

Biological Sex as a Predictor of Competitive Success in Intercollegiate Forensics

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Authors' Note

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Abstract

This study examines biological sex as a predictor of the level of success in intercollegiate policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking. Secondary data analysis of tabulation sheets from NDT, AFA-NIET, and NFA, revealed three findings. First, there are more male than female competitors in policy debate and males significantly experienced more out-round success than females. Second, there are more males than females in impromptu speaking; however, there was no significance between biological sex and success in out-rounds. Third, there are more male than female competitors in extemporaneous speaking and males significantly experienced more out-round success than females.

Keywords: forensics, success, policy debate, limited preparation, impromptu speaking, extemporaneous speaking, American Forensic Association-National Individual Events Tournament, National Forensic Association, National Debate Tournament

Perception of the activity and the actual participation are two different creatures.

Logue, 1986, p. 70

The forensics community encourages open dialogue about political and social controversies fostering critical thought. For example, Allen, Trejo, Bartanen, Schroeder, and Ulrich (2004) argue, “forensics serves a valuable educational purpose” (p. 173). Competitive forensics rewards students by training competitors to utilize critical thinking skills. As Hinck and Hinck (1998) explain, “Debate topics focus on social problems. Individual events, such as extemporaneous speaking...address current events and controversies” (p. 8). Despite encouragement to think critically about global issues, the forensics community is less critical of internal matters. For example, women continue to experience less success than men in intercollegiate forensics, and this issue continues to be ignored. This study analyzes the trend of biological sex and success in forensics, beginning with previous literature, followed by an explanation of the methodology, the results, and finally, a discussion outlining the study’s limitations and future research.

This study continues research on the participation and success of men and women in policy debate and limited preparation individual events (impromptu speaking and extemporaneous speaking). The researchers have chosen limited preparation individual events over general individual events such as interpretative (e.g., poetry and prose) and platform (e.g., public address and oratory/persuasion) because they more closely resemble intercollegiate policy debate. The purpose of this research is to raise awareness that biological sex contributes to the level of success in continual research-intensive events (e.g., policy debate and extemporaneous speaking). The researchers are interested in the following research question: Is there a difference in competitive success between males and females in intercollegiate policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking?

Literature Review

Since the beginning of intercollegiate forensics in the 19th century, disparities, or rather a divide in success between men and women has been established (see Friedley & Manchester, 1985; Manchester & Friedly, 2003; White, 1997). Over time, the community has worked towards equality for both sexes. Despite advances towards

equality for men and women, a disparity of success between men and women still exists (see Manchester & Friedley, 2003). This literature review will examine the possible reasons for the inequality of biological sexes and the differences and comparisons between policy debate and individual limited preparation events.

Previous studies have proposed possible causes for the inequality of men and women in the forensics activity, especially in policy debate and in limited preparation individual events. Scholars (e.g., Friedley & Manchester, 1985; Manchester & Friedley 2003; Matz & Brusckke, 2006; White 1997) have recognized culture, gender communication styles, harassment, lack of female coaches and judges, an individual vs. collective atmosphere, and attitudes of competitors as possible influences on women's lack of equal success.

Our culture plays a significant role in perpetuating the gender divide. In 1974, Kramer was one of the first scholars to acknowledge the inequality of men and women when stating, "The sex role differences, so important to our culture, seem to have been largely ignored in communication research" (p. 14). Since Kramer's research, scholarship has increasingly recognized the cultural sex role differences and muted voices of women in our society (Rogers, 1997, p. 6). The cultural inequality between males and females influences both the collegiate classroom and the forensics activity. As Sellnow and Treinen (2004) argue, "female students are silenced [in the classroom], whereas their male counterparts receive more and better-quality attention from instructors" (p. 277). Similarly, Rhode (2003) explains this inequality spreads beyond just the classroom and into "debate and the workforce" (p. 37). The inequality between biological sexes in our society impacts the role of women in forensics, as represented by Croucher, Thorton, and Eckstein's (2006) study that investigated male and female apprehension scores. Croucher, Thorton, and Eckstein (2006) found that "female competitors score higher on overall communication apprehension than male competitors" (p. 11) and noted that females scored lower than males on knowing and understanding forensics culture (p. 9). Women in forensics are slightly disadvantaged because of the male dominated culture.

After examining culture and biological sex, this next section will investigate the similarities and differences between biological sex, success, intercollegiate policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking. It should be noted that there is a vast amount of literature that discusses the discrepancy of biological sex and level of success for policy debate (e.g., Friedley & Manchester, 1985; Logue, 1986; Manchester & Friedley, 2003; Matz & Brusckke, 2006; 1993; Pettus & Danielson, 1994; Rogers, 1997; Skarb, 2003; Southworth, 2003; Stepp, 1997; Stepp & Gardner, 2001). The researchers have chosen not to break down the percentages of each study because all

of the studies acknowledge that men significantly experience a higher level of success over females in policy debate and that a greater disparity between men and women exists in policy debate than individual events.

Murphy (1989) explains that individual events may experience greater equality among both males and female competitors because “the activity...has matured and moved away from debate, [and] the traditional norms have been supported even more vigorously” (p. 116). White’s (1997) study notes the disparity between the level of success of males and females in extemporaneous speaking and explains, “the forensics community has known about the problem...for over ten years” (p. 37). Similar to Murphy (1989), Friedley and Manchester (1985) found that the community perceived individual events to have more equality between male and female competitors, however, in overall individual events, they argue, “both sexes are subject to perceptual limitations” (p. 2). Friedley and Manchester (1987) followed up on this and found males have been successful in interpretative events:

Because the level of male success in the interpretive events rises slightly in final rounds at regional tournaments and rises overwhelmingly in elimination rounds at national tournaments while the level of female success in the limited preparation events drops considerably in the final rounds at both regional and national tournaments, it appears that males are rewarded more for violating those sex-role expectations and stereotypes than females. (p. 13)

In comparison, Friedley and Manchester (1985) explain that interpretive events reflect a feminine style of communication, whereas limited preparation events are geared towards a masculine style of communication. Individual events (excluding limited preparation events) have allowed males to more easily break traditional gender roles. White’s (1997) study found women have been equally successful as men in persuasive speaking, an event historically dominated by men. Manchester and Friedley (2003) hypothesize that a possible reasoning for this equality may be because, “original speaking events have come to reflect a ‘blend’ of the logical appeals grounded in argument and critical thinking (often labeled as ‘masculine’) as well as the use of emotional appeals (often labeled as ‘feminine’)” (p. 33).

Historically, females have experienced a disparity in level of success when compared to men in limited preparation events. For example, Friedley and Manchester (1987) note, women have been more successful in impromptu speaking than extemporaneous speaking, despite this disparity. Williams, Carver, and Hart (1993) explain within the limited preparation events, “Impromptu speaking is one of the most frequently entered events in forensics competition...[because competitors view the event as]...fun, thrilling, challenging and open to creativity”

(p. 29). Impromptu speaking does differ from the other limited preparation event, extemporaneous speaking. On a basic level, Preston (1992) notes the “two preparation events...differ mainly in time allowed to prepare the speech” (p. 19). Whereas, Turnipseed (2005) argues “the information provided...[in an impromptu speech]...comes from within the individuals own interests and compiled knowledge” (p. 40). The differences between extemporaneous and impromptu speaking may be one factor to explain the differences between level of success and biological sex. Another reason for these differences may be gender communication styles.

Research has acknowledged that the differences in gender communication styles, physical differences such as voice, pitch, and tone, and appeals to argumentation may also influence the inequality of success. As Pettus and Danielson (1994) argue, the “Traditional gender role indicates that a female should be submissive, non-assertive and noncompetitive...these qualities would not lend themselves to success in our field” (p. 50). The male dominated events such as debate and limited preparation all require some use of verbal aggression, which violates gender roles. For example, in debate, verbal aggression may appear in the prepared speeches and in cross-examination which may be directed at competitors, fellow teammates, or the judges (e.g., Colbert, 1993). In addition, Wilkins and Hobbs (1997) discuss sexual metaphors as verbal aggression, which may alienate women in policy debate:

Another example of patriarchal practices is the use of sexual metaphors in the rhetoric of many in the debate community. It would be impossible for us to count the number of times that we have heard that an argument “sucks” or “blows” or that a debater “got screwed” in a round. These expressions are dangerous because they revolve around males and their experiences at the expense of and the exclusion of women. We have heard debaters tell one another to “bend over and take it.” Another example of this is when debaters claim to have been “raped” by the other team or the judge. This is using language to trivialize and to make light of something that is horrific and demeaning. (p. 61)

This verbal aggression is not only limited to debate, as Friedley and Manchester (1985) note, “female participants come closer to meeting sex-role stereotypes and sex-role expectations in individual events; however, perceived barriers of ‘competitiveness,’ ‘aggressiveness,’ and ‘intellectual respect’ in the original speaking events and limited preparation events are apparent” (p. 2). Gendered communication is just one of the potential reasons females may not be as successful as males in forensics events.

Murphy (1989) argues, because of the communication differences, women have adapted their communication styles to compete in forensics, when he states, “women have developed alternative communication

strategies that do not fit the masculine norms or the rational world paradigm. By elevating that paradigm...[the community]...ignore[s] such strategies to the detriment of the activity” (1989, p. 122). Olson (2001) furthers this communication alternative, stating, “...women feel trapped into a need to imitate a masculine style while retaining their femininity” (p. 11). White (1997) even argues extemporaneous speaking does not allow women to “blend” styles:

...extemporaneous speaking parallel[s] many masculine communication traits. A highly confident, criterion based, argumentative, objective, and deductive masculine style works well with the analytical, formulaic, carefully reasoned and synthesized, clearly organized, and powerfully delivered extemporaneous speech. However, the feminine style, inductive reasoning, use of personal experience, and a tentative approach does not meet the criteria for a successful extemporaneous speech. (p. 34)

In an effort to “level the playing field” (Olson, 2001, p. 13), scholars have proposed various tactics to assist in including more women into extemporaneous speaking. One way to overcome this barrier, as White (1997) suggests, is for the forensics community to embrace a compromise between masculine and feminine communication styles. White (1997) encourages more “narrative and example, along with logical reasoning and evidence, as acceptable support material in an extemporaneous speech in order to make the event more palatable to the feminine communication style” (p. 36). White (1997) specifically mentions extemporaneous speaking, impromptu speaking, and debate may benefit from this strategy of allowing for narrative, rather than the strict masculine style of deductive reasoning. Other tactics include changing the format of the event entirely (e.g., Crawford, 1984) to less drastic measures such as Olson’s (2001) suggestion of encouraging the use of narrative style in both writing questions and delivering speeches in order “equalize opportunities” (p. 13). Though these suggestions may allow for a more gendered voice, more needs to be done to overcome this gender inequality.

Kramer, Mulac, Lundell, and Bradac (1986) explain, “The range of language features on which male/female differences in syntax and semantics has been found is substantial” (p. 116). Kramer (1974) argues, “The pitch of the female voice, which is usually higher because of the given physical traits of the vocal cords, is associated with the undesirable trait of timidity” (p. 19). In addition to differences in voice, pitch and tone, Logue (1993) argues that part of the disparity may be influenced by the topic selections, as “topics selected are perhaps going to have more male than female appeal (e.g., military support, terrorism, nuclear war)” (p. 72). Compared to individual events, competitors have more influence on their topics that may suit their interests and communication

styles. In the case of limited preparation events, topics are randomly selected for the competitor to discuss. Though there is no previous research comparing the differences between topic selections for policy debate and random topic selections for individual events, the researchers acknowledge this may be a factor for the greater disparity between men and women in policy debate than limited preparation individual events. The differences between topic selections is one characteristic between limited preparation events and platform events.

Another reason the disparity between success and biological sex exists is sexual harassment (e.g., Jones & Treadaway, 2000; Sulfaro, 2002). Specifically, Jones and Treadaway (2000) argue more harassment occurs towards women than men in the activity (p. 43), and Stepp (2001) argues more “reported harassment [occurs] in CEDA and NDT...than in other general college settings...[and] in AFA and NFA” (p. 40). Sulfaro (2002) argues individuals “in more powerful positions and possessing the greater expertise are more likely to be subjected to harassment” (p. 64). These studies acknowledge the existence of harassment; however, scholars also criticize this research on harassment. Scholars argue that harassment cannot be used as the only reason to explain the disparity between the level of success and biological sex. Matz and Bruschke (2006) explain, “this shameful behavior cannot by itself fully explain the lack of female participation nor does it go very far in explaining why the lack of female participation is generally limited to open divisions at national tournaments” (p.42). As Tuman (1993) explains, there is no sufficient data or evidence that can be used to explain the effects of harassment on forensics and participation (p. 84). To further criticize, Matz and Bruschke (2006), Tuman (1993), and Sulfaro (2002) argue that there is no accurate way to measure sexual harassment in forensics.

In addition to harassment as a possible impact for why there are fewer women in the activity, another potential contribution is the lack of female coaches and judges. Croucher et al. (2009) explain that coaches are significant because they assist in providing a foundation of the community, where competitors seek coaches and teammates with whom they can relate (p. 85). With a lack of female coaches, women may not relate as easily to the program or community. Stepp (1997) argues, “The lack of female and minority coaches, directors and debate organization officers increases the magnitude of this problem” (p. 181). Pettus and Danielson (1994) hypothesize the lack of female coaches and judges is because of the “burden of child-raising traditionally falls upon the woman than the man” (p. 52). Given the lack of female coaches, few female competitors feel included, and therefore few will become coaches. The lack of females competing and coaching also impacts the number of females judging. Friedley and Manchester (1987) explain, “If a qualified judging pool at regional tournaments is selected from those

individuals who have most likely participated and succeeded in the events, a predominantly male judging pool is likely” (p. 17). In events historically dominated by men, such as policy debate and limited preparation events, many forensics scholars recognize the power that judges possess on creating and maintaining expectations for each event (e.g., Billings, 1999; Cronn-Mills & Schnoor, 2003; Gaer, 2002; Kay & Aden, 1984; Rogers, 1997; Stepp 1997; 2001; White, 1997). Forensics literature has proposed possible solutions to overcome the lack of female coaches and judges. Greenstreet (1997) encourages all coaches and judges to take extra measures to promote the positives of the activity: such as mentoring by a coach, recognition of academic excellence, and social awareness” (p.51). In addition, others propose that judges take an active role in accepting other styles of performances that do not follow traditional expectations. Cronn-Mills and Schnoor (2003) argue in extemporaneous speaking, judges need to worry less about counting the number of sources a competitor might cite and focus on the message.

Moreover, the biological sexes of the coaching staff and competitors may contribute to different learning environments and the level of success. Jones and Treadway (2000) have recognized that women succeed in collective atmospheres. Many forensics teams utilize individual over collective atmospheres. The individualistic atmosphere focuses on individual contestants, which promotes the masculine form of learning. For example, Kruger (1956) argues, “...most extemp contestants are left to their own devices, usually whatever success they achieve in this activity is due solely to their own efforts” (p. 214). The feminine style of learning may be illustrated by cooperative learning or through groups where females feel a sense of unity amongst their peers (Croucher, Thornton, & Eckstein, 2006).

In addition, the disparity may be perpetuated through competitors’ attitudes. Gaer (2002) argues the current attitude “promotes competition over education” (p. 54). White (1997) recognizes this current attitude and argues, “more women need to be encouraged to participate in extemporaneous speaking, and they need support if their participation leads to initial failure” (p. 37). Similar to Greenstreet’s (1997) argument for the need of positive reinforcement in forensics and specifically policy debate, White’s suggestion may also have a strong impact on all events that are male dominated that females are less likely to initially succeed. Another suggestion, proposed by Warner and Brusckhe (2001) and Gaer (2002), discuss policy debate and individual events by encouraging competitors to break outside the community norms when competing. Warner and Brusckhe (2001) argue that breaking these barriers is important to make debate “accessible to all” (p. 14).

Method

This study models previous studies (Friedley and Manchester, 1985; Manchester and Friedley, 2003; Matz and Bruschke, 2006; Southworth, 2003; White, 1997) that examine the level of success males and females experience in forensics. The researchers chose to utilize this model to continue the discussion on biological sex and success in intercollegiate forensics. For this study, level of success is measured based on out round appearance and how far a participant reaches such as octo-finals, quarter-finals, semi-finals, and finals. Success is measured based on out round appearance in octo-finals or higher. This study investigates three hypotheses:

H1: There is a difference between biological sex and the level of success experienced in intercollegiate policy debate.

H2: There is a difference between biological sex and the level of success experienced in intercollegiate impromptu speaking.

H3: There is a difference between biological sex and the level of success experienced in intercollegiate extemporaneous speaking.

