then continues to shift culpability for non-tournament sanctioned recordings by stating “Any participants or other individuals that wish to record any portion of the tournament should obtain prior consent of all individuals identifiable in the recording(s)” (Gish, 2020). In the two sentences that follow, the policy constructs a contradiction in its framing of ambiguity in relation to audio and video recordings of the tournament. This is because, not only is the entire tournament being recorded by some ambiguous group of people, but it is happening under an assumed consent of the participant. In this paragraph, the terms are different, rather stating that in order for someone to record the tournament, they must obtain prior consent.

By setting a standard for conducting surveillance that the tournament itself does not meet, the ambiguous nature of the surveillant has morphed itself into an antagonism in terms of who is conducting the surveillance. In other words, the ambiguous agent operates as an antagonistic force against Blackness because it produces the means and power to enact anti-Black violence in a gratuitous and structurally embedded manner. Here, Wilderson’s framing comes in handy when

90

articulating the social antagonisms at play in Black media studies (Wilderson, 2010). Namely, the implicative differences between a white director leading a Black film versus a Black director leading a white film (Wilderson, 2010). This is because the strength in the sociogenic principle, as Browne might put it, comes from the systems in which surveillance partakes in, rather than the individuals being or conducting the surveillance (Browne, 2015). Thus, within an anti-Black world steeped in anti-Black ideologies of accumulation and fungibility of Blackness, this policy can be understood as a blurring of lines of accountability when determining who or what is accountable for the persistence of anti-Black surveillance practices within policy debate (Wilderson, 2010).

The notion of racializing surveillance as oversight is evident in the rhetoric of “all rounds” being recorded because it disregards the question of debaters consenting to being recorded during all interactions in the virtual tournament space and uses technology embedded in digital debate to surveil debaters in a way that is not “impeded by distances or physical barriers” and “can be shared, permanently stored, compressed, and aggregated” (Browne, 2015; Gish, 2020). The networked connections which make digital debate possible simultaneously render it a space in which racializing surveillance can occur. Prior to digital debate, the technology needed to collect audio and video recordings of debate would have required the surveillant to be in proximity to debate. In the turn to digital debate, that surveillance is no longer “impeded by distances” (Browne, 2015). The networking of surveillance apparatuses allows for more comprehensive data, making aggregation more efficient. This is because the data created by the surveillance practices afforded by the policy is collected in a way that can easily be stored and aggregated based off the information provided by tabroom. The name tabroom assigns to users within a digital debate round is attached to their tabroom account which generally includes

additional information than can be captured while any audio recordings can include further identifying information.

The policy then takes a contradictory stance with regards to consent of those being recorded and adds an additional layer of possible surveillance points. The policy states that “any participants or other individuals that wish to record any portion of the tournament should obtain the prior consent of all individuals identifiable in the recording(s)” (Gish, 2020). Contradicting the sentiments of the previous paragraph, the policy recognizes the need for consent in recordings but only to the extent that “participants or other individuals” are encouraged to gain consent from individuals they consider identifiable from the recordings (Gish, 2020). The policy states that “use of such recordings should be limited to private educational purposes” and “should not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not participating in the tournament, or uploaded to other online environments, without the prior consent of all individuals identifiable in the recordings” (Gish, 2020). The policy does not give perimeters for surveillants to use when deciding whether someone is identifiable in their recordings. Additionally, the policy provides no statement or method of recourse for someone who has been recorded without their consent. While it provides soft, or non-commanding language that discourages malicious use of recordings from the tournament, it fails to meaningfully create a digital space where already present points of capture are prohibited from exploitation (Sparrow, 2014). This is to say, data created by the JW Patterson Debates tournament staff and its ambiguous agents is then coupled by any data that is generated, consensually or otherwise, by individuals who chose to recording the tournament on their own accord. This combination can be read as an explosion of surveillance points and is the result of already present technologies making data transmission and

information sharing through networked technologies an inherent facet of digital debate. The data that is created is then at the will of the systems used to aggregate, store, and share it.

Data Lifespan

In the previous section, I argued that the JW Patterson Debates policy produces an explosion of already present points of capture and introduces a degree of agential ambiguity which exemplify racializing surveillance. I began by contextualizing the media environment which the JW Patterson Debates policy was created in response to. In doing so, I explain the backlash the policy received by the community. I then construct a rhetorical framework which couches my understanding of the persuasiveness of the policy. I use the theory of constitutive rhetoric to argue that the policy is persuasive of the digital environment of which it governs (Charland, 1987; Gaonkar, 1990; Sparrow, 2014). Specifically, I argue that rhetoric possesses material consequences when used to demarcate Blackness and as such, the governing rhetorics of the JW Patterson Debates policy constitute a media environment which can enact anti-Black sentiments of branding Blackness (Browne, 2015). In this section, I further my consideration into the scope of potential violence afforded by the policy. In doing so, I unpack the lifespan of data and its effects on the lasting circulation of anti-Black representations of Black debaters.

Data lives forever in the digital space (Sparrow, 2014). This is because the ability to generate a “perfect copy” of any given message allows for infinite recreations and can easily be re-located using various data retrieval mechanisms (Sparrow, 2014). In the context of the JW Patterson’s surveillance policy, the data generated from recording the audio and video of all debate rounds throughout the entire tournament will live on forever in storage servers either owned by the university and/or its agents, only to be distributed if required for tournament

administration and/or if necessary under “applicable law” (Gish, 2020). This is because the policy does not provide any description for how long data will be stored before it is deleted. The policy also fails to provide any information as to what would be considered “applicable law” or what might justify the tournament administration choosing to distribute recordings on their own accord. This means that not only will the data be created and shared for reasons undeclared, but it also will be stored and accessible for sharing for an undisclosed amount of time. Additionally, once shared, anti-Black imagery of Black debaters can circulate quickly when attached with inflammatory rhetoric meant to cause virality, as proven by the actions of Michael Moreno and Bill Shanahan (*We’re Still Learning to Navigate Black Death on Social Media*, n.d.).

