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## Going Public: An Organizational Autoethnographic Exploration of the International Public Debate Association

Adam Matthew Key  
*Minnesota State University - Mankato*

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Going Public: An Organizational Autoethnographic Exploration  
of the International Public Debate Association

By

Adam M. Key

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

In

Communication Studies

Forensics

Minnesota State University, Mankato

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## ABSTRACT

### GOING PUBLIC: AN ORGANIZATIONAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC DEBATE ASSOCIATION

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Historically, a trend has been demonstrated in intercollegiate debate. Debate organizations begin with a focus on rhetoric aimed at a public audience and within an average of two decades devolve into a highly technical format marked by a high rate of speed, use of nuanced technical jargon, and an overreliance on evidence. The focus on competitive success, culture, and judges are examined as contributors to this trend. The International Public Debate Association was created to sociologically combat the excesses of its predecessors, though sixteen years after its creation it is beginning to show symptoms of the same disease that afflicted the others. This study conducted an organizational autoethnography, through the medium of documentary film, as a biopsy of the disease's progress. Interviews with organizational founders, coaches, and competitors were conducted and filmed. Clips of the each interview were arranged and organized in a manner informed by Grounded Theory and produced into a documentary film. Results indicated that the fetishization of information is the primary cause of the change to intercollegiate debate organizations including IPDA.

*Keywords:* debate, rhetoric, public, International Public Debate Association

Going Public: An Organizational Autoethnographic Exploration of the International  
Public Debate Association

Key, Adam M.

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's  
committee.

James Dimock, M.F.A., Advisor

Leah White, Ph.D., Committee Member

Heather Hamilton, Ph.D., Committee Member

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
The Walking Dead: A History of Intercollegiate Debate in the United States .....	2
Problem Statement .....	18
Research Question .....	19
Justification .....	19
II. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	22
All I Do Is Win, Win, Win... No Matter What: Competition vs. Education in Debate .....	22
We Built This City: The Social Construction of Forensics Cultural Norms .....	31
The People’s Court: Determining Qualifications of Debate Judges .....	55
Down With the Sickness: An Examination of Practices Within IPDA .....	65
III. METHOD .....	74
Justification .....	74
Organizational Autoethnography .....	76
Grounded Theory .....	77
Documentary Film .....	81
Conglomerated Methodology .....	83
IV. DOCUMENTARY SUMMARY .....	84
Introduction (00;00;09;04) .....	84
What is debate? (00;09;30;01) .....	84
History of IPDA (00;12;28;05) .....	84
What is good debate? (00;40;05;12) .....	84

What is bad debate? (00;44;50;13) .....	85
How does it go from good to bad?( 00;51;10;13).....	85
Who should judge debate? (01;15;45;03).....	85
Is IPDA changing? (01;36;10;07).....	85
So what's the point? (02;02;35;27).....	86
<b>V. REFLECTIONS .....</b>	<b>87</b>
Limitations and Future Research .....	93
Conclusion .....	93
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>95</b>

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*“We cannot train leaders to... not believe that ordinary people are capable of understanding issues and making reasoned decisions and expect democracy to flourish or even survive” (Dimock, 2006, p. 92).*

There is something wrong with academic debate. If a college freshman was to wander into a tournament championship round of most major intercollegiate debate organizations, he or she would likely be shocked and dismayed at the disconnect between what he or she observed in the round and what he or she was taught in his or her public speaking class. Instead of stately rhetoric that emulates Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, or John F. Kennedy, the student would witness competitors citing obscure evidence at a speed that would make an auctioneer sweat using terms so foreign to the average person that the round might as well have been conducted in Klingon. Sadly, this phenomenon is the rule, rather than the exception, in intercollegiate debate.

While this is the eventual end product of debate organizations, none start out aiming to produce such odd rounds. Instead, the history of intercollegiate debate demonstrates that each organization was founded with the goals of public address in mind, but quickly devolved into a highly technical format. McGee and McGee (2000) understood this transition as a disease, stating that the transformation from rhetoric to technical debate was “the result of an opportunistic infection that the body could not fight off” (p. 14). While the description of the devolution as a disease is, in a sense, accurate, the analogy does not extend far enough. Diseases deplete the resistance and eventually overwhelm a body, causing it to succumb to death and cease to exist. If technical debate



were this type of disease, then the infected organizations would eventually die off and cease to exist. This, however, is not the case. While the rhetorical style, the soul and the personality of the organization, is killed off, the organizations continue to persist. The disease of technical debate, then, is more closely related to a zombie infection than it is to small pox. In modern folklore and fiction, a zombie is a human being who contracts the disease by forcible contact with an infected member. Once the infection takes hold, the individual loses all aspects of his or her unique personality. The soul dies, but the body, unaware that it is dead, continues to wander the earth in search of more victims to infect and more brains to destroy. There is no better description for the process by which most debate organizations devolved into their current form.

### **The Walking Dead: A History of Intercollegiate Debate in the United States**

Intercollegiate debate within the United States began in the last decade of the nineteenth century as the Ivy League universities of the East Coast adopted a style of competitive argument stemming from British Union debates (Cirlin, 2007). Slowly but surely, competitive debate grew from being a pastime of elite universities into a nationwide competitive circuit by the 1940s. In an effort to unify the various competitions, the National Debate Tournament (NDT) was established in 1947 (Cirlin, 2007). “During the sixties, the size of the policy debate divisions (or just ‘Debate’ as it was known in those days), was enormous” (Preston, 2006, p. 17). By 1969, the number of debate teams competing at the Pi Kappa Delta national tournament had reached 80 (Preston, 2006).

In that same two decade time span that debating had spread so rapidly, the format which had begun as an exercise in classical rhetoric had developed a high rate of speed

and a regular use of technical jargon (McGee & McGee, 2000). The first article criticizing these practices, written by Swinney, appeared in 1968. By 1974, Cox reported that in statements of their judge philosophies at the national tournament, a substantial number of judges expressed displeasure and concern over these practices. Alan Cirlin (1998), who would later go on to found the International Public Debate Association, recalled that “when I debated in the early 1970’s NDT debate was already inaccessible to everyday listeners” (p. 341).

As speed reading, or spreading, and use of highly technical jargon increasingly became the standard in order to achieve competitive success within NDT, a number of coaches became disenchanted with the format (Shepard, 1973). Explaining the primary complaint concerning NDT, Jones (1978) wrote “Most judges at debate tournaments expect an exercise of reasoned discourse, but often they hear only jargon, unintelligible, except possibly to the debaters participating” (p. 1). Furthering the frustration of the coaches was a system of judge selection implemented by NDT which effectively only permitted those who advocated these practices to act as judges (McGee & McGee, 2000). With no ability to counteract these damaging trends, coaches were left with the choice to either remain in an organization which promoted practices that ran counter to their pedagogical aims or to form a new organization. This ultimatum became the genesis of a new debate coalition, as the coaches who chose the latter option began to leave NDT in favor of a new organization. “In [1971] the speaking style generated by the NDT format resulted lead a number of coaches, headed by Dr. Jack Howe of the California State University at Long Beach, to found the Cross Examination Debate Association” (CEDA)

(Cirlin, 2007, p. 6). McGee and McGee (2000) explained the reasons for the founding of CEDA, stating:

Early CEDA proponents, most notably Jack Howe, maintained that NDT debate had become incomprehensible to all but the most specialized of audiences, as successful debaters responded to competitive pressures by relying on highly developed note-taking skills, the extensive use of quoted evidence taken from expert sources, a rapid rate of speaking, and unusual interpretations of debate propositions. (McGee & McGee, 2000, p. 3)

In order to ensure that the organization would continue to promote rhetorical debate and avoid devolving into its predecessor, a number of practices were implemented (Preston, 2006). First, CEDA introduced the first nationwide intercollegiate debate sweepstakes. In a sweepstakes system, debaters and their teams earn a certain amount of points per round won which are accumulated over the course of a season to determine program rankings. Tournaments with larger entries had more rounds and thus more opportunities to earn points. The purpose of this change was to discourage elitism and promote more and larger tournaments with greater numbers of debate programs participating. More sweepstakes points were possible with larger entry numbers, providing an incentive for programs to welcome new university teams to compete. Second, CEDA abandoned NDT's use of a single resolution per season, instead choosing to change resolutions each semester (Cirlin, 1997). This change was implemented to limit teams' abilities to mass large stockpiles as evidence as NDT debaters were known to do over the course of the year. Third, as an additional step to limit evidence massing, preparation time from the announcement of the resolution from the tournament was

shortened from months to weeks (Cirlin, 1997). Fourth, cross examination was reintroduced in order to reflect more closely the styles of argumentation the general public would be more familiar with such as trial advocacy (McGee & McGee, 2000). Fifth, the style of resolutions was changed from propositions of policy to propositions of value (Cirlin, 1997). Comparatively, arguments concerning value tend to be far less technical and much more accessible to the general audience. Finally, traditional debate judges were initially replaced with attorneys and other members of the community that would be less familiar with technical debate jargon. Taken as a whole, these changes were CEDA's answer to NDT's "evaluation of argument content (e.g., evidence quantity and quality, analysis) over an approach that still valued analysis and use of evidence, while simultaneously demanding that delivery practices be reasonably intelligible to lay audiences and consistent with conventional public speaking" (McGee & McGee, 2000, p. 4).

