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Speaker & Gavel

Featured Articles

Fueling the Competition: Exploring Individual Events Competitors' Nutritional Choices. (Kerber) 7

Using Assessment to Improve Teacher Efficacy in the Actualization of Student Outcomes: An Instrumental Case Study Approach (Perlich et al) 25

Research Brief

College Policy Debate Community Climate: Data from the 2014 and 2015 College Policy Debate Survey (Richards & Mabrey) 44

Alumni Corner

George LaMaster: What Forensics Did for Me (LaMaster) 53

Terri Trickle: What Forensics Did for Me (Trickle) 57

Editor's Note

A Call for Research to Sustain the Activity and the Discipline (Holm) 59



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Editor's Note: S&G went to an entire online format with volume 41/2004 of the journal. The journal will be available online at: www.dsr-tka.org/ The layout and design of the journal will not change in the online format. The journal will be available online as a pdf document. A pdf document is identical to a traditional hardcopy journal. We hope enjoy and utilize the format.

Table of Contents

Fueling the Competition: Exploring Individual Events Competitors' Nutritional Choices. 7
(*Kerber*)

Using Assessment to Improve Teacher Efficacy in the Actualization of Student Outcomes:
An Instrumental Case Study Approach (*Perlich et al*) 25

RESEARCH BRIEF

College Policy Debate Community Climate: Data from the 2014 and 2015 College Policy
Debate Survey (*Richards & Mabrey*) 44

Alumni Corner

George LaMaster: What Forensics Did for Me (*LaMaster*) 52

Terri Tickle: What Forensics Did for Me (Tickle) 57

Editor's Note

A Call for Research to Sustain the Activity and the Discipline 59

Fueling the Competition: Exploring Individual Events Competitors' Nutritional Choices



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Kerber

Fueling the Competition: Exploring Individual Events Competitors' Nutritional Choices

Page | 7

Anne E. Kerber

Despite ongoing scholarly conversations surrounding the health of forensic competitors and educators, there remains a dearth of published research demonstrating the impact of efforts to improve the activity's wellness environment. Additionally, the dialogue has primarily focused on educators' perspectives, obscuring how students' participation in forensics influences their health behaviors as well as how they experience initiatives to improve wellness. This study aims to address the literature gaps, using the Coordinated Management of Meaning theory to analyze how forensic competitors account for their nutritional judgments during tournaments. Competition emerged as a logical force that not only guides students' nutritional choices, but also provides them with a mechanism for imposing coherence on actions that do not follow stated norms.

Key Words: Forensics, wellness, nutrition, competitive speech and debate, Coordinated Management of Meaning

The overall wellness of forensic competitors and coaches has been an ongoing concern for more than two decades. Hatfield, Hatfield, and Carver (1989) initially raised the issue in an essay for the First Developmental Conference for Individual Events, highlighting how tournament management could foster a wellness perspective in forensics. Hatfield (2004) recalled, "As anyone familiar with the paper and its response knows, the paper was widely discussed, not to mention wildly lampooned (e.g., as 'the banana bread paper')" (p. 24). Despite ridicule, Hatfield et al.'s manuscript prompted other forensic educators to begin investigating health and wellness issues within the activity. Published research has illuminated a diverse range of concerns surrounding the tournament setting (e.g., length of the competitive forensic season, and physical demands of travel).

Several scholars have asserted the tournament atmosphere often constrains participants' healthful choices. Often stretching from early morning until evenings with few breaks, tournament schedules have been blamed for students' and coaches' lack of sleep; extensive caffeine, alcohol and/or nicotine consumption; and, reliance on sugar and other fast foods (Dickmeyer, 2002;

Fueling Forensics

Leland, 2004; Olson, 2004a; Schnoor, 2004; Trejo, 2004; Williams, 2003). The consumption of food has been historically noted as a source of concern for students. Tournament schedules and stress have been identified as issues that make it particularly difficult for students to eat meals during competitions, and can lead to overconsumption during evening meals (see Littlefield & Sellnow, 1992; Paine & Stanley, 2003).

Page | 8

Additionally, researchers have pointed to the length of the competitive forensic season and travel demands as other health and wellness concerns. The individual events season lasts nearly eight months, which Billings (2002) observed is “longer than the college football and basketball seasons *combined* [emphasis in the original]” (p. 33). The thrill of competition erodes for many students and coaches, particularly when the length of the season is coupled with extensive travel to attend tournaments. Multiple studies have identified the health impacts of competition as being among the top perceived drawbacks of forensics participation among current and former competitors (Billings, 2011; Littlefield & Sellnow, 1992; Paine & Stanley, 2003; Quenette, Larson-Casselton, & Littlefield, 2007; Williams, 2003; Williams, McGee, & Worth, 2001). Respondents in these studies raised specific concerns surrounding stress, fatigue and sleep deprivation, and the use of tobacco, alcohol or other substances as wellness issues related to forensics participation. Moreover, Billings’ 2011 survey of former competitors found respondents who competed at the American Forensics Association (AFA) National Individual Events Tournament were less likely to regard forensics competition as healthy, likely due to the “more rigorous qualification system for participation” and increased travel requirements (p. 121).

Students are not the only stakeholders expressing concerns about the forensics wellness environment. Dickmeyer (2002) candidly summed up issues from a coach’s perspective:

Individual events coaches are at their “unhealthiest” when traveling and participating in tournaments. Coaches eat poorly, have no time to exercise, overindulge on caffeine (perhaps nicotine and alcohol as well), get little sleep, and when exhausted from the weekend, put their life (as well as their students’ lives) in jeopardy when hitting the road for the long drive home. It seems absolutely ridiculous and morally irresponsible that individual events coaches put themselves and their students in danger so often (p. 58).

Likewise, others have explored the connections between competition travel with health and wellness issues for coaches (Leland, 2004; Olson, 2004a). Richardson (2005) similarly connected the increase in research on forensic coaching burnout and competition-related stressors to the “preponderance of swing tournaments, longer seasons, and more taxing tournament schedules” (p. 110). Although literature in this area underscores the physical tolls of forensics participation, the evidence suggests it influences mental health as well. For instance, Carmack and Holm (2013) found emotional exhaustion was a major element of perceived burnout among forensic educators, particularly those who have considered leaving the activity.

Fortunately, the attention directed to forensics activities and health has sparked promising changes. The *National Forensic Journal* (NFJ) published a special wellness-themed issue in 2004

Kerber

highlighting examples of wellness initiatives at local and national tournaments, such as healthier food options provided for students and coaches, and adjustments to competition schedules to provide for meal-time breaks (Schnoor, 2004; Trejo, 2004). The NFJ issue also outlined AFA's newly established wellness policy (Workman, 2004); and identified other opportunities for wellness-related changes in tournament and program management (Leland, 2004; Olson 2004a; Olson 2004b; Trejo, 2004). More recently, a resolution of the 2010 National Developmental Conference on Individual Events indicated the emphasis on well-being has created "many productive changes for the student population" (Cronn-Mills & Schnoor, 2010, p. 140).

Yet, two primary concerns remain about the state of the dialogue on forensics and health. First, there is a dearth of published research demonstrating the impact of efforts to improve the wellness environment in forensics. The majority of scholarship on the activity's health impacts is more than a decade old, and little health related-research appears to be in the pipeline: Between 1998 and 2007, only 10 papers presented at the National Communication's annual convention addressed forensics and wellness (Cronn-Mills & Croucher, 2013). One recent exception, Carmack's (2016) study of forensic educators' sensemaking regarding healthy tournament management practices, indicates progress has been made: Although just over half of the participants were *aware* of the AFA's wellness policies, 67 percent reported *implementing* healthy tournament procedures. Because previous research may not accurately reflect how travel patterns and tournament practices have evolved over time (see related arguments by Williams et al., 2001), ongoing assessment of health behaviors in forensics is warranted. Moreover, applied research is needed to help forensic educators grapple with shared practical tensions surrounding the time and resources necessary to enact wellness practices (Carmack, 2016).

Second, the existing dialogue on wellness issues in forensics has foregrounded educators' perspectives. Studies that have incorporated students' voices were not explicitly designed to address their perspectives on health behaviors. Rather, health concerns emerged in the research as a response to current and former competitors' perceptions of other issues related to forensic participation, such as travel and the overall benefits and drawbacks of the activity (Billings, 2011; Littlefield & Sellnow, 1992; Paine & Stanley, 2003; Quenette et al., 2007; Williams, 2003; Williams et al., 2001). Without scholarship explicitly focused on students' health concerns, considerable ambiguity exists surrounding how to interpret and address forensic competitors' wellness needs. A case in point: Littlefield and Sellnow's study indicated that up to three-quarters of students alter their health behaviors during tournaments. However, it is unclear whether (and/or to what degree) students would engage in (un)healthy practices if they were not participating in forensics (see also Williams et al., 2001). Moreover, as Carmack (2016) noted, it remains to be seen how students are responding to the wellness practices implemented at tournaments. Conducting research on students' health practices during forensics competitions can also help to address Schnoor's (2004) questions surrounding the ambiguity of wellness, and particularly how it ought to be defined and addressed at the individual, team, and organizational levels.

Fueling Forensics

My study is intended to provide a starting point for scholarship bridging these gaps in wellness-related forensics research. Given the breadth of potential student health concerns raised by other scholars discussed earlier in this essay, I begin by focusing on one specific wellness issue:

“Exploring how students account for their nutritional judgments in the tournament context represents an initial step toward identifying and understanding health behaviors and assessing organizational wellness changes.”

The nutritional choices made by individual events competitors during tournaments. Not only has food been identified as a student health concern in existing research, it has also been a focus for forensics wellness efforts (Carmack, 2016; Olson, 2004b; Schnoor, 2004; Trejo, 2004). Exploring how students account for their nutritional judgments in the tournament context represents an initial step toward identifying and understanding health behaviors and assessing organizational wellness changes.

Page | 10

Theoretical Framework

The Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory offers a robust theoretical framework for understanding how individual events competitors negotiate the messages influencing their nutritional choices. CMM emphasizes how communication is the primary social process through which meaning is constructed, and informs action (Cronen, Pearce, & Harris, 1982; Pearce & Pearce, 2000). First, CMM posits that *meaning* is developed recursively through the movement between individuals' communicative acts and salient frameworks of understanding (Pearce & Pearce, 2000; Rose, 2006). Engaging in dialogue requires proactive and reactive conversational moves described as *coordination*: Individuals in conversation strive to impose coherence upon their own meanings and actions, while simultaneously making sense of others' meanings in ways that are mutually understandable (Littlejohn, 2009; Pearce & Pearce, 2000). However, as Rose (2006) noted, CMM theory does not presume “individuals need to make the same coherent sense of an episode for it to be coordinated” (p. 180). In other words, even when coordination occurs, the interpretation of meaning can be complex, contextually bound, and fluid.

According to CMM theory, individuals draw upon personal experience for interpreting the meanings and actions shared in dialogue with others (Littlejohn, 2009). However, all experiences are nested within multiple contexts (e.g., familial, sociocultural, organizational). Individuals thus must negotiate which frameworks of understanding are most salient for making sense of a specific communicative act. Additionally, the social discourses that provide resources for making sense of meanings are themselves sites of struggle over meaning and power (Lupton, 2004). CMM theory provides resources for analyzing message interpretation, including a typology for various levels of understanding ranging from message content to broader discursive forms, such as life scripts and archetypes (Pearce & Cronen, 1980). More recent articulations of CMM theory have also explored how individuals use storytelling to “create contexts, establish meanings, and define actions” (Littlejohn, 2009, p. 202) in ways that illustrate logics of meaning and action

Kerber

(see related arguments by Rose, 2006).

CMM theory also enables researchers to unpack how individuals manage, or contextually (re)construct messages to impose a sense of coherence upon desired actions (Pearce & Pearce, 2000). Specifically, the theory articulates two kinds of rules: Regulative rules guide individuals' actions and behaviors. Constitutive rules enable individuals to interpret others' communicative acts (Bruss et al., 2005; Cronen et al., 1982). CMM theory does note that rules are continually evolving, which allows for multiple interpretive possibilities (Arnett, 2013; Bruss et al., 2005; Pearce & Cronen, 1980). Moreover, CMM posits that communicative actions occur within fields of deontic logic that operate as a "felt force," connecting action to regulative rules (Pearce & Pearce, 2000; Rose, 2006). For example, Bruss et al. (2005) found that sociocultural and familial discourses shaped how caregivers negotiated the meanings of public health messages about childhood obesity prevention. Specifically, they observed how culture became a logical force that undermined the extent to which participants complied with governmental dietary recommendations. Individuals experience logical forces as moral positions that enable or constrain how they believe they ought to behave. For instance, a forensic competitor may follow a particular diet outside of the activity as the result of familial, governmental, or sociocultural discourses. Yet, they may act differently in the forensic tournament context as the result of "felt forces" embedded in messages from peers and educators. For the purpose of this study, I analyzed how individual events competitors imposed coherence upon their nutritional judgments within the tournament environment. I particularly focused on participants' accounts of their actions, as well as how these accounts highlighted regulative rules, the source(s) of messages underpinning these rules, and perceived logical forces influencing their actions.

