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Abstract

This paper[1] presents an analysis of stasis as a means for creating common ground between conflicting parties and a guide to judgment in public deliberation. Craig's (1989) approach to communication as a "practical discipline" provides the theoretical justification for research that examines the practical communication problems society faces. This paper examines public discourse in the form of arguments before local deliberative bodies, where people are attempting to influence the judgment of the board and the public. Using the methods of a rhetorically informed discourse analysis (see Tracy, 2001 & 2002), this paper examines the formulation, presentation, and reaction to arguments in naturally occurring public deliberation. The analysis focuses on the ways stasis provides a means of understanding, analyzing, and critiquing argument. A fundamental problem in public argument is a lack of common ground for proceeding with deliberation when opposing sides take divergent views of an issue. Stasis as a principle for public deliberation provides a way of conceiving common ground and a guide for effective public deliberation.

Introduction

Public deliberation, at any level of government, can be very divisive. Deliberative bodies, from national legislatures to local school boards, are often bombarded by groups pushing for their particular agendas. While this interest driven approach to public arguments runs contrary to a Habermasian notion of ideal speech (see Habermas, 1989), Mouffe (1999) and other theorists of public argument and rhetoric (see Hauser, 1999) argue that such interest is inherent to deliberation and that power differences are ubiquitous to society. When people use such interest based approaches to public argument, however, they tend to present different perspectives as incommensurable, leading to the axiomatic conclusion that "little hearing goes on at public hearings" (McComas, 2001, 38). Kemmis (1990) has referred to this problem as a "stalemate" that keeps citizens from reaching agreement and one of the practices that keeps citizens apart and unable to orient to a common good.

In public argument and deliberation, it is important to discover ways of overcoming such apparently incommensurable differences in order to discover, or invent, a common good capable of sustaining agreement and providing a basis for action. The argumentative concept stasis can be used as a guiding principle for public deliberation that provides for such a basis. Rather than attending to the common ground stasis can provide, the many practices in public argument work against establishing a clear stasis, which increases division between competing interests.

As one of the most common practices of democracy, public meetings provide a common locus for naturally occurring public argument (see Tracy & Dimock, 2004). To explicate the relevance of stasis as an analytic tool and its relevance as a potential guiding principle, this essay examines two case studies of public deliberation. Both illustrate a problematic deliberative situation best explained by a lack of attention to stasis. This analysis falls into a line of research examining naturally occurring argumentative discourse using discourse analytic methods (see Tracy, 2002; Tracy and Ashcraft, 2001; Tracy and Standerfer, 2003). Prior to analysis, it is important to examine the essential aspects of stasis theory, which provides a framework for the analysis, a practical ideal in deliberation, and a method of judgment for public argument.

Stasis and Public Argument

Stasis theory is nearly as old as rhetoric itself. The standard forensic stases have been, essentially, codified since Hermagoras (Deiter, 1950; Goodwin, 1989); the concept was referenced by both Plato and Aristotle (Braet, 1987; Dill, 1988), and is also fundamental to Aristotle's conceptions in the physical sciences (Backes, 1960; Deiter, 1950). More importantly though, the concept of stasis represents a fundamental means of understanding the nature of argument, generating effective discourse, understanding conflict, and coming to judgment. Past research on stasis demonstrates its significance as a fundamental principle of argument. Contemporary research on naturally occurring argument can add to our understanding of stasis theory and can connect argument theory to argument practice.

As Deiter's (1950) exhaustive analysis of the etymology of stasis explains, stasis is that point where motion stops. The prefix "sta" literally means "stand" and is used in reference to physical objects like water, rocks, and people. In an abstracted sense though, standing also refers to the stance taken by interlocutors in an argument (Dill, 1988). Deiter's analysis also explains how stasis is both the stopping point and the starting point of argument. Similar to the old axiom that you can only travel *half way* into the forest (otherwise you start traveling *out* of the forest), stasis refers to that point where "in" and "out" meet. In this sense, stasis is simultaneously the start, the end, and the turning point of movement. Argumentatively speaking then, stasis can (and has been) applied to all of these aspects of argument. It is the point of conflict at which two speakers reach an impasse. It is the focal point of inventive strategies focused on generating arguments to persuade an audience to move from the stasis. Finally, it can also refer to the turning point of a debate, the point or issue at the heart of a disagreement.