The rhetorical capacity of data itself implicates the effects of its lifespan. Namely, given the constitutive capacity of rhetoric and the mass of metadata attached to circulated digital messages, the branding of Black subjectivity in online spaces will always precede and preclude any chance of social life within digitality. This is because the incendiary language attached to imagery of Blackness gets circulated more often because the norms embedded in the algorithms which share data are themselves anti-Black (Ibrahim, 2022; Noble, 2018; Sobande, 2021). Not only does the process of creating data rely upon the demarcation of bodies into categories constructed through sociogenic norms, but the sharing of that data is also implicated in the usage of anti-Black rhetoric as it is used to describe its contents. For example, the video released by Michael Moreno of Ryan Wash did not show Wash teaching “anti-white curriculum”, nor does it give evidence to the claim that Wash is racist (Moreno, 2019c). Rather, it shows Wash trying to explain to Moreno why his intended debate argument would not be successful because it did not make sense (Moreno, 2019c). When Moreno shared the video to YouTube, he entitled it “Racist professor teaches anti-white curriculum” and intentionally used language that would incite

responses from white nationalist groups (Moreno, 2019c). In doing so, his rhetoric not only defines the video but also informs its circulation as the video continues to be shared under similarly incendiary descriptors. Before individuals even click on the video and listen to what actually happened, they are already persuaded that Wash is racist and there is evidence to prove it (Ibrahim, 2022; Noble, 2018). This is because data is circulated using its descriptors (Noble, 2018; Sparrow, 2014). In this way, the data is implicated by its rhetorical capacity to constitute an individual or event in so far as it defines the individual.

When situated within sociogenic principles of surveillance, the mere having access to data entails having access to defining what bodies are warranted, where (Browne, 2015). This is because surveillance has the ability to control bodies by dictating what behaviors, practices, and identities are allowed in what spaces (Beauchamp, 2009, 2019; Browne, 2015). In doing so, it possesses the ability to enforce an “organizational framework of our present human condition” that “fixes” on Blackness as an object needing oversight (Browne, 2015). Specifically, having access to an oversight mechanism which, at its core, is meant to collect and demarcate information about individuals, produces a power differential between those being surveilled and those doing the surveillance. The demarcation of bodies is done along norms which decide what categories to place information for aggregation and in doing so, follows the ideologies embedded in practiced norms. This is particularly true in the context of the JW Patterson Debates policy which participates in an activity with a rich history of anti-Black surveillance and representations in online media. In further considering the effects of ICPD’s history of racializing violence through data created by surveillance being circulated, it is important to revisit the analysis of Frank Wilderson and the concept of Blackness being targeted by systems of control.

Wilderson's framing of Black sociality suggests that Blackness is always already targeted by mechanisms of control, which Browne cites are inherent within data collection systems (Browne, 2015; Wilderson, 2010). Here, it would be fair to say that the data itself never dies but the body targeted by surveillance systems will always already be dead due to the position of (non)ontology constituted by the Middle Passage (Wilderson, 2010). In other words, the bodies which are targeted by racializing surveillance were always already rendered objects worthy of exploitation and, while the data created by such surveillance can circulate in such a way that it never dies, the bodies featured were already socially dead (Sexton, 2011; Wilderson, 2010).

This project reads the question of data lifespans through the accumulation of the Black-as-object to understand the inherent anti-Black desires imbricated within the policy (Warren, 2017; Wilderson, 2010). In doing so, the very nature of data living forever can be understood in a similar fashion as Nat Turner's flesh being preserved as a purse (Berry, 2016). This is to say, imagery of Black suffering or anti-Black depictions of Blackness are preserved in such that they are circulated and stored digitally. The ability to capture Blackness in imagery is as violently accumulative as the preservation of Nat Turner's flesh through leatherwork as it allows for the status of Blackness to forever be haunted by Slavery as an ontologically structuring event (Wilderson, 2010). The forever *branding* of the Black-as-object continues throughout digital spaces as the process of being recognized by data capture systems requires legible bodies, and legible bodies requires rendering oneself intelligible to systems of subject creation (Browne, 2015; Warren, 2017). *Branding* here, meaning the demarcators used in surveillance practices to identify, label, store, and circulate data (Sobande, 2021; Sparrow, 2014). Legibility, in this way, would refer to bodies which are recognized by surveillance systems as Human (Wilderson, 2010). Put otherwise, the legibility required to replicate subjectivity and sociality on digital

platforms requires the Black-as-object to brand itself as such in order to be categories and demarcated as social bodies (Browne, 2015; Warren, 2017). Whether in academic wholesale spaces, or within niche corners like the policy debate community, the lasting effect of digital *branding* takes both a material and social hold on Black sociality.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I conducted a close textual analysis of the JW Patterson Debates surveillance policy to argue that it is not only objective and descriptive, but persuasive. I contextualize a rhetorical framework guided by rhetoricians concerned with the constitutive nature of rhetoric to guide my analysis of the embedded themes and ideologies present within the JW Patterson Debates surveillance policy (Beauguitte et al., 2015; Belsey, 2013; Flores, 2016; Gaonkar, 1990). In doing so, I argue that the policy constitutes a digital space where Black debaters are subjected to racializing surveillance which exploits points of capture and agential ambiguity to contribute to on-going anti-Black violence that occurs within online environments (Browne, 2015; Sobande, 2021; Sparrow, 2014). I consider the policy as implicated in the mediated history of debate as it contributes to on-going racialized acts which make debate an unsteady space for Black students (Kelsie, 2019). In the next chapter, I answer the research questions guiding this thesis and provide future directions for the community to consider as the turn to digital debate continues to unfold.

A close-textual analysis of the JW Patterson's audio and video recording policy reveals an explosion of points of capture and ambiguous agential identification that allows for the perpetuation of anti-Black violence through racializing surveillance. By coupling afro-pessimist theories of Black (non)ontology with critical surveillance studies of branding Blackness, this

project considered the degree to which rhetorical themes of anti-Blackness are present within governing policies regarding digital surveillance. When tackling the question of accumulation, the constant generation of infinitely lasting data through the countless points of capture afforded within digital debate reveal the gratuitous influences of anti-Blackness (Sparrow, 2014; Wilderson, 2010). This is because, when the governing institutions of debate utilize networked digital communications to conduct surveillance on a mass scale, the inherent desires to ensure Black (non)sociality is under control becomes evident (Wilderson, 2010). By keeping an all-watching camera in every room of the tournament, regardless of individual consent, the JW Patterson Tournament administration has cemented technologies of anti-Blackness at the heart of tournament operations. In doing so, every subject who attempts to render themselves legible for the purpose of the debate, must do so through digital recognition generating digital subjectivity that is legible and coherent when considered a social being (Wilderson, 2010).