Method

This study is based on respondent interviews with 15 individual events competitors who volunteered to discuss their nutritional choices at forensic tournaments. The following paragraphs describe (a) the methods used to recruit participants, (b) the participants' characteristics, and (c) procedures for data collection and analysis.

Participants

Prior to beginning the study, I received institutional review board approval. During the initial phase of data collection, I recruited participants by sending emails to forensic coaches in the Midwest asking them to share information about the study with their teams. My initial recruitment yielded eight volunteers. During the second phase of data collection, a recruitment message was submitted to the individual events list-serv (IEL). Through this approach, I recruited another seven volunteers, for a total of 15 participants. It was during the second phase of interviews that I noticed respondents' answers had become repetitive, and fit within recurrent themes. The observation indicated I had reached a point of "theoretical saturation" that enabled me to make robust and viable knowledge claims (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 224). Between the two phases, I interviewed

Fueling Forensics

a total of 15 participants, who were relatively homogenous in terms of social characteristics, age, geographic region, and experience with forensics competition. However, the size of the teams students represented varied (see Table 1 for a summary of the demographic information of the participants).

Data Collection

Page | 12

I conducted respondent interviews to learn more about individual events competitors' nutritional choices. Designed to elicit open-ended responses, respondent interviews focus on individuals who share appropriate experiences relevant to a particular study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Although participants speak to their own behaviors and motivations, the focus on shared experiences makes respondent interviews useful for understanding similarities and differences among groups, such as forensic competitors (Tracy, 2013). I followed the same procedures in both phases of data collection. Prior to conducting the interviews, I emailed participants a short questionnaire to gather demographic information. My semi-structured interview protocol focused on the following topics: Participants' definitions of healthy nutritional choices; perceptions of the connection between nutrition and competitive forensic performance; consumption habits during tournaments; how participants engaged in dialogue with teammates and coaches about nutritional choices; and, students' overall perceptions of the health and wellness environment at tournaments. Although my interview questions provided a structure for the conversation, I allowed participants to negotiate talk and topic shifts as they shared their experiences (Riessman, 2008). My approach sought to privilege students' perspectives, and the conversations were broad enough to identify a diverse range of topics for future areas of research as well.

Interviews were conducted via Skype or telephone, based on what was most convenient for the participants. Conversations ranged from 15-60 minutes and averaged approximately 20 minutes in length. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed. Additionally, I took detailed notes during the conversations to document questions, recurrent stories and issues, and theoretical connections (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

Data Analysis

I followed Tracy's (2013) iterative analysis process to make sense of my data. Rather than using theory as an a priori, deductive resource, scholars who employ an iterative approach move between the data and theory to develop, refine, and reflect on emergent knowledge claims. To begin, I used data analysis software (QDA DataMiner) to organize and immerse myself in the transcripts. During the initial readings, I created first-level codes to trace repeated ideas and themes discussed by the participants. As I developed the initial codes, I began to notice the influence of regulative rules and logical forces articulated in participants' accounts. In subsequent readings of the transcripts, I refined the initial codes by analyzing them in relation to CMM theory and negative cases in the data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Additionally, I strove to be reflexive about how my perspectives as a former forensic competitor and health communication scholar

Kerber

influenced the development of knowledge claims (see Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Charmaz, 2005). My readings of the data resulted in an understanding of how competition acts as a paradoxical logical force influencing students' nutritional choices: First, it underscored the regulative rules students used to guide their decisions. Second, it enabled students to compose coherence on their actions when constraints made it difficult to follow their own rules.

Page | 13

Eating to Compete: Connecting Nutritional Choices to Performance

Thirteen of the fifteen participants connected the quality of their nutritional choices to their competitive success at forensics tournaments. One student noted, "I definitely do a lot better and feel better when I make sure I eat enough and of the right stuff." Competition emerged as a "felt force" as participants explained specific regulative rules, or norms developed through messages from educators and peers, that shaped their eating behaviors during tournaments (Bruss et al., 2005; Cronen et al., 1982). According to Rose (2006), regulative rules are "meaning structures" that instruct individuals on how they ought to "manage the unfolding sequence of actions in a social episode" (p. 178). As a component of these meaning structures, "felt forces" describe the moral position associated with actions in a particular context (Cronen et al., 1982). Moreover, the felt forces emerging from interaction are frequently interlocked with personal experiences, and used to guide actions (Rose, 2006). The participants in this study coupled regulative rules with their own embodied experiences to describe how their eating behaviors were intended to provide a competitive advantage for forensic performances.

"Thirteen of the fifteen participants connected the quality of their nutritional choices to their competitive success at forensics tournaments."

The felt force of competition was initially apparent in how participants dichotomized nutritional choices as either "good" or "bad." Participants first described how it was important to make "good" nutritional choices to sustain energy levels throughout a tournament. Participants defined "good" foods as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins; whereas "junk foods" (defined as fried food, fast food, or candy) were labeled as "bad." Students particularly associated eating "good" foods with maintaining competitive vitality and focus across a lengthy tournament schedule (which can stretch from early mornings to late evenings, and across multiple days). For instance, one student described the simultaneous difficulty and importance of sustaining energy from the beginning of a tournament into the later elimination rounds. "We have so much less energy and so much less ability to perform at the same level," he stated, "It's harder to perform well if you're not loading yourself with energy earlier in the day." From this perspective, the quality of nutritional choices was associated with performance stamina and competitive success.

Although the quality of food consumed was viewed as important, students' comments indicated another regulative rule regarding quantity as well. Specifically, participants explained how consuming the "wrong" amount of food (defined as either eating too much or not enough)

Fueling Forensics

contributed to indigestion, tiredness, and overall feelings of sickness. As a result, they noted carefully disciplining their food intake during tournaments to find an appropriate balance. One student said:

I never performed on a full stomach because sometimes it made me a little queasy. But at the same time, you don't want to perform without anything in your stomach because then you're always focusing on how hungry you are. So, you're kind of in a fine line between doing something, but not overdoing it.

Page | 14

Competition functioned as a logical force for managing food intake in other ways as well. Like the participants in Littlefield and Sellnow's (1992) study, half of the students said they consumed less food than usual at tournaments. Six students specifically noted the effects of stress on their appetite. One student explained, "I usually don't eat as much as I probably should, especially since in a high stress environment, I can't really stomach very much. I can get it down, but I'm just not hungry." Another student noted his concern with being monitored by fellow competitors and potential judges both inside and outside of rounds:

I wouldn't personally eat more or eat as much as I usually do at a tournament because I don't want to look like 'Hey, look how much he just ate.' I know that's stupid but, you've got people that are going to be watching you all the time.

Taken together, students' concerns about the embodied effects of consumption appeared to work in concert with felt forces regarding how their choices would affect competitive performance to guide action (Rose, 2006). However, it appears students' concerns about consumption and bodily discipline extends to how influential others may perceive their choices, and implicitly impact their competitive success as well.

Moreover, the perceived regulative rules linking nutritional choices and performance were more likely to be cited by participants with less forensics experience. As with previous studies (e.g., Olson, 2004a; Littlefield & Sellnow, 1992), forensic educators were cited as important influencers for how students made nutritional choices during tournaments. Seven students said their coach(es) provided them with regular reminders to make healthy choices during tournaments. Three students noted their coach(es) specifically prompted them to eat during tournaments. For instance, a student said their coach "always makes sure that we have eaten something" in the morning. She continued, "And, if we are in the middle of the day, and [they] see us [they] say, 'Okay, you're looking kind of low on energy. Grab a granola bar. Take a drink of water.'" The other four students commented their coach(es) provided more periodic reminders about nutritional choices, with some direction being given at tournaments and other advice being offered during team meetings. Additionally, four students reported their coach(es) provided advice on other health-related behaviors, such as staying hydrated or getting physical activity outside of forensic competitions.

Peers also functioned as important influencers. Five students commented on specific

Kerber

examples of how their team members had noticed and responded to peers' nutritional choices. One student commented her team was often self-monitoring when it came to observing peers' choices, "We also have some team leadership that says, hey, try a Vitamin Water and not that Diet Coke." Another student similarly remarked her peers offered advice regarding healthier alternatives, "the team tries to encourage people to maybe don't get a Big Mac. Try a fruit and walnut salad." Additionally, five students reported team members encouraged each other to make choices to maintain their energy levels during a competition. The majority of participants indicated they viewed their peers' influence as helpful, even though peer surveillance and advice-giving of this type could potentially be perceived as paternalistic (see, for instance, Lupton, 1996).

Page | 15

In contrast, individuals with more forensics participation were particularly likely to draw upon embodied experiences rather than regulative rules to explain nutritional judgments. "I know that I need to eat periodically throughout the day. I know that granola is usually a good choice for me," one participant commented. Another participant explained he avoided eating chocolate and

dairy products during a tournament because it had affected his voice at previous tournaments. It is possible that regulative rules are less meaningful for experienced competitors as they learn what their bodies need to compete at a high level. However, because regulative rules are reflexively interlocked with personal experiences, it is also possible that veteran competitors have internalized these felt forces (Rose, 2006).

"Students justified deviations from regulative rules in the tournament context by emphasizing how competitive structures constrained their ability to follow desired norms."

Although students discussed regulative rules used to fuel their competitive success, they noted the tournament environment presented contextual challenges for following these norms. In the next section, I discuss the constraints articulated by competitors, as well as how they sought to impose coherence upon their actions.

Imposing Coherence: Making Choices within Constraints

Existing research has emphasized how time and resources create logistical challenges for implementing healthy tournament practices (Carmack, 2016). Students similarly pointed to the limited availability of healthy foods and time at tournaments as the key constraints for following their regulative rules. According to CMM theory, individuals negotiate meanings across multiple, and conflicting contexts to impose coherence on their actions (see Bruss et al., 2005). As participants discussed sacrificing the quality of their nutritional choices, their comments illustrated a second and paradoxical way competition emerged as a logical force: Students justified deviations from regulative rules in the tournament context by emphasizing how competitive structures constrained their ability to follow desired norms.

Providing free food to competitors is considered a health best practice for tournaments (Carmack, 2016). Many of the students reported that tournaments provided a limited number of

Fueling Forensics

free breakfast items, as well as a meal at lunch. Participants said they found it helpful to have these meals available, but simultaneously noted the nutritional quality of the meals could be improved. “Best case scenario, it’s going to be sandwiches and some chips,” one student commented, “It’s kind of filling, so that’s good, but certainly not very good for you.” Students may not be aware of the cost-related challenges to providing tournament meals (see arguments by Carmack, 2016). However, participants noted that finding alternative, healthy options is limited to what is immediately available on or adjacent to campus. One student explained, “Usually, it’s a fast food restaurant or if there’s a stand there where they are selling something for you, it’s usually just something kind of fattening.” Two students mentioned they frequently found the dining options on campus to have limited hours during tournament weekends.

Page | 16

Participants reported time as another factor constraining their ability to make nutritional choices according to their regulative rules. Tournament schedules were described as a constraint for finding healthy food options, particularly if participants were unable to eat around conventional meal times. Although students noted meal breaks were often integrated into the schedules, the allotted time failed to account for when competitions lasted longer than expected. One student said, “We normally do get a lunch break but a lot of the rounds I’m in will go over. Then, I have another round quickly following lunch.” Participants compensated for the lack of time by choosing food options that were quick to locate and consume so they could resume competing. One student noted, “It’s just easier to grab something unhealthy because it’s normally an easier access.” The same students who commented on the length of meal breaks discussed how opportunities for meals were further complicated by competing in multiple events, and specifically, extemporaneous speaking (because of the preparation time required before a round). “I know lots of extempers have talked about it. They can pretty much kiss lunch goodbye,” one student stated. Another student who competed in extemporaneous speaking described:

I remember at least one instance last year that I came straight from a round. We were supposed to have had lunchtime between that round and the next draw and it was already time for that next draw. So I was eating while I was prepping, which is obviously not ideal for eating or performance.

Tournament schedules and limited food options were also described by participants as influencing what they ate at the end of a day, or at the end of a weekend competition. “We are normally at the school at seven, and then we don’t get done until eight or nine at night. That means a very early breakfast, a very quick lunch, and then a really late dinner,” one student explained, “So it’s hard on your body.” Because competition and award ceremonies frequently end later in the evenings, students characterized dinner as a meal where they indulged or strove to replenish what they were not able to consume during the competition, similar to Littlefield and Sellnow’s findings (1992). “I like eat what I didn’t get to most of the weekend,” one student explained, “All the stuff that I probably shouldn’t have or eat during the tournament.” Similarly, two other students reported they tended to eat more at the end of a tournament to celebrate their performance and being done with

Kerber

the competition.