A secondary-data or content analysis of tabulation sheets was conducted for three tournaments: the National Debate Tournament (NDT), American Forensic Association-National Individual Events Tournament (AFA-NIET), and the National Forensic Association (NFA) national tournament from 2003 to 2010, determining all competitors and breaks in policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking. The researchers chose to only include one policy debate tournament, NDT (excluding the Cross-Examination Debate Tournament), because similar to AFA and NFA, this tournament requires qualifying at prior district or regional tournaments.

The researchers received tabulation sheets from NDT, AFA-NIET, and NFA officials. The researchers coded participants that attended each tournament, by biological sex, event, year, out-round appearance, and the highest level achieved in out-round appearance. For policy debate, octo-finals, quarter-finals, semi-finals, and finals were tabulated. For extemporaneous and impromptu speaking quarter-finals, semi-finals, and finals were tabulated. The researchers decided to not include the double octo-finals results for policy debate to create a more equal comparison between competition levels. If first names were unknown (e.g., gender neutral names such as Chris), researchers contacted members of the forensics community to determine the participant's biological sex. The researchers ran frequencies and Pearson's chi-square tests of this data. Similar to White (1997), the researchers decreased the significance levels to .0125 (policy debate) and .0167 (individual events) to decrease the potential for error for chi-square.

Results

The hypotheses stated that biological sex is a predictor of the level of success experienced in intercollegiate policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking. Similar to White (1997), we conducted “basic frequencies and Chi-square analysis” (p. 25) to test the hypotheses. Chi-square is the most desired test because of the ability to show the difference between biological sexes in the level of success. Chi-square allows a clear comparison to further White (1997) and Manchester and Friedly’s (1985) studies.

Frequency data was calculated to determine the number of total entries by biological sex and event. TABLE 1 shows the total entries by males and females who competed in policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking. With 2928 males and 1541 females (a total of 4496 individuals), the table shows the percentage of males (65.5%) and females (34.5%) who make up the data set. TABLE 2 illustrates the total entries in each event. The data shows entries in policy debate (1080 entries) equates to 16.8% of the data set; impromptu speaking (2359 entries) equates to 38.7% of the data set; and extemporaneous speaking (1909 entries) equates to 29.7%.

Overall, there is a disparity between entries by gender and event. There is a clear divide between the total number of males and females competing in the three events. In addition, impromptu speaking and extemporaneous speaking account for higher percentages of the data set. Both of these disparities are important to acknowledge because they influence how the results may be interpreted. One reason for the disparity between the entries by event is because the two individual events include data from two national tournaments (American Forensic Association-National Individual Events Tournament and the National Forensic Association national tournament), whereas policy debate only includes entries from one national tournament (National Debate Tournament).

TABLE 1
Frequency of Total Entries by
Biological Sex

Event	Frequency	% of Total Entries
Male	2928	65.5%
Female	1541	34.5%

TABLE 2
Frequency of Total Entries by Event

Event	Frequency	% of all Entries
Policy Debate	1080	16.8%
Impromptu Speaking	2359	36.7%
Extemporaneous Speaking	1909	29.7%

A disparity between the frequency of male and female entries has been acknowledged from TABLE 1. TABLE 3 separates the male and female entries by event. By providing this data, a clearer understanding of the discrepancy of the male/female ratio may be further evaluated. Overall, more males qualified and competed in policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking than females. Males alone account for over 79% of the entries in policy debate. Impromptu speaking and extemporaneous speaking show a similar trend. However, the percentage of success for males in policy debate doubles in comparison of success to males in impromptu and extemporaneous speaking. A Pearson's chi-square analysis was conducted against biological sex and event type. Significance was found: $\chi^2(2, N = 5348) = \text{chi-square value}, p < .000$ Separate chi-squares were run by event type and biological sex. Overall, the findings indicate biological sex may predict whether a contestant will compete in policy debate, impromptu speaking, or extemporaneous speaking.

TABLE 3
Frequency of Entries in Each Event by Biological Sex

Sex	Event	Frequency	% of all Event Entries
Male	Policy Debate	855	79.2%
Female	Policy Debate	225	20.8%
Male	Impromptu Speaking	1478	62.7%
Female	Impromptu Speaking	881	37.3%
Male	Extemporaneous Speaking	1230	64.4%
Female	Extemporaneous Speaking	679	35.6%

The inequality in the number of men and women advancing to elimination rounds in policy debate, impromptu speaking and extemporaneous speaking is further illustrated when examining the percentage of all competitors advancing to elimination rounds. Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 show that the percentage of males who advanced to elimination rounds was significantly higher than females who advanced in all three events. This can best be seen when looking at the percentages of women advancing to the semifinal round in each event: policy debate, 3.8%; impromptu speaking, 32.9%; and extemporaneous speaking, 34.9%.

TABLE 4
Contestants Advancing to the Octo-Final Round

Sex	Event	# of Contestants Advancing	% of all Contestants Entered	% of all Advancing
Male	Policy Debate	88	8.2%	84.6%
Female	Policy Debate	16	1.5%	15.4%

TABLE 5
Contestants Advancing to the Quarter-Final Round

Sex	Event	# of Contestants Advancing	% of all Contestants Entered	% of all Advancing
Male	Policy Debate	49	4.5%	94.2%
Female	Policy Debate	3	0.3%	5.8%
Male	Impromptu Speaking	104	4.4%	61.2%
Female	Impromptu Speaking	66	2.8%	38.8%
Male	Extemporaneous Speaking	130	6.8%	76.9%
Female	Extemporaneous Speaking	39	2%	23.1%

TABLE 6
Contestants Advancing to the Final Round

Sex	Event	# of Contestants Advancing	% of all Contestants Entered	% of all Advancing
Male	Policy Debate	16	1.5%	66.7%
Female	Policy Debate	8	.7%	33.3%
Male	Impromptu Speaking	53	2.2%	61.6%
Female	Impromptu Speaking	33	1.4%	38.4%
Male	Extemporaneous Speaking	60	3.1%	73.2%
Female	Extemporaneous Speaking	22	1.2%	25.6%

In all three events men advanced to elimination rounds more than women. Even though frequencies supported hypotheses one, two, and three, further analysis was conducted. Pearson's chi-square was used to examine the number of students advancing to the octo-final (only for policy debate), quarter-final, semi-final, and final rounds. To reduce possible error, the .05 confidence interval was divided by 4 for policy debate resulting in a significance level of .0125 and divided by 3 for impromptu and extemporaneous speaking resulting in a significance level of .0167. For chi-square analysis the dependent variable was level of success and independent variables were sex and event. Table 8 reports the results of the chi-square analysis. These results only partially support hypothesis one that sex is a predictor of competitive success in intercollegiate policy debate. Differences between males and

females success in policy debate at the levels of quarter-final and semi-final round are significant. However, policy debate at the levels of octo-final and final round are not significant. Therefore, these results indicate that a male debater is more likely to experience success in the quarter-final and semi-final round than a female debater. However, a male debater is not more likely to experience success in the octo-final and finals round over a female debater.

These results for impromptu speaking do not support hypothesis two that sex is a predictor of competitive success in intercollegiate impromptu speaking. Differences between impromptu speaking is insignificant which means that male speakers are not more likely to experience success in elimination rounds over female speakers.

These results for extemporaneous speaking partially support hypothesis three that sex is a predictor of competitive success in intercollegiate extemporaneous speaking. Extemporaneous speaking at the levels of the quarter-final and final round are significant. However, extemporaneous speaking at the level of the semi-final round is not significant. Therefore, the results indicate that a male speaker is more likely to experience success in the quarter-final and final round than a female speaker. However, for the semi-final round of extemporaneous speaking, a male speaker is not more likely to experience success in elimination rounds over female speakers.

TABLE 7
Results of Pearson Chi-Square Analysis
(Policy Debate $p < .0125$; Impromptu & Extemporaneous $p < .0167$)

Event	Level of Success	Chi-Square Value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Policy Debate	Octo-Finals	2.072	1	.150
Policy Debate	Quarter-Finals	7.517	1	.006
Policy Debate	Semi-Finals	4.661	1	.031
Policy Debate	Finals	2.325	1	.127
Impromptu Speaking	Quarter-Finals	.171	1	.679
Impromptu Speaking	Semi-Finals	.709	1	.400
Impromptu Speaking	Finals	.140	1	.708
Extemporaneous Speaking	Quarter-Finals	12.624	1	.000
Extemporaneous Speaking	Semi-Finals	.003	1	.957
Extemporaneous Speaking	Finals	2.855	1	.091

The results indicate an imbalance between male and female participants in the elimination rounds of policy debate and extemporaneous speaking. Unlike impromptu speaking where the balance is not severe, males dominate in policy debate and extemporaneous speaking. In order to understand the reasons for this discrepancy, we shall review the characteristics of these three events and the current literature that discusses gender differences in policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking. An overview of this literature may identify explanations for the unequal representation of women represented in national elimination rounds.

Discussion

Findings

This study found that biological sex is a predictor of the percentage of males and females entered in policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking. Individually, each event indicated different levels of success achieved by males and females in forensics. Hypothesis one was accepted: indicating biological sex is a predictor of the level of success experienced in intercollegiate policy debate. Hypothesis two was rejected: indicating biological sex is not a predictor of the level of success in impromptu speaking. However, the statistics show a strong trend for males having a higher level of success than women in impromptu speaking. Hypothesis three

was accepted: indicating biological sex is a predictor of the level of success experienced in extemporaneous speaking.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study, as briefly noted in the method section, is the potential coding error of forensics participants with gender neutral first names. For example, the name “Chris” can be male or female. Many of the participants were known by the authors, however, for the unknown competitors with gender neutral names, the authors’ personal contacts and through the internet. This process did not eliminate the potential for error entirely.

The second limitation is this study only utilized data retrieved from 2003 through 2010. This study did not evaluate prior to 2003 or after 2010, which may influence the results. By incorporating more years of data, the researchers expect the results to reveal even less percentages of women participating in forensics.

The last limitation is that for intercollegiate policy debate, only one national tournament, the NDT, was evaluated, whereas, two national tournaments (AFA-NIET and NFA), were utilized to evaluate impromptu and extemporaneous speaking. Results from two national tournaments may have given different outcomes than if only one individual national tournament was compared to the National Debate Tournament.

Future Research

Based on this study’s findings, many possibilities for future research exist. Future studies could analyze a greater data set. For example, future research may investigate the level of success based on biological sex at the CEDA national tournament, the level of success based on biological sex of other forensics events, the level of success based on biological sex at national tournaments prior to 2003 and after 2010, the level of success based on biological sex at national tournaments on a year by year basis, and the breakdown of individual speaker awards based on biological sex from 2003 to 2010 to model Stepp (1996). Future research may also wish to investigate why the largest disparity occurs in intercollegiate policy debate and extemporaneous speaking, and why there is a difference between regional competitions verse national competitions of the number of women entered (e.g., Friedley & Manchester, 1985).

In addition, future research could elaborate on previous literature to understand why disparity still exists despite attempts by numerous scholars to raise awareness about this issue. Future studies could advance the literature discussing the impact of linguistic styles and language used by males and females in these three events may impact on level of success based on language used by males and females (e.g., Sellnow & Treinen, 2004), why

a discrepancy of female coaches and competitors exists (e.g., Wilkins & Hobbs, 1997, p. 58), whether the lack of female coaches attributes to a lack of female competitors (e.g., Pettus & Danielson, 1994, p. 52), and if the individualist (male) verse collectivist (female) notion does impact the level of success in these events (e.g., Croucher, Thorton, & Eckstein, 2006; Jones & Treadaway, 2000). Furthermore, research could investigate Fugate's (1997) proposal to increase financial scholarships as a means of creating more equality. Scholarships specifically allocated to women competitors and women graduate students who become coaches may assist in overcoming the divide. Additionally, White (1997) proposes hostilities may exist in extemporaneous speaking preparation rooms. A study could investigate potential hostilities to women both in extemporaneous speaking preparation rooms and policy debate rooms.

Solutions

The forensics community is fully aware that there is a difference in the level of success between males and females in forensics and the forensics community (e.g., Friedley & Manchester, 1985; 1987; Logue, 1986; Manchester & Friedley, 2003; Matz & Bruscke, 2006; 1993; Pettus & Danielson, 1994; Rogers, 1997; Skarb, 2003; Southworth, 2003; Stepp, 1997; Stepp & Gardner, 2001; Warner & Bruscke, 2001; White, 1997). So, why hasn't this community done more to overcome this barrier? Overtime, the forensics community has made attempts to embrace women. However, these efforts have been made cautiously over a significant amount of time, which has prevented and continues to prevent the full embracement of women into the forensics community. As a result, the researchers suggest several possible solutions that have been proposed by previous scholars that would assist in overcoming this barrier immediately, on both, an individual and community level. First, the forensics community and individuals can take precautions against gender bias (e.g., White, 1997). Peterson (1991) argues that this change cannot just occur within the forensics community, but has to be embraced in academics as well.

Second, the forensics community should no longer have conceptions of how traditional policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking are stylistically performed (e.g., Gaer, 2002). These traditional styles, though not all bad, may contribute to why women are not as successful as men in these three events. Finally, individuals as participants, coaches, judges, and spectators must reevaluate their views of women in the activity. For example, Roger's (1997) study found "Members of the dominant culture group within the ...forensics community – that all white males...expressed...the majority of women...were deficient in the skills necessary for success within Open Debate Division" (p. 2)

Despite these rewards, the forensics community has not and cannot achieve its full potential as a critical pedagogical community given the inequalities between males and females involved in the activity. Inequality between sexes may stifle voices and ideas of competitors in forensics. Even Friendley & Manchester (1985) argue, “The benefits accrued through participation in the forensic experience should be available to all individuals regardless of gender” (p. 2-3). This inequality of sexes in forensics is noticeable by the lack of and close to non-existent gendered voice in the community.

Conclusion

Know that more is expected of you than women in other fields and men in our own field (and be willing to accept that).

Pettus and Danielson, 1994, p. 51

The findings of this study extend our understanding of the level of success women experience in comparison to men in intercollegiate policy debate, impromptu speaking, and extemporaneous speaking. This study found that biological sex is a predictor of the level of success experienced in forensics. More studies need to be conducted to better understand why there is a difference in level of success based on biological sex. The argument is not that women do not advance to elimination rounds. It is fully acknowledged that women have made progress in advancing to elimination rounds at national forensics tournaments. However, further efforts to include women still need to be made, as our research indicates that in forensics events, men have a significantly larger success rate than women. This disparity in success is inexcusable. It is now time for our community to take action.

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Reframing competitive critical analyses: An argument for education-application based methods for speech writing in CA and Rhetorical Criticism.

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This project offers a contemporary exemplar that students and coaches in competitive speech, specifically in the events of rhetorical criticism or communication analysis can use to help reframe traditional notions or methods of how to write a speech for competition. I contend that the event in competition has become too “cookie-cutter” and devoid of innovation or “thinking outside the box,” which can limit the educational experience for our students. Thus, this project begins as a full critical analysis employing the theoretical framework of public memory and follows with a discussion of how a student in competitive speech could approach the event with a broader and more open notion of how to conduct an analysis. Finally, I offer suggestions to coaches and teachers in the event or the classroom for rhetorical criticism about how to guide students towards a more scholarly understanding of critical investigation and provide an exemplar that begins to re-frame the writing process of rhetorical criticism.

Keywords: Rhetorical Criticism, Communication Analysis, Innovation

Any coach or competitor who follows discussion of events, trends, or concerns about the norms of competitive speech on the Individual Events Listserve or attends discussions held at our national and regional conferences should admit that inevitably at some point throughout the year, these forums are often the space for discussions of frustration about how we are too tied to our normative practices and that speech activities often lack innovativeness. Further, that when students do think outside the box, too often the community can be resistant to acknowledge and reward that creativity. Strangely, the community seems to appreciate discussion about how we need innovation, but is resistant to actually accept the changes in practice. The debate of education versus competition historically finds itself at the heart of our community public forum discussions.

The rules of competition are in reality, very few. In essence, there are time limits and a description of the event. However the “rules” that guide our students’ speech writing and performances are convention and normative practices. These “rules” are reinscribed over and over as competitor turns coach, and so too does their knowledge of how to prepare and deliver particular events in competition. The old adage of “if it isn’t broke, don’t fix it,” has become the unspoken mantra of the coaching community. Those norms are guided by what has proven to be

successful in previous experiences. I contend that this approach to coaching is overly limiting in creativity and educational growth and development. The aim of this project is to challenge our normative practices by arguing for an education-application based approach to coaching the writing of Communication Analysis and Rhetorical Criticism. This project argues for a scholarship driven approach to teaching and writing rhetorical criticism, followed by a discussion of how this approach differs from current competitive norms and what can be gained by expanding our understanding and acceptance of competitive excellence. Finally, I offer an exemplar of a critical analysis, which serves as an illustration for our students in competitive speech. I contend that teachers in communication studies can use this exemplar as an illustration of how we can encourage scholarly practices from our speech competitors.