In this sense, stasis refers to a context extrinsic structure which rational discourse obeys just as ball bearings obey the laws of physics. Stasis in argumentation though, is more than the application of physical metaphors to discourse. As Kline (1979) has explained, this point of contact between otherwise incommensurate positions is also upheld in linguistic theory. Her argument draws on Habermas's position relative to systematically distorted communication (1970b) and communicative competence (1970a) which, in a basic sense, argues that in

order for there to be communication there needs to be some point of fundamental agreement. Thus, if there is conflict over a point, there must also be a point of agreement, such as a basic agreement on the meanings of the language used, upon which the disagreement may be founded. This analysis positions stasis not as extrinsic to language use, but intrinsic to it as well. Kline's work has further demonstrated that the stases, as potential points of conflict in the pragmatic use of language, correspond to the classic forensic stases.

Research on the structure of argumentative interaction has also demonstrated that stasis is fundamental to language and entails the aspects of meeting point, conflicting point, and turning point. Jacobs and Jackson's (1981) work on conversational argument provides some important insight into the applicability of stasis to the structural features of disagreement. From their discourse analytic perspective, "arguments are collaborative productions organized by conventions of language use in which two cooperative speakers jointly produce the conventional structure" (Jacobs & Jackson, 1980, 251). Arguments develop in accordance with the basic conversational structure of the adjacency pair. An adjacency pair is simply a conversational sequence, like question and answer or greeting and response, that forms the basic unit of interaction. The introduction of a first pair part (like "how are you?") makes the second pair part ("fine.") conditionally relevant. In argument stasis emerges where there is a point of disagreement between a first and second part of the adjacency pair. A first pair part of, say a proposition, would make a second pair part of agreement or disagreement conditionally relevant. If no response is made or a disagreement is made, the stasis is created and discourse should orient to the point of conflict if it is to proceed.

It is the common orientation to the structure of interaction that discourse analytic research adds to the Habermasian principle of communicative competence and the logical basis of stasis theory. Unless parties are orienting to the same structure, they cannot communicate. For instance, in the old Hitchcock classic *North by Northwest*, the hero managed to get thrown out of an auction (escaping the villains) because he kept responding to the auctioneer with structurally inappropriate bids (he decreased the bid rather than increasing it). He was then taken into custody on drunk and disorderly changes. It was the "disorderliness" of his speech that was both problematic and disruptive. The disorder, or conflict between the first part and second part of the adjacency pair, creates a point of stasis that must be remedied for discourse to continue.

A second essential concept in the analysis of adjacency pairs is the notion of preference. In conversation analysis, preference does not refer to a psychological desire for agreement (although socially, there is often this feature at work in conversation), but to a structural design that "prefers" one response over another (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). For instance, there is a structural difference between the questions "where are you spending the holiday?" and "why don't you spend the holiday with us?" In each case the question serves as a first pair part that structurally requires a second pair part, an answer. However, the answers to these questions require different kinds of work to conform to social expectations. To the first one might simply state, "we're going to Disney Land." The

second case structurally prefers an affirmative answer. In an interaction where the "dispreferred" response must be given, the respondent will tend to mark the statement with hesitation, delay, and an account. The first question does not imply a preference for an answer (although situational demands may imply a preferred choice), and thus does not require an account for the choice. The second structure requires an account for a dispreferred response. This need for an account opens an "expansion slot" (see Antaki, 1994) where an account for the dispreferred response may be offered. Essentially, when there is a stasis point, conversational structure orients to the need to speak to the stasis prior to continuing the conversation. These dispreferred responses are structurally marked by hesitation or other disruption to the flow of the conversation, as well as the account responding to the point of conflict.

Accounts have a variety of features that relate to the ways they are called for and the structural and functional aspects of accounts (see Antaki, 1994). However, for present purposes, it is simply that these accounts are made relevant by the emergence of a stasis that provides an important link between the logical theory and the conversational practices of stasis. If we understand stasis, generally, as a point of disruption in the flow of what would otherwise be an agreement, we can see that Jacobs and Jackson's work lends support to the same conception of stasis offered by Dieter, and thus by Hermagoras and Aristotle. Stasis arises as a point where a first pair part and a second pair part do not seamlessly fit together. The disagreement creates a structural place (expansion slot) where an explanation or account relevant.[2] Even in Plato's reconstructed dialogues, this feature of discourse is apparent. As Socrates practices the dialectical method, displayed below from Plato's *Republic*, he creates a stasis, which disrupts the flow of the conversation, shifting to the new issue that must be addressed prior to continuing the discussion:

Thrasymachus and Socrates
S: …Are the rulers in all cities infallible or are they liable to error?
2 * T: No doubt they are liable to error.
3 S: When they undertake to make laws, therefore, they make some
4 correctly, others incorrectly?
5 T: I suppose so.
6 S: And a law is correct if it prescribes what is to the ruler's own
7 advantage and incorrect if it prescribes what is to their disadvantage?…
8 T: It is. …
9 S: Then, according to your account, it is just to do not only what is to the
10 advantage of the stronger, but also the opposite, what is not to their
11 advantage.
12 * T: What are you saying?
13 * S: The same as you. But let's examine it more fully…
(Plato, 380 BC/1992, 339c-339d)

There are, of course, differences between a dialectical examination and typical conversation, and Plato does not show hesitations, repairs and the like, but

there is a structure to the emergence of stasis that is important to this conceptual frame. Thrasymachus' responses (line 2) were direct and did not treat the questions as problematic (something Socrates used later as support for his indictment of the position). As Socrates questioned his witness, Thrasymachus continued in providing short responses, up to the point (line 12) where he found fault with the previous turn. Therefore, this is the stasis in the line of argument. Socrates must be called upon to justify the claim. Argument can only continue if and when this point of stasis has been overcome.

Clearly stasis is a point of disagreement that stops the progression of a line of reasoning, or positions an account or claim in need of justification. This is the point from which argumentation develops as a response to the clash of positions. In some debates, deliberations, and conversations this stasis is clearly identified and pursued, but this is more frequently not the case. No doubt the reader has experienced debates and conversational arguments where "the issue" is never quite clear. Beyond this anecdotal evidence, there is also a growing body of research on deliberation that points to stasis as a fundamental problematic.

In research on deliberation and public meetings (see Tracy & Dimock, 2004) one of the fundamental problems is with the reasonableness of the deliberative decision-making process. Researchers vary considerably, from boisterous disagreement (Ivie, 2002) to open-minded dialogue (Pearce and Pearce, 2000), in their recommendations for addressing conflicting views appropriately. Each and every practice is open to failure as "undemocratic discourse" (Gastil, 1992) where people stop reasoning and arguing together to come to better decisions (see Button & Mattson, 1999; Ivie, 2002; Price, 2000).

Tracy and colleague's work on public meetings and deliberative practices (see Tracy, 1999; Tracy & Ashcraft, 2001; Tracy & Standerfer, 2003) point to a number of different strategies people use to negotiate tensions and argue with one another. Many of the argument practices they have identified manage the tension between unity and division in arguments. These practices often position getting along as more fundamental to deliberation than the reasonableness of the decision-making. For instance, in the course of choosing a new superintendent (in the context of a polarly divided school board), Tracy and Standerfer (2003) examined the ways the search process was positioned as unquestionable, rather than having contentions implications. Tracy (1999) examined how platitudes may be used to invoke moral principles and make nonspecific moral reprimands in ways that make an argument difficult to question. Kitzinger's (2000) research on idiomatic expressions found that they also function in ways that impede disagreement and argument. Framing arguments as concerning wording, rather than conflicting values (Tracy & Ashcraft, 2001), is yet another practice that limits disagreement in order to gain assent.

Essentially, this line of research indexes patterns of conflict avoidance or circumnavigation that, while providing unity, frequently undermine the deliberative process. In each case the interaction patterns suggest that the discourse is structured so as to avoid establishing or acknowledging some issue as a point of contention. The problem for deliberation more generally is that these practices

may undermine the legitimacy of deliberative bodies' decisions. By orienting to stases, both as an analytic tool and a practical principle, deliberative bodies could secure more reasoned judgment because they would be more likely to discover and examine the main points of conflict an issue may raise, and avoid those contentions that are not fundamental to a dispute. In this sense, stasis theory can provide a situated standard for reasoned decision making.

Brat's (1987) research on stasis points to its potential applicability as just such a practical standard. He argues that the theory of stasis functions as standard for reasoned, unbiased judgment. For instance, he provides the following excerpt from the Code of Criminal Procedure in the Netherlands:

The material or main questions of article 350:
1. Is the fact proven?
2. Is the fact punishable? (i.e. is the proven fact covered by a provision of criminal law?)
3. Is the offender punishable? (i.e. are there exonerating circumstances?)
4. What sanction should be imposed?
(Brat, 1987, 87)

This guide to the judge is a guide to reasoned judgment in the context of the criminal law courts. As opposed to the comprehensive and complex sort of guidance offered by the elaborate *Robert's Rules of Order*, this set of questions focuses on judgment rather than procedure. The two are no doubt interrelated, but the implication of Braet's argument is that stases provide situated, practical standards to guide judgment.