Students described several individual and team approaches that enabled them to adapt to the issues of time and limited food availability during tournaments. Eight students, or slightly more than half of the participants, reported they brought food or beverages with them to tournaments. One student reported bringing breakfast items or granola bars to a typical weekend tournament, “but if it’s a longer tournament, I’ll buy sandwich spread and carrots and stuff like that to keep.” Another student described keeping pre-made peanut butter sandwiches in their bag to ensure they would have a lunch.

Likewise, six students indicated their team brought some kind of prepared meals or snacks to tournaments for their competitors. How the items were gathered differed by team: One student explained how his coach made arrangements with their campus’ dining services to provide food for travel because competitors were missing meals they had paid for. Typical provisions were described as including “a basket of fruit, some chopped up carrots and celery sticks; more healthier food we could snack on.” Four other participants said students on their respective teams contributed non-perishable items (e.g., granola bars, trail mix, peanut butter, crackers) to a basket that competitors could snack from during tournaments. Another student described how his coach kept a cooler in the team vehicle stocked with applesauce, chips, and sandwich-making supplies during tournaments.

Two additional students said they would bring more of their own foods to tournaments, but healthy options were limited because of the perceived lack of refrigeration and heating options available during competitions. Moreover, students who do not bring food with them (or come from teams that bring food) indicated they are still able to adapt and find meal options on campus in most circumstances. “Worst case scenario?” one student explained, “I usually find a vending machine or something.” Although the student said this was not an ideal option for fueling for a tournament, it ensured he was at least able to eat during the competition.

In summary, forensic students experience competition as a paradox for their nutritional choices: On one hand, the desire for competitive success influences regulative rules that shape consumption patterns. On the other hand, the structure and logistics of competition simultaneously creates constraints for students to effectively follow such rules. As health communication research using CMM theory has revealed, it is important for educators and practitioners to consider how communication at multiple levels (individual, team, and the broader organization of forensic activity) creates larger patterns of meaning (Bruss et al., 2005). In other words, what patterns do our interactions about wellness in forensics co-construct together (Pearce & Pearce, 2000)?

Discussion

My study sought to expand understandings of how individual events competitors make sense of their nutritional judgments during competitions, and provide support for continued

Fueling Forensics

research and practice related to health issues in forensics. Understanding how competition functions as a logical force to both enable and constrain students' choices offers important theoretical and practical insights.

From a theoretical perspective, CMM offered a useful heuristic for exploring how forensic competitors made sense of wellness-related messages from peers and educators, and attempted to use those meanings to guide their behaviors in the tournament context. My findings illustrated how regulative rules worked in tandem with embodied experiences to shape the moral forces influencing participants' actions (Rose, 2006). Although CMM theory establishes that experiences and interactions are intertwined in reflexive consideration, how this process works is less clearly defined and merits additional research. For example, less experienced forensic competitors were more likely to cite messages from others as the sources of felt forces and regulative rules influencing their nutritional choices. However, veteran competitors cited more embodied experience to describe their eating behaviors. More study is needed to understand whether felt forces and regulative rules are stronger when individuals are new to a particular context and are learning patterns of appropriate behavior, or if these norms are internalized as individuals become more familiar with specific communicative episodes.

From a practical perspective, students not only have a basic awareness of how nutrition affects their forensic performance, they use this understanding to develop regulative rules in search of a competitive advantage. Their perceptions are supported by public health discourses that link nutrition to cognitive functioning and physical performance (e.g., Rodriguez, DiMarco, &

“Forensic educators are uniquely situated for helping students understand the importance of self-care in the tournament environment, as well as how this knowledge can be applied to effective performance in other personal, educational, and professional contexts.”

Langley, 2009; Taras, 2005). Likewise, Trejo (2004) noted, successful competitors are those who have discovered how to sustain “reservoirs of carefully tended energy . . . Most have undergone an alteration, which, despite their considerable determination and courage, is, quite simply physical” (p. 40). It is encouraging to see that students want to make good nutritional decisions. Yet, it is simultaneously concerning that consumption patterns are driven by competitive concerns, rather than concern for health.

To echo Olson (2004a), education is the first step in promoting a more wellness-oriented environment. Providing students with more education about the connections between nutrition and bodily performance could be a potential remedy for underscoring both the forensic and non-forensic values of enacting healthy behaviors. Forensic educators are uniquely situated for helping students understand the importance of self-care in the tournament environment, as well as how this knowledge can be applied to effective performance in other personal, educational, and professional contexts.

Kerber

Additionally, the study's findings demonstrate forensic educators must pay attention to the range of choices available to students for making nutritional judgments during competition. Carmack and Holm (2013) contended that when systems are not viable for healthy long-term participation, "we need to consider not *what* we are doing, but the *way* in which we do it" (p. 54). The participants' comments do reflect some areas of progress surrounding the efforts to improve wellness-related practices in forensics. The vast majority of students said their coaches and peers offer some form of positive guidance in relation to health behaviors. Participants also described efforts at the individual, team, and tournament levels to ensure adequate access to food during competitions. Some of these initiatives, particularly at the tournament level, have been documented by the existing research (Olson, 2004a; Schnoor, 2004; Trejo, 2004; Workman, 2004). However, students' comments demonstrated how persistent constraining factors remain within forensics, making it complicated for them to eat healthfully during competitions. For instance, participants indicated work could still be done to calibrate the length of meal breaks, improve the quality of available foods, and potentially provide options for storing and/or heating meals during tournaments.

Page | 19

Strikingly, students did share concerns over the tensions between the desire to improve the forensics wellness environment and the material challenges (e.g., budgets, time, tournament schedules) for making effective structural changes within the activity. For instance, three students observed how lengthening meal breaks could make tournaments longer or travel even more difficult and expensive for their teams. One-third of the participants similarly acknowledged concerns for how making health-focused changes to team or tournament practices would impact their team's budget. As forensic educators continue to make incremental efforts to implement wellness-related activities, it will be important to more formally assess the effectiveness of these efforts, their impacts on students' and coaches' health-related behaviors, and any (un)anticipated consequences.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

As an interpretive study, my findings are generalizable only to the participant population and may not be representative of all forensic competitors. Despite participation from multiple regions of the country, students were primarily from Midwestern states. Future scholarship should explore differences in health-related practices across different regions of the country.

Additionally, the majority of the participants in the study were within their first or second year of competition at the intercollegiate level. Billings (2011) indicated the longer a student participated in forensics, the more likely they were to regard it as healthy. This potentially indicates students with more experience have identified ways to adapt to the competitive environment and/or make better nutritional and health-related choices during tournaments. More research is necessary to understand if there are patterned ways that veteran students adapt to the tournament environment and the impact of competition on their health and wellness.

Fueling Forensics

Moreover, the scope of this study was limited to the nutritional choices made by forensic competitors. The participants raised a number of other issues that would be worthwhile to fully explore health-related behaviors in forensic participation. Some of the issues mentioned by participants have already surfaced in the existing literature, such as sleep deprivation and fatigue (Littlefield & Sellnow, 1992; Trejo, 2004), stress management (Billings, 2011; Quenette et al., 2007; Williams, 2003), alcohol, tobacco, and drug use (Billings, 2011; Littlefield & Sellnow; Williams et al., 2001), and the physical impacts of travel (Billings, 2002; Dickmeyer, 2002; Williams, 2003; Williams et al., 2001), but have not been examined in depth. Other concerns were relatively new, such as the (over)consumption of energy drinks, which were mentioned by one-third of the participants. Another two students discussed body image and its connection to (un)healthy eating behaviors. More exploration of these issues would yield insight into the discourses (both within and outside of forensics) influencing students' choices, and help forensic educators to focus on providing guidance that emphasizes good health, rather than aesthetic appearance. Finally, more research is needed to define the appropriate scope of wellness initiatives in forensics. Student-competitors are adults who make their own choices regarding health behaviors. How much education and advice ought to be provided to them? At what point do coach and peer influences on health-related choices veer from being helpful to overly paternalistic?

Despite the energy and attention that has been focused on forensics and health over the past two decades, the overall progress towards developing a more wellness-conscious environment has yet to be fully studied and assessed. Although incremental changes have been made, more research is needed to continue to make forensics a more sustainable activity for competitors and coaches alike.



Kerber

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Fueling Forensics

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	Data
Age	18 to 21 years ($M = 19.73$, $SD = 1.06$)
Sex	Seven males, eight females ($n = 15$)
Years of Collegiate Forensic Participation	Participants had completed between 1-3 years of collegiate forensics ($M = 1.67$, $SD = .69$). Additionally, twelve of the participants reported they had also competed in high school forensics.
Geographic Location	The majority of the participants identified as being from Midwestern states ($n = 8$); followed by Mideastern states ($n = 2$), Southeastern states ($n = 2$), and South central states ($n=2$). One participant reported being from a Western state.
Team Size	The team size reported by participants varied ($M = 21.86$, $SD = 11.85$). The majority of participants came from teams with 10-20 competitors ($n = 6$) or teams with more than 20 competitors ($n = 6$). Three students said their teams had fewer than 10 competitors.



Using Assessment to Improve Teacher Efficacy in the Actualization of Student Outcomes: An Instrumental Case Study Approach



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The student co-authors participated in this project as part of the requirements for *Research Methods in Communication*. They worked tirelessly in observation, collection of data, analysis of data, review of literature, and writing. All of the students graduated as majors or minors in the field of Communication Studies.



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Perlich et al

Using Assessment to Improve Teacher Efficacy in the Actualization of Student Outcomes: An Instrumental Case Study Approach

Page | 25

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The present study was designed to explore the relationship between perceived teaching style (PTS) and student outcomes in the classroom at a small Midwestern liberal arts college. A case study method was used to explore the relationship between PTS and learning outcomes. Quantitative data in the form of both survey assessment and posttest measures provided information about student outcomes; this information was coupled with a phenomenological inquiry process that was used to explicate PTS. The data suggests that student perceptions regarding “care” significantly relate with affective, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes; these findings fill a gap in the literature on the topic of face support, care, and empathy as it relates with student learning outcomes. Extrapolating these findings beyond the small Midwestern liberal arts college must be done with caution, and while the authors are certainly aware of this exigency, the feedback provided was used as part of an assessment cycle to guide the development of new faculty.

Key Words: Communication apprehension, teaching style, outcomes, case study

A study released by the Pew Research Center affirms the popularly perceived importance of communication ability, arguing these skills are more valued than “reading, math, teamwork, writing and logic” (Goo, 2015, p. 4). Facilitating the development of communication skill is a daunting prospect; particularly in light of the fact that the fear of speaking remains the top phobia for Americans (Tully, 2015). Fear (a.k.a. affect or emotion) might stand in the way of important gains for many individuals. If we can find a way to reduce apprehension toward communication skill acquisition in the classroom, the benefit is indisputable.

Most fear is developed over the course of a lifetime and often as a result of critical

Communication Apprehension

events. Counteracting an existence grounded in trepidation, while difficult, is not insurmountable. Cognitive restructuring, systematic desensitization, and visualization are all established techniques that a speaker can use to lower apprehension. However, few would refute the significant impact that support from a teacher may have on the negotiation of glossophobia (a.k.a.: communication apprehension).

Page | 26

The present study was designed to explore the relationship between perceived teaching style and student outcomes (particularly student affective learning) in the classroom at a small Midwestern liberal arts college. It has been argued that perceived teaching style can positively or negatively impact affective learning, which can influence behavioral commitment, internalization of ideas, and performance (Catt, Miller, & Schallenkamp, 2007; Chory & McCroskey, 1999; Frisby, Berger, Burchett, Herovic, & Strawser, 2014; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Kearney, 1994; Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964; Sidelinger, Nyeste, Madlock, Pollak, & Wilkinson, 2015), yet there is much we do not know regarding face support, care, and empathy as it relates with student learning outcomes. As an instrumental case study, our research project was grounded in an inductive interpretive standpoint. It should be noted that as an inductive research project, an apriori framework was unnecessary—instead, the results were integrated within existing research at the conclusion of this project. The study is the culmination of several steps: 1) on the first day of a standardized hybrid entry-level course, students completed a pretest for affect (PRCA-24); 2) at the completion of the course, students were scored on affective, cognitive, and behavioral measures; 3) the data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential analysis; 4) following analysis of the data, a phenomenological method was used to arrive at an understanding of perceived teaching style (PTS) for the professors included in this project; 5) the results of this study were used as part of an assessment cycle and in the development of faculty. Teaching at a small liberal arts institution can be a significantly challenging experience for anyone making the transition from a large public institution; our study may provide a useful case for both a department and individual faculty.