Re-framing Critical Analysis in Competitive Speech

Our goal with this project is to provide a teaching tool for your students. First it is important to remember that too often we coach our students to pick and choose the few perfect quotations from the single journal article that will “synthesize” what the author of the perspective is arguing about their theoretical position. Many of us have heard the statement “In order to better understand X’s perspective, we will first describe the author’s three (insert the correct number) tenets of the theory” while we were judging a round of CA or Rhetorical Criticism. While I understand that this decision is typically a result of time limits in the event, here I suggest that a more fleshed out discussion of the literature on the perspective offers more depth and richness. Further, I believe that when we teach our students in the event of rhetorical criticism, we should encourage them to write for scholarship first, allowing for depth and breadth in their writing and then pair the project down once he or she has a well-constructed argument. I argue that we can do more to more fully understand the richness of the perspective by encouraging writing for the scholarship first and editing for the speech second. I suggest that writing the speech initially to a time frame or a page length limits the depth of understanding of the perspective. It can promote oversimplification and minimizing the work of the theory. Thus, my suggestion is to encourage your student to broaden their research to have a more full understanding of the perspective in general and draw from multiple sources for more depth in the description and understanding of the theory. Encouraging your student to research and write in the vein similar to a mini-review of literature will help grow their sincere understanding of the theory and offer better insight into their investigation and analysis.

Too often coaches instruct students to find a singular exemplar of the theory's use, isolate the tenets of the theory, and apply those tenets to the artifact of choice. This limits education for the students understanding of the depth of the theory as well as underscore the extent to which our discipline has been influenced by the theory. Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2001) as well as others argue that forensics is an educational activity. Given this basic assumption, I contend that forensic educators have a responsibility to prioritize the educational experience. My contention is that if forensic pedagogy is successful, our students will walk away not only with both disciplinary knowledge and growth, but competitive success. However, to achieve this success on both fronts, we need to encourage a break from some of our traditional practices and allow for the welcoming of innovation and growth. I also recognize and agree with Burnett, Brand and Meister however, in that many within the community are hesitant of change because winning in competition pays off, yet focus on education is often not prioritized.

With this project I urge forensic educators to take risk and push for innovation and change. This example demonstrates how the critic could cull together a more thorough discussion of the theory that offers more depth and richness. Similar to the way, scholars in rhetorical criticism would approach their own work, this strategy engages the reader, or in the competitive arena – the audience in a depth of understanding and framing for the analysis. In the exemplar case, I will use the frame of public memory to serve as a theoretical lens, whereas in competition, most students will choose an exemplar (typically found in disciplinary journals). Think of the rounds of CA or Rhetorical Criticism that you may have observed. Did the student present a theoretical position supported by the work of scholars within the discipline? Or did the student present an author(s) individual perspective and employment of a theory, (i.e. Hariman and Lucaites' (2001) four tenets of an iconic image)? My contention is that if we encourage our students to read more, understand the extent to which the perspective is being used by others engaging in this methodology, they could potentially come to a stronger understanding of the theory, which in turn could help to offer more insight in the analysis of their own project.

Further, I suggest that we need to move beyond the overly simplistic 3-point (method, application, implications) method of conducting and writing a speech for communication analysis or rhetorical criticism and to instead encourage a blending or merging of method and application. If written successfully, a student should be able to clearly identify properties of the theory while simultaneously applying them to the artifact of choice. This approach allows the artifact of choice for the project to be the star and the perspective to be the stage. The

theoretical perspective creates an environment of understanding while the artifact is highlighted center stage. This approach may break normative practices and require a commitment to risk and innovation on the part of the student. I do not contend that all students have to, nor need to abandon the way in which we have CA or Rhetorical Criticism in the past; but just as all speeches are unique and should be organized in the most logical way to present an argument, our approach offers a variation for organizing this type of speech. We need to allow competitors to choose the most appropriate style and organization suited to that particular project.

Finally, I suggest that instructors in communication studies and rhetorical studies have an opportunity to bridge the competitive learning environment with the traditional classroom/instructional setting. In fact, today, more undergraduate colleges and universities are strongly encouraging student research and scholarship. In the studies of communication and rhetoric, students may feel as though traditional research practices are more difficult to accomplish because the natural building of research teams, as often seen in disciplines such as biology, psychology, and chemistry, is not as typical.

It is my hope that this project offers fresh perspective on how to rethink and approach coaching the events of Communication Analysis and Rhetorical Criticism. I argued for innovation and an education-application based approach to the events, urged the community to be more accepting of alternative styles or organizational patterns, and finally I discussed the benefits or outcomes of this new approach for our students and the forensic community. Next I will offer a contemporary exemplar to help frame the “how-to” component of coaching using a more scholarly approach.

The following exemplar is a tool to use when helping students begin to re-frame their approach to constructing their speech. It serves not as a final speech manuscript, but rather as an example of rhetorical scholarship that could be transitioned into a rhetorical criticism or communication analysis for competition. The idea here is to encourage students to write for scholarship and then pare the project down to meet the ten-minute time constraints of competition. Too often students look for the quick and easy quotation or statement to place within their speech manuscript, and neglect the more full understanding and relevance within their own project. This approach offers the student two primary educational outcomes. First, he or she will be able to write more broadly about the project, instilling a stronger understanding of the theory and its role in explaining what the popular culture artifact is offering to the audience. And second, it helps to teach students to be more selective in determining what is

pertinent in a ten-minute speech. This selective process teaches a student to fine tune and finesse the argument that he or she is making with their project.

Bringing Home The Dead: A Contemporary Exemplar

Introduction

During the Vietnam War, images of soldiers lost overseas returning home to US military bases were a commonly observed media event. Even throughout the 1980's it was commonplace for the media to cover the return of war dead. During this era, it was considered a valuable method for helping the American public to collectively mourn those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The public was allowed to witness the flag draped coffins lining the tarmac, symbolically representing the country those soldiers once stood and served in defense of. Both Presidents Carter and Reagan were photographed amidst the ceremonial reception and honoring of the fallen soldiers.



However, in 1989, the day after the US invaded Panama, the first US casualties were returned home to Dover military base. The networks all used split screen coverage, allowing the public to see both the ceremonial coverage of the honoring and President George H. Bush's presence at the ceremony. During the ceremony, the President was captured in a jovial situation where it appeared he was "joking" around. This image juxtaposed against the solemn ceremony simultaneously taking place outraged many viewers. Complaints were filed, and soon after, the government sanctioned the media release of the images of war dead. The policy, known as the Dover Rule, disallowed media direct access to cover of the return of war dead. While photographs and video footage were still

captured on these occasions, the military was responsible for their release as official historical government documents. In April 2009, then newly elected President Obama lifted the ban. Obama's policy allows the families of the deceased to decide whether they would like a public (media accessible) ceremony, or if a more private ceremony is preferred. The former Dover Rule policy and now the lifting of the ban draws attention to the question of how the public attempts to commemorate the sacrifice made by soldiers.

The concept of public memory, drawing on the work of Casey (2004), as well as Hariman and Lucaites (2001 & 2003), Bodnar (1992), Phillips (2010) and others, will be helpful as a theoretical foundation since it helps to explain how a public memorializes its experiences, especially those that the public has deemed tragic or devastating. People not only remember an event based on what they were doing at that moment in relation to the occurrence, but also they remember the event based on the things that they saw and heard. The shocking and rarely seen images of war dead lined up on the tarmac draped in the American flag all have helped to narrate the experience through visual reminders of a tragedy that has taken place. This project will first describe the perspective of public memory while applying it to the images of war dead soldiers and the decision to overturn the Dover Rule. Then, I will engage the audience in a discussion of public memory and its effect on public culture and the implications of Obama's decision to overturn the Dover Rule.

Theory and Application

Public memory studies began in earnest in the 1980s and 90s (Phillips, 2004). Early on, scholars began to articulate a clear distinction between history and memory. Phillips writes of them as "opposing ways of recalling the past" (p. 2). History claims to retell the past with some sense of accurate objectivity, implying that the past has a singular existence. This assumes history involves an objective retelling of what has happened, as if only one way of knowing the past exists. Yet memory allows for and welcomes multiple ways of knowing the past and of recognizing the interrelationships between the past, present, and future. The memorializing of an event or person allows for a multitude of perspectives. Public memory serves as an interpretive process (Browne, 1995). The process by which a public is able to make sense of its experiences allows it a cultural identity unique to that experience. In addition, the sense in which representational forms, specifically photographs, serve as the backdrop for memorializing, as chronicled in the work of Lucaites and Hariman (2001), Ivie (1987), Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991), Edwards and Winkler (1997), and others will serve as the critical lens within which memorializing will be viewed.

Defining what constitutes “public memory” such that nothing else may intercede in its provenance has proven to be a difficult if not impossible task. As Phillips (2004) notes, public memory refers not to a “thing” people have in their mind, but to a complex of interactions with an environment that is mutable over time. Public memory is inherently memorable, public, and commemorative. Memories fade and return anew in different guises within our individual lives. Such is also the case in the sense of “public memory.” To be resilient in the face of such transitory possibilities, an event must convey a sense of worthiness to be recalled. The dead coming home, shrouded in the symbol of American pride, as in the case of those who “witnessed” (even from afar) the death of President Kennedy, is such an event: it may not be “there” at all times, but comes and goes as events call it forth: its staying power is a function of its memorability.

Characteristically, public memory is memorable, public, and commemorative. Memories of an event evolve and are created or born out of the people (Casey, 2004). It is socially constructed among members of a culture in a way that provides for multiple interpretations. Memories may change and/or evolve over time, whereas the retelling of history claims consistency in the way the history is told. By examining the images of the war dead through the lens of public memory we are able to investigate the rhetorical process by which a public remembers moments of significance from its history. Seeing these images allows the public to remember war, death, loss, sacrifice, patriotism, and the vast array of emotions and experiences that a public collectively experiences. The images serve as a reminder and evoke a response.

Second, it is not restricted to the private realm, but rather is a feature that is capable of being shared as a feeling, a belief, a perspective, or even as the prelude to action. As such, it goes beyond what Casey (2004) refers to as the individual or social to encompass the attitudes and recollections of others. Indeed, it participates in a collective consciousness. Images of the dead returning home allow the public a shared sense of recollection of their own unique experience with the war, regardless of their own individual level of involvement. When the media is allowed to capture these images and gives access to the public, there is a collective memory that is created in the meeting of person and image. President Obama’s decision to allow the public access to these images again ensures that the images are a source for public concern and experience. They become the vehicles by which a public conscious is created and the war and loss are acknowledged publicly.

Finally, public memory is inherently commemorative. The term public is meant to distinguish it from anything that may take place in private. Casey (2004) argues that public discussion with others is possible and vulnerable to scrutiny and debate and further contends “one can speculate that traumatic public events such as the Trade Towers disaster require the almost instantaneous installation of a new public memory, this time, a public memory of the victims regarded en masse” (p. 26). It is not necessary for words to be spoken in order to invoke a reaction that recalls an event, in the case of walking along the Vietnam Veteran’s wall, we need not speak the names of the dead to participate actively in commemorating their sacrifice. As such the interaction of the images from war, and the meeting of person and image can invoke a powerful reaction, as would a conversation, song, or speech about the event. These images can evoke a strong emotional response that allows for the public to commemorate or honor those who have lost their lives for the country and/or a cause. The images of war dead serve as a visceral reminder of that sacrifice. There is an undeniability of the loss that is captured when the public sees coffins draped in the American flag. These images are inherently commemorative.

Kosalka (1998) writes, “public memory is a powerful force. It is the essential nature of man to interpret his identity and what he wishes to be in terms of his appropriation of the past. A communal identity then is built on the language of symbols that are inherent in public memory” (www.lemingland.com/pubmem.htm). People are more than beings in time and place; they are also social beings whose very identities are constructed or conceived in the presence of others. Collectively, a public relies on common symbols, created from the past and brought together in order to inform the future. These symbols have multi-dimensional significance. Symbols offer more than a sign or indicator, but rather conjure an array of feelings, memories, beliefs, and attitudes. The power of a symbol is found in its ability to help construct a cultural or public identity. Yet only through interpretation and understanding of a culture and its potential future can the symbol take on meaning or significance.

Discussion and Implications

Bodnar (1992) argues that the creation of a public memory occurs as a result of the combination of “fundamental issues about the entire existence of a society” (p. 14). Because public memory is one way that society organizes and makes sense of its experiences, this perspective offers an argument about how to understand and know that reality. It is an ideological system that is constituted by symbols, values, beliefs, language and the creation and retelling of stories that emerge as a mechanism of sensemaking. The construction of public memory is

both a cultural and textual practice. In fact, when memorializing occurs, a textual interpretation of the memory takes place (Browne, 1995). Browne further argues that public memory is a “site of symbolic action, a place of cultural performance, the meaning of which is defined by its public and persuasive functions” (p. 237). As the American public remembers and attempts to cope with the aftermath of war, images such as the caskets lined up in rows on military airbase tarmacs are employed to trigger our public memory about what has happened as a result of the war. Public sentiment regarding the war is formed, shaped, and debated based in the interactions that the public has with these images and then subsequently with each other.

Collectively, individual realities or ways of knowing the world become socially patterned. Each response is individualistic in that each person responds to and comes to know an image in distinctly different ways. Yet common responses or patterns emerge as a social reality. Public memory is what the past leaves us as an imprint or impression on us and in us. These imprints help to construct and place limits on how we come to know the world (Bodnar, 1992). The focus should be on the “process of constituting the memory as well as the implications of the product for future audiences and uses” (Mandzuik, 2003, p. 274). Public memory helps to inform our future by informing our perceptions of the past and present. Casey (2004) argues that public memory is “bivalent in its temporality” (p. 17); it neither privileges nor denies the importance of time and space. Casey distinguishes between what constitutes public memory and individual, social, and collective memory. Individual memory simply refers to the individual who experiences a memory of no particular consequence. Social memory is that which is shared by a group tied together by a common trait such as geography or kinship (Casey, 2004).

Further, a public memory is socially constructed out of a specific moment in history, often a result of a crisis. As we learn from the scholarship of Hariman and Lucaites (2003), Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991), Casey (2004), and Edwards and Winkler (1997), the study of public memory attempts to identify the significance of a culture’s history. Cultural scholarship about such events attempts to make sense of the experience a culture has as it relates to crisis situations. Scholarship on public memory has focused its attention on events such as the Vietnam War, the attack on Iwo Jima, and the 9/11 attacks. These events are memorable moments within a culture’s history. They are moments of crisis that pose a challenge for the members of the public. A public memory of the event helps citizenry make sense of the crisis and the future of a people after the event.

The way in which we publicly remember or memorialize events and/or people in history is often directed by the media images that emerge as symbolic representations. Fry (2002) notes that “how and what we remember about things and events is a function not of our individual, isolated consciousness but of shared consciousness. We are directed through the framework of society to remember certain things in a certain way” (p. 108). For instance, we come to know the experience and trauma of the Vietnamese people through our interaction with the iconic image of Accidental Napalm Attack. It is precisely the way that images are used in the public sphere that, as Edwards and Winkler (1997) argue, reflect not only the individual’s values and attitudes, but also those of the broader society. Images have cultural salience (Edwards & Winkler, 1997). Remember that iconic images emerge out of the cultural manifestations of a public and transcend both time and space. In fact, Olson (1987) defines icon as “a visual representation so as to designate a type of image that is palpable in manifest form and denotative in function” (p. 38). Iconic images in this sense help to construct a public memory by serving as visual representations of the experience. Denotatively, the images of war dead have come to represent various aspects of the aftermath of war for the American people. Iconic images are then used to serve a specific function in the way the public commemorates an event. As a function of public memory, iconic images also motivate social action by the public. These images have the power to motivate the public to respond to war as a public, inspire political and public discussion about war, and provide a forum for public mourning.

When we publicly commemorate our histories by highlighting the events through public display, we not only acknowledge our past, but also make suggestions for the future. Similarly, the images of the war dead allow for another powerful public moment in the aftermath of war. Zelizer (2004) argues that photographic images become vehicles of memory. Photographic images have the power to illuminate and depict what is real. Each is a snapshot of a moment in time, with the power to memorialize the event. Images such as Accidental Napalm Attack, a firefighter emerging from the Oklahoma City federal building carrying a small child draped in his arms, and the Twin Towers billowing with smoke prior to their collapse, will forever remain ingrained in the public’s memory of the atrocities that occurred in each of those moments in history. Zelizer argues that “often photography aids the recall of things and events past so effectively that photographs become the primary markers of memory itself” (p. 160). The cultural practice of storing these images allows the public to memorialize the event. Zelizer (2004) argues that, in modern societies, museums, galleries, television and Internet archives serve to “freeze, replay, and store visual memories for large numbers of people” (p. 161). These images defy the constraints of public policy and allow for the public

recognition of loss at the hand of global conflict. They allow the families, friends, and citizens of this country to commemorate, grieve, and more fully understand the magnitude of the sacrifice being made. The image is powerful. It has stay power. It changes the individual, and ultimately changes the public. The lifting of the Dover Rule allows us to meet these images, to experience them firsthand and to collectively come to terms with our loss.