Summary

The basic forensic stases have long been understood as an exhaustive set of questions, applicable to any case. While Braet's (1987) research appears to adopt a relatively similar, context extrinsic set of stases as a guide, the research from Kline (1979) and Jacobs and Jackson (1983) allow us to conceive of stasis as a feature of interaction with broad scope. It is the starting, stopping, and turning point of a conversation or disagreement. When a stopping point occurs, which is as inevitable as the agreement that must precede it, interaction pauses and must navigate the new terrain of the disagreement. Stasis theory tells us that if reasoned judgment, a new agreement, is to follow the disagreement, the stasis needs to be addressed. Unfortunately, as research indicates and practitioners of public discourse have experienced, little effort is put into addressing and removing barriers to disagreement.

In order to illustrate the significance of stasis as both a key component of argument analysis and guide to judgment, the two following case studies explore problematic treatments of stasis. Analytically, examining how arguments relate to the stasis allows insight into the role of arguments in guiding the deliberative process. In each case, the way arguments construct or avoid stases impedes the development of reasoned judgment.

Case Studies in Problematic Deliberation

The purpose of relaying these two case studies is threefold. First, they lend credence the above theoretical analysis by portraying the practice of argumentation in naturally occurring discourse. Secondly, they demonstrate stasis theory's viability as a means of analysis, which can account for the destructive tendencies of arguments that are not oriented to stases. Third and finally these case studies demonstrate that the practice of deliberation is sorely in need of a practical standard for reasoned judgment. These case studies utilize discourse analysis as a method of examining naturally occurring public argument.

Discourse Analysis and Argumentation

Discourse analysis refers to a broad range of methods for textual analysis ranging from conversation analysis, which is marked by close attention to turn-taking structure (see Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998; Schegloff, 1999), to critical discourse analysis, which focuses on the construction and use of power in and through discourse (see Gee, 1999). This analysis of public argument is concerned with examining the practices of deliberation in order to discover practical problems and offer solutions that fit the situated ideals of the participants. This purpose is best facilitated by Tracy's (1995) Action-Implicative Discourse Analysis which entails a close examination of naturally occurring discourse in context, uses conceptual tools that explicate the structures and practices of interaction, and orients toward explaining problematic practices and offering constructive criticism to better achieve situated ideals.

Both of the following case studies are based on an examination of the video records of the deliberative proceedings (in both cases the public meetings are routinely recorded and broadcast on a public access channel), background research recovering the "public conversation" surrounding the issues (including press releases and news reports), and transcription of relevant speeches and interactions for close textual analysis.

Case I: The Invisible Stasis

On January 6th 2003 the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) was sued in federal court for religious discrimination by the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) over the exclusion of a "Bible Club" as a student organization. As the event unfolded, a fragmented public conversation developed between the dispersed constituencies. By redefining the issue to be considered, the school board was able to avoid addressing the stasis and, consequently, remove it from the public conversation.

In Sept. 2002, Ashley Thiele (a student in the district) petitioned her school to form a Bible club. Under the "closed forum" policy of the school district, all clubs and student organizations needed to be curriculum related. On those grounds the petition was denied by the principle. Thiele then petitioned the district superintendent, who also denied the petition in November. In December, the petition was sent on to the school board who told the ACLJ lawyers recently acquired by Thiele and another student, they would review the decision in January. On January 6th, the ACLJ filed a federal lawsuit for religious discrimination

naming the BVSD, "the board of education, its president and members, the superintendent of schools and the principal of the school" as defendants. On January 28th, the BVSD reviewed the petition publicly, but postponed discussion of the issue in order to review the student organizations policy first. On February 11th, the board changed its student organizations policy to allow a "limited open forum" and remanded the petition to form a Bible club back to the superintendent to be reviewed under the new policy. The club was accepted under the new policy and on March 19th the ACLJ announced that they had reached a settlement with the district.

The general structure of the board meetings is to begin with public participation, at which time members of the public can raise any concern or speak to items on the agenda, followed by any board members' responses, reports from various committees, study items, and then action items. In the January meeting, the Board president asked for and received a motion to suspend the rules of operations for the evening to hear study items prior to action items at the beginning of the meeting. There was no discussion on the motion and no justification offered for the change. The effect of the motion was to temporally locate the discussion of changing the student organizations closed forum policy to a limited open forum immediately prior to the discussion of the lawsuit and the Bible club's appeal.