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

In this thesis, I conducted a close textual analysis of the JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy to argue that the policy is persuasive of the online landscape for digital debate and provides opportunities for anti-Black violence against Black debaters. The JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy was created by the University of Kentucky and used to administer the first ever online national college policy debate tournament. The policy is important because it received significant community backlash and was used for a season-opening tournament and as such, it sets the tone for the competitive season's surveillance practices. I situated the policy within a larger media history of debate to contextualize the relationship between technology use and changes in debate's structure and content. I chose to evaluate the policy through an afro-pessimist approach because debate's mediated history is strife with racialized surveillance of Black debaters and afro-pessimism, as a theory, best contextualizes the concept of anti-Blackness as the structuring mechanism which directs violence against Black bodies. In other words, afro-pessimism best describes the implications to on-going racialized violence resulting from surveillance against Black debaters. My intention for this thesis is to call for a revisioning of the use of technology within debate. Specifically, I hope that the governing bodies of Intercollegiate Policy Debate (ICPD) take heed of my suggestion to craft policies which address the prevalence of racialized surveillance within debate and regulate the future use of surveillance technologies within the era of digital debate.

My overall argument has been that debate is inherently a racialized activity and is situated within a larger system of alienating, devaluing, and exploiting Blackness. As such, surveillance apparatuses act as tools for the enactment of anti-Black violence because they provide the means of overseeing and controlling Black movements. I argue that, because debate

is inherently racialized and surveillance systems serve as tools for executing anti-Black violence, debate's turn to digital operations makes the risk of anti-Black violence higher because such a turn requires the use of surveillance technologies. I have attempted to prove this argument by analyzing the governing policies used to regulate the digital debate space and, in doing so, I have identified racial surveillance affordances

In the previous chapter, I evaluated the JW Patterson Debates policy through the lens of afro-pessimism to identify themes of racializing surveillance. In doing so, I argued that the policy possesses embedded anti-Black sentiments which manifest a virtual space which contributes to the “impossibility of debate” for Black debaters (Kelsie, 2019). In this chapter, I conclude my analysis and argue that the turn to digital debate must take into consideration the system of anti-Black violence that is embedded in the activity of college policy debate. I begin by summarizing my arguments from chapters one through three and reviewing my findings from chapter four. Next, I will re-introduce and answer my research questions. Finally, I will call for future considerations to be made with regards to policies constructed to govern digital debate.

Summary

In chapter one, I provided an in-depth explanation for the structure of debate to contextualize my considerations into the activity's manifestation within virtual environments. Specifically, I outlined the activity's mediated nature by unpacking the speaker order, positions, and tournament structure. I argued that the activity is overall a beneficial scholarly activity that still possesses disadvantages and areas of improvement. The benefits to debate, being that of social and scholarly nature, are important because they function as the reason many community members choose to stay involved in ICPD. Additionally, the disadvantages to participation,

being the laborious commitment to an activity with a deeply racialized state of affairs, arguably deters students. The activity often required extensive time commitments including travel for in-person tournaments and team practices. As well as, Black debaters were often subjected to targeted surveillance and criminalized for their argumentative choice and style of delivery. Combined, debate as an activity retains its beneficial aspects in contrast to its on-going issues with racial violence and discouraging time commitments.

When COVID-19 shut down university in-person operations, ICPD rapidly moved online in an attempt to retain competition during the global pandemic. Justifying the move with the advantages to ICPD, little was said by governing bodies regarding the racialized history of debate which demonstrated the extent to which anti-Black systems of surveillance have embedded themselves into the activity. Specifically, I introduced the JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy as important in considering the turn to digital debate in the midst of debate's relationship with anti-Black violence against Black debaters.

As the artifact for this thesis, the JW Patterson Debate surveillance policy served as an important starting point in the transition to online debate because it was the first, fully online, national college policy debate tournament. The policy received significant community response after its initial release and was the subject of scrutiny when the JW Patterson Debates tournament staff failed to obtain consent from all individuals involved in a debate round recording that the tournament had collected. Being the first online tournament, the JW Patterson Debates set the tone for the semester and demonstrated the functionality and affordances of digital debate. While no other national tournaments used the same policy for subsequent competition, I situated the JW Patterson Debates policy as informative for future policy creation.

In chapter two, I constructed a comprehensive history of mediated intercollegiate policy debate (ICPD) to demonstrate the activity's technological and racially informed past. My overall argument in this chapter was that debate's content and style of delivery has evolved alongside the use of technology within the activity. I offered a media history that suggests that the influence of technology within debate has resulted in an evolution of the activity as the affordances of technology alter the scope and utility of resources available to the activity. I began with intercollegiate debate's origins in 1945 and examine the progressive change to the activity's structure and governing bodies. I then identified a computer revolution by locating significant effects to the activity caused by the interconnectedness of household computers. In doing so, I traced the evolution of technology's influence into the content and delivery of college debates. Specifically, I suggest that the development of critical arguments stems from the "Black oral traditions" which the Louisville Project forefronted and resulted in the creation of "framework" arguments defending the normative, plan-based debates that critical arguments challenge (Dillard-Knox, 2014). The antagonism at play between plan-based debates and critical challenges to debate produces a "clash of civilizations" or an internal conflict between argument styles and delivery (Reid-Brinkley, 2008).

Such a conflict generated public attention towards the activity and was followed by a push for more technological involvement in debate. As the activity continued to evolve, I identified a turn to digital debate as the result of COVID-19's rapid closure of intercollegiate activities and contextualize the JW Patterson Debates policy as significant in the move towards digital debate. In doing so, I argued that the internal debate about debate, coupled with the turn online and history of racializing surveillance within debate suggest the activity is leaning towards more tech mediation and is in need of policy creation that attunes to the activity's past

and impending technologically facilitated future. This is because the history of racialized and technologically informed actions within debate suggest that the turn to digital debate would impose further racializing surveillance within the activity.

In chapter three, I unpacked the concept of anti-Blackness as understood through the theoretical lens of afro-pessimism. In doing so, I argued that all aspects of modern sociality are informed and founded upon the subjugation of Black bodies. I contextualized the primary concepts used to situate anti-Blackness within an afro-pessimist framework, being that of gratuity, fungibility, absolute domination, natal alienation, and general dishonor, as useful in providing themes for identifying anti-Black violence, particularly within digitally mediated debates. Natal alienation, or the erasure of familial connections and generational traditions, is evident in debate in so far as the imposition of plan-based debates discourages personal experiences and references to one's unique perspective and relationship to the topic.