The Small College Classroom and Assessment

Assessment, at any level, is at the heart of every educational process. The need for clear assessment practices is a serious issue for higher education and one that merits additional attention. As Cooper and Sietman (2016, p. 2) point out, “a lack of empirical evidence, confusion regarding the assessment process itself, and emphasis on teachers rather than student outcomes—suggest a need to assess the short-term gains as well as long-term effects of the basic communication course.” While the Higher Learning Commission (2017) has established standard expectations for the process of accreditation in higher education, it can be a challenge to translate these at the departmental level. The department that constitutes the “case” in this study uses a process that is consistent with Higher Learning Commission (HLC) best practices; specifically,

Perlich et al

the cycle of assessment includes the stages of orientation, facilitation, measurement, and feedback/reorientation. This model is consistent with Tucker's (1994) recommendation for a process that includes instructional objectives, instructional procedures, performance assessment, and a feedback loop (Tucker, 1994, pp. 113-115). Although these stages seem to logically work in every academic proscenium, the application of these assessment procedures can differ between departments—particularly if the department is housed within a small college.

Page | 27

The college classroom, whether situated in a small college or large university, is an organization (Richmond & McCroskey, 1992). Students and teachers work toward a common goal and the learning process occurs in a structured environment. Although each space is unique, often the identity of the classroom reflects and is reified by the mission of a department or (in the case of a small college) the institution. Additionally, each classroom may reflect the personalities of those who participate in the structuration of culture.

While there are many similarities between large universities and small colleges, the differences between these two learning environments are noteworthy. Much has been written about the student-centered orientation of the small college (with an emphasis on one-to-one interaction), so in the interest of brevity (and topicality) we will not dwell on these issues (e.g. Pascarella, Wang, Trolian, & Blaich, 2013). Unfortunately, compared to larger universities, less is known about the small college environment, particularly with regard to communication curriculum. McGee & Socha McGee contend that "small undergraduate-centered colleges "have received much less attention in these narratives" (2006, p. 36). Although there are examples of research projects that include "small, private liberal arts colleges" in the research of communication processes, these studies "may mask features of small-college communication programs that are unique" (McGee & Socha McGee, 2006. P. 37).

The small college classroom, indeed, is an environment that differs from many large school counterparts. It is commonly expected that such institutions will feature fewer students and a low student teacher ratio (McGee & Socha McGee, 2006). Swoger, Brainard, & Hoffman (2015) found an example that reflects the unique type of student-teacher interdependent relationship at the liberal arts college in their investigation of scholarly communication programs. With regard to the research process, small college faculty are "continually finding ways to involve students in their research and publishing endeavors" (Swoger, et al., 2015, p. 10). At a large university, research is often independent of students; at the small private liberal arts institution, research is often "in line with what can be expected at an undergraduate college that places teaching and learning as a top priority" (Swoger, et al., 2015, p. 10). As an example, our study features the work of seven undergraduate students who served as trained observers and agents in the development of invariant structural descriptions through a phenomenological process implemented within a case study method; these descriptions were used to characterize PTS in our results section.

Communication Apprehension

The small college that constitutes the “case” or “bounded system” in the present study is typical of many small colleges across the United States. The literature disseminated in mailings or through the internet by the admissions staff for this small college provides context for our investigation. Students are told, explicitly, they will receive a type of care and attention unlike the large university experience. In an attempt to convince prospective students that the small college experience is significantly better than the educational opportunities of a large institution, several claims are made. For many students, the point of first exposure to this small college comes from the webpage. Front and center on the main page you will find several specific messages. This is a college that “takes you places,” “challenges you,” and “inspires greatness.” Several hyperlinks are available in the middle of the main page. One notable link brings the reader to a page that explains the idyllic role of each person at the institution. Students are told they are an important part of the history and tradition. Emphasis is placed on family, solidarity, and connection. Other hyperlinks expose the reader to the faculty members and staff who serve the student and the college. Service is a key point in this message. The college is touted as ensuring success through networking, outreach, teaching, advising and support services. Individual mentoring is showcased on these pages. One quotation reads, “from the moment you step on campus as a visitor, we start working for you.” Twice on the college website the student/faculty ratio is quoted as 12:1. The opportunity to work with faculty one-on-one is also considered a key aspect of campus life. From the start, this small college sets up the expectation of immediacy, connection, personalization, and care.

Every professor likely enters the classroom intending to actualize an academic version of the Hippocratic Oath, “Do no harm.” Few of us realize if the techniques we are using in the classroom might be counterproductive to the intended outcome for our classes.

Perceived Teaching Style

When measuring the PTS of an instructor, it is important to keep in mind that self-report measures are often fallible. Every professor likely enters the classroom intending to actualize an academic version of the Hippocratic Oath, “Do no harm.” Few of us realize if the techniques we are using in the classroom might be counterproductive to the intended outcome for our classes. Surprisingly, few beginning professors receive formal classroom management skills training (Dicke, Elling, Schmeck, & Leutner, 2015). Therefore, while we could simply ask the professors involved in this study how they might characterize their teaching styles, our intent was to

Perlich et al

ascertain the PTS from students in the classroom¹.

In this way, our study is premised on the notion that intent and effect are not necessarily equated. At the conclusion of this research project, we used a common qualitative technique known as “reflexivity” to ask the professorial participants for responses about their PTS. This technique is a well-known approach for judging the validity (or, better known in an inductive framework as credibility) of a research project. If, in fact, our professor participants were able to see themselves in the descriptions generated by the students who participated in their classes, it would validate the use of “perceived teaching style” as the best measure of the independent variable in this project.

Page | 29

Teaching Style and Student Outcomes

The outcomes that were delineated in our study were affective (how they feel about learning), behavioral (what they can achieve), and cognitive (what they know). Research suggests that the approach of a professor during classroom interaction has a significant impact on student outcomes (Frisby, et al., 2014; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). In a comprehensive review of literature over the past 25 years, Wubbles and Brekelmans (2005) point out several important findings. A summary of their meta-analysis suggests that an effective teacher makes use of specific nonverbal behaviors, spatial positions, proximity, rapport and ethos. Wentzel (2002), interested in examining the utility of parent socialization models for understanding teachers influence, found that control, maturity demands, democratic communication, and nurturance all play a significant role in student outcomes and academic performance. Most notably, high expectation, also known as maturity demand, was a consistent positive predictor of student goals and interests. Conversely, lack of nurturance was the most consistent negative predictor of academic performance. Micari & Pazoz (2012) found this is especially true in “highly challenging courses.” Few classes provide more challenge than one that explicitly expects students to confront communication apprehension. Similar to the work of Wentzel (2002), our research project attempted to expand on these findings by exploring the role that affect and rapport might play in the realization of student outcomes, most notably an increase or decrease in communication apprehension.

As recently as 2014, researchers have been calling for “heightened research pertaining to the best practices for assessment of...public speaking courses” (Hunter, Westwick, & Haleta, 2014, p. 124). Additionally, as Cooper & Sietman note, “since many factors can affect communication competency, multiple observations of student performances in diverse situations must be assessed” (2016, pp. 169-170). We are particularly interested in the impact that PTS has

¹ Hagenauer & Volet (2014), in particular, assert that perception of teaching styles is multi-dimensional and context dependent, strengthening the rationale for an inductive and emergent approach toward the understanding of teaching style.

Communication Apprehension

on learning outcomes (cognitive and behavioral) and the reduction of communication anxiety (affect). This research is significant because communication apprehension has been found to negatively correlate with a number of skills and attributes that particularly impact college students, including (but not limited to) leadership, first-year adjustment, appreciation for diversity, foreign language use, interpersonal attraction, learning, and adaptability to new situations (Blume, Baldwin, & Ryan, 2013; Hirai, Frazier, & Syed, 2015; Guntzville, Yale, & Jensen, 2016; McCroskey, Teven, Minielli, & Richmond McCroskey, 2014).

Conversely, reducing apprehension is beneficial for students. For example, Ledbetter & Finn (2013) learned that reduced apprehension was a predictor of learner empowerment. While it is well known that exposure therapy, cognitive modification, inoculation messages, and skills training all work to reduce public speaking apprehension (Hunter, et al., 2014; Jackson, Compton, Thornton, & Dimmock, 2017), several researchers have noted that additional investigation is needed to determine how instructor face support, care, and empathy relates with a host of other student, classroom, and learning outcomes (Frisby et al., 2014; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Although much has been written about communication apprehension, the use of management and negotiation techniques—particularly in the academic proscenium—merit additional research, largely due to the constantly evolving nature of communication practices in the postmodern world. Therefore, one primary research question guided this project: What relationship, if any, exists between the PTS of instructors and reduction of communication apprehension in the small college classroom?

Method

A case study method was used to explore the relationship between PTS and student outcomes, particularly affective learning. Creswell (1998, p. 61) points out that “a case study is an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case over time through detailed in-depth data

The current study used numerical data in the form of survey and posttest measures coupled with observations and descriptions provided by seven student co-researchers (using a phenomenological approach) to develop a qualitative typology of PTS.

collection involving multiple sources of information in rich context.” The case, or bounded system, was a small Midwestern liberal arts college; more specifically, classes in the communication department, making this a “within-site” study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Three different professors (all with equal academic background) facilitated the classes—

they are identified as professors A, B, and C. One defining characteristic of case study is the collection of data through multiple sources. The current study used numerical data in the form of survey and posttest measures coupled with observations and descriptions provided by seven student co-researchers (using a phenomenological approach) to develop a qualitative typology of PTS. Patton (1990, p. 54) contends that case studies are “particularly useful” when the aim is to

Perlich et al

“capture individual differences” or “unique variations.” Creswell (1998, p. 62) would characterize the type of case study conducted for our assessment as “instrumental” because the case is used instrumentally to illustrate an issue—in this situation the relationship between PTS and student outcomes in affective, behavioral, and cognitive domain areas.

The first phase of the study relied upon numerical data to articulate the potential impact that PTS might have on student outcomes. The second phase of this study was phenomenological and involved trained undergraduate student-researchers using Wolcott’s (1994) process for the transformation of qualitative data to develop themes that reflect the various teaching styles evident from professors who were observed in this research project.

Page | 31

Stage One: Student Outcomes Measured at the End of Semester

Before we could explore the relationship (if any) that existed between the professor’s PTS and student outcomes, we needed to document the results for affective, cognitive, and behavioral measures in a standardized entry-level hybrid communication course at the end of the semester. We were particularly interested in exploring the affective domain as it relates with PTS. The second phase of this study more clearly elucidates the various teaching styles represented in this study (as perceived by the co-researchers), as well as the potential connection to student outcomes.

Sample: The case study began with the collection of data from first-year undergraduate students ($n = 164$) who were required to enroll in a communication studies course during the first year in college.² Due to the voluntary nature of participation, the actual sample size varied during each phase of this stage and is reflected within the data summary tables.

Measurement: A pretest and posttest design was used to ascertain the amount of reduction in communication apprehension for participants during the semester of study. Based on the work of McCroskey (1982), communication apprehension was assessed using the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (a.k.a PRCA-24) in four domains: group, meeting, interpersonal, and public speaking. Participating students enrolled in the basic course with one of three primary professors. The result of change in the affective measure can be found in table 1.

Simultaneously, students were assessed behaviorally on their ability to present a fundamentally solid speech via a posttest design. This type of assessment is consistent with Rhodes (2009) and actualizes policies developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. The exemplary speech was coded and met conditions in four major areas: Content, composition, verbal delivery, and nonverbal delivery. These four areas are also aligned with the NCA Competent Speaker Evaluation Form (Morreale, Moore, Surges-Tatum, & Webster, 2007). More specifically, the exemplary speech would demonstrate a student’s ability to meet the

² An institutional requirement.

Communication Apprehension

following criteria: Defend a thesis and explicate the topic thoroughly; provide content that is valid & linked to the topic; use supporting materials that are sufficient and credible; cite source material accurately; sources are easily verified; create an introduction that captures attention; give a thesis that states the topic and purpose; convey the significance of the topic; communicate main points that are previewed and follow a logical pattern/order; use an ending that provides summary and closure; utilize transitions that illustrate how ideas connect; projection/volume/rate convey confidence, speaker is easily heard; tone & pitch suggest enthusiasm; presentation is extemporaneous (neither read nor impromptu); language is accurate, precise, varied and engaging; almost no disfluencies used (verbal/vocal fillers [e.g. “um,” “uh”]); movement and gesture has clear purpose; speaker is competent and confident; eye contact is maintained and creates rapport with listener; notes are limited and provide no distraction; and dress is appropriate & professional.

Like the affective measure, results for posttest comparison were organized by class section and professor (A, B, & C); these results are displayed in table 2. Unlike the affective measure, behavioral results are descriptive and represent class averages. The behavioral data was collected in a standardized basic speech class and each professor has been trained to facilitate the class in a uniform manner. Recorded speeches were coded by the instructor of each class and checked for reliability by an independent external reviewer; interclass correlation indicated strong agreement between coders ($r = .93$).

A cognitive instrument was used to assess what students learned during their time in the class. The cognitive measure is a summative test developed in-house and has been used to determine knowledge gained and retained at the completion of the course. Once again a posttest design was used to analyze the data. All outcomes are organized by class section/professor (a.k.a. A, B, & C) and can be seen below in table 3.