President Obama's decision to overturn the Dover Rule allows for a meeting of witness and loss. It also allows for the meeting of public and sacrifice. When Americans are allowed to see the images of war dead returning home, it garners a collective response that publicly commemorates the sacrifice and loss experienced. This essay critically examines the theoretical framework of public memory and its use for understanding the implications of Obama's Dover Rule repeal. It helped to explore how publics publicly commemorate sacrifice. The St. Petersburg Times (2009) cites John Ellsworth, president of the Military Families United as suggesting that "some people want to celebrate the lives of their fallen, and share their fallen hero with the American people, while others want to hold them a little closer to the vest and keep it private. We should respect that. It shouldn't be up to the government to hide these images to the public" (¶6).

Concluding Remarks

This project aimed to position our pedagogical approach to teaching and coaching the events of rhetorical criticism and communication analysis at the center of a scholarship focused discussion. Our students are the future of our discipline and have the potential to begin their scholarly contributions at an earlier stage of academic tenure. The events of rhetorical criticism and communication analysis offer a unique opportunity for practicum of the methods we employ as rhetoricians.

We have a responsibility to teach our students how to be great speakers, but also how to be great critics. Helping them to understand the depth of the theories they see informing their projects and being able to articulate that understanding to their audience will help them grow as young student/scholars. In an era when forensic competition is constantly being challenged by budgetary constraints, it is even more important to help our students more fully grow in their knowledge of communication theory. Our role as coaches is to provide the tools necessary for our students to understand the complexity of the game, knowledge to master the practice, and willingness to take risk...all in the pursuit of excellence.

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Better Pleasing the Court:

How the American Collegiate Moot Court Association Can Improve its Competition

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Abstract

The American Collegiate Moot Court Association strives to educate undergraduates about the American legal system through participation in moot court, a simulated oral argument before an appellate court. Its competition structure, however, suffers from defects that undermine the educational value of the event. This article argues that the ACMCA ought to adopt certain reforms in its operational structure, including geographically locking its regional competitions, abandoning its practice of power-matching preliminary rounds, and rewriting its judging ballot. These goals would not only enhance the quality of the legal education received by its participants, but improve students' forensic learning experience as well.

Keywords: moot court, preliminary rounds, power matching, regional qualification, ballot structure

Better Pleasing the Court:

How the American Collegiate Moot Court Association Can Improve its Competition

Undergraduate debaters have only recently been able to experience legal argumentation first-hand. The American Collegiate Moot Court Association (ACMCA) was founded in 2000 to offer a national moot court tournament in January 2001, sponsoring an exercise in which law students commonly partake by simulating an oral argument before an appellate court (Knerr & Sommerman, 2001). Ten years later, the ACMCA has expanded to offer eight regional qualifying tournaments, in addition to the national championship (ACMCA, n.d.). As a sponsor of undergraduate speech and debate competition, however, the ACMCA has yet to adopt a number of time-tested strategies. In this article, I examine three problems within the ACMCA: its qualifying procedures, which favor larger and wealthier teams; its preliminary round organization, which powers teams at the national tournament before they even arrive; and, its ballot, which relies on ambiguous criteria in order to render a decision antithetical to the fundamental tenets of competitive debate. I then offer suggestions from modern speech and debate competition in order to improve the overall competitive experience offered by the ACMCA.

Qualifying Tournament Procedures

The ACMCA currently offers eight geographically dispersed regional tournaments: Eastern, Midwest, Western, Southwestern, Southeastern, Mid-Atlantic, South Central, and Upper Midwest (ACMCA, n.d.). These regions, however, are not geographically locked; that is, any institution may enter any regional tournament, even if it is not the one closest to them (ACMCA, 2010b). Although one “team” – that is, one group of two students – is prohibited from participating at more than one regional tournament each year (ACMCA, 2010b), the possibility remains that a single institution, and the same students, could compete at every regional tournament, so long as they partnered with a different student at each. Furthermore, although a single institution may not qualify more than eight teams to compete at the national tournament (ACMCA, 2010b), it is not restricted from competing at as many regional tournaments as it wishes, or doing so until it reaches its maximum number of eligible students.

This policy presents a number of problems. First, it inherently favors larger, wealthier institutions, since they have the means to travel to each of these different regional qualifying tournaments until the team qualifies all of its competitors. At the same time, it penalizes smaller institutions or student run teams who cannot afford to travel to multiple regional tournaments. Hosting geographically dispersed qualifying tournaments superficially ensures that

every student hoping to attend the national championship has a chance to do so, but fundamentally sends the message that the 64 openings for teams at the national championship are reserved for those with the financial means to travel, compete, and secure expert coaches.

The reasoning behind the ACMCA's decision to structure its tournaments in this way is not difficult to discern. First, by allowing schools to participate at as many regional tournaments as they see fit, students essentially "get more practice" by being able to travel and compete at more tournaments. Since these regional tournaments are the only undergraduate moot court tournaments available – unless a student's state has its own undergraduate moot court association, as in Texas – this is the only practice students may have before the national championship. Additionally, a high level of participation and competition is ensured by opening regional tournaments to any school wishing to attend. If the Southeastern region, for example, only has a small number of schools who have participated in the competition in the past, those students get a higher quality of competition by allowing other schools to travel and compete at their tournament as well. In essence, the rationale seems to be to promote participation and improve the quality of competition.

The ACMCA, however, can fulfill this goal by conforming to the practices of other national debate organizations and geographically locking their districts. In high school, both the National Catholic Forensic League (NCFL) and the National Forensic League (NFL) structure their national qualifying tournaments in this way – the former, by Catholic diocese (NCFL, 2010), and the latter, by NFL District (NFL, 2010). For undergraduates, the American Forensic Association (AFA) offers two means by which students may qualify for its National Individual Events Tournament: either by earning "legs" at invitational tournaments where at least nine schools competed, or by finishing in the top ten percent of his or her event at their District Qualifier (AFA, 2009). Geographically locking its regional tournaments ultimately prevents larger schools from abusing the open-door policy of its regional tournaments.

Additionally, in order to promote participation and improve the quality of its competition, the ACMCA should allocate a particular regional tournament's qualifying slots proportionally to the number of teams competing at the tournament, as other organizations do. The NCFL, for example, enforces League Quotas that determine "the maximum number of entries in each category that can advance to the Grand National Tournament from each local league" (NCFL, 2011). The NFL also links national qualification to "the number of contestants or teams actually participating in each event at the NFL District Tournament" (NFL, 2009, p. N6). The "top ten percent" qualifying

procedure used by the AFA at its District Qualifiers also allows for larger districts to qualify more students (AFA, 2009). Thus, if the ACMCA distributes the 64 qualifying slots based on the number of entries at the regional tournament, it will incentivize regional tournament directors to find other schools in their district and encourage them to participate in the organization. In doing so, the ACMCA not only levels the playing field for all participating schools, but encourages the activity's long term survival and proliferation among new schools.

Preliminary Round Power Matching at the National Tournament

Another troubling aspect of the competition sponsored by the ACMCA is its practice of power matching the preliminary rounds at its National Tournament. According to its *Rules*, the ACMCA pairs teams during national preliminary rounds “using a formula based upon their regional record and the historic strength of each regional tournament” (ACMCA, 2010b, p. 9). But the ACMCA does not identify this formula in its *Rules* nor anywhere else on its website. In any case, the idea of pairing teams so as to afford better teams a higher probability of winning – known as *power-matching* – before they even arrive at the tournament is counterintuitive.

Arthur W. Larson, then a Graduate Assistant at California State University in Northridge, conducted perhaps the only comprehensive study on power matching in forensics in 1972. While the participants in his study recognized that elimination rounds were usually paired high-low in elimination rounds (e.g., “the number one team with the sixteenth team and so forth”), the practice of power-matching was applied inconsistently during preliminary rounds. Because his survey found that coaches’ believe power-matching has “a significant bearing on [both] which teams advance to the elimination rounds [and] on the quality of the teams which advance to the elimination rounds,” Larson identifies high-low power matching as the system which is most “consistent with the principle of rewarding teams for doing well.” (1972, pp. 2, 4-5)

Although Larson advocates power matching the preliminary rounds high-low, he acknowledges that it must proceed “on a round-by-round basis;” a particularly important consideration because the ACMCA’s *Rules* advocate power matching the preliminary rounds based on a team’s performance at the regional tournament – before the team even reaches the national tournament several months later. This concept discourages teams who “barely” qualify to the tournament from working to improve their performance while simultaneously encouraging competitive stagnation among teams who handily qualify for the championship.

A review of high school and undergraduate debate organizations indicates that no national organization, high school or undergraduate, uses the kind of system implemented by the ACMCA. In all debate events, the NCFL

randomly matches Rounds I and II, powers Round III high-high – that is, “the number one team . . . is paired with the number two team and straight on down the line” (Larson, 1972, p. 4) – based on Rounds I and II, and powers Rounds IV and V high-low based on rounds I through III (NCFL, 2010). At its national tournament, the NFL pairs all preliminary rounds randomly, excepting that no competitor may debate someone from his or her own school or state, or someone he or she already debated (NFL, 2011). In undergraduate Lincoln-Douglas Debate, the National Forensic Association (NFA) randomly pairs the first and second rounds, then pairs rounds three and five high-high and rounds four and six high-low (NFA, n.d.a). Finally, the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) powers undergraduate Parliamentary Debate randomly during round one of the national championship, then powers rounds two through eight high-low (NPDA, 2011).

The only feasible justification for the powering of preliminary rounds could occur if students attended multiple moot court competitions, and their cumulative performance determined their preliminary round seating. Not only does this not occur, since, once again, these regional tournaments are the only undergraduate moot court competitions available, excepting those states that also offer such competition, but it also cannot occur because of the ACMCA’s rule that no team may compete at more than one regional tournament.

Additionally, because the ACMCA only offers qualification to “[t]he top 25% of the teams competing at each ACMCA sanctioned Regional Tournament[,],” the ACMCA’s National Tournament Committee is left in charge of “allocat[ing] the remaining bids to the National Tournament” (ACMCA, 2010b, p. 6). The recipients of these extra, at-large bids offered by the Committee are therefore powered low at the national championship. Thus, a team that has a ‘bad round’ at a regional tournament, but is still invited to the national championship through this reallocation process, might as well not even attend; they are guaranteed to be paired against the very best teams in the tournament, and to be knocked out of the competition early.

The ACMCA must abandon this process of power-matching preliminary rounds based on a team’s performance at their sole moot court qualifying competition, given that it is inconsistent “with the principle of rewarding teams for doing well” at the national tournament.

The ACMCA’s Ballot

Finally, and perhaps most bothersome, is the ballot used by the ACMCA for scoring its regional and national competitions. The ballot lists four criteria on which the students’ performance is to be judged: “Knowledge of Subject Matter” (“Preparation on facts, law, and record; reasoning, organization; full use of time; etc.”),

“Response to Questioning” (“Responsiveness to judges; authoritative; ability to think quickly and well and return to argument; etc.”), “Forensic Skills” (“Manner which is relaxed, confident, believable, poised; eye contact; ability to speak without reading notes; grammar; vocabulary; inflection; etc.”), and “Courtroom Demeanor” (“Professionalism; proper attire; respect toward the court; conversational approach, etc.”). All competitors receive a score of one to 100 on each of these criteria, and then the team’s scores are summed. Whichever team earns more points wins that judge’s ballot, and if a team wins all or most of the judges’ ballots, then they win the round; if the judges render a split decision – which, given the ACMCA’s practice of using two judge panels in many rounds, happens often – both teams receive a tie; and, if a team loses more judges’ ballots than they won, then they lose the round. (ACMCA, 2010a)

The problems associated with this scoring scheme are plentiful. The fact that the judge is not required to render a win-loss decision leaves the fate of the round in the hands of the competitors’ speech quality – but debate cannot function in this way. Judges must be trusted to set their personal opinions, even about the law, aside when they adjudicate a round; otherwise, no debate is actually held. Moreover, since the ACMCA offers speaker awards, which is calculated by summing an individual competitor’s scores on these ballots during their preliminary round – the same criteria that are used to determine whether they won or lost the round – the ACMCA essentially congratulates competitors twice based on the same standards.

The rationale for avoiding a win-loss declaration is inherent in the ACMCA’s *Rules*, which command that “[o]ral arguments shall be scored on the basis of quality of presentation, not on the merits of the case” (ACMCA, 2010b, p. 8). The fear is that competition judges, in being asked to decide questions of law, would decide the round based on their personal opinion of what the law should be. The ACMCA’s 2010 fact pattern, for example, tested the limits of technology during warrantless searches, and asked whether a juvenile may constitutionally be sentenced to life in prison for a non-homicide offense. These contentious issues might tempt a judge to rule based on what they think the law should be instead of the argumentation of the competitors.

Once again, no other national forensic organization shares this philosophy. The ballots for Lincoln-Douglas and Public Forum Debate in both the NCFL and NFL require the judge to issue a win-loss decision (NCFL, n.d.a; NCFL, n.d.b; NFL, n.d.a; NFL, n.d.b); the NFA requires a win-loss decision in undergraduate Lincoln-Douglas Debate (NFA, n.d.b); and, the NPDA states that, “[i]f, at the end of the debate, the judge believes that the proposition team has supported and successfully defended the resolution, they will be declared the winner, otherwise

the opposition will be declared the winner” (NPDA, 2008). This across-the-board consensus represents the very idea of argumentation: debate must yield a winner and a loser; otherwise, it is not debate.

The criteria themselves are also rather ambiguous. Dr. Paul Weizer, the Past-President of the ACMCA, edited *How to Please the Court*, a text that essentially serves as a how-to guide to participate in the ACMCA’s tournaments. Dr. Charles Knerr and attorney Andrew B. Sommerman, the latter of whom competed under Dr. Knerr’s instruction at the University of Texas at Arlington, authored a chapter in Dr. Weizer’s book which describes the moot court tournament generally and the Texas Undergraduate Moot Court Competition’s judging guidelines specifically. Given that Dr. Knerr was instrumental in the formation of the ACMCA, considering these criteria sheds light on the precise standards intended on the ACMCA’s ballot. One need only examine the Texas league’s specifications for the ACMCA’s fourth criterion, “Courtroom Demeanor,” in order to understand the inherent contradictions in the ACMCA’s ballot. Specifically, Knerr and Sommerman list the following standards for this last criterion:

1. Does the speaker appear to be trying to be helpful to the Court?
2. Does the speaker project an image of professional sincerity toward his/her client?
3. Is the speaker forceful without being overbearing?
4. Does the speaker talk to and look at the judges in a conversational manner **INSTEAD OF READING A PREPARED TEXT**?
5. Is the speaker courteous rather than sarcastic, condescending, or resentful?
6. Is the speaker poised and at ease rather than stiff and/or jittery?
7. Does the speaker display the proper degree of confidence?
8. Does the speaker use all of his/her time but not exceed his/her time limits?
9. Does the speaker begin with “May it please the court [*sic*]” and end with a specific prayer for relief?
10. Does the speaker demonstrate the skills of an effective advocate for the client? (Knerr & Sommerman, 2005, p. 93)

These standards, however, were not even hinted about on the ACMCA’s ballot until the 2010-2011 competitive season, when the ACMCA added them to the reverse of the actual ballot. These standards, however, contravene the ACMCA’s *Rules*; for example, they state that students may use notes, but the ballot’s standards specifically penalize their use. Furthermore, only the fifth and ninth standards have anything to do with the

professionalism and respect toward the court required by the ACMCA's *Ballot*; the rest would more appropriately be categorized under the "Forensic Skills" component of the *Ballot*. Basically, unless a student is blatantly rude and disrespectful toward his or her judges, he should receive a perfect score in this category: if so, then this category is useless, since very few, if any, students would demonstrate such an attitude; if not, then the criteria need to be reevaluated and explained more appropriately on the *Ballot*.

Finally, the point values need reconsideration. A one to 100 scoring system essentially asks judges to assign 'grades' to the competitors in each of these categories. Judges, however, have no standard to which they can relate when assigning these scores. Novice judges may think that every competitor they observe is "Excellent," meriting a score between 90 and 100. Other judges may be 'stingy' with their points, offering everyone only "Average" scores between 70 and 80. Limiting the number of points that may be offered on each category – e.g., from one to 25 – and demanding a win-loss decision would ensure that competitors both advance in the competition and receive speaker awards more appropriately.