In addition to stylistic changes, CEDA also attempted to promote and protect its format by the propagation of literature enforcing its style (Cirlin, 1997). These steps included publishing official documents, routinely distributing a newsletter containing editorial exhortations, producing ballots and judge instructions emphasizing ethos, creating an academic journal, and hosting training sessions and convention presentations. The message of separatism was received by the general membership, as coaches and debaters alike took strides to differentiate themselves from NDT. McGee (1993) recalled this era of isolationism, stating "I personally have heard it said that some team was 'NDT' or that a debater should 'go back to NDT' at least once in every semester since I

became a CEDA debater in the 1985 Fall Term” (p. 142). This change, however, would not last.

Twenty years after its founding, coaches began to note the prevailing presence of NDT-style practices within CEDA (Jensen & Preston, 1991). Among other content objectionable to the original aims of CEDA, Steinfatt (1990) observed that quality argumentation was being replaced by rapid delivery, excessive reliance on evidence, and “total unintelligibility and hostility in delivery” (p. 66). In much the same way as NDT before it, judges began to expect debaters to spread, use increased amounts of research, and speak with technical jargon if they wanted to be competitively successful (McGee & McGee, 2000). Most notably, one judge philosophy in the booklet distributed at the 1992 CEDA national tournament instructed debaters who made theoretical, rather than evidence-driven, arguments to “see a psychologist and get a library card” (McGee & McGee, 2000, p. 8). This emphasis on research was exacerbated by the increase in consumer technology including personal computers and the widespread availability of the internet (Edwards, 1997). This newfound access to updated information now meant debaters were expected to keep their files as up to date as the week preceding the tournament weekend (McGee & McGee, 2000). However, despite this emphasis on evidence, success was not earned by the team with the greatest understanding of the research. Rather than privileging the explanation of studies, CEDA was noted for “a serious focus on sound bites of information and evidence” (Cirlin, 1997, p. 264). Cirlin (2007) critiqued the lack of education promoted by the modern style CEDA debating, writing, “the average contemporary NDT or CEDA debater commonly knows little more than what is given to them by way of the research generated by others. The context of

evidence is generally ignored and/or abused” (p. 7).

Judges also began to adopt specific assessment models from NDT, most notably *tabula rasa*. The Latin term, meaning blank slate, was a philosophy that judges should act as if they are ignorant of all facts and reality that were not presented in the round (Ulrich, 1984). This necessarily meant judges would accept counterintuitive arguments and evidence that knew to be false if the opposing team did not successfully argue against its use. Horn and Underberg (1991) bemoaned this practice, noting that CEDA judges were rewarding “spread debating, convoluted arguments, trick cases, and abuse of evidence” (p. 49). By 1990, *tabula rasa* was the most popular philosophy among CEDA judges (Hallmark, 1990).

The noted changes in the style of CEDA debate largely came from outside, rather than inside the organization. Historically, “as new CEDA member schools came to CEDA in the 1980s, they often did so out of a need for regional tournaments to attend, rather than because their students or coaches had any substantial commitment to CEDA's founding ideology” (McGee & McGee, 2000, p. 11). These new programs brought students and coaches who, rather than adopt CEDA's style, relied on research and speaking practices common to NDT (McGee & McGee, 2000). This invasion was accelerated as the coaches who had embraced CEDA's values retired or otherwise left their positions and were replaced by coaches with NDT backgrounds and values because administrations often did not understand the difference between the two formats. According to a competitor in the early 1990s, “The research burdens have increased, the stylistic demands as far as minimum level of competency, mental quickness, as well as verbal quickness, the demands have increased to a very large extent” (McGee, 1993, p.

150). As these new programs also supplied judges who rewarded these behaviors, those who adopted them became competitively successful and those following the original CEDA style soon followed suit.

Those students who adhered to the new CEDA work ethic would grow to value the acquisition of large quantities of recent evidence as they sought competitive success and intellectual stimulation. Competitive pressures and time limitations would also encourage them to adopt jargon and delivery practices consistent with the full utilization of this evidence and the more complex argumentation that it allowed. (McGee & McGee, 2000, p. 12)

Notably, not only did competitors as a whole adopt NDT practices, but hostility grew against those practicing the original CEDA style. McGee (1993) recorded a CEDA debater who stated that those utilizing rhetorical style were “whiny little teams” and that competitive debate “is not a public speaking activity. And if CEDA was founded with those things [in mind], then it's probably wrong” (pp. 157-158).

By the 1980s, CEDA’s membership had grown exponentially (Preston, 2006). However, its growth was largely fed by the presence of NDT programs whose coaches and debaters had more interest in promoting the style they knew than adopting the style of the new organization. As CEDA debate evolved and eventually reinvented the wheel of traditional NDT policy debate during the late 1980s and early 1990s, predictably, some of its members became troubled as they felt that “the original *rhetorical vision* of CEDA was dying” (Preston, 2006, p. 21, emphasis original).

By the 1990s, there no longer remained any fundamental distinction between CEDA and NDT. Both organizations adopted the same resolution, with CEDA

abandoning its original practice of changing resolutions each semester (Preston, 2006). The same programs would use the same debaters to compete within both organizations (Preston, 2006). In every meaningful way, the two organizations had merged.

The influx of new coaches, judges, and students into CEDA also made it impossible for those committed to CEDA's founding ideology to retain organizational control over CEDA and its organizational narratives. Competing narratives about work ethic, argument selection, delivery practices, and judging philosophies began to circulate, with resulting implications for perceptions of CEDA... CEDA became ideologically coherent only when most of those committed to the founding ideology eventually left CEDA or gave up the public defense of that ideology, leaving CEDA to those who endorsed the content thesis or, at least, were unwilling to dissent given the costs of resistance. (McGee & McGee, 2000, pp. 13-14).

Thus, Cirlin noted, "If CEDA was an experiment designed to alleviate the stylistic abuses of NDT debate, it is certainly time to declare that experiment a failure" (Cirlin, 1997, p. 264). Responding to CEDA's failure, in the 1990s, coaches committed to promoting rhetoric fled the organization much as their predecessors had led an exodus from NDT two decades prior. In 1993, the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) was formed in yet another attempt to form a debate organization dedicated to the practice of rhetorical argumentation.

Sheckels and Warfield (1990) provide one of the earliest justifications for the creation of parliamentary debate. As opposed to its predecessors, NDT and CEDA, whose style and developed to only value logics, parliamentary debate additionally placed



equal emphasis on ethos and pathos. In its original design, the format “stresses the skills associated with good delivery, including movement in contrast with truncated syntax of policy debate” (Cates & Eaves, 2010, p. 23). In order to combat the devolution that afflicted previous organizations, NPDA implemented several steps. First, rather than using the same resolution for an entire semester or year, NPDA debaters would not even use the same resolution during the entire tournament. Instead, a different resolution was announced prior to the beginning of every round (Cates & Eaves, 2010). Debate teams were given a short time span, traditionally 15 minutes, in which to prep their cases. Second, the use of evidence was deemphasized. This was implemented in order to ensure that “the work of learning to be prepared for the rounds puts the responsibility of preparation on the shoulders of the student participants rather than research teams or graduate students” (Cates & Eaves, 2010, p. 23). NPDA’s style of debating, then, “emerges from the extemporaneous nature of the debates and from the exclusion during the debate of published resources. NPDA encourages genuine, engaging debates among participants who may draw only from their own knowledge and personal resources” (Trapp, 1996, p. 85). Third, topics were often varied from policy or even value propositions. NPDA made extensive use of “metaphors or vague topics, allowing their debates to be filled with endless possibilities for the debaters” (Cates & Eaves, 2010, p. 24). Finally, the judging pool was expanded to include non-traditional judges. The first NPDA constitution stated, “The composition of the judging pool is critical to training students to speak before audiences and to discourage negative practices such as very rapid delivery and excessive reliance on evidence” (Kuster, Olson, & Loging, 2000, p. 1). The organization began by utilizing three-person judging pools for rounds, consisting of a

“nonstudent lay judge,” an “undergraduate ‘peer,’” and a forensics faculty member (Kuster, Olson, & Loging, 2000, p. 1).