Results: The within-site case study reveals that student learning was similar in behavioral and cognitive domains but distinct with regard to affect. Without using a pretest and posttest design to determine the amount of change in our sample, the results in cognitive and behavioral measures were compared using descriptive statistics. The most salient measure for our institutional assessment was affect; and the three sections varied significantly with regard to change in this area.

Results in the affective domain were analyzed using a *t*-test and suggest that students in sections taught by professor “A” did not significantly reduce apprehension for speaking assignments. Conversely, students who were in sections taught by professors “B” and “C” did evidence a significant decline in apprehension toward speaking. Table 1 displays these results.

Descriptive statistics suggest a similar trend with regard to the behavioral domain. Students in section A were outperformed by their peers in sections B and C. As previously noted,

Perlich et al

the exemplary speech was coded and met conditions in four major areas: Content, composition, verbal delivery, and nonverbal delivery. Descriptive results are displayed below in the table 2.

Finally, a cognitive instrument was used to assess what students learned during their time in the class and posttest data was used to make comparisons. The descriptive statistics are organized by class section in table 3 below. Data collected during stage one of this within-site instrumental case study suggests that student outcomes were distinct by section.

Page | 33

Stage Two: Perceived Teaching Style of Professors

As previously mentioned, the second part of this study involved a determination of teaching style as a result of qualitative student observation measures. Generally speaking, the trained student-researchers used an approach that was phenomenological in nature (and grounded in the work of Wolcott, 1994). If phenomenology is the study of essences, the second stage in this project was intended to inquire about “the very nature of a phenomenon” or “for that which makes a some-‘thing’ what it *is*” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10). The world does not exist separate from society. We, as members of a society, speak the world, and the world, in turn, speaks us—a process known as co-constitution. Communicating about experience with the world allows the phenomenologist to uncover the essential structure of experience through reflection. As Moustakas (1994) states, phenomenology is a scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomenon just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness (p. 49). It is through communication that we reveal appearances and experiences to the phenomenologist. As a methodology, phenomenology is centrally concerned with how a pre-reflective lived experience emerges through the reflective communication of those who have lived and/or are living and experience. Given that communication is central to the process of phenomenology as both a philosophical movement and a methodology, discourse notes and observations of behaviors were used to elicit the meanings of the pre-reflective lived world experience for the trained student-researchers.

The following steps were used in the procedure of data collection for this phenomenological investigation. First, human subject consent was required. Second, the student-researchers were immersed in the classroom. Finally, data was analyzed from a phenomenological perspective. The analysis of data was consistent with the work of Carter (1985), Colaizzi (1966), Ihde (1977), Merleau-Ponté (1974), Moustakas (1994), Pilotta & Mickunas (1990) and included the following four steps: epoché, description, reduction, and interpretation.

Communication Apprehension

Epoché: Prior to entering the classroom, the student co-researchers were required to undergo the epoché process. Epoché is a Greek word meaning to stay away from or abstain. During the epoché process, the researcher becomes alert to presupposition; the epoché is a warning to be alert, to look with care, to see what is really there, and to stay away from everyday habits of knowing things. It is during the epoché process that we set aside our pre judgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). As beings within the world, we learn to hold certain beliefs or attitudes about what is and is not true regarding phenomenon. Prior to beginning a phenomenological study, the researcher already has an intuitive grasp of the phenomenon (Spiegelberg 1984). The *bracketing* of this attitude is a first step in phenomenological inquiry (Pilotta and Mickunas, 1990). During the bracketing stage, the students were asked to provide all possible explanations for the difference in student outcomes between professors A, B, and C. These observations served as a credibility check at the end of the investigation.

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Description: After observing and taking notes from the classroom, the student-researchers initiated the second stage of data analysis known as description. Description involves classifying and naming perceptions that constitute the phenomena (Spiegelberg, 1984). As Colaizzi, (1966, p. 25) notes, “the typical phenomenal study investigates its content by proceeding in an empirical way: it gathers descriptions provided by a plurality of subjects. Such descriptions can be conveyed according to any of several empirical modalities.” Using Krippendorff’s (1980) typology, students generated 1,101 syntactical units for their descriptions.

In this study, interviews were used to collect descriptions. Description includes the basic stages of horizontalization and identification of invariant themes (Moustakas, 1994). Following the collection of data, all meaning units were considered equally important, in accordance with Moustakas notion of horizontalizing (1994, p. 122). Through horizontalization, the researcher is “perceptive to every statement of the co-researchers experience, granting each comment equal value” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). Granting each statement equal emphasis requires a suspension of belief that is again achieved through the epoché (Ihde, 1977). As Cooks and Descutner (1994, p. 254) explain, description at this level requires that the researcher “intentionally seek to identify the widest number of thematic topics and thematic descriptions.” The second step of description involved selecting key words or phrases that encapsulated invariant themes or non-repetitive, non-overlapping constituent clusters (Moustakas, 1994, p. 90). Ideally, the concepts developed in analysis grow naturally out of an interaction between the kinds of action noted in the field and the theoretical ideas with which the analyst began the study (Lindlof, 1995, p. 217).

Perlich et al

Reduction: During the third stage of data analysis, phenomenological reduction, the phenomenologist relies on intuition and the participants own words to construct a composite description of the phenomena of experience. The descriptions are “integration, descriptively, of the invariant constituents and themes” for the participants (Moustakas, 1994, p. 180). Cooks and Descutner, (1994, p. 255) explain that reduction is the process in which the researcher attempts to “extract from...discourse the words and phrases that function as existential signifiers.” These words and phrases are generated through the process of imaginative variation. During imaginative variation, the task of the phenomenologist is to seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of references, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). As Carter (1985, p. 62) notes, imaginative variation involves a “systematic addition and omission of the parts of the phenomenological description to discover the essential structure” of the phenomena of experience. During the phenomenological reduction, the phenomenologist relies upon eidetic intuiting to classify individual experiences as instances of more general phenomena (Spiegelberg, 1984). Lindlof (1995, p. 217) contends that, although making detailed descriptions of discourse is a goal of any qualitative project, most analysts also enter into research with the intent of understanding the “coherence of meaning” in the case under study. During phenomenological inquiry, this understanding occurs at the point of reduction. At the conclusion of this step, the invariant descriptions provided by the trained student co-researchers resulted in 355 syntactical units.

Interpretation: The final step of data analysis in this phenomenological study was interpretation. According to Cooks and Descutner (1994 p. 255), interpretation, sometimes called the hermeneutic step, involves two stages: 1) review the phrases derived from the reduction step, and 2) identify the statements in discourse that effectively renders explicit the meaning that formerly was implicit in the discourse. Additionally, interpretation involves investigating how the experience relates with the broader cultural milieu and themes. During the interpretation stage, the phenomenologist considers the interplay between the composite description obtained through horizontalization, phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation with the cultural milieu and contextual themes found during the study. The end result of phenomenological inquiry is the production of a description that captures the essential structures of experience, in this case, the essential structure of perceived teaching for the professors witnessed during this study. In simplest terms, the participants observed teachers in the classroom over the course of a semester and developed an essential invariant structure of description (i.e. perception) for the teaching style of each professor.

Sample: Participants ($n = 7$) for the qualitative phase of the study were drawn from an undergraduate research methods class at a small Midwestern liberal arts college. Each participant logged more than 45 hours of observation and recorded their impressions regarding the teaching behaviors of three professors with earned doctorate degrees in their respective content area. The

Communication Apprehension

professors were approached by the lead researcher and invited to participate in this study. Participation was voluntary on the part of both the student co-researchers and professors. Informed consent was provided and is on file with the Committee for Human Subjects Research at this institution.

Measurement: Student-researchers were trained by the lead researcher in the collection of qualitative data. Field notes were used to record teaching experiences. Consistent with a phenomenological approach in data transformation (e.g. Wolcott, 1994), the data was used to arrive at “description” through the process of “horizontalization” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96). After arriving at a description that characterized the classroom environment for each professor, student-researchers identified variant and invariant structures of the experience. Working at first in teams of three, the student-researchers ultimately arrived at consensus through a constant comparative process for the final essential invariant structural experience of teaching styles discerned through the qualitative portion of this study.

Results: The student-research teams were able to comfortably arrive at an invariant structural representation (or essential structure) of teaching style for all three professors in this study. These three professors were studied for perceived teaching style and subsequently described, themed, and identified through an essential structural representation. Generally speaking, this invariant structural representation is characterized by a dialectical contradiction that has been identified in other studies. Ultimately, using a single word to summarize the invariant representations, all of the student-researchers noted that the professors differed perceptually in a phenomenological construct labeled as, “care” or “caring.”

Unlike research grounded in an apriori framework, the research team arrived at the essential invariant structure through an inductive emergent process—this approach has been encouraged by other researchers (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, p. 373). The construct identified by the research team as the “essential structure of a professors teaching style” resonates with previous research in the area (Frisby et al., 2014; Goldman & Goodboy, 2014; Wentzel, 2002); synonyms for the invariant representation include confirmation, affirmation, support, and immediacy. Specifically, the perception of nurturance positively associated with desirable student outcomes and lack of nurturance (at least in perception) negatively associated with student success. Admittedly, the amount of difference is slight (yet significant with regard to the reduction of communication apprehension). Below are the final invariant structural descriptions for each teacher as developed by the student-researcher team.

Professor A: “Professor A is incredibly knowledgeable. Professor A seems very well-prepared for each class. Unfortunately, Professor A is often difficult to understand, not good at compromise, seems distant, not able to distinguish between real life and academic paradigms.” The most important finding with regard to the perceived teaching style of “Professor A,” as described by the research team, was that this professor “seemed incredibly disconnected from

Perlich et al

students.”

Professor B: “Professor B is very organized and always clear about the direction of class. Professor B is tremendously passionate and enthusiastic, really good at engaging students.” Professor B was also perceived as, “perhaps a bit overwhelming for some students. Not a pushover. Very high expectations.” In the final summation, the invariant description provided by the trained student co-researchers notes, “Professor B is a father-like figure. Very caring and sympathetic.”

Professor C: “Professor C establishes a warm classroom environment. Professor C has a motherly approach to teaching. Anything a student says will somehow fit into the class. No one feels embarrassed as a result of participation.” In the final invariant descriptions, the co-researchers wrote, “Although warm and motherly she does demand the attention and effort of her students.”

The invariant structural descriptions for these professors suggested that a parental approach and embodiment of nurturance yielded positive results in student outcomes; particularly with regard to communication apprehension.

Discussion

This study is a cornerstone of the assessment process for our department. As noted earlier, the stages of assessment for our team consist of orientation, measurement, feedback, and reinforcement. Following the collection and analysis of data, our department collectively interpreted the findings in order to make a determination regarding teaching efficacy. As implied by the previously listed stages of assessment, the feedback obtained through this study initiated a new cycle of mindful engagement and a “re-orientation” phase. Every professor represented within the “case” has used these findings to mindfully evaluate their pedagogical practices.

It is clear from the results that students in this study believe that an important relationship exists between PTS and empirical outcomes on the cognitive, behavioral, and affective levels. Most notably, professors who were perceived as caring witnessed improved student outcomes in three domains. One obvious implication should be taken from the revealed construct of caring — parental pedagogy is a proverbial double-edged sword.

It is clear from the results that students in this study believed that an important relationship exists between PTS and empirical outcomes on the cognitive, behavioral, and affective levels.

In this specific case, an obvious advantage of a parental perceived teaching style is the significantly higher outcomes that were

associated with the sample. It seems possible that students performed well as a result of perceived parental attributes. Nurturing, supporting, understanding and forgiving were all terms mentioned as syntactical units when descriptions of professors B and C were provided. A follow-

Communication Apprehension

up to this study should use touchpoint method, grounded in phenomenology, to better understand the explanation of care from a student-centered perspective. Kuis & Goossens (2017) provide an overview of touchpoint, explaining that touchpoints represent the key moments in the experience of receiving care. In education, a touchpoint approach could be used by investigating the incidents when a student recalls being impressed emotionally or cognitively.

Unfortunately, more research is required to determine the long term drawbacks of a perceived parental teaching style. While there are seemingly short-term benefits for students who completed a course with the parental and caring perceived teaching style, these benefits may come at a long-term cost. As Thompson and Robinson (2013, p. 38) point out:

To date, a majority of extant educational and instructional research has primarily focused on the importance of the teacher in instructional environments. Although the teacher is an important aspect of the teaching learning process, the emphasis on instructor ability and responsibility in empirical research has diminished the perceived role that students have in educational contexts whereby creating an imbalanced learning equation that ignores student responsibility for their personal, affective and cognitive development.

In other words, a parental style may help students achieve instrumental outcomes (cognitive, behavioral, affective), but these gains may wane once the student has left this environment. This, in fact, reinforces the need for instructors to facilitate self-efficacy as a long-term mindset in life-long learning—an extremely important objective for any program wishing to fulfil the NCA recommended learning outcomes in communication (LOC).