In combination, natal alienation, general dishonor and absolute domination articulate the modern world as inherently anti-Black and embedded with anti-Black themes of racialized violence. Given that the world is inherently anti-Black, it is logical to conclude that opportunities for enacting anti-Black violence will be utilized when present because the libidinal desire to eradicate and demonize Blackness is engrained in an anti-Black world. The concept of anti-Blackness as articulated by the historically situated theory of afro-pessimism and can be traced through the evolution of ICPD by identifying themes of racializing surveillance within the policies which govern digital debate. This thesis situated afro-pessimism alongside the evolution of technology within debate to argue that such a combination risks heightened moments of anti-Black violence against Black debaters as the turn to digital debate becomes evermore solidified and entrenched in the structure of the activity.

Understanding the pillars of afro-pessimism is key to understanding the analysis this project has deployed. Afro-pessimism grounds this project's boundaries for anti-Blackness, allowing for a limited and defined approach to considering the racialized effects of the JW Patterson's audio and video policy as rhetorically constitutive of potentially violent digital spaces. The pillars themselves, being that of natal alienation, absolute domination, and general dishonor, are each necessary in considering the capacity of governing policies to dictate, demand, and demonize Black debaters. The concept of gratuity situates anti-Blackness as an on-going event with no utility and allows my analysis to be grounded alongside the work of both debate and Blackness scholars. In this way, contextualizing scholarship from both fields of literature is necessary and useful for understanding and advancing the analysis of the project.

In particular, telling Black debaters that they should not invoke "Black oral traditions" because those traditions are beyond the norms ICPD is the foundation of the clash of civilizations and is exemplar of the whitened activity of debate attempting to sever the cultural connections of Black debaters. Absolute domination, or being subject to the total will of another, is present within ICPD because the digital manifestations of debate are shared and circulated through the infinite lifespan of data. The digital Black debater is then subject to the total control of others, namely those who maliciously use imagery from debates to paint the activity as a leftist echo chamber where white death is advocated (Itsnotmyfault, 2019). General dishonor, or the symbolic exclusion from humanity, can be understood as the consistent exclusion from dictating governance that Black debaters experience. Specifically, the positive attributes of debate being shared in the history of documentaries often focuses on success, white debaters and only includes partial reference to Black debaters in so far as the internal antagonism of the clash of civilizations. The concept of fungibility is useful in understanding the interchangeability of

Black debaters who are subject to targeted surveillance. This is to say, data generation itself does not care who the Black debater being surveilled is and rather only concerns itself with the desire to control and oversee Blackness. This thesis contextualizes the anti-Black affordances of surveillance technologies within the realm of ICPD by focusing on the rhetorics used to govern digital debate surveillance practices.

In the chapter four, I analyzed the JW Patterson Debates policy and identified an expansion of points of capture or moments in which surveillance can occur, a lack of agential clarity which allows perpetrators to be avoid being held accountable, and an inconsistent relationship with consent which denies participants the right to refuse to be recorded. In doing so, I argued that the policy is not only objective or descriptive, but is also persuasive of the virtual space within which digital debate occurs. This is because the virtual space is inherently mediated through communicative means and the policies written to govern virtual interactions are constitutive of the space's affordances and user capabilities. As such, the policy written for the JW Patterson Debates college debate tournament is important in so far as it becomes digitally material. It determines what participants can expect when they log-onto the tournament and what participants can do when they use features afforded. I argued that the policy allows an undefined group of tournament officials to record any the audio and video from any debate round and decide when to share those recordings without regards to individual consent which provides multiple opportunities for racializing surveillance of debaters. I identified shortcomings in the policy when situated in the context of the anti-Black surveillance which already perpetrates ICPD.

Implications

The history of technology's influence into the structure, content, and public attention of debate suggests that rapid technology evolution will continue to affect policy debate. From the beginning of the computer revolution in the 1970s to the rise of debate documentaries in the mid-2000s, technology has been used to both manage and draw public attention towards ICPD. Alongside the historic Louisville Project which increased "meaningful Black participation", the attention towards debate morphed into a voyeuristic depiction of the clash of civilizations, or the internal debate about the style and content of debates (Dillard-Knox, 2014). As technology continued to evolve, so too did the racialized attacks against Black debaters who were depicted in public representations of debate. The turn to digital debate, resulting from the move online caused by the 2020 global pandemic, indicates that policy debate will continue to situate itself within the interchange of in-person and online events and requires that the activity's governing bodies, CEDA and the NDT Committee, consider governing policies which attend to ICPD's racialized relationship with mediated technologies. The 2020 JW Patterson Debates was demonstrative of the need to attend to racializing surveillance and the move towards digital debate because it was the first college policy debate national tournament to occur fully online and released a novel surveillance policy that revealed the racialization embedded in ICPD.

Technology is a deeply embedded facet of modern ICPD and is unlikely to evaporate from use. The benefits that networked computers provide in terms of tabulation speed, efficiency, and transparency, as well as the expanded scope of research available to debaters who use personal computers to store and access evidence and arguments are all reasons why tournaments and participants will continue to use technology in debate. The instructional benefits to having pre-recorded college policy debates to show students will likely encourage future ICPD livestreams by either independent or tournament-sanctioned organizations. Ultimately, it is

improbably that the activity of policy debate would devolve away from technology. As such, consideration has to be given to the effects of technology within a racialized activity such as ICPD.

Debate is a racialized activity that is part and parcel of an anti-Black world. Recognizing such is not a justification for inaction in the face of anti-Black violence. While it is important to attune to the anti-Black ways in which power operates within academia and isolation of Black sociality within the realm of nonexistence, such attunement does not warrant ignorance to moments of anti-Black violence that occur in the status quo. This is to say, when opportunities for anti-Black violence are identified, preventive action should be taken by those involved. This thesis has attempted to make moments of anti-Blackness visible from the position of rhetoric and media studies, joining a growing consensus of scholars concerned with the racial implications of ICPD (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Kelsie, 2019; Reid-Brinkley, 2008). In the context of digital debate and the heightened opportunities for mediated anti-Blackness, ICPD tournament directors, staff and participants should take necessary action to mitigate the risk of violence against Black debaters.

Future directions

In this thesis, I have attempted to articulate the turn to digital debate as an unstable move towards a digital space ripe with anti-Black potential. As an activity already steeped in an anti-Black world, the turn to digital debate poses heightened opportunities for anti-Blackness because the rhetorics used to govern and regulate the use of surveillance technologies fails to account for their malicious use. In other words, I have argued that the digital debate space sanctioned by the

JW Patterson Debates Audio and Video Recording policy produces multiple points in which racializing surveillance of Black debaters can occur non-consensually and without recourse. I have utilized a specific media history of ICPD to articulate the racialized history of ICPD alongside its evolution with technology. In short, I identify racializing surveillance as an affordance of the JW Patterson Debates policy and suggest that such a practice implicates the manifestation of the debate space.