When the Bible club appeal came before the board, the lawsuit was explained, and the board immediately moved to postpone discussion until the next meeting when it would be able to vote on the proposed student organization changes. By changing the student organization policy, the Board did not have to make a decision on the Bible club. Addressing the matter of the Bible club's appeal and the lawsuit would have involved having to account for why the Bible club was denied when there is a class in Old Testament Literature, and when other clubs such as Amnesty International and Gay/Straight Alliance (which have no corresponding courses) were being allowed to meet under the closed forum policy.

The combination of these two issues worked in concert to undermine deliberation at three potential stases. First, the Board did not justify the change in the student organization policy. Although a community member who had been on the school board that unanimously established the closed forum policy explained what concerns had motivated their decision, no one on the board responded to her arguments. Instead, each speaker took time to mention how they had been considering changing the policy, but not to indict the current policy. For instance, when the superintendent introduced the new policy he stated:

BVSD - 012803 3:15:00[3]
> Garcia: Yes. We have been um considering um um (.) looking at a scenario with a lipid-limited open (.) forum. As a different scenario from what we've had in the past. Um, an' we have a proposal for a, policy along those lines.

Similarly, the responses from board members presented the current concern as stemming from a continual concern with the issue, without reference to the lawsuit.

BVSD - 012803 3:18:22

>   Garnett: I um, I like the proposed uh policy Ms. Mohr. I think it's um seems like fair, and a: uh reasonable way to approach using the school. um Making the school facilities available. I've had some (1.5) uh questions about the closed forum (.) policy for some time, but I this is an appropriate approach so, .h depending on how...

BVSD - 012803 3:19:00

>   Phillips: Um, For a long time I've been interested in a limited open forum uh, and the reason is that it really meets the needs of students. ...

While these responses state an ongoing concern, the topic of student organizations had only been raised twice in the past year (April and September). In both cases, the discourse was limited to a statement by one board member, with no responses from anyone else on the board. There was never any other discussion of the matter. The important point is not whether the board members had actually had any concerns, but that there had been no public discourse on these concerns. This is a matter of presenting reasoned deliberation in the public forum (where decisions are supposed to be discussed and made). Their approach in this case makes the stasis invisible in the sense that it was chalked up to vague "concerns" or unstated students' needs whose significance was simply that they have been held a long time.

The second way deliberation was undermined was the lack of an inquiry into the validity of the lawsuit itself. The civil suit accused a district that prides itself on its "openness" of discrimination against religion. While the change in policy would have the effect of opening up club access and, as indicated in the minutes of the following meeting, there would be a review of all student organizations according to the new policy, the question of whether or not the district was engaging in discriminatory practices was dropped completely.[4] This is fairly significant for a district, which like others across the country, was in tight budget constraints and ended up with a bill for $12,000 from the ACLJ by settling out of court.

The third way deliberation was undermined was by the lack of review of the petition to have the Bible club under the original policy. The petition was to establish the club as a student sponsored organization, an organization that is either part of the academic program (e.g. Band) or related to the curriculum (e.g. Spanish club). Without discussion of the issue, the board simply denied the petition and stated that it would be accepted under the new policy as a student initiated club, the category created by the policy change which was not the status the students had petitioned for, and did not carry official recognition (sponsorship). This decision, notably, was not discussed or voted on. The review of all

the clubs (and assumed changes in their status) was positioned as a result of the policy change, since the question of discriminatory or even unsystematic policy enforcement had disappeared from the deliberations. As the discussion around the motion indicates, when the President of the School Board (de la Cruz) raised the issue at the next meeting, the board members quickly moved the issue back into the hands of the superintendent.