To the extent that the goal of NPDA was to separate itself from CEDA, it was initially successful. CEDA debaters regularly treated NPDA with the same disdain they had applied to those using traditional rhetoric within their own organization. “In CEDA and NDT circles, critics of parliamentary debate label it as non-research debate with expressions such as ‘I will never do parli debate -- it is lazy debate’” (Cates & Eaves, 2010, p. 23). However, this separation of styles was short lived. Almost immediately after its founding, the seeds of NPDA’s devolution into NDT and CEDA style debate were sown. The move to eliminate lay judges was instant. Johnson noted that motions were made at the 1993 NPDA annual meeting to eliminate lay judges, a move he feared. In 1996, Jensen (1996) demanded steps be put into place to make NPDA “a viable exercise in educational debate” (p. 1). These changes specifically included policy resolutions that mirrored the style of NDT and CEDA, allowing the possession and reading of evidence in rounds, specific criteria for judges, and the addition of formal cross-examination. By 2000, arguments for structural changes in resolutions were becoming popular (Stroud, 2000). As years progressed, more and more coaches and competitors began to buy into the idea that adopting CEDA and NDT style was the only means of making NPDA a valid educational activity. Venette (2003) suggested that, in order to have educational value, NPDA must craft resolutions “written to support substantive debate with debaters working through a quasi-logical lens to argue based on context and to avoid topics perceived as silly” (Cates & Eaves, 2010, p. 24). Five years later, Swift (2008) noted an

aversion to resolutions within NPDA that did not meet the previous standards of CEDA and NDT.

In the same way that CEDA's stylistic downfall began due to an influx of "NDT programs early in its evolution, NPDA is increasingly 'converting' what have become CEDA/NDT programs to abandon CEDA/NDT for NPDA. Like CEDA, NPDA's pragmatic vision is inclusive; it faces the same (de)evolutionary challenges faced by the CEDA organization" (Preston, 2006, p. 23). As CEDA and NDT programs invaded NPDA, they once again brought with them the same strains of spreading and jargon bacteria which had infected their organizations. Despite NPDA's espoused values remaining true to its founding, the actual practices of its members no longer resemble an enactment of said values (Diers & Birkholt, 2004). In the same way Cirlin (1997) declared CEDA to be an academic failure, Dimock (2006) makes the same proclamation in regards to NPDA.

While an extensive history of the National Forensic Association's Lincoln Douglas (NFA-LD) will not be included, it is worth noting that it is now experiencing much the same problems for much the same reasons as CEDA and NPDA. NFA-LD was constructed based upon a "vision of debate that tackled policy propositions, drew on evidence from the public domain, but remained accessible to the average communication instructor, and potentially, competent citizens interested in the issues of the day" (Swafford & Hinck, 2009, p. 4). The explanation of this, as with NPDA and CEDA, is the introduction of debaters, coaches, and judges from other formats. NFA-LD, an individual policy debate format, has often been used as a training ground for NDT and CEDA (Swafford & Hinck, 2009). These debaters, who brought with them the rapid speaking

and highly technical style of the organizations they aspired to compete in, have substantially increased the speed, technical jargon usage, and number of arguments within NFA-LD rounds (Swafford & Hinck, 2009). “Could a merger between NPDA and CEDA/NDT be far off?” (Preston, 2006, pp. 23-24).

In the grand scheme of intercollegiate debate, there exist only two organizations that are presumptively immune to the stylistic infection which plagued NDT, CEDA, NPDA, and NFA-LD: The National Educational Debate Association (NEDA) and the International Public Debate Association (IPDA).

In a similar vein to CEDA and NPDA, NEDA began as an attempt by frustrated coaches to counter the excesses of previous organizations. In 1994, a number of forensics coaches and educators formed the organization to promote a format of debate that still encouraged research but lacked the speed and technicalities that made CEDA inaccessible to general audiences (Preston, 2006). NEDA is unique among debate organizations in two primary ways. First, membership is extended to individuals rather than programs (“NEDA Objectives & Procedures,” 2013). The goals of NEDA are directly antithetical to the inclusivity practiced by NDT, CEDA, NPDA, and NFA-LD. Rather than an open membership process, prospective members must have a letter of support from a current member and receive a 2/3 vote of the executive council. Further, if “the actions of an individual undermine the mission of the Association,” the executive council is permitted to remove the offending member (NEDA). Tournaments are open to members only, furthering the exclusivity of the organization. Second, the organization privileges a rhetorical style that appeals to the general public and punishes those members who attempt a NDT/CEDA style. Its mission statement reads:

This Association promotes debate as a practical educational experience and believes that performance by participants should reflect the stylistic and analytical skills that would be rewarded in typical public forums (i.e., courts, congress, the classroom, civic gatherings, etc.). To facilitate this mission, the Association will host a variety of tournament events open to students and directors willing to abide by and enforce Association standards of ethical, responsible, humane and communicative advocacy. Association tournaments are viewed as an extension of the speech classroom. Specifically, the skills we teach as effective in persuading a public audience are also the skills rewarded at Association events. Ideally, a debate is an exchange that, when witnessed by a member of the general public, would be viewed as comprehensible and enlightening. A more specific description of the climate expected to prevail at Association events may be found in Jack Howe's "CEDA's Original Objectives—Lest We Forget" ... and Robert Weiss' "The Audience Standard .... ("NEDA Objectives & Procedures," 2013)

These standards are tightly enforced by the organization, who specifically monitors the practices of debaters at its tournaments. Judges in NEDA are empowered to award a loss to both teams in a round if neither team is employing a style consistent with the organization's stated mission (NEDA). The organization also makes liberal use of lay judges, on whom the NDT/CEDA style would be ineffective (Preston, 2006).

If the goal of NEDA was to remain unaffected by the virus which infected its predecessors, the organization's mission can be deemed successful. However, if the goal of the organization was to change the hegemonic structure of intercollegiate debate, then it can only be deemed a failure. In an effort to prevent the spread of NDT/CEDA style

into its organization, NEDA has engaged in strict isolationism. Like humans seeking to prevent themselves from being infected, NEDA has quarantined its members into a forensic safe room. However, as with a medical quarantine, this offers no ability for the members to grow and prosper. Any potential members are interrogated for any sign of the disease, while current members who begin to display symptoms are punished by expulsion. In the past year, NEDA only sanctioned six tournaments with evidence of only five universities competing (NEDA). “This more rigid rhetorical vision is not conducive to chaining out widely in the larger debate community, especially since NEDA’s members have relatively little contact with that community” (Preston, 2006, p. 22) While NEDA has successfully prevented the spread of NDT/CEDA’s specialized format, its limited membership creates its own form of specialization. With such an insular community, it is unlikely that it will produce the type of real world rhetoric it proposes. In that sense, it can also be considered an academic failure.

IPDA is the youngest intercollegiate debate organization, founded in 1996 by Alan Cirlin and Jack Rogers (Cirlin, 1997). According to Cirlin (2007), “it is the only debate format in modern history which was intentionally developed using empirical methodologies to achieve specific pedagogical ends” (p. 11). Cirlin went on to explain that “Public Debate format was created by starting with the educational goals and working backwards, using a method of trial and error mostly, until a viable debate format emerged which consistently achieved the ends for which it was intended” (p. 11). IPDA’s pedagogical goals lead to a number of differences between it and its predecessors.

First, the use of evidence as means of persuasion is highly discouraged. Competitors may not bring preprinted evidence into rounds (Cirlin, 1997). Handwritten

case outlines are only permissible if they are constructed during the 30-minute preparation period (“Constitution & Bylaws,” 2012). In the original rules of the format, competitors were prohibited from even copying evidence verbatim onto their flow pads, instead being required to memorize or paraphrase their sources in the same manner as competitors in the Extemporaneous Speaking individual event (Cirlin, 2008). From its earliest days, this prohibition “lead to a great deal of [camaraderie] on the IPDA debate circuit. It is quite common to see groups of debaters from different programs prepping together and helping each other if they happen to have the same topic” (Cirlin, 2007, p. 12).

Second, IPDA abhors the exclusive use of trained judges found in formats like NDT and CEDA. Rather than requiring extensive qualifications for judges, any person who is at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level or higher and is of reasonable intelligence may be used to judge (“Constitution & Bylaws,” 2012). “The typical Public Debate tournament uses classroom students and freshman debaters for its judging pool” (Cirlin, 2007, p. 12). In addition, in elimination rounds, eliminated competitors from other divisions are often used to judge. This provides a wide variety of judges which debaters are required to adapt to. For instance, in an elimination round, a competitor could be judged simultaneously by a high school freshman, an eliminated undergraduate competitor from another division, and a coach with a doctorate and multiple decades of experience. “Rather than both speakers and judges conforming to preexisting schema for evaluating argumentation, debaters are instead required to adapt their communication style to the lay judge” (Key, 2009, p. 11).