This thesis should not be read as a reason to abolish the activity of ICPD but rather as a call to revision the use of digitally mediated technologies in the turn to digital debate. ICPD is a valuable activity that retains its social and educational benefits throughout debate's violent history. It is these social and educational benefits that continue to drive innovation in the activity as individuals gather with community members to consider ways to address research disparities and access gaps (Hiland, 2017; Panetta, 1990; Sciallo, 2017). Many of the innovations in structure were forged by networked communities working together to develop new rules, policies, and procedures to evolve the activity (Hiland, 2017; Sciallo, 2017). Through the development of critical scholarship as competitive arguments, the activity has witnessed an internal debate about debate which continues to call for innovation in style and content. ICPD is an activity that, at its core, is meant to encourage advocacy building strategies and thus, can be receptive of advocacies calling for an innovation in its use of surveillance technologies. Rather than abolishing the activity, debate can and should once again evolve.

Debate has always already been a racially informed activity because of the anti-Black standards which an "academic argument" and yet, in the face of such discrimination, innovators have found a way to alter the content and style of debate to "increase meaningful Black participation" (Dillard-Knox, 2014; Harney & Moten, 2013). Many of debate's most successful

debaters have been Black debaters who pushed the argumentative boundaries through performance and scholarship (Twitchell, 2013; *Undisputed Nat'l Champs*, 2017). While chosen examples do not demonstrate the entirety of the Black experience within debate, they demonstrate the degree to which Blackness continues to exist within an activity that historically has discouraged its existence. These examples additionally point to the scope to which Black debaters continue to innovate the activity and achieve competitive success in the process (Dillard-Knox, 2014). In this way, the activity is already situated to be reflexive of evolving practices and can revision the use of technology in the turn to digital debate.

A revisioning of surveillance technologies within debate should include further consideration into what Black debaters have to say. Given that surveillance practices historically target Black debaters, it would be naïve to assume that an effective policy can be written without consulting the experiences of those most vulnerable to its effects. This is not to suggest that the burden for crafting policies should be place on the shoulder of Black debate members, but rather to say that value should be given to the contributions already provided by Black debaters in regards to surveillance practices within debate. I point to the Association of Black Argumentation Professionals' "Digital Debate Bill of Rights" as an extremely poignant and useful resource when constructing governing surveillance policies for digital debate tournaments (See Appendix E) (*ABAP'S DIGITAL DEBATE BILL OF RIGHTS – Association of Black Argumentation Professionals*, n.d.).

The Association of Black Argumentation Professionals (ABAP) is an non-profit organization founded in 2018 that was "created to empower Black debaters, coaches, educators, and advocates" (*Association of Black Argumentation Professionals (@BlackArgPros) / Twitter*, 2023; *Association of Black Argumentation Professionals: Overview | LinkedIn*, 2018). ABAP

seeks to “address, educate, coordinate and provide support and aid to challenge and eradicate institutional racism, cultural incompetence and bigotry” (*Association of Black Argumentation Professionals: Overview | LinkedIn*, 2018). In doing so, ABAP hosts town halls and “create a forum for the exchange of ideas and strategies to improve opportunities for Black coaches and students” (*ABAP’S DIGITAL DEBATE BILL OF RIGHTS – Association of Black Argumentation Professionals*, n.d.). Additionally, ABAP shares resources through their website and various social media platforms (*ABAP’S DIGITAL DEBATE BILL OF RIGHTS – Association of Black Argumentation Professionals*, n.d.; *Association of Black Argumentation Professionals: Overview | LinkedIn*, 2018). One of the resources that ABAP has provided is their written “Digital Debate Bill of Rights” which crafted a framework for institutions to consider when governing surveillance practices (*ABAP’S DIGITAL DEBATE BILL OF RIGHTS – Association of Black Argumentation Professionals*, n.d.).

The “Digital Debate Bill of Rights” is a comprehensive document that “identifies a set of rights and expectations that college policy debate should acknowledge for its participants” (See Appendix E) (*ABAP’S DIGITAL DEBATE BILL OF RIGHTS – Association of Black Argumentation Professionals*, n.d.). In doing so, the document serves as a framework for future policy creation in that it provides clear expectations and values that tournaments should aspire towards (*ABAP’S DIGITAL DEBATE BILL OF RIGHTS – Association of Black Argumentation Professionals*, n.d.). Published on their website, the bill of rights is an extensive response to the turn to digital debate and is “reflective of the needs and concerns expressed” by members of the community (*ABAP’S DIGITAL DEBATE BILL OF RIGHTS – Association of Black Argumentation Professionals*, n.d.). As such, the document is useful for tournament directors and administrators, as well as debaters and judges, who construct and navigate digital debate spaces.

Revisioning the use of technology within debate through the framework of ABAP's "Digital Debate Bill of Rights" should occur at two levels: led by the administrators of tournaments and by the tournament participants. This is necessary to ensure a holistic approach to embracing the tenants of the bill of rights as well as a last effect of the changes produced. Tournament directors and administrators possess a unique power in terms of dictating the digital terrain of virtual debate spaces. As discussed in chapter four, they can enact policies which constitute the structure and terrain for debate and thus can effectuate change by revisioning policies and altering their procedures. Using the "Digital Debate Bill of Rights" to frame surveillance policies would allow tournament directors to address community concerns and best situate their tournament within a conscious media environment (*ABAP'S DIGITAL DEBATE BILL OF RIGHTS – Association of Black Argumentation Professionals*, n.d.). They can thus quickly change the digital landscape of their tournament and foster better interactions through digital debate. While the "Digital Debate Bill of Rights" is not prescriptive of actions, it is descriptive of the values which tournament policies can seek to exemplify (*ABAP'S DIGITAL DEBATE BILL OF RIGHTS – Association of Black Argumentation Professionals*, n.d.).

In addition, the internal debate about debate can provide further engagement with the prevalence of surveillance practices within debate. In other words, debaters should continue the tradition of challenging the stylistic norms of ICPD and proposing alternative ways to engage competing advocacies. In doing so, they should participate in the reconstruction of the digital debate space in such a way that addresses their needs and concerns. This thesis seeks to contribute to such a revisioning. As debaters use their debate rounds to engage the question of technology and surveillance within debate, they participate in reimagining the affordances of digital debate. Debaters should be active advocates in the structure and embodiment of debate

and can capitalize on the already present reflexive capacity of debate to alter the normalized practices surrounding surveillance and online debates. In doing so, a lasting change can be created and the structure of debate can continue to evolve in such a way that acknowledges its history of racializing surveillance and seeks to address it.