Conclusion

The moot court experience is an important one for undergraduates considering legal careers. Like debate generally, students improve communication and critical thinking skills, improve their research and writing skills, and, hopefully, improve their chances of being admitted into law school (Knerr & Sommerman, 2001). More than any other debate event, however, undergraduate moot court competition practically prepares students for law schools (Knerr & Sommerman, 2001). While moot court is therefore more beneficial to aspiring law students than perhaps any other competitive forensic event, it is not particularly unique so as to warrant deviating from established undergraduate forensic standards. The ACMCA, therefore, should conform to those standards, thereby ensuring that the competitive experience it offers is a meaningful one for the law school-bound debater.

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After Dinner Speaking: Problems, Causes, and Still No Solutions

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Abstract

Since its adoption as a competitive event, After Dinner Speaking has been critiqued and criticized by several scholars. Despite the quantity of literature produced on this topic, changes to the event have been minimal. This author chooses to look at four areas of controversy including: defining the event, differentiating After Dinner Speaking from Speech to Entertain, differentiating After Dinner Speaking from other platform events, and developing a judging standard for this event. With the use of humor, this paper not only examines these problems, but also the need for discussion surrounding the pedagogical goals of After Dinner Speaking as a springboard for improvement. Also considered will be the implementation of humor curriculums in forensics and/or higher education.

KEYWORDS: After Dinner Speaking, Individual Events, Platform Speaking, Forensics

I was judging a round of After Dinner Speaking last weekend, hoping for a laugh. Some competitors were successful through their use of wit, others used cheesy lines, and the last student was probably supposed to be entered in Persuasive Speaking. It was extremely difficult and frustrating to fill out the ballots. Should I have voted for the funniest person, the funniest looking person, or the most significant topic with some jokes thrown in at the end like laws on a California proposition? This is a question facing many individual events judges today, and the students competing in this event are equally confused. Although many forensics judges maintain that whoever can entertain them the most will take “the one” in an ADS round, AFA-NIET final rounds are consistently full of speeches jam packed with importance. This is just one example of how the waters of ADS have become murky. Since its inception, the After Dinner Speech has changed more than Obama’s cabinet picks. Therefore, it is important to analyze the communicative evolution of this event and the controversies that have arisen since its incarnation. In order to do so, we must first, peek into the past of After Dinner Speaking, ponder the present status of the event, and finally, have a premonition of how to pursue progression.

A (Very) Short History of After Dinner Speaking

Like Al Gore and the Internet, forensics members did not invent the ADS. After dinner speeches, also referred to as “evening illustrated lectures,” date back hundreds of years where they are assumed to originate in Britain. Yes, we can thank the Brits for something other than Harry Potter and colonialism. Today, there are still quite a few agencies in Britain and Scotland that offer the services of several famous after dinner speakers; their topics ranging from marketing to cricket. The name of the event is quite literal, as these speakers address the guests *after dinner*.

Though the forensic event of After Dinner Speaking does not take place after a meal (unless the judge ate a meatball sandwich during the first speech), the forensics community thought it would be a good addition to the family of events. Despite popular opinion, its induction was based on more than keeping the judges awake. Mills (1984) argued, “Speech communication texts have emphasized the use of humor in speech development for decades. Because of this philosophical stance that forensics should be an extension of what is taught in classrooms, After Dinner Speaking as a competitive event has emerged” (p. 11). This, however, does not account for why the popular classroom act of “lecture” is not an event. So, in 1973 the National Forensics Association added After Dinner Speaking as an event.

Controversy in After Dinner Speaking

A number of points of controversy surrounding the After Dinner Speech have surfaced since its appearance in the forensics community. Preston (1997) states, “the controversy surrounding after dinner speaking traditionally revolve[s] around three issues: 1) the purpose of the event in terms of the role of humor and the serious point, 2) the extent to which sources should be used, 3) what, if anything, should be the real-world master analog for the event” (p. 99). While Preston points out key areas of controversy, problems in this event span beyond three components. Like the number of brain cells in George W. Bush’s head, there are four areas of controversy I will discuss: defining the event, differentiating After Dinner Speaking from Speech to Entertain, differentiating After Dinner Speaking from Informative and Persuasive events, and the necessity for judging standards.

Defining After Dinner Speaking

When tournament invitations, NFA rules, AFA rules, Phi Rho Pi rules, and individual directors all have a different notion of what the After Dinner Speech is, confusion arises. While each of these places might wield a few similarities, the differences are often plentiful...like the number of brain cells in *my* head. For example, Mills (1984) examined descriptions of After-Dinner Speaking listed on several tournament invitations. He found several criteria for this event including: time limits, originality, the ability to produce more than a string of one-liners, wit, creativity, humor that is in *good taste*, and that the speech should make a serious point. Dreibelbis and Redmon (1987) note that many invitations characterize the ADS as being either persuasive *or* informative, further noting, “a number of tournaments are specifying in their event descriptions that the ADS should not be a ‘funny informative’” but rather, persuasive in nature (p. 97). Today, invitations might also include something about the number of sources recommended, plagiarism of famous comics’ bits, and the inclusion of a dinosaur joke. Mills further notes that many of the words used in these invitations (such as “good taste”) are ambiguous and raise several questions for judges and competitors alike. Some of this ambiguity is almost certainly derived from the multiple organizations within the forensics community.

After Dinner Speaking v. Speaking to Entertain

One strong area of contestation arises when critics question the significance of academic content and development in this event. Without a strong thesis, some After Dinner Speeches are cast off as the red headed stepchild of forensics. Questions surrounding the content of the ADS marked an early area of controversy involved with After Dinner Speaking, causing us to ask: Is the event about being funny with a bit of significance or significant with a bit of funny? Klopff (1982) wrote,

An after-dinner speech does not have to convert an audience into a howling mob

convulsed with laughter; a speech that is brightened with humor and that offers a good natured approach to a worthwhile subject usually is more appropriate. A speaker achieves his or her purpose through the use of anecdotes, illustrations, and humorous stories, if these are appropriate to the audience and the occasion and are related to the subject. Many beginning speakers fail because their material is not in harmony with the mood of the listeners and the occasion. (cited in Hanson p. 28)

Furthermore, Mills (1984) explains a connection between entertainment and significance through the difference between wit and humor. He says both of these types of language “play an integral part in the development of the serious point of the speech” (p. 14). However, he finds these two laughing matters may be connected, but are distinct entities. Whereas wit springs from a “serious motive” and has an overall purpose, humor can “just be” and

does not need a point to work (Gruner as cited in Mills, p. 14). Even with such definitions, the emphasis on humor versus persuasiveness varies based on the organization hosting the event. Driebelbis and Redmon (1987) differentiated After Dinner Speaking from the commonly substituted Speech to Entertain, determining that Phi Rho Pi's definition of Speech to Entertain focuses on entertainment. They state, "the rules for STE differ from those of ADS in that there is no mention of the 'serious point' (p. 101). This potentially leads to confusion among those students who attend both the Phi Rho Pi National tournament and NFA Nationals, or for those of us without a big budget, students who attend the Santa Rosa tournament and the California opener in the same year.

Differentiating After Dinner Speaking From Other Platform Events

As noted above, the After Dinner Speech often adopts the qualities of a persuasive or informative speech. I speak from experience when I say that some students find it easy to have jokes in their speech when they are signed up for informative, and embarrassingly enough, no jokes at all when they are competing in After Dinner Speaking. The standards become unclear when a student's speech can fit into more than one category. Part of the confusion may stem from the universal platform standards enacted by the forensics community. In 1984 at the 2nd National Conference on Forensics, Resolution 45 was enacted, which created standards for judging platform events or public address events as they were commonly referred to at that time. The resolution included the following standards:

1. the speaker's presentation should identify a thesis or claim from which the speech is developed;
2. the speaker's presentation should provide a motivational link (relevance factor) between the topic and the audience;
3. the speaker's presentation should develop a substantive analysis of the thesis using appropriate supporting materials;
4. the speaker's presentation should be organized in a coherent manner;
5. the speaker's presentation should use language which is appropriate for the topic and the audience;
6. the speaker's presentation should be delivered using appropriate vocal and physical presentation skills. (cited in Hanson, 1998, p. 25)

Hanson addresses the concern of whether or not such standards are applicable to the After Dinner Speech. While it may be easy to see similarities and differences amongst all platform speeches, there is indeed something that sets the after dinner speech apart from its siblings: entertainment. This element can vary through the use of props, facial expressions, and the various types of humor that exist. Miller (1974) noted, "Some speakers use various forms of humor better than others. How effective are you, for example, in using exaggeration? understatement? puns? irony? Can you talk entertainingly about the peculiar traits of people? Are you effective in treating serious

ideas lightly or light subjects seriously?" (cited in Hanson, p. 27). Each of these questions, if answered, could create unique guidelines for the After Dinner Speech and set it apart from other platform events.

The Necessity for Judging Standards

With judging standards unclear, boundaries enacted what I like to call the invisible electric doggy fence theory. If a student went too far, they often didn't know it and got zapped back into their place when they got their ballots. The smoking of the six really hurt some students. Thus, local tournaments began to suffer with enrollment rates. Holm (1996) noticed what many of us have seen in our districts: that ADS is a favorite room-packed event at nationals, but entries at the local level seem to have dwindled. He lists several reasons for this decline. The winner: judges. He cites complaints from several open competitors such as "judges with hangovers" and "judges who try not to laugh" (p. 1). More specifically, Holm returns to the idea that a tailored set of standards for judging the after dinner speech is non-existent, leading to confusion, frustration, and murder. No murders have occurred to date, but it is possible. Students are prompted to then ask, "Why do speeches which aren't funny make it into the finals?" "Why are my rankings so inconsistent?" and "Why do they teach us about audience analysis in public speaking classes and say we should modify our speeches to meet the demographics of the group and then turn around and say "Never use forensics humor" in [ADS] Forensics is the one thing we all have in common" (p. 1).

In response to these questions, and just out of sheer nosiness, Edwards and Thompson (2001) conducted a content analysis of ADS ballots. During the 2000-2001 Forensics season, these authors collected ADS ballots from several tournaments in the upper Midwest. Edwards and Thompson found that most of the comments on the ADS ballot fit into two headings: content and humor. To give you an idea of which category weighed heavier in the minds of the judges, they stated, "Content had two hundred and twenty-one related comments while humor had one hundred eight-nine." (p. 1).

Billings (2003) further examines judges' tolerance of topics and specific language in this event. He points out that After-dinner speeches aren't as funny as they used to be and the primary reason appears to be the fear of potentially intolerable or offensive humor. Because of this problem, Billings studied focus groups comprised of forensics judges in which he asked them to define "the line" and identify their tolerance of different types of humor. Those topics that were generally not tolerated included humor regarding: handicaps, homophobia, violence,

disorders, and sexism. This means that I won't be able to talk about my paraplegic, gay, narcoleptic, bigot of an uncle, and that is some funny stuff. Billings claims that this intolerability to many of the topics that are prevalent in our society only works to stifle creativity in this event.

Each of these studies reiterates the same theme: there is a seriously large grey area for criteria and standards in After-Dinner Speaking. Each of these controversies needs to be addressed and analyzed for further development and improvement not only within this event, but also our community.

Suggestions and Future Directions

I have elaborated upon four major areas of controversy within After Dinner Speaking that need our attention. While I would like to say that God helps those who help themselves, I know that will not get me published, which is why I will offer some suggestions; both on a broad scale and more specific to each issue.

First, many of the controversies discussed here could be solved by the implementation of humor curriculums in our education systems. While there is little research done on the actual teaching of humor to students, several scholars do note that humor is a valuable teaching tool (Baym, 2005; Bryant & Zillman, 1989; Johnson, 1990; Kher et. al., 1999; Ruggieri, 1999). Forensic students are teachers in their own right. If you dig through the informative speeches on bees and motorcycles, there are a few speeches that you might find intriguing and fascinating. Often times it is the lack of excitement or entertainment, however, that often prevents people from listening to these speeches, let alone learn from them. The After Dinner Speech should serve as a remedy for this due to its use of humor as a pedagogical tool.

Take for example late night comedy shows. The 2004 Pew Survey found that 13% of people ages 18-29 "report learning from late-night talk shows such as NBC's *Tonight Show* with Jay Leno and CBS's *Late Show* with David Letterman" and *The Daily Show* is a rising source of political information" (cited in Baym, 2005, p. 260). Baym continues, the "unique blending of comedy, late-night entertainment, news, and public affairs discussion has resonated with a substantial audience" (p. 260). This blending of significance with entertainment sounds familiar. If we recognize that forensics students are educators, then the need for humor as a teaching tool becomes more apparent. However, if one does not know how to use humor effectively, the value of comedy and the After Dinner Speech is unapparent. By developing a humor curriculum, we would be giving our students a tool that they can

utilize throughout their forensics career and throughout a lifetime of communication and education. If you do not believe me, go back and review some of my jokes. If you did not laugh, it was not my fault. I was not taught how to be funny.

In regards to defining the event, Preston (1997) believes that there should be improvements made to this event and suggests that we “provide a thorough event description for all events, including after dinner speaking, to assist critics” (p. 97). Not only should there be thorough event descriptions, but I would also advocate for a universal description used by NFA, AFA, and Phi Rho Pi. Currently, the event description for After Dinner Speaking listed for the NIET reads,

An original, humorous speech by the student, designed to exhibit sound speech composition, thematic coherence, direct communicative public speaking skills, and good taste. The speech should not resemble a night club act, an impersonation, or comic dialogue. Audio-visual aids may or may not be used to supplement and reinforce the message. Minimal notes are permitted. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes (AFA-NIET).

Aside from the four typos that I had to fix when transcribing this passage, there are a few words I would like to point out. This list of what not to do is often echoed in tournament invitations across the country. This might include “not a string of one liners,” or “not stand up comedy.” Kay and Borchers (1992) believe that event descriptions should not limit the student as much as they do. They state, “Students in after dinner speaking are doubly penalized—not only do the event rules fail to prescribe a public arena model, but the rules actually take away the most popular and appropriate public arena models (stand up)” (p. 168). Holm (1988) concurs with their statement as he says, “to the new competitor A.D.S. is unlike anything they may have seen in the past. For many the only thing they can compare it to mentally is a stand-up comedy routine” (p. 7). These limitations do not help a student to understand what the event is. Instead of telling students what not to do, the event description should focus on what the event *should* look like. It’s like abstinence only education. If you don’t teach them how to use a condom, the itch gets worse. Speaking of which, the idea of “good taste” is quite vague and subjective. While most of what we do in forensics is subjective, having a term like this in a paragraph that is supposed to break down rules and standards is not helpful, but instead confusing. A description that may be useful looks like this:

An 8-10 minute speech that uses several types of humor as a vehicle to persuade, inform, or otherwise show analysis of a significant topic. Entertainment should be balanced with the significance of the topic at hand

through the use of sources and effective delivery skills. Participants should be less concerned with the quantity of humor and more with the quality of humor. The student should use language appropriate for the audience and topic. Audio-visual aids may or may not be used to supplement and reinforce the message. Random humor is discouraged.

I do not contend that this is a perfect description that should be adopted immediately by all tournaments, NFA, AFA, and/or Phi Rho Pi. However, I do hope that this opens up conversation amongst directors, coaches, and students to change the hundreds of descriptions that exist today and base them on our objectives for this genre.

Next, as the scholars cited here have made clear, we need to differentiate between Speech to Entertain and After Dinner Speaking. By allowing students to qualify for nationals in one event by using their legs from the other, forensics organizations are doing students a great injustice which does not honor the work that they put into this activity. Students who compete in tournaments who offer “Sports impromptu” do not get to take the legs from that swing to go to AFA in regular ole’ impromptu. Then again, if you are at a tournament that offers that event, you probably aren’t going to qualify anyway. If you do not like my radical third wave forensicism ideals, then Dreibelbis and Redmon (1987) offer three other solutions to this conundrum:

1. Coaches should read the rules listed in the event description when going to a tournament with what appear to be different event categories.
2. Students who transfer from two-year colleges or graduate from high school should familiarize themselves with the rules appropriate for intercollegiate tournaments.
3. Coaches and judges should judge STE’s using STE rules and criteria and the same should hold true for ADS. (p. 103)

These suggestions attempt to relieve the confusion students experience in the funny v. serious arguments that make an ongoing appearance on ADS ballots. I know my students do not want to memorize two different speeches for the same event. Preston (1997) continues by advocating for clearer distinctions between After-Dinner Speaking and Informative and/or persuasive. Although he vowed to do a content analysis and comparison of Informative and Persuasive ballots against the ADS ballots, 14 years have gone by and we still have not seen that research (p. 97). Perhaps somebody in the community could take on this task to improve the knowledge we have for differentiating platform event standards.