Third, resolutions are drawn from a wide array of topics and styles. Competitors will regularly encounter fact, value, and policy propositions from a variety of subjects ranging from international affairs to popular culture. In a single tournament, a competitor might debate resolutions including “Freedom ought to be valued above justice,” “The United Nations should expand the membership of its Security Council,” and “Lady Gaga is the new Madonna.” Unlike other formats, debaters have some degree of control over the resolution they debate. Instead of the entire tournament being assigned a resolution for the year, as in NDT and CEDA, or for the round, as in NPDA, competitors are permitted to select a resolution from five choices per round (“Constitution & Bylaws,” 2012). Beginning with the negative, each side alternates in striking a single resolution until the lone topic which shall be debated remains. Debaters who do not prefer or are otherwise uncomfortable with specific topics are thus able to eliminate them.

Fourth, IPDA differs in terms of divisions offered. There are three individual and one team division offered by the organization. The three individual divisions include Novice, Varsity, and Professional. The Novice division is for students who have competed in fewer than ten debate tournaments since beginning high school (“Constitution & Bylaws,” 2012). This differs from the definition of Novice provided by other organizations who allow a competitor, regardless of high school debate experience, a year in their Novice divisions. The Varsity division is for students on at least their 11th tournament who have not debated more than ten semesters as an undergraduate (“Constitution & Bylaws,” 2012). Finally, the Professional division is open to anyone including undergraduate and graduate students, coaches, attorneys, and other non-students (“Constitution & Bylaws,” 2012). This division is unique to IPDA, as all other



intercollegiate organizations mandate their competitors be undergraduates except under extreme circumstances. The Team division has identical requirements to the Varsity division ("Constitution & Bylaws," 2012). This division also makes IPDA unique in that it is the only intercollegiate format to offer both an individual and a partnered version. For instance, there is no individual NPDA nor is there a partnered NFA-LD. IPDA's membership is not exclusively intercollegiate. The requirement that a Varsity, Novice, or Team competitor be a student does not require them to be an undergraduate. For this reason, a high school has regularly competed in IPDA, earning as high a rank as 3rd, from 2005 until the present. Discussions in the leadership meeting at the 2013 IPDA national convention, however, indicate a substantial likelihood that entry requirements will mandate that a competitor have completed high school beginning in the 2013-2014 season.

### **Problem Statement**

The phenomenon that debate organizations begin with a rhetorical style and devolve is not a rare occurrence, but continually happens. IPDA, like CEDA and NPDA before it, proposed to change that. However, IPDA chose to implement a solution drastically different from the others. The reason for the unique nature of IPDA was the founders' desire to attempt to correct stylistic problems pedagogically rather than rhetorically. Cirlin (1997) writes:

Generally speaking, stylistic abuses in academic debate were considered a rhetorical problem and rhetorical solutions had always been applied. If you didn't like the students' speaking style, teach them a new one. You might try to provide corrective rhetorical feedback on ballots, in oral critiques, between rounds, and in

the classroom; study the problem rhetorically, provide analyses, and suggest improvements; and report your findings at conventions and in journal articles.

(pp. 263-264)

These methods, however often they were tried across multiple organizations, failed to stave off the infection of speed and technicality. Today, 16 years after its founding, IPDA continues its growth and its commitment to core principles. Over its lifetime, 124 different academic institutions from three countries have competed in IPDA. In the upcoming 2013-2014 season, 33 tournaments are scheduled across 10 states and 2 continents including 3 tournaments in Afghanistan. Its growth, unlike NEDA, can be attributed to its emphasis on inclusivity and growth. This same growth, however, contributed to the decline of NDT, CEDA, NPDA, and NFA-LD. This study attempts to examine whether the goals of inclusive growth and maintaining a commitment to accessible rhetoric are mutually exclusive. It intends to explore whether IPDA will repeat the history of its predecessors or write a history all its own.

### **Research Question**

Is IPDA, when practiced in its current form, immune from the influences which devolved its predecessors from rhetorical debate to information processing?

### **Justification**

Former multi-time IPDA national champion and circuit legend Steve Goode was known for opening each round by stating that “debate should be two things, fun and educational. When it stops being those things, we should stop doing it” (Key, 2009, p. 3). These twin criteria of fun and education are echoed by Cirlin (1998) in one of the foundational documents of the organization. IPDA began as a grand experiment sixteen

years ago to see if the practice of intercollegiate debate could be both enjoyable for the audience and educational for the competitors. Having born witness to the epidemic, Cirlin reverse engineered IPDA to create a new type of debate organization whose practices would both encourage good rhetoric and prevent the rapid fire, evidence driven, highly technical form of debate that became pervasive in its predecessors. As IPDA enters its adolescence, it deserves a checkup to examine whether it is still a healthy enactment of Cirlin's vision or terminally infected with the disease of technical debate.

This is a prime time for an examination, as the fifteen year mark is significant in the stages of devolution of debate organizations. Essentially, the life span of rhetoric in any debate organization is roughly 20 years. NDT began in 1947 and meaningful criticism began in 1968. CEDA was born in 1973 and by the early 1990s had effectively merged with NDT. It only took 13 years for NPDA, founded in 1993, to be condemned as a pedagogical failure. Today, two decades after its founding, it is questioned whether NPDA may soon merge with CEDA and NDT (Preston, 2006). Cirlin (personal communication, May 3, 2013) stated "CEDA was effectively dead within 15 years of its inception. Within 25 years it was officially dead. IPDA seems to be holding its own after 15 years. Only time will tell if it continues to do so." The disease of technical debate did not affect IPDA's predecessors overnight. This study will effectively provide a biopsy of the organization at a stage when the disease typically develops.

This examination is important to not just for IPDA but for the future of academic debate itself. As demonstrated above, there is a consistent and pervasive pattern that has been followed by every major debate organization except IPDA and NEDA. Each one starts out wanting to promote best practices in rhetoric aimed at a real audience but

quickly devolves into the form that these organizations now assume. NEDA's solution involved eliminating inclusivity as a goal and, in doing so, it ceded its ability to affect the culture of forensics outside of its quarantine. Like the Amish who reject technology to preserve their way of life, NEDA remains small, secluded, and inconsequential in the lives of the community at large. IPDA, however, attempts to preserve rhetoric without such quarantine. It promotes inclusivity, which explains its expansion throughout the southeastern and northwestern United States as well as internationally. The answer to the research question will shed light on whether any debate organization may ever be both inclusive and immune to the disease of technical debate. If IPDA, which addressed the excesses of previous formats sociologically rather than rhetorically, cannot succeed, then there is little hope for the future of academic debate.

Finally, beyond the bounds of academic debate, the examination of this trend has implications for the future of democracy in the free world. The continual shift to technical debate under the belief that a general audience is incapable of appreciating academic argument is troubling, especially as debate is touted as training for future leaders of our society.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **All I Do Is Win, Win, Win... No Matter What: Competition vs. Education in Debate**

The emphasis on forensics as an educational activity is nearly as old as the discipline of communication studies itself. The first recorded mention of the educational merits of forensics came from Ehninger in 1954 when he advocated that forensics was a means to meet “the need to provide an educational experience for our students” (Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2003 p. 14). Two decades later, the first developmental conference for forensics, the Sedalia retreat, was held (McBath, 1975). The results from that conference were propagated in documents that of developing “students’ communicative abilities” and “argument theory” through the “humanistic education” provided by forensics (McBath, 1975, pp. 14-16).

Numerous scholars have addressed the educational benefit of forensics. Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, and Loudon (1999) reviewed more than 30 studies examining participating in competitive forensics. They wrote that forensics provides a superior education to traditional methods of schooling, writing that “unbridled by the limitations found within the traditional lecture-oriented classroom situation, participants must learn to invent, organize, and articulate thoughts subject to scrutiny by others” (p. 19).

The premise that debate is educational has been used to justify the support of many colleges and universities including “housing the activity in departments of speech/communication, labeling forensics a ‘co-curricular,’ not ‘extra-curricular,’ activity, attracting new students, soliciting funding for tournament travel, and even for pleading with universities not to eliminate entire speech/communication departments”

(Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2003, p. 12). Indeed, there exists a storied relationship between forensics programs and communication departments. Forensics was the reason for the creation, growth, and expansion of many university departments (Swanson, 1992). “Forgetting their roots, today many of those departments have divorced or distanced themselves from their forensic programs, much like they might distance themselves from an unfamiliar relative” (Swanson, 1992, p. 49). The reason for this departure is a realization that the educational benefits of forensics are not as plentiful as coaches have repeatedly asserted.