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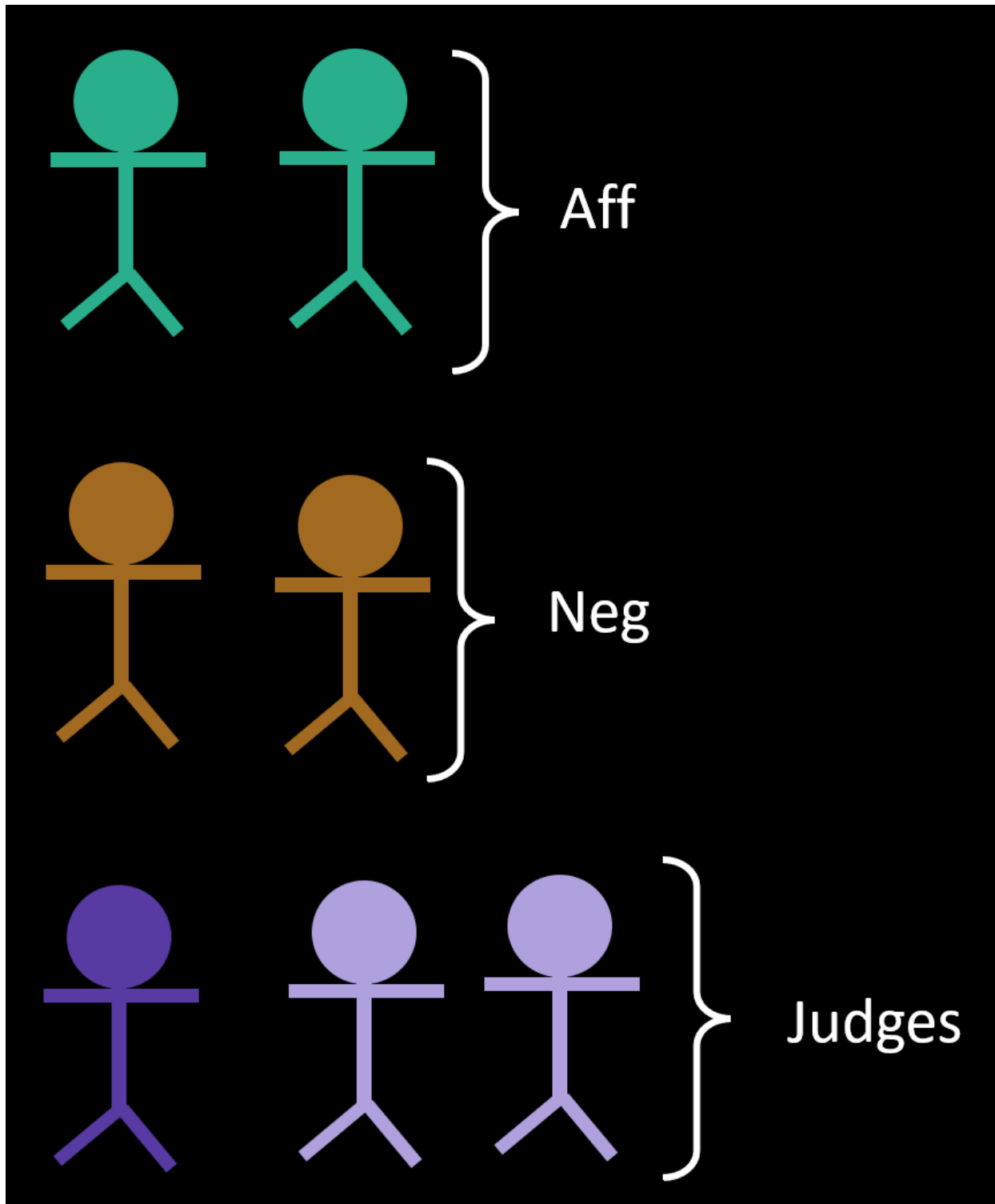
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Appendix A - Speakers, Order and Time

First Affirmative Constructive (1AC)	9 minutes
- Cross Examination by the Negative Team	- 3 minutes
First Negative Constructive (1NC)	9 minutes
- Cross Examination by the Affirmative Team	- 3 minutes
Second Affirmative Constructive (2AC)	9 minutes
- Cross Examination by the Negative Team	- 3 minutes
Second Negative Constructive (2NC)	9 minutes
- Cross Examination by the Affirmative Team	- 3 minutes
First Negative Rebuttal (1NR)	6 minutes
First Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR)	6 minutes
Second Negative Rebuttal (2NR)	6 minutes
Second Affirmative Rebuttal (2AR)	6 minutes