While some scholars, like Preston, have stated that we need to differentiate After Dinner Speaking from Informative or Persuasive, I disagree. It seems as though there is a battle between the informative ADS and the

persuasive ADS. If we can agree that the primary purpose of this speech is to use humor as a vehicle, then the end result should be left open. Furthermore, I advocate a new direction in After Dinner Speaking. Why not allow your students to use humor to engage the audience in a rhetorical criticism or communication analysis? We should let our students take the tools they learn in these other platform events and apply them to the speech that everyone wants to watch. People got it wrong when they started to call the informative the “speech to bore.” While a good CA is interesting, the language and density that most competitors use to construct it prevent them from getting the audience they deserve. The amount of time that goes into a Communication Analysis deserves at least five people in the room to watch it. If we regularly saw humor being used to explain the movements, media, and language that we encounter daily, then we would truly be using the After Dinner Speech to make a serious point worthy of investigation and ultimately we could reinvent this event as we know it.

Finally, although forensics coaches sometimes like to live vicariously through those who they coach, we all must admit that this activity is for the students. If we acknowledge this, then it is of great concern that 35% of students surveyed regarding the ADS stated that a lack of uniform judging criteria is the biggest problem facing ADS competitors today (Billings, 2003, p. 4). With such a variety of outcomes in the data that has been produced, several scholars propose that there should be a new set of standards on which to base our judgments for After-Dinner Speaking (Billings, 1997; Dreibelbis and Redmon, 1987; Hanson, 1998; Holm, 1988; Jensen 1990; Mills 1983; Preston, 1997). However, before we propose judging criteria for this event, there are preliminary steps that we as a community must take.

Before we can create a set of criteria, the forensics community must identify the pedagogical goals of this specific event. Until we agree upon what the educational value of this activity is, then we cannot agree upon a clear set of criteria for judging the ADS. Stimulating this conversation will provide clarity to some of the controversy discussed here. Therefore, I would like to offer a list of goals/objectives that I have identified for this genre:

1. Students should be able to understand and effectively use humor as a vehicle of persuasion, informing, and/or analyzing.
2. Students should learn and be able to use a variety of different types of humor.
3. Students should be able to use humor extemporaneously.
4. Students should demonstrate the ability to create a coherent argument/thesis.

While these are only a few suggestions, they serve as a starting point from which we can develop a fruitful conversation on the pedagogical value of the ADS.

Strengths and Limitations

Despite the fact that many people have been waiting for my generosity in supplying the community with a set of criteria for judging ADS, we have to admit that there are a number of limitations such a set of standards will bring us. When we define the “line” and create a boundary for students to stay within, we may be stifling their creativity. Most of us would agree creativity is the defining feature of an after dinner speech. Forensics encourages students to think outside of the box and challenge the status quo. As more and more standards and rules are introduced and more guidelines become “unwritten” rules, students may be less likely to reach this goal of the activity. Gaer (2002) argues that our need to simplify events into a formulaic list of requirements may promote energy in the activity by way of competition, but certainly does not nourish creativity and the education of our students.

However, I would argue that by creating the “line” we are also creating the space beyond that line where many of us challenge our students to daringly enter. If we did not have criteria for any event, then there would be no uniqueness to stylistic choices. This space beyond the line is like dark matter: we cannot see it, but we know it exists and it is really freaking cool. This space is where innovation truly happens. Many coaches urge their students to rub up against the boundaries that are there in order to stand out and make an argument about *our* system. It is hard to forget the students who put colorful pages in their black binders to emphasize a point, the student who did not speak throughout his entire piece, or the duo pair that purposefully touched in their conclusion.

At this point, I would like to point out the fact that I am challenging the “unwritten” rules of journal and conference writing. Hopefully, you have noticed the jokes and jabs that I have inserted into this work, ultimately creating an After Dinner Paper about the After Dinner Speech. Even if this paper is never published the fact that I crossed the “line” may challenge the readers and proponents of my paper to do the same in other unique ways.

When we create standards and criteria, we are not so naïve to think that the ideas we put onto paper now will be the end all, be all of changes to this event. Forensics encourages challenge and changes in its very nature. Forensics means to take a close look at something. We frequently find that when we get close, we find that there is something wrong or insufficient. Rules can be an engine for creativity and innovation and if they weren’t in place, we wouldn’t live in the world that we do now. Really beautiful things often obtain that aesthetic by getting a face-lift every ten years.

Conclusion

In our trip down memory lane, I identified the history of After Dinner Speaking, the several areas of controversy that remain in this event, and some ways we can channel the challenges for change in this event. While these changes will take time, it is important to carry on the discussion I have started here amongst students, coaches, directors, and anyone else involved in the forensics community. Feel free to elaborate, shift, shape, and even criticize the pedagogical goals and assumptions, definitions, and criteria I have offered you here. I do not claim to be the final producer of knowledge on this topic, but instead a catalyst for change.

If you somehow are involved with forensics but do not like to communicate or start conversations, then please, when you are judging this event, start the conversation with yourself. A little intrapersonal communication never hurt anyone and could be useful to the ballots of the students you are watching. Making yourself conscious of what you consider the goals of this activity to be will better aid your reason for decision and fight confusion amongst ADS participants. Conversations like this keep this event and the activity as a whole healthy. It's like the old saying goes: a convo a day keeps the 4-25's away. So, in the words of one of Britain's most famous after dinner speakers: May the After Dinner Speech live long and prosper.

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**They Know What They're Doing But They Don't Know Why:
A Theoretical Exploration of Intertextuality in Interpretation Events**

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Abstract

Our agenda is to offer a conceptual/theoretical understanding of the post-structural approach to literature interpretation/performance. We make a practice of the theory in the construction of the paper—we allow the text to speak for itself. We provide a juxtaposition numerous authors. We focus on the text rather than the author. We offer the following reading instructions: Please read the text as a whole and skimming the referential notations. The citations are provided for readers who wish to further the topic.

We realize we depart from the traditional academic writing form. The common occurrence of the style in competition underscores the merit to our use. We have intersplined text from numerous sources dealing with post-structuralist thought in the same manner used by intercollegiate competitors in Program Oral Interpretation. Our approach illustrates the form and simultaneously explains the justification behind the approach.

Introduction

Oral interpretation of literature remains an important and intricate part of forensics education and competition. McBath provides the most commonly cited paragraph concerning what oral interpretation has to offer: Oral interpretation of literature events are distinctive because they focus on the human perspective from a poetic stance. The oral performance of literature requires that students understand literary analysis, history, the emotional

and intellectual aspects of literature, and effective vocal and physical expression. Students must acquire knowledge of literary form and style while striving to interpret literature with the purpose of enriching the audience's understanding of the human condition.¹

The forensic community does not dispute McBath's perspective on oral interpretation events, however, controversy exists regarding the approaches used to achieve an "understanding of the human condition."² Because competitive events are dynamic, the conceptual approaches have changed and adapted through the years. Expressive realism (i.e., author intent) was once held as the most commonly defended mean of achieving the enrichment of the "audience's understanding of the human condition."³ The need for the interpretation to make an argument is gaining popularity.⁴ Competitive success may require more than well-written literature and a solid interpretation; a performer may be expected to make a claim/argument about a social issue.

Program oral interpretation (POI) is an event that most readily manifests these changes. The requirement to use multiple types of literature and the decision for how the selections shall be framed makes the introduction of an argument an obvious and compelling issue. POI has changed during the years. In its genesis, pieces were most commonly read one after another, presented consecutively in a full format. Now, that approach is rarely—if ever—heard. The mostly employed method is a post-structural/post-modern approach of splicing texts together to create a new whole. As with many conventions, one person started doing it and when it worked, others also adopted the approach.⁵ This weaving does have theoretical justification, but the theory may have taken a backseat to the form. While a "copycat without comprehension" practice is a concern in POI, a recent change in Dramatic Duo has made the concern even more relevant.

Recently, the American Forensics Association-National Individual Events Tournament (AFA-NIET) allowed the inclusion of different types of literature into Dramatic Duo. The decision sparked an explosion of "program duos" (a duo performance utilizing more than one text). The ability to have a number of types of texts directly connects to having an argument focus the performance; the allowance of the first motivates the use of the second. While we fully support the idea of including other texts, we are concerned this will promote a "copycat without comprehension" approach to the event at the expense of educational coaching.

The use of conventions in forensics is unavoidable; without the use of developed standards, directors/coaches/judges would have a difficult time comparing and ranking competitors. But in certain instances,

we fear convention takes the place of quality education. As a coach, teaching the theory/concept behind the different approaches to various interpretation events is a laborious and time-consuming process. As a competitor, it is far easier to watch what everyone else is doing and copy them than to take the time to learn why you are doing what you are doing. Especially when programming literature, or weaving together several texts together, we have observed form taking priority over justification. This approach continues to flourish, becoming the preference on the circuit, yet we fear students are not aware of the motivation behind this act. Instead, the motivation for designing their pieces in this manner is because it what is winning and what is passed down from previous years. If the pedagogical purposes of these actions are left behind, it will harm the integrity and purpose of this activity.

We support a variety of interpretive/performative approaches. Our purpose is to advocate that whatever interpretive/performative concept is utilized, that we as coaches and competitors actively teach and learn the theoretical frameworks supporting it. Our agenda in this paper is to offer a conceptual/theoretical understanding of the post-structural approach to literature interpretation/performance. A traditionally structured paper explaining this theory seems counter intuitive. Therefore, we have made practice of the theory. We allow the text to speak for itself. The following juxtaposition comes from many authors. Each specific author is not important, the text is important. Thus, we offer the following reading instructions: Please read the text as a whole while skipping over the referential notations. The citations are merely provided for those wishing further exploration of this approach.

We realize this article is a departure from the traditional academic format. However, we believe the juxtaposition constitutes a legitimate form for the expression of post-structuralism in oral interpretation. The common occurrence of this approach in competition gives merit to approaching our explanation in a similar way. Just as prose, poetry, and drama may be interspliced in competitive program oral interpretation and duo interpretation, we have interspliced text from numerous sources dealing with post-structuralist thought. Our approach only illustrates the form and simultaneously explains the justification behind the approach.

One final note: In line with post-structuralist thought we consider the reader/interpreter to be a critic. An interpretation is also a criticism.

A Post-Structuralist Reader

"Structuralists assume that (presumably universal) laws, or structures of laws, govern human activity and that these laws can be ferreted out by determined investigation of human systems such as language or kinship The term 'post-structuralism' subsequently evolved into a designation that could be used for any theory

or methodology which offered a critique of modernist notions."⁶ "There, is then, a rooted Western prejudice which tries to reduce writing to a stable meaning equated with the character of speech."⁷ "The traditional is the idea of the text as a bearer of stable meanings and the critic as a faithful seeker after truth in the text."⁸ "Smoothing out contradiction, closing the text, criticism becomes the accomplice of ideology ... effectively censoring any elements in them which come into collision with the dominant ideology. To deconstruct the text, on the other hand, is to open it, to release the possible positions of its intelligibility, including those which reveal the partiality (in both senses) of the ideology inscribed in the text."⁹

[Yet] "meanings circulate between text, ideology and reader, and the work of criticism is to release possible meanings."¹⁰ "A written sign, in the usual sense of the word, is therefore a mark which remains, which is not exhausted in the present of its inscription, and which can give rise to an iteration both in the absence of and beyond the presence of the empirically determined subject who, in a given context, has emitted or produced it."¹¹ [Thus,] "Poststructuralism pushes self-conscious reflection toward the limits of what is historically tolerable for readers."¹²

"There must be an awareness of ambivalence, of the discrepancy between meaning and the author's assertion."¹³ "An analytic reading of a text attempts to establish a meaning for it, to tell other readers what the interpreter thinks the text "means." But to read a text deconstructively is not to produce a doubling commentary, one that would escape the deconstructive insight that there is no "meaning," no "ultimate signified" that exists outside the text and to which the text refers or tries to reconstruct."¹⁴ "In general, theories of intertextuality replace the author-text relationship with one between reader and text, placing the locus of meaning in the cultural coeds of discourse itself."¹⁵ "Thanks to its author's absence, any piece of writing, even the smallest scrap, makes itself available to appropriation by readers and other writers, who can, and do, interpret it in multiple ways."¹⁶ "The author's absence also permits writing to do its work with or without a context ... any 'real' context we might imagine for a text is always constructed by its readers."¹⁷

"Writing, which makes itself available to anyone who can read, never authorizes a given reading all by itself, never tells us exactly what it 'means,' least of all what its writer's intention might have been ... the meaning we derive from reading is located as much in the process of reading and in the social and cultural contexts which surround our reading, as it is in the 'text itself.'"¹⁸

"The object of the critic, then, is to seek not the unity of the work, but the multiplicity and diversity of its possible meanings, its incompleteness, the omissions which it displays but cannot describe, and above all its

contradictions."¹⁹ "The inclusion of a number of perspectives does not necessarily require compromise or resolution; rather it invites complications and tensions that allow those involved to engage in critical dialogue."²⁰ "It is a mistake to believe that any language is literally literal. Literary works are in a sense less deluded than other forms of discourse, because they implicitly acknowledge their own rhetorical status. Other forms of writing are just as figurative and ambiguous but pass themselves off as unquestionable truth."²¹

"Composed of contradictions, the text is no longer restricted to a single, harmonious and authoritative reading. Instead it becomes plural, open to re-reading, no longer an object for passive consumption but an object of work by the reader to produce meaning."²² "Because the seamless intertext has no single perspective, point of view, or 'mastervoice,' its subject matter is often fragmented, unstable, deconstructed."²³ "Meaning will never stay quite the same from context to context; the signified will be altered by the various chains of signifiers in which it is entangled."²⁴ "Indeed poststructuralism typically denies the integrity of a coherent individual perspective, especially one that would claim consistency over time."²⁵

"Poststructuralism works to textualize the entire social domain, thereby at once undermining any secure links or distinctions between persons and the meaningfulness of messages."²⁶ "Poststructuralism reinscribes communication as a field of differences, substitutions, displacements, and multiple determinations."²⁷ "A seamless intertext is created by piecing together these ready-made images in order to achieve certain political or social effect, is structured to follow a consistent story line, and maintains consistent characters throughout the script. The sources are stitched together 'seamlessly' so that parts are not featured and the transitions are not marked. In other words, the parts cannot be discerned without close analysis."²⁸

"Language is not an instrument or tool in man's hands, a submissive means of thinking. Language rather thinks man and his 'world,' including poems, if he will allow them to do so."²⁹ "The solution ... a critical practice which insists on finding the plurality ... Such a criticism finds in the literary work a new object of intelligibility: it produces the text."³⁰ "One reason for 're-discover' this method of scripting at this time is the increased emphasis theorists are placing on cultural studies, postmodern performances, and intertextuality. Recent critical theory highlights the importance of intertextuality in the experience of texts."³¹ "Clearly, the expansion of the theories offered here would enrich what we already intuitively believe to be the power of performance."³²

Notes

- ¹ McBath, J., ed. *Forensics as Communication: The Argumentative Perspective* (Skokie, IL: The National Textbook Co., 1975) 11.
- ² Mills, N. H., "A Rationale for Events to be in I.E. Competition." *Perspective on Individual Events: Proceedings of the First Developmental Conference on Individual Events*. L. Schnoor, V. Karns, eds., (Mankato, MN: Mankato State University, 1989).
- ⁶ Crowley, S. *A teacher's Introduction to Deconstruction* (Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1989) 51.
- ⁷ Sarup, M. *An Introductory Guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989) 45.
- ⁸ Sarup 43.
- ⁹ Belsey, C. *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980) 109.
- ¹⁰ Belsey 104.
- ¹¹ Derrida, J. *The Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 317.
- ¹² Nelson, C. "Poststructuralism and Communication," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 9 (1985) 3.
- ¹³ Sarup 57.
- ¹⁴ Crowley 6.
- ¹⁵ Mitchell, K. "Seamless Intertexts: Extrinsic and Intrinsic Intertextuality and Emily Mann's *Execution of Justice*," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 13 (1993): 45
- ¹⁶ Crowley 14.
- ¹⁷ Crowley 15-16.
- ¹⁹ Belsey 105.
- ²⁰ Mitchell 48
- ²¹ Sarup 51.
- ²² Belsey 104.
- ²³ Mitchell 58
- ²⁴ Sarup 36.
- ²⁵ Nelson 4.
- ²⁶ Nelson 6.

- ²⁷ Nelson 4.
²⁸ Mitchell 45
³⁰ Belsey 129.
³¹ Mitchell 45
³² Mitchell 59

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The Official Language of Academic Debate

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Abstract: Academic debate continues to face the long term issue of how to reconcile competing philosophies of argument pedagogy and competitive practice, especially between adherents technical and civic debate theories. Using the theories of Pierre Bourdieu, this essay offers an analysis of this division, focusing on the role of dominant language formation and the role fluency plays in constituting power dynamic in the activity. The conception of a translation approach to judging is offered as a remedy for the exclusionary effects of technical language use in debate.