Although the information discovered through this instrumental case study is inherently useful, the results were most fruitful in providing feedback for the professors included within this study (and the development of their teaching techniques). Our goal, as implied by the title of this article, was to facilitate the development of teacher efficacy in the reduction of student communication apprehension and cognitive/behavioral outcomes. Professor “A” gleaned the most from the results of this project. Using the data collected for this project, the department was able to engage in a mentoring protocol through the department chair with the intent of improved instruction as indicated by student outcomes. The resulting plan HELPED Professor A navigate the promotion process; one that explicitly places teaching effectiveness at the heart of faculty retention.

While the findings from the present study are useful for our department and faculty members, this approach could also prove fruitful for other departments. Assessment is often lamented if not resented by those who are not fully engaged and/or committed to the process (Hunter, et al., 2014). Our results provide useful information that will help faculty members identify perceived deficiencies in face support, care, and empathy. Hopefully, this information can be used to improve student and teacher facilitation. This process, in turn, will provide useful tools to make determinations in both the tenure and promotion proceedings at other institutions.

Perlich et al

The findings of this study can also begin to address areas considered vital to the function of higher education (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, p 371), including the effect of teacher-student relationships in retention, instructor affect, and quality of teaching³.

Extrapolating our findings beyond a small Midwestern college must be done with caution. Teaching at a small college, as noted previously, may present a fair amount of challenges. If a student is courted by an institution with promises about small classes, personal connection, and one-on-one interaction, it is logical to assume that expectations might predispose students to expect a caring interaction between pupil and professor. If the professor is perceived as not teaching in accord with these expectations, their feedback about instruction might be skewed. While we are certainly aware of this exigency, the feedback provided by students allowed us to make informed decisions about our teaching in the future. Therefore, the process, more so than the product, can provide a strong foundation for both assessment and future decisions with regard to pedagogy.

Page | 39

³ The tools in this study have also been used to assess co-curricular programs (see: Grace, K. & McDonald, A. [2017]. *Assessment through Video and Excel: Building a Case for Outcomes and Work Ethic*. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Communication Association, Philadelphia, PA.).

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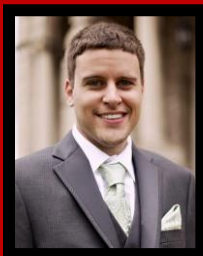
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College Policy Debate Community Climate: Data from the 2014 and 2015 College Policy Debate Survey

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A Research Brief

College Policy Debate Community Climate: Data from the 2014 and 2015 College Policy Debate Survey

Keith Richards and Paul E. Mabrey III

The College Policy Debate Survey research project was designed to answer relevant questions about current debate practices and the debate community. This information can be used to inform future interventions as well as programming (e.g. bystander intervention training, organization membership criteria, judge mentorship, and involvement of historically marginalized or at-risk populations). This paper analyzes qualitative data from the 2014 College Policy Debate Survey and incorporates both the quantitative and qualitative data from the 2015 version. The study was developed to help the debate community understand what members believe constitutes a good resolution and salient beliefs about why people participate in debate as well to identify concerns within the debate community. Over the course of two years 584 students, coaches, and alumni completed the survey. In 2014, 378 participants completed the questionnaire and 206 participated in 2015.

Participants indicated they want a sustainable resolution that was accessible to all skill levels and diverse perspectives. Their most important reasons for participating in debate were because it was fun and because of the educational benefits. Harassment and institutional/structural sexism were identified as the most pressing concerns for the debate community to address. This research brief concludes with recommendations, informed by the data, to positively impact the college policy debate community climate.

Key Words: Forensics, debate, survey, debate climate

In 2014, community members sought to better understand the demographics and attitudes of the current NDT/CEDA policy debate community (Mabrey & Richards, 2017). Several events motivated the interest in this information and research. First, institutions and individual members of the community were thrust into the spotlight with very public discussions about the NDT/CEDA policy debate community (Kraft, 2014; Thompson, 2014). The 2013 and

2014 national debate tournament championships made history with African-American teams competing for and winning the national championship while deploying argumentative strategies breaking from the traditional approach. Final round videos of African-American students speaking quickly, talking about race and sexuality alongside experiences of discrimination, and using the n-word were used as evidence for racist vitriol by members of white supremacist communities. Another example was alumni of college policy debate programs asking questions about the evolution of debate, speaking practices, and argumentative strategies. Coaches, judges, debaters, and alumni were being asked to participate in conversations about current practices and attitudes based on the popular circulation of these public pieces. As alumni or administrators saw these stories in *The Atlantic* or *The Washington Post*, it was not uncommon for them to ask their local college policy debate coach about the controversies.

The impetus for this research was to provide evidence to improve the discussions and decision-making processes that were taking place in the wake of the significant competitive and community victories (or defeats, depending on perspective). Policymaking in the debate community has traditionally been based in theoretical and applied communication research aimed at improving policy, evaluation, and programming based on what works (Head, 2008; James & Lodge, 2003; Sanderson, 2002). Decisions regarding the governance of the debate community should be informed by research rather than observational inferences and speculation.

The current essay utilizes an evidence-based policy making framework to analyze and discuss the 2014 and 2015 College Policy Debate Survey results and make recommendations for addressing concerns of the college policy debate community. While the 2014 quantitative results have been analyzed (Mabrey & Richards, 2017), none of the qualitative data from that survey has been shared. This essay includes both quantitative and qualitative data from the 2015 College Policy Debate Survey.

Method

Participants

The 2015 survey had a final sample of 206 participants, a 46% decrease from the 378 completed during 2014. The 2015 participant breakdown was fairly even between undergraduates (n=60, 29%), coaches (n=71, 35%), and alumni (n=66, 32%). These numbers were nearly identical, in percentage, to those of 2014 where 34% of the sample were students, 33% were coaches, and 32% were alumni.

Responses to questions about race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disabilities were similar to those from 2014. In 2015, 73% identified as White while 7% were Hispanic, 5% were Asian, and 3% were African-American. Similarly, in 2014 most of the sample identified as White (76%) followed by Asian (6.5%), African-American (5.4%), and Hispanic (5.4%). Men made up 63.6% of the sample, females comprised 21.4% of the sample, 5.3% identified as queer, 2.4% were transgender, 1.5% were “another gender” and 6.8% preferred not to answer. In 2014

22% identified as having a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, similar results were found in 2015 with 20% having a sexual orientation that was not heterosexual. Nearly half (48%) identified that they had a disability, up from 38% in 2014. The most frequently identified disabilities were anxiety (19%), depression (17%), and attention-deficit disorder (11%). Physical disabilities play an important role in access at a tournament, but only 3.4% of the population indicated this type of disability. A total of 164 disabilities were indicated across the 2015 sample (*note, an individual could report multiple disabilities*).

The undergraduate participants were asked what type of institution they were attending and 70% were currently members of a four-year state university, 27% were attending a private four-year institution, and 3% were at a community or junior college. Students had a range of experience with debate in high school with 25% having had no high school policy debate experience, 14% having debated five to seven semesters, and 51% debating for eight or more semesters in high school. Most participants (59%) had no experience with a form of debate outside of policy debate. These findings are generally consistent with those from 2014.

Materials and Procedure

The survey instrument was modified from one used in research conducted on the same topic in 2014 (Mabrey & Richards, 2017). The 2015 iteration included slightly modified questions as a result of feedback and data analysis from the 2014 version. To reach as many members of the debate community as possible the survey was distributed through the CEDA organization web forums, CEDA membership email distribution list, College Policy Debate Facebook group, and College Policy Debate Alums Facebook group. No incentive was offered for participation. The survey was launched August 24, 2015 and closed October 5, 2015. The quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS v22.0 statistical software. A graduate research assistant was trained to code the qualitative data along with the two principal investigators.

Results

Topic Issues

All of the quantitative questions were scored on 5-point Likert scales with answers ranging from 1 *not at all important* to 5 *extremely important*. Students ($M=4.50$, $SD=0.62$) and coaches ($M=4.44$, $SD=0.69$) in 2015 valued a resolution that was sustainable across the debate season. Another highly rated aspect was the balance between affirmative and negative ground ($M=4.51$, $SD=0.63$). To gather additional information on the important elements of a resolution, three themes were identified in the 2014 open-ended questions and were added for 2015. They were *making the resolution accessible to historically marginalized groups* ($M=4.37$, $SD=1.98$), *novice friendly* ($M=4.40$, $SD=1.86$), and *creating a resolution that allowed for more argument variety* ($M=4.86$, $SD=1.44$).

Round Issues

Data from both the 2014 and 2015 surveys suggested that participants were concerned with non-competitive factors impacting the results of competitive debate rounds. Judge ideology

was indirectly mentioned (through their expressed concern with the community division along argumentation style lines) by 32 of the 160 participants (20%) in 2014 and 18 of 64 participants (28%) in 2015. These concerns were not exclusively about judge ideology, but reflected dissatisfaction with the way some judges would let their own preferences for certain argumentation styles bias or influence their ability to judge a given debate, team, or argumentation style.

Community Questions

The survey was also designed to create a better understanding of why individuals participate in debate. This was accomplished by asking each participant *how important to anyone are the following reasons for participating in debate* with the answers focusing on education, competition, resume building, and as a form of activism. Each question was scored on a Likert scale with answer choices ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*extremely important*). The highest rated reasons were fun and enjoyment ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.79$), educational benefits ($M=4.23$, $SD=0.96$), and competition ($M=3.95$, $SD=0.98$). Overall coaches, undergraduates, and alumni agreed on the value of each category except for education. Undergraduates ($M=4.19$, $SD=1.01$) valued the educational benefits of debate significantly more than did coaches ($M=3.93$, $SD=1.12$) ($F(1,130)=7.58$, $p=.007$, $d=.24$). Qualitative results confirmed the importance of education for motivating debate participation where 26 participants (out of 106) in 2014 indicated they found debate provided an educational benefit to the participants with similar results in 2015 (10 of 43).

When comparing the reasons males and those identifying as a gender other than male participate in debate there were a few statistically significant differences. The first of which was that males valued competition more ($M=4.02$, $SD=0.92$) than those identifying as not male ($M=3.73$, $SD=1.04$); ($F(1,204)=5.73$, $p=.018$, $d=.30$). A second difference was related to debate as a form of activism where males ($M=1.98$, $SD=1.25$) valued it significantly less than those identifying as not male ($M=2.73$, $SD=1.39$), ($F(1,204)=15.82$, $p=.000$, $d=.57$). The final significant difference ($F(2,194)=9.30$, $p=.003$, $d=.42$) was that men reported having fun was a more important ($M=4.45$, $SD=.72$) reason for participating than did those identifying as a gender other than male ($M=4.11$, $SD=.88$). The last demographic variable driving statistically significant differences for motivations to participate in debate was sexual orientation. Those identifying as heterosexual valued competition significantly ($M=4.17$, $SD=.86$) more ($F(2,194)=22.63$, $p=.000$, $d=.68$) than those who identified as a sexual orientation other than heterosexual ($M=3.52$, $SD=1.05$).

All respondents were asked about the importance of certain issues for the collegiate policy debate community to address. The most important issues were addressing harassment and/or hostile debate environments ($M=4.18$), participation numbers and the decline of participation ($M=4.07$), and structural/institutional sexism ($M=3.83$). Concern about threats to the overall health of the college policy debate community (and subsequent recommendations) were the most prevalent responses across both years of the survey for the open-ended question

Richards & Mabrey

asking *what concerns you as a community member*. Of these, the most frequent theme from both 2014 (43 out of 160) and 2015 (23 out of 64) were concerns about a hostile environment, not welcoming or inviting to individuals, and civil discourse. The second most popular response of community concern was concerned with a lack of civility around argumentation style and political leanings. These connections to argumentation style and ideology solicited 32 (of 160) responses in 2014 and 18 (of 64) responses in the 2015 survey.

Finally, the question about successes of the NDT/CEDA policy debate community is the last instance that yielded responses relevant to community concerns. Here, respondents pointed to community diversity and attitudes toward diversity as positive aspects of the debate community despite some of the previously mentioned concerns. As examples of increasing diversity, respondents cited the “increasing success of persons of color in debate,” “inclusion of diverse populations,” and having increased “the acceptance of difference.”

Discussion

When it comes to formulating a resolution, the most important element for participants and coaches was that it be sustainable across the entire season. Participants indicated that the resolution should be accessible to disadvantaged groups as well as novices. Accessibility here means that the controversy and literature base are accessible to student-debaters across a spectrum of prior life experiences. Debate practitioners have argued that resolutions centered on role-playing U.S. Federal Government action have been accessible only to students with traditional debate experience and substantial life privilege. Another significant finding was that the survey participants wanted a resolution that would fit a range of debate styles; whether one interpreted the resolution instrumentally and literally to role-play as the federal government implementing a policy, one interpreted the resolution figuratively to affirm the resolution as a metaphor for discussing the resolution’s controversy area, or if one refused to affirm the resolution at all and instead used it as a launching point for critical reflection, scholarship, or activism. One recommendation is that the topic committee considers these data as evidence for supporting certain styles of resolutions. The community could treat these preferences for topic sustainability, inclusion, and access as explicit decision-criteria for whether a topic makes the final ballot.