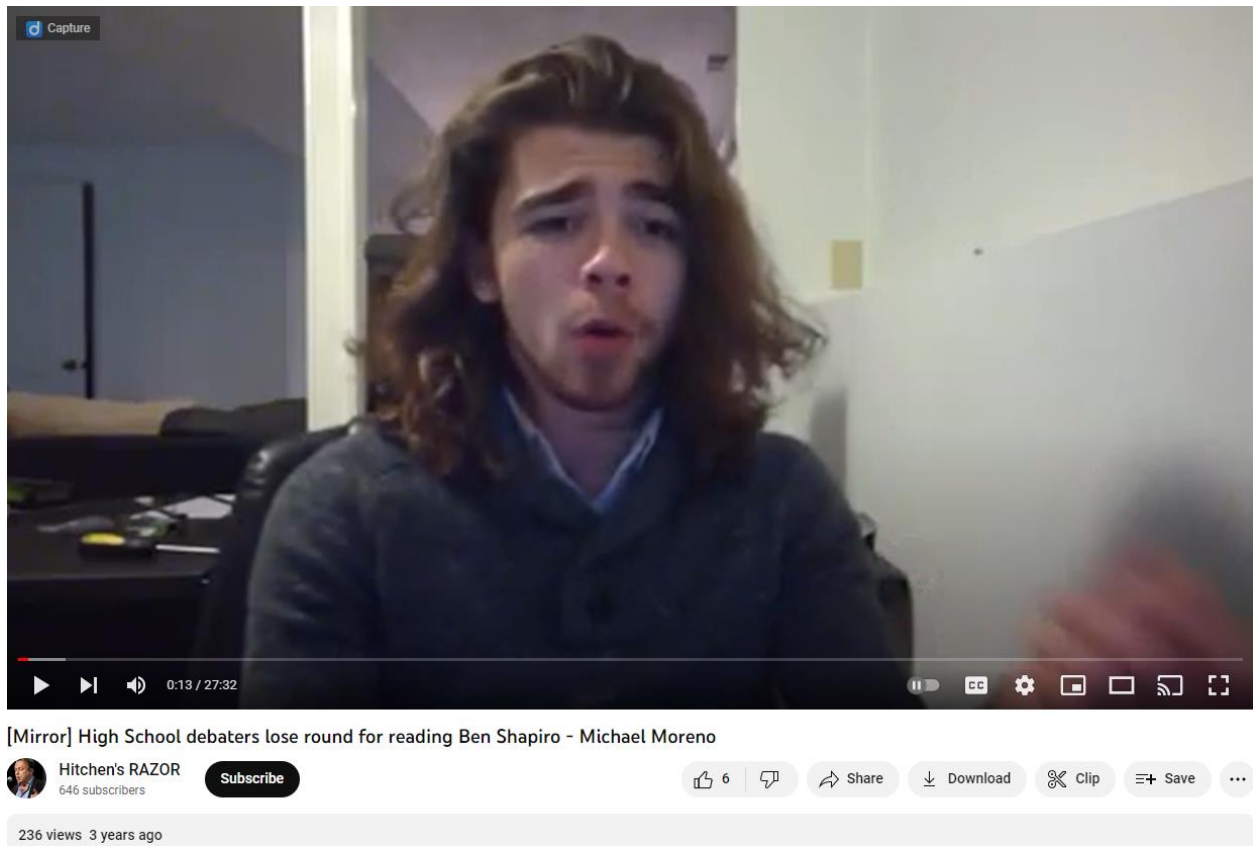
Appendix B - Positions within the Round



Appendix C - Freedom Papers



Appendix D - Michael Moreno



Appendix E - Association for Black Argumentation Professionals'

“Digital Debate Bill of Rights”

PREAMBLE

Events of the last several months have opened up wounds that never healed alongside new spaces for action that require attention and directed purpose so that communities we care about do not revert to an untenable status quo.

Participation in a debate tournament intended as a training ground for future leaders, activists and informed global citizens should not require a choice by any individual between fulfilling their competitive and educational objectives and being subjected to verbal, physical or online harassment in violation of university codes of conducts and principled behavior.

Students have a right to expect parties in authority over online tournaments to be proactive, rather than reactive, in creating a safe and instructive educational environment that provides protections against various forms of abuse.

Furthermore, all in attendance who believe in the value of this competitive activity, the importance of educational engagement, the sanctity of the marketplace of ideas and the merit of crafting scholarship have an affirmative obligation to work together for the betterment of the debate community.

In accordance with these fundamental notions and the ideals articulated in the governing documents of the Cross Examination Debate Association and the NDT Code of Conduct, we affirm that the following rights and expectations should be understood as unassailable within the operations of the online debate community, its members and its events.

PARTICIPANTS EXPECTATIONS AND RIGHTS

The opening two articles articulate a set of principles grounded in long-standing codes of conduct and research into developing practices. While some of the rights articulated may seem to apply mostly to students and others may apply more easily to students, the underlying hope is that they would be afforded to all participating in the debate community.

ARTICLE I: PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS

While a perfect solution to the imperfections of online competitions doesn't exist and may be limited by finances, university policies, tournament director preferences or other considerations, we recognize that, as members of the debate community, individuals participating in educational, competitive debate activities have a reasonable expectation of:

- Access to Knowledge. Facilitation of use of scholarly tools, including access to libraries, social media, computer systems, servers, software, databases, phones, the Internet, and other forms of technology.

- Freedom from Abuse. Protection from abuse and intrusion by others sharing these resources including but not limited to cyber-bullying, unauthorized recordings, discriminatory practices, and/or harassing conduct based on an individual's race, physical ability, cognitive ability, sexual preferences, gender identity, or other protected classes.
- Confidence in the Deliberate Review Process. The ability to report documented, concerning behaviors without fear of retribution. Once reported, individuals can reasonably expect fair review of the allegations by unaffiliated parties. It doesn't require a favorable verdict just meaningful deliberation. Neither position, power nor competitive interests should serve as a basis for exemption as it has in the past.
- Right to Privacy. Degrees of privacy which may vary depending on whether you are a university employee, matriculated student or unaffiliated.
- Promotion of Wellness. Include the socio-economic realities and the psycho-social needs of a student in the calculus when appraising tournament conditions and choosing which events the program supports with its time and its dollars.

ARTICLE II: RIGHTS AFFORDED PARTICIPANTS

We recognize that each member of the debate community should be afforded:

- Freedom from Observer Interference. The right to request removal of observers engaged in conduct detrimental to the proceedings [distracting, disturbing, lewd or unethical behavior]. Observer videos should be turned off unless a participant requests identification.
- Right to Affirmative Consent. We acknowledge that some see recording as a valuable educational and development aid as well as a means to provide full context to protect a participant's privacy. However, given that there are also implicit dangers, participants should have the right to record their own performances but no one else's without affirmative consent that may be given or withheld freely.
- Right to Safety. Participate in a safe debating environment with campus-specific action plans so if an incident occurs, the program's director or person present in authority knows who to report the incident to and how to pursue relief.
- Right to Due Process. We have all had our actions, intentions and statements misinterpreted. Allegations should first be communicated to an uninvolved authority within your program, grounded in the applicable campus codes, state, local and/or federal laws and then presented to governing bodies (e.g. Conduct offices, Faculty Review Boards, Ombudsman offices, law enforcement, tournament officials, professional review bodies within CEDA, NDT, and AFA Provosts or Deans). We must be wary of weaponizing our responses in ways that jeopardize, most importantly, those who follow later but also, those that may be found innocent in the eyes of the law and deserve to live their lives.
- Right to Know. The right to know of any intention to abridge these expectations and rights whether caused by university policy, host schools' open expression policies, tournament

preferences or organizational codes, prior to the agreement of directors, coaches, and students to participate.

RIGHTS ACTIVATION SUPPORT STRUCTURES

To transform rights from mere statements to an everyday reality requires responsive institutions invested in their participants equipped with an understanding of both the supports that are needed from them and the barriers created intentionally and unintentionally by current norms and practices. The following articles identify and affirm the need for change and the desire for responsiveness to go beyond the bare minimum in activation of the rights articulated above creating an accountable, respectful, and safe environment for all involved.