Fryar and Thomas (1980) asserted the claim made by many debate coaches that skills learned in debate “transfer directly out of the academic world into the everyday experiences of our society” (p. i). Pelham and Watt (1989) reinforced the point, stating “In order for this society to effectively meet the political, legal, economic, social and religious challenges facing it, citizens must be capable of effective public debate” (p. 4). The obvious issue is that while the latter statement is true, the former certainly is not. Students in NDT, CEDA, NPDA, and NFA-LD are not learning skills, beyond the logical reasoning that all debate teaches, that transfer into everyday experiences, nor are they learning the effective public debate that is so necessary for society to function. While coaches claim real world benefits to the communication styles necessary for success in most intercollegiate debate, “the persuasive skills learned through forensics may be only marginally applicable to situations outside of the forensics laboratory” (Dean, 1992). Though addressing forensics in general, rather than specifically debate, Dean (1992) further questions the educational foundation of forensics, stating:

Are we suggesting to our students that what they spend hours perfecting for weekend tournaments has little applicability upon graduation? Or are we inferring, simply because a forensics audience is typically small and prescribed by tournament practice, that attention to audience appeals is unimportant? To imply either would cheapen both our field of study and our students' education. (p. 193)

The highly technical format developed in formats like NDT and CEDA has little applicability to real world situations. Horn (1994) quoted coaches who left CEDA over the lack of educational and pedagogical value of its eventual style. These remarks are poignant reminders of the lack of education contained within a format that privileges speed, evidence, and jargon. One coach stated, “The actual educational advantages of 'speed debate' are, in my opinion, negligible. Only a highly specialized, incestuous industry could ever reward the skills taught in CEDA debate, and I speak with a clear understanding of politics and law as career fields” (pp. 1-2). A second coach furthered the point, stating “The fast-paced delivery is detrimental to students. They need to practice good speech delivery that will be accepted in real life situations” (p. 2). Still another coach remarked, “Until delivery/communication practice in rounds reflects the sort of theory we teach in speech classes, there will be serious dissatisfaction with intercollegiate debate. The problem has been chronic” (p. 2). Finally, one respondent summarized the frustration, stating “I do not know of any coach in any form of debate that would allow or encourage students to speak rapidly in their speech classes. Why then do many coaches insist on it in debate rounds?” (p. 3).

The frustration at the lack of educational value in CEDA and styles like regrettably is only the tip of the iceberg for criticisms of intercollegiate debate. Swafford and Hinck (2009) illustrate the core of this disapproval, stating:

Without a conscious consideration of how practices actualize educational values, strong systemic forces can push us away from a debate activity grounded in a specific educational vision and toward competitive outcomes that reflect excellence in speed reading, neglect of decorum in public advocacy, an inability to choose arguments and support materials that are rhetorically appropriate, and an excessive reliance on technical aspects of argumentation over the more generally appealing public aspects of argumentation. (p. 7)

In addition to speed, one of the most noted criticisms of NDT/CEDA style debate is the overreliance on evidence. Cirlin (2007) notes that when evidence is used properly, it can enhance education. However, “the abuse of written evidence in the NDT format is so rampant and excessive, it is hard to imagine what pedagogical advantages might be if the use of evidence were handled more honestly and rhetorically” (p. 14). Dimock (2009) criticized the practice of privileging only evidence backed arguments from authority having presumption in academic debate. “If a debater must choose between the use of authority and any other mode of argument, debaters will pick the argument from authority opting other forms of argument only when the option to cite evidence is not available” (p. 89). Dimock notes that this practice is both critically and educationally unsound, comparing it to a carpenter only using a hammer when he has an overabundance of tools at his disposal. It further lowers their education as, when dealing with broad topics and a nearly limitless number of interpretations, they cannot possibly



make a reasoned consideration of all available evidence. The current debate practices of CEDA/NDT “makes it difficult for debaters to develop their own sense of the ideas or to explore them in depth. Unable to make personal judgments upon the issues, debaters are forced to rely upon the judgments of others” (p. 90).

The problem of lack of education in intercollegiate debate may be more insidious than an oversight. Success in debate is not defined by achieving educational aims, but by winning rounds (Dalton & Pross, 1954; Mazilu, 2002). Success in debate is “a synonym for winning rounds or gaining speaker points. Debate professionals have correspondingly defined success this way for more than 50 years” (Brennan, 2011, p. 4). Rather than inform administrators about the true competitive nature of the activity, coaches have repeatedly engaged in a deception that the activity of forensics is primarily educational. A mere two years after Ehninger published the first scholarship hailing the educational virtues of forensics, Padrow (1956) responded, “The time has come to stop deceiving ourselves and our administrators about the educational value of forensics” ( p. 206). In a stark proclamation of the reality of forensic completion, Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) stated:

In fact, the discourse of forensics is all about competition. In preparation for *tournaments*, *competitors practice* their *events* with *coaches*. Forensics educators refer to themselves as *coaches*, who prepare *competitors*, not students, for week-end-long *tournaments* that give out *awards* to *top competitors*, *trophies* to *programs* that receive *sweepstakes points*, and *qualifier legs* to *competitors* for *national tournaments*. While at *tournaments*, *coaches judge competitors*, providing critiques on *ballots* that reflect a *competitor's school code*. Ultimately,

the *judge* gives each *competitor rank and rate points*. Moreover, a *tournament director* and a *tab room staff*, whose sole purpose is to ensure that the *tournament* is *on time* and that results are *tabulated* correctly, *run tournaments*. (pp. 15-16, emphasis original)

Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) explained that the proclamation that forensics is an educational activity is an enactment of the forensics-as-education myth. Guerin, Labor, Morgan, and Willingham (1979) identified myths as “symbolic projections of a people’s hopes, values, fears, and aspirations” (p. 155). Myths are always narrative in nature and can exist in writing, storytelling, and dramatic performance (Flood, 1966). They are not, however, simply stories told for entertainment value alone. Instead, the function of a mythological story is persuasion that relies on desires common to the society. “The most compelling, persuasive stories are mythic in form, stories reflective of ‘public dreams’ that give meaning and significance to life” (Fisher, 1985, p. 76). Fisher (1987) expanded on the idea of mythological stories, explaining their importance as lessons “to establish ways of living in common” (p. 63). That is, myths serve as a way to pass on cultural values and norms in the form of storytelling. Kenneth Burke (1947) highlights the importance of mythological criticism in understanding a culture when he states, “To derive a culture from a certain mythic ancestry, or ideal mythic type, is a way of stating that culture's essence in narrative terms” (p. 200).

Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) explained the use of myth within forensics culture, stating that:

In the forensics-as-education myth, the forensic hero is the forensic educator who works hard and whose students are competitively successful. The forensics

community pays little or no explicit attention to the learning practices that the forensic educator incorporates. Here the forensic educator protects the virtue of education by coaching students to win awards. At some point in a coach's career, he/she might have enacted this heroic myth by staying up late working with students, calling for work sessions on weekends, discussing ballots in the van on a long ride home, or making changes in debate cases or speeches to improve the chances of winning at the next tournament. In forensics, education is a secondary concern and is only made “real” through its rhetorical alignment with competition. Thus, education is a myth that reinforces the ideological virtues of competition. (p. 14)

“Myths are stories which symbolically solve the problem facing the society, provide justification for a social structure, or deal with a psychological crisis” (Rowland, 1990, p. 103). Therefore, when examining the rhetorical use of myth by the forensics community, it is important to keep watch for the problem, social structure, or crisis being dealt with. In this case, the social structure being protected is competitive forensics and the crisis being dealt with is the use of educational funds in order to promote a competitive activity.

Understanding that the nature of forensics is competition, it becomes easier to understand the formulaic nature that NDT, CEDA, NPDA, and NFA-LD have adopted. In short, formulaic events are easier to win. Burnett, Brand, and Meister's (2003) commentary on the refusal of the forensics community to embrace experimental events is relevant to this discussion. They state that individual events are avoided because they lack the “coherence that maintains the authoritative presumption of competition. When the events are experimental, placings in the event do not always ‘count’ for sweepstakes

points, and rules are unclear, making the event more difficult to win” (p. 17). Gaer (2002) addressed the question as to why forensic events become formulaic. He stated, “it's because as people, we have a tendency to WANT everything to be in a little box. It's how we process and remember information” (p. 54). He goes on to compare the phenomenon to the psychological process of stereotyping, where humans maintain a sense of control over their lives by using observations to predict future consequences of actions. He explained:

It stands to reason then that people involved in competitive forensics might also want some prediction and control over the outcomes of their performances. The written guidelines leave too much “gray area,” the rules are too vague for our liking. So, in order to create that prediction and control, we develop a set of guidelines that are outside of the written rules, and rely on them to make us feel better about how we construct our performance... Students, coaches and judges alike don't want so much subjectivity in predicting the outcomes of a competitive outing. (pp. 54-55)

Paine (2005) addressed the problems of these unwritten rules, asserting “the success formulas...stifle creativity and certainly do not provide new material for forensic research... In addition, working through the formulaic, stifling 'unwritten rules' takes time away from other academic duties” (p. 86). It is worth noting that these unwritten rules only promote competitive success. A student will not receive any less educational benefit from not following unwritten rules. “Conformity to unwritten competitive standards further relegates forensics education to secondary and mythic status. There

exist, to our knowledge, no ‘educational’ unwritten standards in the activity” (Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2003, p. 17).