The current alphabet soup of debate formats, and the wide divergences of style and substance within those formats, bring to the fore a number of issues regarding debate pedagogy and competitive practice. While debate retains a strong case as a worthwhile pursuit for students and academic institutions, it is harder and harder to define exactly what debate is or explain it to a layperson. The National Forensics Association's Lincoln-Douglas Debate (NFA-LD), the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA), and post-merger policy debate offered by the National Debate Tournament (NDT) and the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA),¹ along with any number of smaller organizations, share the common challenge of integrating the recent profusion of debate philosophies within their own competitive frameworks. These issues have attracted significant scholarly attention in the recent past (Zompetti 2004; Parcher 2004; Galloway 2007). Indeed, these differences between pedagogical visions of debate have been with us since the beginning of the activity (Keith 2002). But never before has there been so much disagreement, so much fragmentation, in intercollegiate competitive debate.

Reconciliation, or even hostile co-habitation, seems elusive, threatening both the congruence of the debate round and the long term viability of the activity. In this essay, I offer an alternative reading of the stakes for this

¹ I treat the two interchangeably as "policy debate," a la McGee and McGee (2000).

friction in debate. My analysis is rooted in the philosophy and sociology of education articulated by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's work focuses in particular on the ways both education and accolades are distributed in societal institutions, a ready fit for competitive college debating. Bourdieu also lays bare the often hidden ways that power entrenches certain educational practices, a point I believe is key to understanding contemporary academic debate. I argue that the nominal objectivity of non-interventionist judging paradigms conceals a deeper bias in favor of those fluent in specialized debate vocabularies, and that this bias shuts out equitable access to education and competitive success for those not schooled in the dominant idioms of debate.

To make this case, this essay will first unpack the theories of Bourdieu, especially as they relate to the formation of official languages within educational institutions. Next, I engage in a Bourdieuan critique of intercollegiate competitive debate in order to diagnose the role that reputational distribution plays in choking off pedagogical agency.² I finally offer a set of potential remedies, including a revised approach to judging debates that reflexively recognizes the privileges of fluency and hopefully paves the way for a more equitable practice of debate pedagogy.

Bourdieu on the Structures of Education

Social theorist Pierre Bourdieu has made a foundational contribution to the sociology of education along with any number of other fields. Perhaps his most important thoughts center on the ways societal institutions construct and distribute goods or "capital." (Bourdieu 1984a; Bourdieu 1986). Educational systems are primary sources for both cultural and symbolic forms of capital. Cultural capital includes the skills and knowledge that accrue from participating in educational activities. Symbolic capital in educational contexts includes the benefits of reputation, title, and societal position that are the result of having attained education. The use of the capital metaphor by Bourdieu recognizes that both of these goods eventually translate into economic capital, as skills and prestige become entry tickets to certain vocations and a higher class status.

While those within a particular capital structure may view the distribution of cultural and symbolic capital as a process of determining merit, Bourdieu theorizes that fields of capital distribution in any status quo are in fact arbitrary and in the interests of the dominant class. This is true across society, but especially so in educational

² A similar dynamic of community norms stifling individual speaker agency has been noted in Individual Events as well. See (Gaer 2002) and (Ribarsky 2005). It is possible that the line of reasoning in this essay would be fruitful for those forensic activities as well.

systems (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970). The distribution of capital is arbitrary because the standards by which we determine what knowledge and skills are important to possess, as well as the reputational benefits that flow to those who possess them, cannot be defended except from within the given field. While the prevalence of one type of capital over another is fundamentally arbitrary, from within the field the status quo often seems a natural product of an inevitable social order. Bourdieu argues, on the other hand, that this supposition is the product of “misrecognition,” a failure to reflexively understand the arbitrary nature of capital distribution. Those who possess capital falsely believe that they defend the objectively proper order of society when they reserve positions of power for others who possess this arbitrary, misrecognized capital. This is not merely a top-down process of hoarding power and privilege. Instead, the subjugated classes themselves misrecognize the status quo as being structured in a necessary and unrevisable way. They take it for granted that those who have been to certain schools, who have been educated to think or act in certain ways, are entitled to wealth and power while they themselves are destined for lower positions. Somebody has to dig the ditches, and most everyone believes that the societal rules for who those people will be are inevitable and proper.

The theoretical vocabulary of capital allows Bourdieu to paint a picture of society where scarce resources (education, prestige, careers, political and social power) are distributed according to a system that seems inexorable both to those in power and those who are denied power through their lack of capital. Anyone who has been denied a job because they do not possess a degree or has been socially shunned because of the status of their family, and further believed that this was “just the way the world works” has participated in this misrecognized system of capital distribution. One of the most important ways that this system operates is through the regulation of language.

Determining an Official Language

Bourdieu spent much of his early career studying the entrenchment of official French over a number of regional dialects, including his own now dead idiom Gascon (Grenfell 2009). The experience led him to place language in a central role for understanding the construction of society. Differences in dialect and diction are a product of regional, ethnic and class distinctions in a broader community. However, the lack of a common standard for multiple dialects makes social hierarchicization difficult. Homogenizing language use by establishing an official

or legitimate way of speaking allows society to demarcate those who have been through a formal education program, and therefore possess symbolic and cultural capital, and those who have not. Encouraging as many as possible to speak a common language is more than a process of ensuring communication between different groups. It is also a means of establishing a normative set of distinctions between linguistic communities. Bourdieu argues that language becomes a test to regulate behavior. “Produced by authors who have the authority to write, fixed and codified by grammarians and teachers who are also charged with the task of inculcating its mastery, the language is a *code*, in the sense of a cipher enabling equivalencies to be established between sounds and meanings, but also in the sense of norms regulating linguistic practices” (Bourdieu 1991, p. 145). Language that runs afoul of the respected idiom is therefore considered devolved, vulgar, and “common.” So too those who speak it.

Institutionalized education is crucial to the ascendancy of an official language. Grammarians, linguists, instructors of proper speaking and writing ensure that pupils internalize these distinctions. Earning high marks, attaining degrees and subsequent acceptance into selective higher education are all contingent on the student mastering the common language, which for many contrasts with the ways of speaking in their own homes and communities. As a result, those who fail to adopt the official language are denied access to the symbolic capital of degrees and reputation, the cultural capital of knowledge and skills that only are available from institutionalized education, and the economic capital of vocations that require fluency in the official language.

To be sure, enabling communication across sub cultures in society is extremely valuable both economically and politically. Linguistic homogenization, though, comes with a cost. The alternative idioms are delegitimized, most often ruthlessly. In a telling locution, Bourdieu calls this process “symbolic violence” (1991, p. 51), a means of domination of one class over another by policing the use of language. This violence is not accomplished through physical force but by rationing symbolic and cultural capital, a process to which the subjugated parties are complicit. The choice to adopt the official language by the minority speaker is seen in self interested terms. To acquire capital, one will surrender the home dialect.

The result is less a top-down prohibition of ways of communicating and instead a restructuring of the field of possible expressions by all participants. From within, this homogenization does not appear as symbolic violence since the warrants for restricting expression emanate from the censored. “Censorship is never quite as perfect or as invisible as when each agent has nothing to say apart from what he is objectively authorized to say: in this case he

does not even have to be his own censor because he is, in a way, censored once and for all, through the forms of perception and expression that he has internalized and which impose their form on all his expressions” (Bourdieu 1991, p. 138). Bourdieu’s famous notion of the *habitus* demonstrates how the most basic patterns of human behavior, how we dress, how we eat, how we walk as well as how we talk, are a product of this internalized censorship, even if the subjects do not recognize their own repression (Bourdieu 1992).

Once official languages are institutionalized, Bourdieu argues they have an even deeper censorial effect, altering not only the form but the content of thought. Content is “inseparable from its appropriate expressions and therefore literally unthinkable outside of the known forms and recognized norms” (Bourdieu 1991, p.139). As alternative dialects are delegitimized by the official language, so too are ways of critiquing the official language. If a critique emerges from the now “vulgar” dialects, it lacks both the linguistic resources to combat the official language as well as the credibility to be taken seriously.

This process is not relegated to national or ethnic language systems. Official academic languages emerge as well as a way to denote elevated and sophisticated approaches to ideas. Bourdieu observes that “to produce a philosophical discourse of a duly formal nature, that is, bearing the set of agreed signs (a certain use of syntax, vocabulary, references, etc.) by which philosophical discourse is recognized and through which it secures recognition as philosophical, is to produce a product which demands to be received with due formality, that is, with due respect for the forms it has adopted” (1991, p.139). This respect takes on a number of forms; degrees, appointments, publications through peer review, and citations by other initiates. The form itself is instrumental in meeting out these forms of capital. In the Academy, ideas that do not feature this official linguistic frame are treated just as folk dialects are, gross and common.

Therefore, there is special disdain reserved for attempts to simplify or reduce complicated academic discourse to a more accessible manner of presentation. There is a “prohibition against any kind of ‘reductionism,’ that is, against any destruction of form aimed at *restoring discourse to its simplest expression* and, in so doing, to the social conditions of its production” (Bourdieu 1991, p.151). Simplifying academic discourse is abhorrent both because the elevated form is seen as essential to the context and because it subverts the arbitrary hierarchy that prevents the uncredentialed from participating in the conversation.

Fluency in academic discourse is therefore less a means of communicating complex ideas and more a form of authorization of those who may speak at all.

The “elevated” style is not merely a contingent property of philosophical discourse. It is the means by which a discourse declares itself to be “authorized,” invested, by virtue of its very conformity, with the authority of a body of people especially mandated to exercise a kind of conceptual magistrature. It also ensures that certain things which have no place in the appropriate discourse, or which cannot find spokespersons capable of putting them in the correct form, are not said, whereas others are said and understood which would otherwise be unsayable and unacceptable (Bourdieu 1991, p. 152).

As I hope to show in the remainder of this essay, this process of authorization and magistrature can also be found in academic debate. Coming to grips with this mechanism for capital distribution allows us to diagnose the source of friction and suggest potential remedies.

A Bourdieuan Critique of Competitive Debate

The primary justification for the existence of competitive debate programs, given their place within institutions of higher learning, are their potential for, in Bourdieu’s terms, distributing cultural capital (Strait and Wallace 2008; Freeley and Steinberg 2009). While this is not a universally held edict (Burnett, Butler and Meister 2003) almost all defenses of debate primarily tout is pedagogical potential.

Of course, competition is the major aspect that separates contest debating from other forms of argumentation pedagogy. The symbolic capital of victories, trophies, championships and the overall prestige of participating in debate are seen both as motivators for participation and as educational in their own right (Hinck 2003). This combination of cultural and symbolic capital makes academic debate particularly complex, as at times the interests of the two are at odds. Allowing for equity in the distribution of symbolic capital may trade off with the desires of participants over which forms of cultural capital should be available. Much of the *gestalt* of debate is driven by agency, both allowing debaters the freedom to craft their own competitive strategies in the pursuit of a victory and to determine the nature of the skills they seek to acquire. The common refrain on judging philosophies that “debate belongs to the debaters” embodies the more or less generally recognized culture of experimentation and intellectual freedom that marks academic debate.

This ostensibly open tent philosophy has developed into a polarization of views on what sort of cultural capital should constitute debate instruction around two broad camps. In one, let us call them the technical camp, we find the hegemony of specialized argument forms that only experts in the activity can comprehend (Panetta 1990; Schiappa and Keenher 1990). As with all specialized language systems, the technical camp presumes a knowledge base in the audience that allows for novel argument forms that often omit the underlying logic of the argument on the assumption that the audience is both familiar with and favorably disposed to the approach. The “permutation” as an idea to test the viability of a counter proposal against an underlying proposal can be communicated to a lay audience through a long narrative. But the “perm” in traditional policy debate tropologically encapsulates that narrative before a technical audience that does not require the whole story in order to understand the point. Participation in technical style debate, as a result, requires either prior knowledge or detailed study of a long history of argumentative techniques, jargon and presumptions in order to participate.

Also within the technical camp are adherents of the *kritik* or performance debate, whose dense philosophical jargon or challenging content also render only initiates access to the arguments (Bennett 1996). Much as contemporary art often appears silly or lacking in artistic skill to the casual observer and yet speaks deeply to the connoisseur, so too must the observer of this kind of technical debate understand the background assumptions about logic and political praxis that make meaning for the expert in debate. In both traditional policy debate and philosophically oriented *kritikal* debate, the focus is on the expert judge who does not need all of the argument explained to her. The type of cultural capital this style produces is the development of high level reasoning and research skills, as the technical language games become increasingly complex and challenging.

The second camp views the cultural capital of debate as training in directly applicable argumentation skills for the public sphere. Let us call this the civic camp, meaning skills of civic engagement are the dominant *telos* of the activity (Weiss 1995; Trapp 1996; Trapp 1997; Kuster 2003). These participants seek skills that mirror deliberative or forensic argumentative practices in society. This perspective is more likely to resonate with the image of debate found in stakeholders beyond the activity itself. Administrators, novice students, and the broader public are unlikely to envision the complicated machinations of the technical camp when contemplating the activity. Lincoln-Douglas debate no doubt brings to mind Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, speaking before an audience on pressing issues of the day. Adherents to the civic camp, to varying degrees, hope to retain these types

of applied cultural capital, even if they themselves are versant in technical debate. This is not to say that the technical camp does not see itself as civically engaged. However, the civic camp uses public sphere discourse as the primary model for cultural capital. The technical camp takes a detour through expertise, later relying on students applying their skills of analysis and research back to the public sphere.

The distinction is reminiscent of Bourdieu's remarks on the "poles" of thought in the Academy. He notes in *Homo Academicus* (1984) the poles that constitute power relations within the university structure. There is a difference between the faculties that emphasize scientific research for its own sake, the pursuit of knowledge such as research science, and those that are entrusted with reproducing the cultural order and preparing students to work within it, such as law and medicine. There is a similar distinction between the technocratic and civic camps of debate, with the former highly protective of its more insular laboratory approach and the latter intent on arming students with the real world skills necessary to wield power within the broader political discourse. The tension arises from the relative emphasis placed on reproducing a common cultural vision of what political discourse ought to look like. Between the two poles, Bourdieu calls this a difference between "scientific competence" versus "social competence."

Bourdieu notes an ideological difference between the isolated scientific faculties who are free to pursue pure knowledge and those social faculties that are entrusted with replicating social order. The former can afford to be more radical, more experimental, while the latter are constrained by the conventions of society. In this sense, it is understandable how the technical camp, both in its traditional policy debate guise and its *kritikal*/performative guise, have come to embrace argumentative forms and content that seems so divorced from public sphere norms. Likewise, the civic camp, turning toward a deliberative ideal that constitutes the self perception of American governance, limits its argumentative invention to those techniques that have a chance to resonate with a heterogeneous audience. There is a clash here of visions of cultural capital, between an ethic of critique and one of working within the system, or carving out a space for experimentation and of incubating future leaders ready to persuade fellow citizens immediately.

The Role of Language in Mediating The Two Camps

Unsurprisingly, given the insights of Bourdieu, the most important way these differences between the two camps manifest themselves is through language. Civic debate, as much as possible, tries to mimic the kinds of

discourse found in the public sphere, where an engaged lay audience would comprehend the debate. Technical debate, though, has developed its own idiom to meet the needs of its technocratic audience. It has its own jargon (*i.e.* severance perm; conditional counter plan) as well as specialized meanings of common words; a “turn” means something in technical debate that it does not in regular English. Technical debate language has its own grammar and syntax as well. For example, not only must one understand the jargon associated with a Topicality argument, but one must know the order in which those ideas are employed and must phrase sentences in a particular way. The kinesics of technical debate is also unique, especially among traditional speed policy debaters, a practice now common across all of the major debate formats. Speaking cadence, patterns of breathing and motions of the body are all learned behaviors necessary to engage in rapid fire debate. The technical debater must also develop a new way of listening by focusing on keywords and anticipating which concepts are likely to follow in a particular argument.

There are also massive distinctions in the written discourse of the technocratic idiom. Flow note taking requires its own set of abbreviations and must adhere to a pictorial representation not found in other written languages. The status of the written record is much more important here than in many other linguistic communities. Missing any details of the speech can have large implications for the distribution of symbolic capital. We might push the study even further along the route of the *habitus* and note styles of clothing, patterns of interpersonal interaction between students as well as between students and critics and other dynamics that create an overall linguistic and performative package of the successful technical debater that those initiated within the system can recognize. While *kritikal* and performative debate can sometimes eschew the verbal patterns of speed debate, the technocratic complexity of these approaches develop their own technical idioms, just as Bourdieu noted for academic philosophical discourse. Either way, the connections back to the public sphere get weaker as the student becomes more advanced.

As anyone who has attempted to train novice debaters can attest, the entry barriers to leaning the technocratic language are high. Even in novice or inexperienced divisions of college debate, the students must first learn the new language in order to engage in more than a superficial level with the activity. To progress further in the ranks, language fluency is an almost nonnegotiable skill. The requirement for language acquisition ensures that only those willing to adopt the new language system become experienced debaters. It also polices the types of cultural capital available in the technocratic linguistic field. Losing public sphere language makes accessing civic

cultural capital very difficult. Just as Bourdieu observed earlier, forcing all thoughts into the official language restricts what can be said (see also Dimock 2009). And if Bourdieu is correct that elevated academic discourse precludes alternative idioms from mounting critiques and demarcates classes between who possess fluency and the common folk who rely on less sophisticated means of expression, then the consequences in debate are to foreclose access to cultural capital for the non-fluent. One cannot participate in debate without first learning the official language, which precludes civic cultural capital.