ARTICLE III: CUSTODIAL EXPECTATIONS OF OUR PROGRAMS

We have the right to expect our own coaches, judges, and directors to:

- Be willing to make representations to the tournament, as the person in charge of our team delegation, that each of our attendees will comport themselves in a manner consistent with governing codes of conduct by statement and/or waivers.
- Act in a manner towards students and each other consistent with our university's code of conduct & acceptable use policies, and adhering to relevant laws.
- Be proactive in deterring predatory behavior within our own digital squad practices and activities.
- Acknowledge the additional labor and stress resulting from debating online coupled with the surrounding issues of the pandemic and racial injustice.
- Communicate with team members about campus wellness and mental health resources available.
- Prioritize debater safety and psyche while creating distinctions that preserve scouting. Director-to-director communication is the most viable means to address past problematic interactions prior to the tournaments without involving the tournament host. Directors should ascertain if anyone in their party has concerning, documented behaviors [a personal log up to a formal complaint] regarding individuals expected to be in attendance. The director doesn't need details except if they question veracity. Then that director should contact the director of the squad in question and respectfully request that the individual(s) in question do not observe that student [indicating by default others may]. Only if reasonable accommodations for information-sharing cannot be reached should overtaxed tournament hosts become involved.
- Be cognizant of the need to promote equity by taking affirmative steps to educate everyone that participants will face challenges in navigating an online debate ecosystem especially without the traditional availability of supportive in-person contact.

ARTICLE IV: EXPECTATIONS FOR TOURNAMENT HOSTS

With due consideration for the caveats listed in the preamble, we encourage tournament hosts as, they are able, to:

- Take affirmative steps to support healthier eating, sleeping and other behaviors at tournaments in online environments in the absence of travel.
- Consider experimenting with flex time instead of prep time so participants can address home-based interruptions, movement, self-care needs, hydration, and tech issues beyond standard in-round debate prep.
- Announce reminders for participants to take wellness breaks and perform tech checks between rounds essential to extended online competition.
- Experiment with incorporating alternative programming that creates spaces/opportunities to compensate for the lack of in-person contact without overextending the tournament day.
- Resist the impulse to maintain the same schedule when considering number of rounds, length of day, time between rounds and meal breaks.
- Increase judge awareness of differentiated student spaces [e.g. living rooms vs. classrooms, public spaces where mask-wearing may be required during debates] and family circumstances [e.g. shared laptop/cellphone use, varying internet access]. Bias is impossible to remove but reminders can aid in minimizing the effects on decisions and speaker points.

ARTICLE V: EXPECTATIONS OF NOTICE

Since knowledge is power and transparency builds trust, we affirm the timely inclusion of explanations in tournament invitations, as they are able, of information regarding:

- Representations by the videoconferencing vendor[s] and/or university IT professionals responsible about the security of audio recordings. If they cannot or chose not to do so, the host can acknowledge that instead.
- Tracking round attendance plans and sharing that data using methods similar to current and planned offerings by Classroom Cloud, Zoom, Google Meet and other vendors to inform participant' decisions to grant consent.
- Tournament's acceptable use policy for recording retention for legal and/or educational reasons including duration, distribution, & automatic round recordings.
- Proactive measures implemented by host schools for protection against harassment/discriminatory practices, cyber-bullying, and unauthorized recordings.

This set of principles is a starting point not an endpoint. Doing nothing, as of now, is unacceptable.

Task Force Members

Brianna Aaron, James Roland [ABAP Board Representative], LaTonya Starks, Will Baker [Chair] Authorized for circulation by Benjamin Hagwood 1 ,Chair of the Association of Black Argumentation Professionals

RESOURCES

EMBRACE YOUR “CUT & PASTE” SKILLS

As reflected throughout the Digital Debate Bill of Rights, we readily acknowledge that some of these expectations will involve a considerable investment of time and effort. Some might not even be feasible on your campus for legal or compliance reasons. However, others clearly will be just by cutting and pasting language incorporated from others’ tournament invitations and then customizing it for their purposes.

This evolving process allows us to learn from each other in the community through experimentation, communication, and observation. The key is to stand with protecting participants demonstrated through your actions not denied by excuses.

Below are some current language samples gathered by the Task Force that can be inserted into tournament invitations with minimal effort. Particular thanks to the debate programs at Binghamton University and Northwestern University who have shared their efforts and invitations with us freely this fall and, in some cases have been excerpted below. We invite others to make this a living document sharing language and resources they view as useful from their experiences.

ONLINE COMPETITION

Recording rounds, releasing videos, or videos without prior permission of the participants is prohibited. Debaters and judges should have their cameras on at all times whenever possible. Anyone registered as a debater or judge on tabroom is allowed to watch any debate unless the participants ask them to leave. Anyone not registered as a debater or judge must get prior approval from everyone before being allowed to watch the debate. This includes parents, high school students, and coaches who have zero judging commitment.

[ABAP SUGGESTS TOURNAMENTS CONSIDER A CHANGE IN THE ABOVE LANGUAGE TO ALL SPEECH TIMES INSTEAD OF ALL TIMES]

DIVERSITY & SAFER SPACE POLICY

We have a zero-tolerance policy for racial, sexual, or any other form of harassment. Violators will be expelled from the tournament, but their judging commitment will still be owed.

UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS ON BIAS THAT HOSTS COULD BASE THEIR OWN UPON AND RELEASE

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/06/02/higher-ed-leaders-address-protests-racial-tensions-and-killing-george-floyd>

<https://www.businessinsider.com/college-top-us-universities-respond-black-lives-matter-protests-2020-6>

CEDA & NDT ETHICAL DOCUMENTS

CEDA is the sanctioning body for tournaments held throughout the College policy debate season. CEDA's governing documents include a section on Tournament Principles and Governance, CEDA's Statement on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment and the CEDA Statement of Ethical Principles. To learn about their referral process, please visit:

CEDA Professional Review Board

http://www.cedadebate.org/PRB_FAQ

The NDT has established a Conduct Policy Adjudication process to review complaints involving its code of conduct related to the National Debate Tournament, specifically, where it has jurisdiction. To learn about their referral process, please visit:

NDT Conduct Policy Adjudication

<https://nationaldebatetournament.org/about/conduct-policy-adjudication/>

American Forensics Association Code of Standards

<https://www.americanforensicsassoc.org/code-of-standards/>

The NSDA does not govern college debate and is not affiliated with CEDA. Links to their Code of Honor and Code of Ethics are below as a courtesy given the interactions that occur between the debate communities across events and age-ranges.

National Speech and Debate Association

<https://www.speechanddebate.org/code-of-honor/>