While the competitive nature of debate can be problematic for education, Cirlin (1997) argued that competition can also be used to further educational and pedagogical aims. “The good news is that if the right kinds of pressure can be applied, the stylistic excesses of academic debate should be relatively easy to correct” (p. 266). Cirlin asserted that, if the goal was to further education, a debate organization would need to “find a way to structure rhetoric as a teleological goal rather than as a causal pressure—to create a sociological climate which will literally pull debate into the future rather than relying on” spreading, technical jargon, and arguments from authority (p. 265). Cirlin stated that a cultural shift was necessary to create a situation in which debaters would prize good rhetoric as a winning strategy. “In such a sociological sub-culture, academic debate would indeed become a training ground where the specific oral communication skills students learn would, in fact, be transferrable to the larger business, legal, and political worlds” (p. 265). Accordingly, however, the debaters who were winning the most rounds would have to be the best speakers. If they were not, then the competitive culture would not inflame a desire in debaters to practice genuine rhetoric. “All the lip-service in the world is as naught when compared to the easily discernible speaking style of the debaters who consistently emerge as winners within the academic debate sub-cultural community” (266).

Cirlin (1997) asked, “As a practical matter, what might such a sociological learning environment look like? How might the academic debate subculture be structured

to promote a superior rhetorical style?" (p. 264). He would go on to found IPDA as an experiment to answer the question.

### **We Built This City: The Social Construction of Forensics Cultural Norms**

Any debate circuit is a constantly changing thing. Students graduate after four to five years and are replaced by eager freshmen. The real constant is the coaches, who tend to become something of a tight knit group over the years. While not a race or an ethnic group, forensics communities should rightfully be understood as a unique culture. In a critique of traditional methods of studying culture, Ono (1998) identified the practice of examining culture from the perspective of a nationality or nation-state to be inherently problematic. Such a narrow view of culture both devalues the intricacy of collective communication within organized groups not related to an immutable characteristic like race and limits the discipline's understanding of such group's communication patterns. Culture, then, should be best understood as "shared and contested, historically situated, socially constructed, contextually constrained, and constantly negotiated system of group identities" (Chen, 2010, p. 37). As forensics coaches, as a group, meet these qualities, their study from the perspective of intercultural communication is therefore merited.

Key to the understanding of any culture is an understanding of identity. Tracy (2002) examined the idea of identity in relation to communication. Communication, accordingly, both constructs and is constructed by identity. That is, a person's communication shapes their identity, while their constructed identity informs which methods of communication will be employed. This duality makes the study of identity, and therefore culture, inseparable from the study of communication. However, culture is not simply a collection of individual identities. Instead, communication also shapes a

cultural identity. Cultural Identity Theory (Collier & Thomas, 1988) holds that a cultural identity is best defined as an “enactment and negotiation of social identification by group members in a particular interactional context that demonstrates their affiliation and understanding of the premises and practices required to be a group member, and the ability to perform practices of membering” (Chen, 2010, p. 39).

Members of a culture, then, possess a unique understanding of not only who members are, but who members are not. This distinction informs a group member’s choice of cultures to join and identify with as well as those cultures a member wishes to avoid participation in. Identifying as a member of a culture is, in and of itself, a communicative act. Given societal and intercultural perceptions about a given culture, members will likely be perceived to possess certain characteristics. Therefore, by choosing to engage in active identification and membership within a particular culture while abstaining from another, an individual communicates the possession or avoidance of those identifiable characteristics to others.

Research concerning organizational culture pays particular attention to this communicative choice. Informed by the scholarship of Jones, Jimmieson, and Griffiths (2005), Hataway (2010) stated, “Organizational cultural research is primarily concerned with identifying the ways in which members of an organization communicatively establish a shared cultural context with one another that is singular to an organization” (p. 13). This singular cultural context encompasses a communicative acceptance of cultural identity and normative standards. In the same dualistic manner that communication is created and creates identity, cultural contexts are constructed and construct communicative practices. At its most essential level, a cultural context defines the

environment in which communication takes place within a given culture. The context defines who is and can be a member of a group, while simultaneously discursively establishing who is and will not be welcome. Furthermore, it defines which group members are capable of speaking for the group and determining normative standards.

The process of determining which members of a group are considered legitimate voices is termed empowerment. Empowerment is understood to be “an active, participatory process through which individuals, organizations, and communities gain greater control, efficacy, and social justice” (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 129). When an individual becomes empowered within an organization, his or her voice is considered to be a legitimate authority. This legitimacy enables a greater degree of control over the culture. Interestingly, those with legitimate power need not be members of the majority within a group. That is, the members with most legitimacy and control can actually be representative of a numerical minority within a given culture (Childress, 2000). Whether the majority or the minority, legitimate members possess great influence in the definition of a culture. Therefore, in order to understand a culture, it is important to understand both the concept of legitimacy and the process by which one achieves it.

Those members of society who have been empowered to legitimately control a culture are those whose perspectives, opinions, and words are inherently valued over those of members of other groups (Meares, Oetzel, Torres, Derkacs, & Ginossar, 2004). Meares (2003) laid the foundation for the principle, explaining that empowered groups are able to maintain domination over a control through tight control of discourse. McKerrow’s (1989) critique of domination centered on “the discourse of power which creates and sustains the social practices which control the dominated” (p. 93).



Specifically addressed are ideologies, characterized as a form of discourse, whereby the ruling class is able to maintain its power. Chief among the tools of the discourse of domination is ultimate control over the legitimization of voices within the affected community. Restrictions are placed upon the choice of speaker, the content he may speak about, when and where he may speak, and who can be considered an authority on the subject (McKerrow, 1980).

Meyerson and Martin (1987) understood organizational culture to be a “social or normative glue that holds together a potentially diverse group of organizational members” (p. 274). Assuming the accuracy of this analogy, it should be noted that in addition to holding a diverse group together, organizational culture also demonstrates another quality of glue: it acts as a sealant. The purpose of a sealant is twofold, to keep desired substances in while keeping undesired substances out. Functioning as a sealant, organizational culture serves to prevent those who do not meet the criteria for legitimacy for achieving any type of power within the culture.

Johnson (2004) addresses these cultural concepts in relation to forensics, stating: Whenever a group sequesters itself, whether intentionally or unintentionally, in pursuit of an objective, a certain amount of specialization naturally occurs: groups develop their own cultures and norms, professions generate their own vocabularies, academic disciplines become more and more technical, and so on. Such a setting provides a fertile environment for the natural evolution of knowledge; because the members of our activity share a context developed and reinforced weekend after weekend, a high degree of specialization is bound to occur. This is the type of environment created by the current sequestered structure

of modern debate tournaments. I'm not arguing that such concentration and specialization is without merit; certainly much solid thought has emerged from what we do in our forensic tournament laboratories. My concern lies with the inherent contradiction in the practice of sequestering ourselves at a tournament to compete in an event designed to teach skills necessary to persuade an audience--any audience. (pp. 39-40)

The culture of forensics coaches, then, has a direct effect on the existence and expansion of NDT/CEDA style argumentation within various debate organizations. As legitimate members possess the power to set normative standards for a culture, it is imperative to examine the effects of an organization's leadership when seeking to determine the cause of the debate infection's continual spread.