While it is clear to anyone involved in the major debate formats that the technical camp dialects now largely constitute the official language of debate, we must also understand the competitive function of debate to see how cultural and symbolic capital manage each other.

Distribution of Symbolic Capital

The critic is given the primary role of distributing symbolic capital throughout debate. This process is strikingly overt, as wins and losses are publically available in most cases immediately after the round, and then later through public performances of out rounds and printed tabulation sheets. As critics communicate, either directly or through reputation, their own guidelines for how symbolic capital will be given out, this has a direct effect on the parameters for cultural capital access as well. A judge that informs the debaters “I don’t vote on Topicality” is framing the types of cultural capital available in that round through the reward system of symbolic capital. This overt exclusion of arguments does occur, but much more common is an implicit rejection of certain arguments because of their form. If in a post round critique a judge says “You had some interesting ideas, but you dropped the reverse voters on ASPEC [agent specification], so I am voting against you,” she is placing the fluency of the written and oral forms of technical discourse before evaluating the underlying content of the arguments. The judge herself may find the ASPEC argument unpersuasive, she may have welcomed deeper debate on the position or found the counter arguments offered interesting personally, but she does not reward those thoughts with symbolic capital but instead defaults to the syntactic procedures of covering the flow. The content of the argument itself is bracketed. In each of these examples, the judge has not announced her intention to constrain educational content, as in “today we will not be learning about Topicality” or “your ideas on agent selection will only be considered if put into the correct

language.” Yet, the impacts of her preferences do severely control the direction of the debate. To the extent that the debate comes down to semantic differences in the ways arguments are framed, it becomes a clash of competing language systems, between which the critic is forced to choose, knowing that this decision will almost certainly determine the outcome of the round. Debaters who seek symbolic capital, then, must predict where that decision will fall and adapt accordingly.

Impacting the pedagogy of the round so directly is, of course, not the intention of the critic. Indeed, it is often in the interests of objectivity or non-intervention that she nominally refuses to impose what she perceives as her own preferences, instead remaining neutral and impartial. She wants as small a role in the outcome of the round as possible, so she defers to the form of the arguments. The veneer of impartiality, though, fails to account for the literacy differences between those versed in theoretical debate jargon and those who are not. If both language systems are judged in a vacuum, technocratic debate will almost always win out since it has consciously developed an exclusionary lexicon that the civic debater cannot access. Access to symbolic capital is reserved for those who speak the language, and as a result the incentive to become fluent is enormous. Those who have preexisting expertise in the technocratic language, or those who do not seek civic cultural capital and are willing to abandon public discourse, are privileged if the fluent critic refuses to be reflexive about her own fluency. Rather than assigning symbolic capital to the best argument, the critic actually assigns it to the best ways of manipulating the language of theoretical debate. This aligns with the “game” mentality that many believe is at the core of contemporary debate (Solt 2004). In a sense, the critic has already intervened by inserting her won fluency into a contest between rival idioms.

Even if a truly objective determination between technical and civic languages is impossible given the structural power dynamics of fluency, the critic may have a weaker form of non-intervention in mind. Her years of experience may have convinced her that the technical language (again, either traditional policy debate or *kritikal* debate) are indeed superior to publically oriented civic debate. The technical arguments are in her mind more sophisticated, dense, unique or otherwise meet a standard for quality argumentation that civic discourse cannot. She is “objective” to the extent that it is possible in her mind to defeat a technical argument with a civic one, but when push comes to shove technical language forms tend to prevail because they are in the end better.

This mindset is a product of the misrecognition that typifies the selective distribution of cultural and symbolic capital. Only from with the resources of fluency at her disposal can the critic elevate technical language above any other. Neither can the critic point to the critical mass of fellow educators and competitors who share her lionization of technical debate. There are, after all, powerful incentives to adopt the dominant language, so the fact that many choose to do so does not in and of itself speak to the superiority of the dominant language. Nor can the critic hold out as examples those who have converted to technical debate as evidence for its legitimate dominance. The self censorship of minority language speakers is a given if they aspire to rise in the ranks of the power structure, so the fact that some would choose to do so is to be expected.

But perhaps the most powerful reason the critic chooses to impose her fluency on the round is to maintain her own position of privilege. The critic herself is competing for respect and reputation from the students. In formats that employ mutually preferred judging (MPJ) or straight strikes this feedback loop is overt. British Parliamentary and Worlds Style debate goes even further in tracking critic reputation. Judging panels are hand selected by a tournament administrator after soliciting feedback forms from competitors and fellow critics (all debates feature panels of judges). Critics perceived as rendering judgments in conformity with community norms are rewarded with leadership positions on panels and rounds higher in the bracket.

A critic is no different than any other stakeholder in a system of symbolic capital distribution. She uses her position of privilege to reify existing power relations between the classes of the fluent and the non-fluent, herself receiving the benefits both educationally and reputationally in the process. In a pedagogical context, the actions of those in control “correspond[s] to the objective interests (material, symbolic and, in the respect considered here, pedagogic) of the dominant groups or classes, both by its move of imposition and by its delimitation of what and on whom, it imposes.” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, 7). In the case of debate, the reward system is clear, and those who buck the system are relegated to lower rounds and suffer the public castigation of being a “bad critic.” It is always, therefore, in the objective interests of the critic to impose the will of the powerful on all participants in the activity. The systemic pressure to adopt a judging paradigm that favors technical debate ensures the neutrality between language skills and cultural capital agency that is the precondition for maintenance of the system.

The pressure on judges to respect the interests of the dominant classes has been noted before. Bartanen (1994) offered a tripartite typology of the function of the judge in debate. There are educational functions, where

the critic helps students better apply the standards of forensics practice, referee functions where the critic renders a decision as to who among competing students did the better job and a trustee function, where the critic is responsible for the standards of the activity. Diers and Birkholt (2004) conducted an empirical study of the NPDA community using this typology, finding a clear preference on the part of both competitors and fellow judges for “policy type judges,” especially in regards to the referee function. To put it in Bourdieuan terms, the preference is for critics both fluent in official debate language and willing to distribute symbolic capital based on competitors’ fluency in that language. In a real sense, therefore, two distinct classes emerge; those who buy into and replicate the dominance of official language, and those on the outside who cannot or refuse to participate.

Framing this in terms of class and access may seem an exaggeration. However, debate scholars have argued for some time that there are concrete materialist implications to the elevation of technical debate into a position of dominance. Brusckie notes the competitive advantages students from high resource high schools have in debate (2004). Indeed, economic class distinctions have a significant impact on who has access to technical debate idioms (Warner and Brusckie 2001). The cultural homogeneity of academic debate has been bemoaned for decades. In large part, this is the result of a symbolic capital system that only favors the fortunately fluent.

It is not as if these classes co-exist peacefully either. The strong reaction against reducing complex linguistic forms in academic discourse that Bourdieu observed above are also present against non-fluent, or non-compliant, debate practitioners. Too many of us have an experience of rage, or quite naked hostility, from a student or coach in debate who feels that a critic is not sufficiently obeying the system that rewards technical fluency. Nothing is worse than to be denied symbolic capital by a critic who appears insufficiently technical to recognize the justice of the current system. And that contemporary debate culture at times normalizes these aggressive reactions to the decisions of critics is not surprising given Bourdieu’s observations of how fiercely those invested in the dominant language will defend their interests against the supposedly inferior, non-fluent vulgar aspirants to cultural and symbolic capital.

Everything in this linguistic field returns inward. The same dynamic was seen by Bourdieu in his own field.

The imposition of form which keeps the lay person at a respectful distance protects the text from “trivialization” (as Heidegger calls it), by reserving it for an *internal reading*, in both senses; that of a

reading confined within the limits of the text itself, and concomitantly, that of a reading reserved for the closed group of professional readers who accept as self-evident an “internalist” definition of reading (Bourdieu 1991, p.153).

The less people who understand, the less trivial is the argument. This seems a self-evident truth in the Academy and in academic debate. The more tightly the rewards of wins and education can be controlled by the judges and debaters who, through work, inclination or historical accident, hold fluency over others, the more the status quo can be replicated. Debate indeed becomes fiercely internalist, and it more and more reacts negatively to outside scrutiny, ideas or participants that disrupt the power structure.

Remedies

The tension between linguistic fields has been a persistent one in debate. The most common remedy has been secession. CEDA, NFA L-D, and the NPDA all have origin stories that highlight the desire of the early pioneers to break away from the technocratic aspects of the dominant format. None has worked, if the goal was to resist the re-inscription of technical debate as the official language. A major strategy of these new formats was to create rules of debate that prohibited certain technical arguments. However, reputational dynamics are transplanted into the new format, no matter how strongly the founder’s vision was to exclude those idioms. NFA L-D is an excellent example. Minch (2002) concluded that

the excessive regulation of Lincoln-Douglas has backfired Students now actively seek ways to argue around theoretical obstacles to reach the argumentative goals they seek to achieve in any particular debate. The fact that the rules mandate topicality is a voting issue, for example, have not stopped competitors from spinning elaborate theoretical rationales for discounting the issue. Similarly, despite there being no framework within the current rules to evaluate a "critique" or "kritik," these arguments are still advanced even if they are cloaked as other arguments, such as disadvantages (p. 51).

Rules are only as good as their enforcement, and if the on-the-ground symbolic capital system rewards circumventing those rules, then they will be circumvented. If history is any guide, spun off formats invariably reincorporate technical practices once the power structure reasserts itself.

Others have called for the development of more civically engaged debate outlets to parallel traditional technical debate formats. Mitchell's (1998) critique of "purely preparatory pedagogy" argues that traditional debate programs should supplement technical instruction with more applied activities such as public debates. This is certainly a noble goal, but it does imply both an abundance of resources and that the pedagogical benefits of public debates equal those in a robust competitive environment. One cannot help but wonder if we must abandon pluralism within the competitive tournament format of debate. If technocracy is inevitable, then Mitchell has the prescription. But if there is an alternative and civic competitive debate can be retained, it should be considered.

I make the assumption here that leveling the playing field in competitive debate is a laudable goal. One reason for this is that the viability of debate and forensics programs may hinge on their ability to expand participation rates and secure support from decision makers on campus (Holm and Miller 2004). Further, opening access to cultural and symbolic capital will help debate live up to its agency driven self image. True choice requires rethinking the activity. Of course, so long as symbolic capital is available in this or any linguistic field, dominant and minority language communities will be present. Still, in the interests of opening the activity to more diverse participants, the following steps may help introduce more equity into debate.

(1) Diversify the fluency levels of critics at the tournament—Most systems, whether a Mutually Preferred Judging system or some version of straight strikes, work as mechanisms of misrecognition by conflating debater preference for fluency in dominant debate practices with finding a superior critic. A truly random selection process would at least increase the chances that at any given tournament students will see critics who force them to translate their arguments. The numerous calls over the years for more inclusion of non-expert judges in both debate and individual events are certainly a way to implement this (Bartanen 1994; Hada 1999). Absent a dynamic increase in the number of non-fluent critics participating in tournaments, though, the prospects of a structural remedy such as this are short. We have already seen that secession and rules are ineffectual. The real solution then becomes attitudinal.

(2) Make translation a judging criteria—If we recognize the ascendancy of technical language as arbitrary and self interested, then the reflexive critic could see the round not from within her own linguistic competency, but as an observer of how competing language models interact with one another. She may check her fluency at the door and require technical concepts be reformulated so as to be understood by the non-fluent debater. Even though the critic

understands the more specialized vocabulary, she must avoid rewarding untranslated arguments to ensure all parties in the room have equal access to their own version of cultural capital.

In many ways, this is an extension of the judging style that asks for warrants or articulated links in debate arguments. Judges who profess to “not vote on blips” and urge debaters to develop arguments suggest a critic reluctant to vote for technical arguments that fail to meet even a minimum level of narrative description. This logic could be continued into a strong requirement for explaining the arguments, even beyond the point where the critic understands it. Even further, the whole room may be full of fluent technical debaters but the critic could still require this deep translation. Focusing on translation would raise the threshold to vote for an argument beyond comprehension and would instead require enough mastery to make the logic behind the argument plain to a non-fluent speaker who is either physically in the room or, more likely, *implied by the judging paradigm*. The translation judge stands in for the non-fluent audience member if only technocrats are present. Such a requirement would equip debaters with the skills necessary to wield debate before public audiences later on, which is after all the long term desire of almost all debate teachers. This translation approach would also reset the standards for symbolic capital distribution, so that in future rounds knowing the technical language would not be enough to earn rewards. This opens the playing field for the non-fluent speaker who, after hearing the argument articulated in an intelligible manner, then has a better chance of formulating responses and accessing the cultural and symbolic capital that accompanies that process of argument generation.

It is important to note that this translation approach is not merely the imposition of public discourse norms onto the debate round. That would be an equally arbitrary and violent exclusion of cultural agency. The content of technical arguments is retained, at least as much as it can be after it has been translated. Neither would debaters be able to dismiss unique technical approaches to argumentation on the grounds that “that is not how it is done in the real world.” Public sector debate must reckon with technical ideas, but in a translated form that makes them understandable. A *kritik*, for example, should not be rejected *a priori*. Even if the content of this argument runs afoul of dominant civic discourse, the translation oriented critic can weigh these experimental arguments against the quality of the civic debater’s response. This way, all parties understand the argument, and yet neither technical nor civic approaches to content exclude the other. In a sense, the translation critic says to the debaters “argue whatever you wish, but just do it in a way that both technical and civic audiences can understand it.”

English et. al. (2007) wonder why competitive debaters have not come under attack from critics of the Academy for espousing views in technical debate rounds that ideological critics might consider anti-American. They point out debate “has become remarkably isolated and esoteric. Competitive pressures have molded the activity into a highly technical art form, where students argue in jargon at breakneck speeds that regularly top 300 words per minute the isolation of this form of debate protects it from criticism and prevents it from having a broader social effect” (p. 223). A translation approach breaks down this isolation, and shortens the road that students need to travel in order to take their technical skills and transform them for public consumption.

(3) Rethink fairness in standards debates--Procedural arguments in technical debate often come down to debates about the standards of measurement the critic should use to choose between competing claims. There are numerous standards, but one of the most important is fairness, that the critic should choose the interpretation that is most equitable to both sides (it fairly delineates ground, for example). What is less common, and the analysis in this essay would imply is missing, is a conception of equity as it applies to cultural capital agency. Equity in this sense is framed less as access to the ballot and more as access to the skills that participation in debate provides. Competitive fairness cannot trump educational opportunity. If it does, then equity is omitted in both senses, as the minority speaker gets neither the benefits of debate skills nor the prospect of the victory. Since we should reflexively recognize the arbitrariness of what “fairness” means in the current linguistic field, the critic is then freed up to preserve educational agency. Correcting for power imbalances and opening up prospects for education can come to the foreground of the critic’s reasons for preferring one argument over another without fear of breaking an inviolable covenant to always place symbolic capital ahead of cultural capital. Taking power into account is advocated by Bourdieu for those who seek to understand symbolic power relations between speaker and audience, as well as between rival speakers. “The structure of the linguistic production relation depends on the symbolic power relation between the two speakers, *i.e.*, on the size of their respective capitals of authority. (Bourdieu, 1977, 648). These capitals of authority can be recognized by the critic and compensated for. In a sense, the critic is free to adjust the distribution of capital to correct the inherent power imbalances in the system. Doing so may sacrifice her own position of privilege as she faces the wrath of the dominant linguistic class; it is no small order. But such a shift in attitude would go far to open the activity and expand the viability of debate.

Conclusion

Perhaps these attitudinal shifts that I advocate, the idea that the critic should sacrifice her own symbolic capital in the interests of furthering the educational agency of the student, are impracticable. If the preceding analysis is correct, there are a number of reasons for those invested in the status quo to maintain that order. However, failure to adopt changes is likely to trap intercollegiate debate in a perpetual cycle of secession and colonization, as those with minority language skills or civic views of cultural capital seeks enclaves to pursue debate on their own terms. The alphabet soup continues to simmer.

By applying the theories of Pierre Bourdieu to intercollegiate debate, hopefully we have been able to diagnose the issue and at least be more reflexive about our practices. As debates about debate continue, this essay makes the case that defending one version of cultural capital over another as being inherently superior is a naïve approach. Such judgments are deeply affected by the power relations between classes of speakers. Even the demystification of this arbitrariness may embolden those who urge debate to be more inclusive, more willing to embrace alternative idioms. Finding ways to articulate those ideas within the structures of official debate language is the paramount challenge for those truly interested in the critique of debate.

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