BVSD - 021103 1:00:45

de la Cruz: The next item on our agenda is the appeal, of the
                    application to start a student club. A:nd (we need) a
                    [motion.
Okolowicz: [(motion)
de la Cruz: Janusz.
Okolowicz: I have a motion that in light of our recent
                    discussion, we just finished, I make a motion to
                    remand the student application for reconsideration.
*   Recognizing that the application would be granted as
*   a student initiated club under our revised policy and
                    therefore there is no need for this board to take
                    further action.
de la Cruz: Second?
                    (.)
de la Cruz: Any further discussion? (.) (Julie)
Phillips: I just want to clarify um, that I think we're
                    remanding it to the superintendent. Janusz wasn't
                    clear but, um,
de la Cruz   Right. (.) Um, based on our approval of the policy,
*   this would ( ) fall under a student, driven, club, at
*   the school rather than a curriculum driven an' (.) So
*   the motion is to remand it back to doctor Garcia for
                    his (.) action. [( )
Okolowicz   [Since since the administration will
                    have joyful task to review all the clubs now. This is
                    proper for administration to deal with all this. We
                    just updated the policy. [(.) (That) is (needed).
de la Cruz: [That's right. Any
                    other comments? (2) ( )
Phillips: Well I just wanted to expand a little bit on what
                    Janusz said, that every club in our district will be
                    under review as to what category that it falls into.
*   And that not all clubs (.) uh, will come out as
*   curriculum related and they will end up as student
*   initiated clubs an' so, .hh some clubs will find some
                    major changes and some won't depending on how di-
                    rectly and closely they're tied to the curriculum.

Both Okolowicz and de la Cruz (see lines indicated *) state that the application will be approved and how it will be classified, even though there was no deliberation on the question or justification offered for their positions. Instead the application was placed under review for the same reason that all student organizations were being reviewed. Phillips suggested (see lines indicated *) that many of the already approved clubs would see their status change, but no reasoning was offered on this point or explanation given for why their current status was suspect.

In each of these instances, the stasis was made invisible by the way the board approached the issue. As a result many questions went unanswered, policies were approved without adequate analysis, and underlying problems were left to lay. Deliberation suffered overall because the board was circumnavigating the conflicts that give rise to argumentation and reasoned deliberation.

Case II: The Fragmented Stasis

While the stasis in the school board's deliberations disappeared from consideration, the second case study examines the way stases can multiply to such an extent that they become impossible to address. In the fall of 2002 as the U.S. put greater political pressure on Iraq to comply with weapons inspections and the administration's discourse treated war as a more and more likely possibility, a number of citizens protested the war. One of the more structured protest movements occurred through the deliberations of city council meetings. Members of peace activist groups and the general citizenry urged city councils across the country to pass resolutions against the "war;" Boulder, CO was among them. Although the Boulder city council eventually passed a resolution opposing war with Iraq on January 21, 2003, a first attempt to have the city take an official stance against the war failed October 1st of 2002.

This case study examines the antiwar deliberations of the October meeting. There was no resolution passed, and in fact no clear resolution offered, but the concern here is not to evaluate this decision, nor to consider the efficacy of such symbolic resolutions. Rather, the concern is with the problematic aspects of the deliberations. In this case, instead of there being a strategic circumnavigation of the stasis, there was a proliferation of stases, issues, and propositions being contended to such an extent that no stasis could be adequately addressed.

In the City Council, like the school board, the meetings begin with public participation where the general public can speak to any issue other than those on the agenda (there are separate times set aside to speak to agenda items) for up to three minutes per person. In the October meeting a large group of people spoke out against the possibility of war in Iraq. In response, some members of the City Council considered taking some sort of formal action. The speeches from the public and the speeches of the council are structurally and sequentially distinct, so the stasis fragmentation of each is examined separately.

The Public's Presentation of the Issues

Fourteen members of the public spoke regarding the potential war (only two opposed to council action). Most expressed an affiliation with the Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Coalition. One of the most telling features of their discourse is the proliferation of topics along a wide variety of different issues. Although there were twelve speakers opposing the war, there were eighteen different argument topics on six essentially different issues and two distinct propositions (See tables 1 & 2). Notably, very few actually stated a proposition and fewer oriented their talk in support of a specific one. The two speakers opposing council action had distinctly fewer issues, partly due to lower numbers, but also due to more focused arguments (See table 3).

Table 1: The Anti-war Topoi

PROPOSITION: The potential war is bad.

ISSUES	War is detrimental.	War is not justified.	The administration is warmongering.
TOPICS	War hurts the innocent.*	Preemptive Strikes*	Bush wants war.*
	Sets a bad precedent	International Law	Bush has a hidden agenda.
	contradicts national identity	Inspections Resumed*	
	economic impacts far reaching impacts	World government	

* indicates that the topic was raised 3-5 times.

Table 2: The Pro-action Topoi

PROPOSITION: The City Council needs to take action on this issue.