Diers and Birkholt (2004) found that, especially among geographically dispersed organizations (Diers & Birkholt, 2002), the practice of debating evolves in a manner separate from the organization's founding principles and more quickly than organizational leadership can respond with corrective action. As most intercollegiate debate organizations, with the exception of NEDA, are spread out across the country, this derivative growth becomes particularly impactful. In addressing geographically dispersed organizations, Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998) held that such groups' core values will fail to remain intact if the dispersed members do not strongly identify with the organization, its values, and their fellow members. Citing the work of Bodkin, Amato, and Peters (2009), Diers (2011) addressed organizational culture in relation to debate organizations when she stated, "This approach to analyzing organizational culture is particularly relevant for the NPDA because organizations that fail to create a shared

identity are less likely to build and maintain commitment to the organization's mission and are ultimately more likely to fail in the long run" (p. 34). She went on to remark:

The NPDA is an organization that was formed as coaches from different genres of debate competition, unsatisfied with the practices that had become normative in other organizations, collaborated to develop a 'more audience-centered' style of debate. Over time, membership in the NPDA grew as programs from at least five different styles of intercollegiate debate came together in competition, suggesting that a disparate set of ideas, practices, and values merged in the NPDA. Thus, the only way for the NPDA to be successful in developing and proliferating the founders shared values, would be to have the organization build a cultural and attitudinal commitment to maintaining its central mission. (pp. 34-35)

In order to make these claims, Diers analyzed conversations held by NPDA leadership on their listserv, *parli-l*. Her findings indicated that "despite active discussion and differences of opinion amongst the membership, the early leaders either refrained from taking a policy position on 'rules' or actively argued against creating or enforcing rules to maintain the organization's broad mission" (p. 38). Of particular note is her discussion over NPDA President Robert Trapp's remark in regards to a dispute on whether coaches were permitted to help students construct cases. Trapp stated in an e-mail exchange concerning the matter in September 1995 that "my primary reaction is that I don't want to become a rules cop" (p. 43). Diers blamed this philosophy on the degradation of NPDA's style of debate.

Diers and Birkholt (2004) examined the cultural shift that occurred in NPDA and reported that the values espoused by NPDA leadership and the in-round practices of its

coaches, judges, and competitors were almost entirely distinct from each other. Diers (2011) argued that NPDA's commitment to inclusiveness and refusal to set rules to enforce cultural norms allowed the influx of former NDT and CEDA programs to socially construct NPDA culture in their own image. The NDT and CEDA style programs' "voices were comparatively louder than the members favoring the original mission of the activity indicating that the routinization of debate practices was dominated by an organic social construction that stood in direct competition with the initial mission" (p. 46). Further, while inaction in the presence of the new social construction might have been enough on its own to allow the change, the refusal to create rules furthered the cause of the CEDA/NDT style advocates. The NPDA leadership's "rigorous and consistent refutation of normative rules or policies created a hegemonic silencing force against members who wanted to take action to clearly define and defend the organization's mission" (Diers, p. 47). Diers blamed this refusal for divisive problems currently present in the organization, including "the emergence of the National Parliamentary Tournament of Excellence (NPTE), backlash against mutual preference judging, increasing rates of delivery, and a litany of other issues" (p. 48).

In the absence of clear leadership, forensic communities will develop their own set of norms or "unwritten rules" (Paine, 2005). Members joining an organization for the first time will almost instantly come upon a set of such standards and will "discover that these unwritten rules possess tremendous power, functioning to separate the "in-group" who know and follow the rules from the "out-group" who do not have access to (or deliberately choose to flout) these assumptive guidelines" (Paine, 2005, p. 79). The out-group, then, is best understood as a muted group.

Muted group theory (Orbe, 1998) explains the effect of legitimizing only certain members of a culture on those who are not privileged. Specifically, muting occurs when a certain group's "lived experiences are not represented in dominant structures" (Orbe, 1998, p. 4). In forensics, new coaches are such a muted group. Their differences from the normative practices are characterized as deviance, further marginalizing them from the cultural mainstream (Hogg & Reid, 2006). The culture denies their own voice and instead forced to adopt the communicative rules and styles of the dominant group (Meares, 2003). Gal (1994) commented on this phenomenon, stating that muted groups experience a deficiency in "separate, socially significant discourse" (p. 408).

Muted group members often become bored with the organization and move on. "Playing the same game by the same rules and producing the same basic product year after year can become boring... many students withdraw from the activity because they felt that forensics had 'nothing left to teach them'" (Paine, 2005, p. 84). For those students who are part of the in-group, however, unwritten rules provide a sense of clarity and security. Paine (2005) addressed this issue concerning forensics, stating:

In each round, judges must employ some set of criteria to enable them to rank and rate the contestants they watch. Meanwhile, the contestants must try to understand why they win or lose to their competitors. By its very nature, forensics demands that judges make largely "subjective" decisions -the very performance that one judge loves will be severely criticized by another critic. The frequent lack of inter-judge consistency can be very frustrating for competitors. Thus, the more these decisions appear to abide by a mutually accepted body of rules or norms, the easier it is to make and accept the decisions that are made. (p. 81)

Reliance on unwritten rules has the effect of homogenizing style. “Once students learn that a certain formula is what ‘wins,’ many become unwilling to push the envelope which surrounds the straight-and-narrow path” (Paine, 2005, p. 83). Standardized formats make wins and losses predictable. As the culture of debate is more concerned with winning than with education, what wins sets the standard for the organization. Once the framework for success is known, debaters will implement a style that comports with the framed expectations of the culture (Minch & Borchers, 1996).

Understanding that normative rules exist begs the question that, if said rules are unwritten, how do debaters come to know them? The answer is simple: they learn them from each other. “Debaters do what they have to do to win. And they take their cues from those who are most successful. By definition, these top debaters... are most successful at adjusting to the biases and expectations of their judges” (Cirlin, 1997, p. 264). In short, new debaters learn the correct scripts in order to achieve success from other debaters.

Scripts are best understood as a defined series of events a person can reasonably expect to occur in a given scenario (Abelson, 1981). They, in essence, provide expectations for normal interaction. “Scripts also serve as a means of guiding our actions by providing a predictor of what should happen given past interactions and by taking into considerations the social norms for what is and what is not acceptable” (Swafford & Hinck, 2009, p. 18). They are primarily acquired through the processes of direct action and observation (Berger & Bradac, 1982). In direct action, individuals take an action and then those they interact with either respond positively or negatively. If the response is negative, the action is not repeated. If the response is positive, however, the action is remembered for later use. Conversely, when individuals learn scripts through

observation, they witness the direct action of others and judge the rightness of the action based upon the responses of others. For instance, a young boy may learn public restroom etiquette through direct action when using a urinal immediately next to another occupied unit. The negative reaction will inhibit him from repeating the same action in the future. The same child could learn the script by observation if he notes that an empty urinal is always left between occupied units.

Swafford and Hinck (2008) identified three types of scripts within competitive debate: activity scripts, forum scripts, and content scripts. Activity scripts are those which are unique to the activity of debate, but not the debate organization. For instance, the script of shaking hands with an opponent following the conclusion of the round would be considered an activity script. This action tends to take place at the conclusion of all debate rounds in NDT, CEDA, NPDA, NFA-LD, NEDA, and IPDA. Forum scripts are those unique to the debate organization. For instance, IPDA debaters typically begin the round by thanking the audience, judge, and opponent. While this may be standard practice in NPDA, it would be foreign to organizations like CEDA and NDT. Finally, content scripts deal with how to take certain actions within a round. Swafford and Hinck (2008) provided the example of a disadvantage, stating:

Disadvantages are negative arguments that attempt to demonstrate some hazard that should be considered before enacting some sort of legislation. The argument is constructed by presenting a brink, how soon the disaster will occur if the plan is adopted, uniqueness, why this disaster is specific to the policy being advocated, a link, how the cause of the disaster is the plan be advocated, and an impact, what

disaster will occur. These pieces of the argument are presented in the order given.

(p. 21)

Taken together, debaters in a given organization learn activity, forum, and content scripts from successful debaters either by direct action or observation. While scripts can certainly improve style, a debater utilizing them must be careful not to engage in mindlessness. Mindlessness is a phenomenon that occurs when an action can be taken with no conscious thought on the part of the actor (Langer, 1978). Routine activities, like scripts, promote mindlessness as the more often an action is repeated, the less thought is required in order to accomplish it (Berger & Bradac, 1982). Mindlessness is particularly harmful to debate organizations as it promotes a formulaic means by which to argue. McDonald (1996) argued that “long held practices [and] traditions becom[ing] entrenched by ritual and re-enactment,” is “liberating” as it “eliminates uncertainty or unwillingness to participate” (p. 81). However, Hada (1999) critiqued this belief, asking “If we all have similarly stated goals, and yet there is continually growing dissatisfaction with our practices, could we not conclude that possibly our ‘long held practices’ are not as liberating as we would all like to believe?” (p. 35).

.In summation, forensics communities are cultures with their own distinct practices. Leadership, as the legitimate voices of the community, has the ability to set normative standards. However, in the absence of leadership, the community will develop its own unwritten rules. The in-group with access to these rules tends to be successful, while the out-group who will not or cannot follow the rules tends to be muted. Debaters learn these unwritten rules by acquiring activity, forum, and content scripts through direct action and observation. Routine activities, like scripts, can lead to mindlessness. While



some have advocated this mindlessness is liberating, the growing dissatisfaction within debate organizations indicates otherwise.