The focus on external factors influencing the competitive outcome of a given debate appeared again when individuals were asked about how team reputation and post-debate behavior should influence a judge. A point of contention was how judge ideology influenced results. Over thirty percent indicated they had concerns with how judge ideology and judge preferences for a particular style influenced the outcome. CEDA has the potential to host public, transparent conversations about the role of ideology and bias in judging. For example, CEDA could partner with a major national tournament that many programs attend, like the Wake Forest University tournament. Wake’s tournament has been a site for many important community conversations and debate practice experimentation. If not at an invitational during the season, CEDA could host this conversation at their end of year national tournament, the National

College Debate Community Climate

Communication Association Convention, or CEDA's summer business and topic meetings. If a conversation like this was to occur, both new and experienced judges could share their best practices for navigating the difficult spaces often required when judging a debate round.

Another goal of the study was to better understand why students, coaches, and alumni participate in debate and the surveys indicated that, in order, having fun, educational benefits, and competition were the highest rated. Individuals are enjoying themselves while reaping educational benefits. These results occurred in both years as well as across the quantitative and qualitative data that further ground the findings. One recommendation to tap into the educational motivation is to experiment with other forms of debate community participation. Perhaps governing institutions can offer more structural support for the non-competitive avenues for debate community members to engage the topic, one another, and their communities. Examples might include public debates, modified tournament experiences, academic conferences, or alumni events.

While many identified positive aspects of debate there were concerns. Some issues that need to be investigated further are structural and institutional sexism, structural and institutional inequalities, and harassment or hostile debate environment. These are significant concerns and surprising given the number of positive experiences that participants reported. Qualitative data supported the notion that it was difficult, both interpersonally and online, to share ideas for change because they were often met with aggression.

Women indicated unsafe conditions where they were encouraged not to report harassment or sexism. Coaches were singled out as not being active in the protection of debate members from sexual harassment and charged with worrying more about reputation and less about safety. One 2014 respondent indicated, "The debate community has created an environment where sexual predators can run rampant. It needs to be fixed immediately. People are being sexually assaulted and raped." A 2015 participant echoed this sentiment, "The NDT/CEDA policy debate community has a terrible track record when it comes to handling sexual violence. Too often, the community is safer and more welcoming to the person doing the assaulting than to the survivor of the assault." These findings are troubling for a community that proclaims diversity and inclusion as a sense of community pride.

To combat these structural inequalities, more steps need to be taken at institutional levels. Great communities of support already exist for those who experience traumatic events, whether at or away from tournament preparation and travel. The concerns raised here suggest members of the community want something more. First, CEDA should review the current protocols to ensure that they meet legal requirements as well as ensure that these are aligned with the beliefs of those in the debate community. Additionally, CEDA should more actively communicate the protocols and resources that exist to protect and care for participants.

Second, perhaps CEDA should experiment with different incentive systems to encourage debate teams to be hospitable and to reduce hostile environments. For example, CEDA could require that every student competing at the national tournament demonstrate they have received

training related to sexual assault, bystander intervention, or another training that the community deems valuable. This could be achieved through an online training. The governing debate organizations already have similar programs for academic standing. As many higher education institutions are requiring something similar of incoming first-year students and employees, this may not create a substantial increase in those trained. But perhaps it could still be the beginning of a conversation orientated around meaningful prevention.

Also, new awards could be created to celebrate debate programs that actively recruit and retain diverse debaters onto their campuses and teams. The data support that some in the debate community wish that it was more inclusive and hospitable. The awards could be modeled after current academic standing awards where a strict quantitative metric like grade point average is used. Here, a debate program would need to demonstrate that it meets or exceeds the diversity representation of the school's own demographic markers. Or perhaps an award modeled after the public debate award presented annually by CEDA. Debate programs submit nomination packets that may include statement letters, programming examples, assessment data, or other evidence to be considered by the awards committee.

Third, CEDA should expand both the expectations and resources required for hosting tournaments. Because many of the concerns about debate participation happen at tournaments, hosts could use more information and guidelines on how to actively be more inclusive. CEDA has recently done this by appointing an access coordinator for their national tournament participants who might have accessibility concerns or need accommodations. Furthermore, CEDA could host community wide discussions of these best practices or encourage experimentation to identify the best resources for a given tournament or region. CEDA also has tournament sanctioning at its disposal. Tournament sanctioning is something it has recently used to leverage tournament actions to increase judge diversity. While the success of this approach has been called into question, there is a continued need to explore ways to meaningfully increase access and inclusion.

Conclusion

The current essay sought to add to and further explain the results of the 2014 College Policy Debate Survey while simultaneously sharing the 2015 follow-up results. Taken together, this project provided data as evidence to help improve the discussions about and decision-making for the NDT/CEDA college policy debate community. Like all research, this project and these surveys were not without limitations. The narrow scope and inability to refer to a known debate community population hindered the kinds (and magnitude) of inferences than can be made based on this data. Furthermore, the demographic data suggests some groups within the community might be under-represented here, like members of the African-American student debate community. This is particularly important given the historical and public controversies driving contemporary discussions and this research. The lack of an intersectional approach to data collection and analysis limits the ability to provide more robust descriptions and recommendations. The survey itself had some limitations one of which was that the question

College Debate Community Climate

about disabilities did not provide specifics on physical disabilities. This information would be beneficial for those organizing tournaments to ensure that the proper resources were available to serve this population. Despite the limitations with this project, the data, analysis, and recommendations provide ample starting points for deliberations about and for improving the NDT/CEDA policy debate community.



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George LaMaster: What Forensics Did For Me

The Reverend Dr. George LaMaster
Chair, Department of Communication
Marian University, Indianapolis IN

ALUMNI CORNER: The forensic community is filled with alumni who will tout the benefits they received through their participation in intercollegiate speech and debate activities. As directors of forensics programs face battles for budgets and sometimes for their program's very existence, having a collection of published testimonies about the positive influence of forensics can be a tremendous help. To that end, Speaker & Gavel is setting aside space in each issue for our alumni to talk about how forensics has helped them in their professional life. These are our alumni's stories.

Keywords: forensics, benefits of forensics, Alumni Corner

When I graduated from college, I headed to seminary to learn how to be a Presbyterian minister. One day I wore my speech team sweatshirt, and thanks to a chance meeting in the cafeteria, my wife and I wound up moonlighting as coaches for a local team. During the same years I served as a hospital chaplain and a youth minister, I observed as many and more lives transformed by coaches in speech and debate. I decided to pursue a Ph.D. in Communication. I've spent most of the years since then coaching, only recently retiring from active duty in favor of settling in as department chair. That's what forensics did for me. It offered me a calling to a transformational ministry in higher education.

Now, you can't throw a stick around any university's Communication Department without hitting faculty who discovered academia through forensics; and, from deans to presidents, you'll find speech and debate alumni well represented among the ranks of university administration, too. Like so many others, forensics ignited my passion for learning, and then it gave me the skills to achieve it.

I coached speech all through graduate school. In my first tenure-track job, I had no intention of spending my weekends on the road with students. A talented honors public speaking class changed my mind: with a budget of zero dollars and our

family's mini-van, I started a new program. Twelve years later, looking back through the eyes of a department chair on the other side of tenure, forensics offered me a remarkable way to serve students. True, it required a lot of nights and weekends. It's also a great way to teach.

Transformational teaching requires experiences and relationships that transcend the classroom.



Transformational teaching requires experiences and relationships that transcend the classroom. As this series of essays from alumni testifies, the result is students who say “speech and debate changed my life.” It should come as no surprise. Forensic programs boast so many high-impact teaching practices:

- An intentional learning community
- A writing-intensive experience
- Collaborate projects
- Individualized undergraduate research
- Community engagement and service
- Mentoring relationships with faculty
- Encounters with diversity and global issues

Few co-curricular programs contribute so directly to academic and social integration, positioning students for success. That’s why my university supports it. We’d like to duplicate this model wherever possible: the professor serves as a coach for a community of students who are highly engaged in learning outside the classroom. It works.

High-impact teaching involves the whole person. It challenges students to articulate how they fit into this world and how they intend to make a difference in it. With the help of a team and a teacher, students find their voice – and the courage to raise it. I could tell any number of miraculous stories here. Every coach can. They’re the kind of stories you read in this series. Though each story is different, they take a familiar form...

A student stumbles upon the world of speech and debate. The student might just as easily have joined the lacrosse team or the quiz bowl club, but a coach makes a connection. Competition throws trials in the path of the student. The student accomplishes more than they ever imagined possible. At some point along the way, the student faces a personal crisis. The student will say “I might have gotten lost, but this team was my family, and this coach was my mentor.” The story is personal. The student performs poetry about his experience with depression or writes a speech about her response to racism. The personal is also public. Debating the issues of the day, week after week, is consciousness-raising.

Education at the intersection of lived experience with art and argument is holy ground.

The student gets, as they say, “woke.” When it’s all over, the student will look back and say, “This activity changed my perspective on life. It helped me find myself. It set me on a course for the future.” That’s transformational.



Education at the intersection of lived experience with art and argument is holy ground. You might even say that forensic education is a space where students encounter the mysterious “something more” of life, the grace that makes transformation possible. Nurturing that kind of learning community has been the most important ministry in my life.

“The heart of a champion is to compete for a higher calling than 1st place.”

I guess you could say what forensics did for me is let me serve the First Church of Speech and Debate. I’m not unique. Those who are coaching and traveling with speech and debate programs, weekend after weekend – as far as I’m concerned, they are all #\$\$?! saints. They’ve answered the call to a transformational ministry, and they see miracles happen all the time.





Alumni Corner

Terri Trickle: What Forensics Did For Me Concordia College (Moorhead, MN) Forensic Alumni (1990-1994)

Terri Trickle



Terri Trickle is a Memorial Consultant with Dakota Monument in Fargo, ND. She lives in Moorhead, MN with her husband and three children. Terri competed at Concordia College from 1990-1994 and before that was a student of the legendary Kathy Martin and the Glyndon-Felton, MN speech program. Terri was most always an interpreter of other people's prose, drama and poetry and is listed as one of the winningest competitive public speakers in MSHSL history. She currently serves as a judge and guest coach on the high school theater and speech circuit and has recently been guest coaching the Concordia forensics team. In her spare time Terri sings and plays piano professionally in the Red River Valley, is active in local arts and theater agencies, regularly hosts international touring bicyclists and enjoys attending arts and sport events in which her children are participants.

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Terri Trickle: What Forensics Did For Me

Construction Estimator
Construction Supply, Inc.
Fargo, ND

ALUMNI CORNER: The forensic community is filled with alumni who will tout the benefits they received through their participation in intercollegiate speech and debate activities. As directors of forensics programs face battles for budgets and sometimes for their program's very existence, having a collection of published testimonies about the positive influence of forensics can be a tremendous help. To that end, Speaker & Gavel is setting aside space in each issue for our alumni to talk about how forensics has helped them in their professional life. These are our alumni's stories.

Keywords: forensics, benefits of forensics, Alumni Corner

I arrived at Concordia College as a high school senior in the fall of 1990. I was a post-secondary kid from an extremely humble, subsistence living rural Minnesota family. The post-secondary option in Minnesota afforded me the opportunity to begin my college education at an extremely low cost. I remember my parents saying I could be at Concordia – a private liberal-arts college – for one year, but after that they weren't sure how they would be able to afford the tuition.

I was only seventeen and had yet to graduate from high school, but I was also a full time student, living in the dorm and my roommate didn't show up. Although I was quick to make friends and there were people from my home town on campus, I sure felt scared and alone at times. I remember joining the forensics team as soon as I could and attending squad meetings. I look back on those days now, and boy I sure thought I was something special. I had a been a three-time Minnesota state medalist, two time state champion, was a double ruby or something like that in NFL's all before I was even a high school senior. I can't imagine how smug and silly I must have seemed. But what was wonderful about college forensics is that everyone, without exception, was so incredibly welcoming and supportive. I had instant and lasting success, mostly because my teammate Steve Rohr took me under his mighty wing and taught me so very much. I was an interper. I was his duo partner. I was in love with him. Completely. Everyone was. (Everyone still is...)

But what was wonderful about college forensics is that everyone, without exception, was so incredibly welcoming and supportive.

My second year at Concordia was paid for largely by the scholarships I earned from my high school and my home community. I was a dorm cop too. I always worked upwards of 30 hours a



week. Mom took a second job and we made it but my parents were pretty clear about not knowing how we were going to be able to make it for the following two years. Instead of concerning myself with tuition, I just continued working hard on the speech team and through my second year – with the guidance of my advisor – we hammered out a plan for my education. I was pursuing two majors – Communications and Studio Art – with an Advertising emphasis.