ISSUES	Action is appropriate.	Action is needed.	Take a specific action.
TOPICS	All implicated	congress to act soon*	Write a letter
	Vote your conscience		Pass a resolution*
	Council's leadership*		
	Economic impacts		

* indicates that the topic was raised 3-5 times.

Table 3: Opposition Topoi

PROPOSITION: The city council should not support an action opposing war.

ISSUES	Action is inappropriate.	Saddam Hussein is dangerous.
TOPICS	Inappropriate Jurisdiction	Comparison to Hitler
	Abuse of power	
	More important matters	

The tables above display a reconstructed version of the arguments offered on each side of the debate. The main "propositions" of those asking the council to take a stand were essentially arguments against the potential war and for the Boulder City Council specifically to take action. The second row in each table represents a reconstructed version of the main issues supported by the argument topics that follow under each one. As the tables indicate, the majority of topics fall in the category of arguments against war. The topic raised most frequently was that Bush wants war and will push for war no matter what. Along with a general dearth of arguments justifying a specific council action, those justifying the appropriateness of the action tended to be vague appeals to conscience and the Council Members' roles as responsive representatives of the city.

The problem, from a stasis point of view, is the lack of systematic justification across speeches as well as within speeches. The predominant amount of time and the most compelling arguments in the speeches were given to argue against going to war. The framing of the issue in those terms makes it difficult for the City Council to take a particular line of action. Many speakers requested that the board pass a resolution as soon as possible to influence Congressional representatives who were considering resolutions that would grant Bush the authority to take military action, but this was, essentially, the full extent of argument on the subject. The overall position oriented mainly to the idea that war is bad, so the Council should oppose it. The justifications for passing a resolution were not oriented to the policy stases for the city council specifically. Consequently there is no clear connection between the arguments against war and the proposed "solution" of taking a stance against the war.

The opposition's arguments, on the other hand, while few in number stand out as more focused attacks. Between the two speakers, one spent approximately half his time arguing that the Council should not devote time to this issue and the other half arguing that Hussein was similar to Hitler. The other speaker devoted all of his time to the question of Council involvement. The main stasis addressed by these speakers was thus not whether or not military action was warranted, but whether or not the City Council should be involved in the issue. Those in favor of a resolution offered very little refutation of the point.

The Council's Response

The City Council Members' responses to this call for action were similarly fragmented topically, but their deliberations also lacked a basic motion or proposition each member could support or refute. Importantly, the first Council speaker was very clear as to what he was seeking to do and the motion made, but the orientation of the other council members, particularly those opposed to the war, fragmented the stasis to such a degree that the secretary asked if there

was still a motion on the floor. When the Council voted, the members were still not in agreement over what was being voted for and another motion had to be proposed and voted on because the first had become so muddled. This confusion is primarily due to a lack of attention the fundamental stasis of the debate. To illustrate this point, I will outline the course of the argument, pointing to the ways the debate was taken off track.

Council Member Havlick spoke first and requested that the city legal staff write a letter in opposition to the use of military force in Iraq due to the conflict such action would have with two of the city's core values: the sanctity of life and stewardship of the environment. According to the Council's bylaws, if three Council members agree to a request, then city resources may be used. All of this was stated clearly and repeated in the form of a formal motion.

The second turn was taken by Council Member Poinsatte who made a lengthy argument against the use of military force and the supposed benefits of such force. Her speech ended with a recommendation to send a letter to relevant national leaders. This, though is where the stasis started to become muddled. Her comments did not directly relate to the motion on the floor, but raised new arguments (different than those raised by the public) against war and military force. Given Jacobs and Jackson's (1981) analysis of argument structure and Antaki's (1994) analysis of "expansion slots" for explanations, Poinsatte's turn violated basic argument structure because it neither responded to nor elaborated on the previous turn.

Her comments were followed by Mayor Toor's recommendation that individuals write their own letters. This turn, while related to the original motion, was not formulated in the form of a motion or an amendment to the existing motion. Argumentatively speaking, it was a reason to reject the current motion, but due to the ambiguity of Poinsatte's recommendation to also write a letter, it sequentially supported or clarified a position that was irrelevant to the current motion.

His comments were followed by a set of arguments for and against the war by two different board members. As such, neither position directly related to the motion on the floor, further fragmenting the stasis. These speeches were followed by two speeches expressing different concerns regarding the Council's involvement in national/international issues, and two more turns for and against war. At this point the secretary asked whether or not there was still a motion on the floor.

Her question was asked as a request for clarification rather than a prompt to reorient the discussion. The motion was reiterated, without reference to the "rule of three," which allows council staff to be dedicated to a project that if three members agree it is important. When the motion was voted down (6 to 3) there was disagreement as to whether or not that allowed staff to be utilized to write a letter opposing the war. A new motion was made (the same as the original) and a new vote was immediately taken. The motion failed with only two votes in favor.

Once again, the fundamental flaw in the deliberations was a fragmentation of stasis, marked by expansion of issues and inattention to other speakers and

the propositions and issues they addressed. This led to multiple propositions being argued at once and thus, multiple interpretations of the motion that was under consideration. With so many issues clouding the discussion, it became impossible to reasonably consider and address particular objections to the motion. The council's decision not to oppose the war officially was reached primarily out of confusion and error, rather than out of reasoned judgment concerning the council and its role regarding national policy.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

Whether in private relationships, the public sphere, or technical discourse, argument and disagreement are commonplace. Less common is a systematic means of addressing and resolving disputes. Conflict is difficult at the best of times, but practices that exacerbate conflict by fragmenting and multiplying points of contention can make conflict much more difficult to resolve. Similarly, avoiding the basis of conflict and hiding it from view, can let conflicts and problems fester, continuing and exacerbating problems and flaws in policies and practices. Given its significance as a key component of reasoned argument, it is problematic that a search of current communication literature will not yield many references to stasis, any developments in stasis theory, and little applications of its fundamental elements. What research there is, in a variety of approaches to argument, suggests that stasis is an essential feature of logical, effective argument, issue focused discourse (argumentum ad rem), and reasoned judgment. It also, as Braet (1987) explains, can provide a useful, topically appropriate standard for assessing the reasonability of deliberations and arguments.

This analysis demonstrates the links between stasis as the classical extrinsic standard for logical argument and contemporary approaches to naturally occurring argument. As Kline's (1979) research demonstrates, inattention to stasis can distort communication while attention to stasis allows speakers to appropriately use expansion slots in a next sequential turn to address stases. This attention to stasis can improve communication by reducing the distortion and confusion that results by not addressing stasis. Research and analysis on stasis should continue to examine the way stases develop and are addressed in naturally occurring discourse in different argument spheres (see Goodnight, 1982).

In the case studies analyzing naturally occurring deliberation it is apparent that 1) attention to stasis is lacking in public discourse and that more attention may improve such discourse; and 2) as an analytic concept stasis can improve argument analysis by explaining practical problems and providing situated ideals. The case studies presented here display the potential benefits of analyzing stasis in public disputes, however further research should examine how arguers can more effectively address stasis in order to reach reasoned judgment. Research should also examine the potential problems of addressing stasis and exposing fundamental disagreements that could undermine groups' ability to achieve goals.

For the purposes of this paper, it is clear that stasis is a concept that deserves stronger attention, particularly if the problems of invisible and frag-

mented stases ring true to the problems faced in public, private, and technical argument. I know that they are strikingly familiar for many of the committees I have sat on and public arguments I have observed. Engaging these problems and utilizing stasis theory can improve our understanding and practice of argumentation.

Endnotes

[1] Original work on this topic was discussed in an NCA panel presentation considering approaches to teaching debate that would lead to better communication practices ("Dialectical Debate: Reaching beyond traditional Debate Paradigms" in the Argumentation and Forensics Division at the 2003 îNCA Convention) and an early draft of the paper was presented at the NCA 2006 Convention (Argumentation and Forensics Division).

[2] An important twist that conversational argument takes (and this is not covered in Jacobs and Jackson's (1980) examinations) is a reversal of the burden of proof. The person in the first turn position is not generally called upon the justify a proposal (e.g. You should spend the holiday with me for the following reasons…). Instead, the one disagreeing is required to account for the dispreferred response.

[3] Regarding the transcripts, all vocalizations are transcribed as recorded in the videotaped recording. Notations for pauses, syllable stretching, and other vocal characteristics are transcribed using the Jeffersonian system (see Hutchby and Woffitt, 1998). Colons indicate stretched sounds; numbers in parentheses indicate timed pauses; words in parentheses indicate the transcriptionist's doubt of the wording.

[4] Incidentally, the charge of discrimination dropped out of the public discourse in the media as well. Prior to this meeting the primary issue was the question of religious discrimination and the place of religion in public institutions, following the meeting the papers reframed the discussion in the "policy problem" terms the Board used.

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