Page | 58

One day in the spring of my second year, one of our forensics coaches – Cindy Carver – asked to see me. She told me (and I'm weeping as I recall this) the communication faculty had nominated me for a Bush Grant and I was awarded an incredible sum. It was going to essentially pay for my last two years of school. I couldn't believe it. What did college forensics do for me? I can't even put it into words.

In the years I was a part of the Concordia forensics program, I was afforded the opportunity to live in the light cast by not only the incredible coaches – but also all the amazing student speakers I stood beside both on my team and on all the teams we would compete against.

My years as a part of a collegiate forensics program readied me for presenting myself to the world.

I am in my mid-forties now and have a ridiculously beautiful family and have had such a rich, varied, and largely successful career story. My years as a part of a collegiate forensics program readied me for presenting myself to the world. I know now that I cast a

very bright light that was offered to me and cultivated within me. This same light has been offered to all who have the grace to say they spoke at the collegiate level. I do believe we live what we learn. In collegiate forensics I certainly learned excellence – so I lived excellence – not only did I want excellence, but it was what was required. And excellence is what remains.



Editor's Note

A Call for Research to Sustain the Activity and the Discipline

Todd T. Holm

As the editor of this journal and someone who sits on the editorial boards of other journals and reviews submissions for the National Communication Association's convention for multiple groups, I see a lot of scholarship. Some of the submissions are from established scholars and some come from scholars who are still in the formative years of their academic careers. Some of the submissions are really very good, and some of the submissions seem hastily put together and more like a rough draft you would send to a colleague than something you would send to a journal editor. Surprisingly, there isn't necessarily a correlation between the point in an academic career and the quality of the submission. I think most of my reviewers would agree that when we get a submission that isn't very good but it is clear the author(s) has taken time to construct something that is more than just their thoughts put down on paper, we feel something like an obligation to nurture that scholar through the publication process. We are proud of them when, after multiple revisions, they produce something that they can be proud of and contributes in some significant way to the scholarship in our field.

The disappointment I most often experience is when I see good presentations at NCA but then rarely see those NCA papers and panels developed into something more permanent and accessible to our discipline. This is especially true in the forensic community. While *Speaker & Gavel* is open to research from all across the communication spectrum, our anchor is intercollegiate speech and debate scholarship. *Speaker & Gavel* is one of a half-dozen journals that actively solicit submissions about forensic competition. These journals often struggle to get enough quality submissions to produce a meaningful issue a couple times a year. The number of papers and panels at state, regional, and national conferences and conventions that address important issues in forensics should yield more than enough articles to fill our journals. In true forensic form, this editor's note will look at the causes, effects, and solutions to what the editor of *Speaker & Gavel* claims may be *a sign of the end of days* (that particular editor is prone to exaggeration and referring to himself in the third person).

Causes

The primary reasons forensics professionals don't publish are fairly obvious. They don't have time to research and write, and often they are not required to publish to keep their positions. I spent 25 years as an active coach. I was often told the average life expectancy of a director of forensics was five years. The directors didn't die; they just left the activity and took positions that involved more teaching, had research requirements, or were in administration. I worked at places that expected me to present and publish my scholarship, and I worked at places that did not (and one place that subtly discouraged me from publishing). I maintained a research agenda throughout because I believe it is important, but few coaches maintain an active research agenda while running a nationally competitive team. I'm not saying it isn't done; I'm saying it isn't common. When Gill (1990) looked at why forensic coaches quit or considered quitting forensics, the single biggest contributing factor was the amount of time the activity takes up. Research puts an additional time burden on an already time-strapped coach.

Being a coach or director is a time intensive activity. Finding the forensics-life balance is hard and failing to find that balance can lead to burnout (Carmack & Holm, 2013). Cutting your research agenda will significantly increase the amount of time you have available for coaching and allow you to get a couple more hours of sleep. Many departments that value forensic programs will decide to "help" coaches by reducing their research expectations. Faculty evaluations are adjusted accordingly and, before you know it, the coach hasn't published anything in five years; yet, they are still burning out because they added more tournaments, expanded the size of the team, started on-campus performances, or started hosting new tournaments because, now that they weren't trying to research and publish, they had more time for those things.

Forensic professionals also hit a stumbling block when scholarship published in forensic journals isn't given the same weight by their promotion and tenure committee as research in non-forensic journals. Some journals are not interested in even reviewing a submission with a large quantitative data set and significant findings if based in a forensic context. I once had the editor of a journal focusing on instructional communication politely explain in an email that the readers of that journal wouldn't be interested in a quantitative article that was the product of grant funded research that compared the success of graduate students with a forensics background to graduate students without a forensics background. I find it hard to believe that readers wouldn't want to know what characteristics the most successful graduate students share, but reviewers at that journal never got the chance to see the manuscript. It received a desk-reject because it was a forensic article. It did find a home in the *Journal of the Association of Communication Administrators*, so the research time was not wasted. It also shows that there are journals who are interested in research related to forensics issues outside of forensics journals.

Coaches and directors don't have the time, they are often told they don't need to publish to keep their jobs, and some journals aren't even interested in the research when it is submitted. With all of these factors working against publishing and a lot of other "alligators close to the boat"

needing immediate attention, *research* is often limited to a last-minute discussion panel at NCA. Unfortunately, the reduced requirement to publish is hurting coaches and the activity.

Effects

Not publishing negatively impacts coaches and the activity as a whole. The axiom “publish or perish” is true on many levels. While it was originally coined to show the importance of a record of publication in the academy, the fact is that publishing is an important part of teaching (or coaching) because it has ripple effects in the classroom, discipline, and ideally, our world. Forensic practitioners are uniquely positioned to have significant impacts in all three of these areas if we prioritize our responsibilities as scholars. That, as they say, is the carrot. Here is the stick: When forensic professionals don’t publish, it handicaps them professionally, leads to burnout, and stagnates the activity. Boyer (1990) rightfully notes that “to counter burnout or stagnation, scholarship in its fullest sense must be acknowledged” (p. 44) Boyer was pushing an agenda that would allow coaches and directors to count student performances as part of their scholarship, but he was not limiting scholarship to just non-traditional formats. He saw and acknowledged research, publication, and scholarship in all its forms as a critical component of the professorate.

Removing the research requirement endangers coaches and directors professionally. Even if the coach/director has been assured there is no need to publish, there is no denying that higher education is operating in uncertain times. Federal and state funding has been significantly cut and “colleges have had to balance budgets by reducing faculty, limiting course offerings, and in some cases closing campuses” (Mitchell, Leachman, & Masterson, 2017, p. 1). Even with full departmental support, when it comes time to reduce faculty because of budget cuts, it is easy for even a novice administrator to look at annual reviews and see that the forensic coach/director has no publication history. At most traditional four-year institutions publication is the coin of the realm. So the math becomes easier when an administrator sees one faculty member has no publications, teaches a reduced load, and spends money on traveling with students (especially if the team doesn’t have a strong presence on campus) while a second faculty member has no release time, agrees to teach an overload, and has even just one publication a year. This isn’t complex math. When someone must be cut, it is easy to justify cutting the person without publications.

At many institutions, not publishing makes it very difficult to get promotions and move up through the academic ranks because promotion generally requires publication. In the unfortunate event that a coach falls victim to budget cuts, the coach is now dumped into the job market where they compete against people who have been teaching just as long but who also have a record of publication. Or, if the coach decides to get out of forensics, they are lucky if they can move into another line within their department and a new coach can be hired. If they can’t move into a line within their department, they are significantly disadvantaged in the job search without a record of publication. If they have risen to the level of associate professor after 10+ years of service to their institution but they have no record of publication, it is unlikely they will be able

to go to a different institution without dropping in rank: It is the “golden handcuffs” of the forensic world.

Research and publication serves as more than just a check box on an annual evaluation. Research is part and parcel to living the life of the mind. More than 30 years ago, Ernest Boyer (1987) in his book *College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* pointed out “scholarship is not an esoteric appendage; it is at the heart of what the profession is all about” (p. 131). Forensic coaches and directors are among the smartest, most creative, and most intellectually nimble people I know. Engaging in research stimulates the intellectual mind, generates enthusiasm, and builds emotional resilience. Publishing gives a feeling of accomplishment and professional validation. Those factors are key in preventing burnout. Unfortunately, we have created systems that allow coaches and directors to avoid these mentally and emotionally healthy options. “When we create systems that are not sustainable or viable for healthy long-term professional participation, we need to consider not what we are doing, but the way in which we do it” (Carmack & Holm, 2013, p. 54). When departments look for ways to reduce the time commitments of forensic coaches and directors, they need to avoid opting for the quick and cheap option of not requiring research and publication. There are other ways to reduce the time burden placed on these professionals that does not hobble their careers. Departments should look for ways to more fully support coaches and directors. Providing a lighter teaching load, undergraduate or graduate students to serve as research assistants or teaching assistant, providing an administrative assistant who can make hotel reservations, reserve vehicles, and handle bookkeeping are relatively low cost ways to unburden coaches and directors. Encouraging and even incentivizing research and publication during the summer months, ensuring that coaches and directors have funding to travel to professional conferences and conventions, and assigning a publishing mentor to help forensics professionals stay on track and feel supported.

Forensic professionals can write with extreme clarity and conciseness from years of training and practice. Their ability to synthesize information and develop sound arguments has been honed by years of coaching students to do those things. Intellect, creativity, analytical thinking, and the ability to concisely communicate ideas in writing are increasingly rare skillsets. They are skills that give an academic great power, and if we learned nothing else from the last half dozen Spiderman movies it is that *with great power comes great responsibility*. Forensic professionals have a responsibility, an obligation, to research and publish. While it helps them personally, it also helps the activity.

Solutions

Over the last 30 years I have attended a lot of NCA panels that discussed how forensics is stagnating, failing to innovate, is not open to new ideas, uses a cookie cutter approach, or is generally too formulaic. I have listened to outstanding discussions on how we could make changes to events, tournaments, coaching practices, and travel. I have enjoyed several panels about how we could encourage and reward innovation in the activity. But I generally watched those panels with five to ten other people (sometimes fewer than that). Many members of the

audience were graduate students in their first year as a coach. They looked around the room and saw that usually no one from the biggest and most competitively successful programs was in the audience (and often not on the panel). They rightfully concluded that the activity is not interested in changing or evolving. Couple that with 90-minute business meeting discussions on the minutia of how to word the description of extemporaneous speaking with regards to the use of notecards with active, passionate, and even heated participation by representatives of most of the top teams in the country and we send a clear message about what is (and is not) important to us as a community.

Panels and papers at national conferences and conventions are good starting places for the discussions we need to have, but the fact is they reach a limited number of people and rarely reach the movers and shakers of the activity. Publishing thought pieces in forensic journals is an excellent way to get people talking about practices, give new coaches an opportunity to really think about issues, and record for posterity's sake the state of the forensic community. On a more fundamental level, we need to publish quantitative and qualitative research on forensics so that we can answer basic questions posed by administrators and see trends in our own activities.

If a freshly minted PhD started at a new school and sat down with the dean of the college to pitch the idea of a forensic team, they would be hard pressed to answer basic questions about intercollegiate forensics. While they might have an operational understanding of the activity and could no doubt start and direct a successful program, they would find it difficult to find research on key issues that the dean would no doubt ask about. For example, try answering these questions (feel free to research for the answers).

1. How many intercollegiate forensic programs are there nationally? (Saying how many teams attended AFA or NFA last year is not enough; there are also debate nationals, Greek organization nationals, novice nationals, Christian nationals, and many programs that do not attend national tournaments.)
2. What is the average budget of a forensic team? (Again, there might be a couple of schools with huge budgets but there are a lot more with very small budgets, so the average is maybe lower than you would think. Perhaps it would be more helpful to give the *mode*, within a range. Go find that.)
3. How many coaches does the average team have?
4. Do coaches receive release time and, if so, how much and how is it determined?
5. How are teams usually funded (student activity fees, department funds, university budget, fundraising, etc.)?
6. Our biggest rival doesn't have a team; why should we?
7. How would this team help fulfill our liberal arts mission?
8. Can't students get the same thing from performing on campus?
9. How does this benefit the students who are not on the team?
10. Can you show me that participation in this activity significantly impacts the students?

These are very reasonable and very basic questions, but finding the answers (assuming there are

answers available) can take days and then might only be found through a network of connections to established forensic professionals who happen to know where information is tucked away. That is unfortunate; this information and more should be at our fingertips.

We have the brilliant minds needed to bolster this body of scholarship. We owe it to ourselves, our activity, and our discipline to research and publish scholarship that informs our community about the activity that is so important to our lives and so relevant to our society. I understand that time is a precious and finite commodity. I also understand that coaches and directors of forensic programs will never *find* time to research and publish. But I also know we *make* time for the things we feel are important. I would encourage everyone in this activity to make time for forensic research. I look forward to receiving your submissions.

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