Tsoukas and Chia (2002) explained that change is not an event within organizations, but instead is understood to be a constant process. Organizational members are consistently making adjustments, both large and small, in order to adapt to an ever changing environment (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1998). From an ontological perspective then, the nature of organizations is not one of stability, but one of becoming (Martin, 2002). Though it is a constant process, change necessarily disrupts the equilibrium of the organization (Trice & Breyer, 1993), as members communicatively redefine both structure and reality (Ford & Ford, 1994) by developing new meanings and methods for themselves and the organization (Barley, 1986). In that sense, equilibrium within ever-changing organizations may be considered fictional, though it remains a goal those in power strive for. While change is a constant process, singular changes can be isolated and examined. In order to understand how an organization changes, in this sense, it is first important to establish how organizations ought to be examined. Organizations are most clearly viewed as cultures (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Culture is defined as a “shared and contested, historically situated, socially constructed, contextually constrained, and constantly negotiated system of group identities” (Chen, 2010, p. 37).

In a critique of traditional methods of studying culture, Ono (1998) identified the practice of examining culture from the perspective of a nationality or nation-state to be inherently problematic. Such a narrow view of culture both devalues the intricacy of collective communication within organized groups not related to an immutable characteristic like race and limits the discipline’s understanding of such group’s

communication patterns. Culture, then, should be best understood as “shared and contested, historically situated, socially constructed, contextually constrained, and constantly negotiated system of group identities” (Chen, 2010, p. 37). As forensics coaches meet these qualities, their study from the perspective of intercultural communication is therefore merited.

Key to the understanding of any culture is an understanding of identity. Tracy (2002) examined the idea of identity in relation to communication. Communication both constructs and is constructed by identity. That is, a person’s communication shapes their identity, while their constructed identity informs which methods of communication will be employed. This duality makes the study of identity, and therefore culture, inseparable from the study of communication. However, culture is not simply a collection of individual identities. Instead, communication also shapes a cultural identity. Cultural Identity Theory, originally theorized by Collier and Thomas (1988), holds that a cultural identity is best defined as an “enactment and negotiation of social identification by group members in a particular interactional context that demonstrates their affiliation and understanding of the premises and practices required to be a group member, and the ability to perform practices of membering” (Chen, 2010, p. 39).

Members of a culture, then, possess a unique understanding of not only who members are, but who members are not. This distinction informs a group member’s choice of cultures to join and identify with as well as those cultures a member wishes to avoid participation in. Identifying as a member of a culture is, in and of itself, a communicative act. Given societal and intercultural perceptions about a given culture, members will likely be perceived to possess certain characteristics. Therefore, by

choosing to engage in active identification and membership within a particular culture while abstaining from another, an individual communicates the possession or avoidance of those identifiable characteristics to others.

Research concerning organizational culture pays particular attention to this communicative choice. Informed by the scholarship of Jones, Jimmieson, and Griffiths (2005), Hataway (2010) stated, “Organizational cultural research is primarily concerned with identifying the ways in which members of an organization communicatively establish a shared cultural context with one another that is singular to an organization” (p. 13). This singular cultural context encompasses a communicative acceptance of cultural identity and normative standards. In the same dualistic manner that communication is created and creates identity, cultural contexts are constructed and construct communicative practices. At its most essential level, a cultural context defines the environment in which communication takes place within a given culture. The context defines who is and can be a member of a group, while simultaneously discursively establishing who is and will not be welcome. Furthermore, it defines which group members are capable of speaking for the group and determining normative standards.

The process of determining which members of a group are considered legitimate voices is termed empowerment. Empowerment is understood to be “an active, participatory process through which individuals, organizations, and communities gain greater control, efficacy, and social justice” (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 129). When an individual becomes empowered within an organization, his or her voice is considered to be a legitimate authority. This legitimacy enables a greater degree of control over the culture. Interestingly, those with legitimate power need not be members

of the majority within a group. That is, the members with most legitimacy and control can actually be representative of a numerical minority within a given culture (Childress, 2000). Whether the majority or the minority, legitimate members possess great influence in the definition of a culture. Therefore, in order to understand a culture, it is important to understand both the concept of legitimacy and the process by which one achieves it within a given power structure.

Those members of society who have been empowered to legitimately control a culture are those whose perspectives, opinions, and words are inherently valued over those of members of other groups (Meares, Oetzel, Torres, Derkacs, & Ginossar, 2004). Meares (2003) laid the foundation for the principle, explaining that empowered groups are able to maintain domination over a control through tight control of discourse. McKerrow's (1989) critique of domination centered on "the discourse of power which creates and sustains the social practices which control the dominated" (p. 93). Specifically addressed are ideologies, characterized as a form of discourse, whereby the ruling class is able to maintain its power. Chief among the tools of the discourse of domination is ultimate control over the legitimization of voices within the affected community. Restrictions are placed upon the choice of speaker, the content he may speak about, when and where he may speak, and who can be considered an authority on the subject (McKerrow, 1980).

Meyerson and Martin (1987) understood organizational culture to be a "social or normative glue that holds together a potentially diverse group of organizational members" (p. 274). Assuming the accuracy of this analogy, it should be noted that in addition to holding a diverse group together, organizational culture also demonstrates

another quality of glue: it acts as a sealant. The purpose of a sealant is twofold, to keep desired substances in while keeping undesired substances out. Functioning as a sealant, organizational culture serves to prevent those who do not meet the criteria for legitimacy for achieving any type of power within the culture.

Those with power in organizations have a manifest interest in maintaining that power. Deetz (1992) applied critical theory in an attempt to understand this power maintenance as a form of cultural control. His work, specifically, sought to “examine communication practices in organizations that undermine full representation in decision making, thus reducing the quality, innovation, and fairness of company policy” (Griffin, 2006, p. 302). Members with power seek to create systems to gain compliance, such that members will “have internalized the organization’s goals and values—its culture—into their cognitive and affective make-up, and therefore no longer require strict and rigid external control” (Kunda, 1992, p. 10).

Alvesson (1993) expanded on this concept, explaining that control is maintained through the construction of power-based relationships whereby members will, by design, yield to the whims of those in power. Specifically, Alvesson outlined four different methods of control: collective, performance-related, ideological, and perceptual. Collective control is achieved by ensuring that members have strong ties to the organization, which precludes the formation of subgroups hostile to those in power (Alvesson, 1993). Performance-related control is gained by relating all goals to efficient performance by the group, thus positioning anyone who questions orders as standing in the way of productivity. Ideological control is established by encouraging members to

adopt the values of those in power (Alvesson, 1993). Finally, perceptual control is realized by mediating how members understand the nature of reality.

In order to enact cultural control, those in power avoid the use of coercion in favor of hegemony. "Coercion ensures the domination of certain groups through the actual exercise or implicit threat of force, while hegemony ensures their subjugation through their own willing consent and acceptance of specific ideas and rules" (Prasad & Elmes, 2005, p. 850). Barker and Cheney (1994) explained this distinction by analogizing how individuals are controlled by both the whip (coercive force) and the watch (hegemonic control), arguing that "the governance of the watch is the more unobtrusive and the more thoroughgoing of the two types of 'authority' because our regular submission to it is a willing, almost wholly voluntary act" (p. 20). Coercive practices may lead to resistance, where hegemony ensures compliance. In short, "democracy is denied by neither armies nor powerful figures, but in the moment-to-moment. This is actively concealed by discursive practices" (Deetz, 1992, p. 333).

Strategically distorted communication (Habermas, 1984) is a type of discursive practice Deetz referred to. This distortion, according to Habermas, is a "communication pathology" which is "the result of a confusion between actions oriented to reaching understanding and actions oriented to success" (p. 332). Whereas Habermas was specifically addressing distortion in interpersonal communication, Deetz (1992) expanded on this concept, applying it to organizational communication as "systematically distorted communication... is an ongoing process within particular systems as they strategically (though latently) work to reproduce, rather than produce, themselves" (p. 187).

In addition to expanding the work of Habermas, Deetz was influenced by the work of Foucault. Foucault (1980) explained that, within groups, those in power seek to control discourse by regulating meaning for members. Knowledge, for Foucault, was inextricably tied to power. For Deetz (1992), this power is both rendered and maintained through the phenomenon of discursive closure to “suppress insight into the conflictual nature of experience and preclude careful discussion of and decision making regarding the values implicit in experience, identity, and representation” (pp. 188–189). Discursive closure can occur both through intentional acts (Redding, 1996) but can also be enacted unintentionally (Cheney, 2000). That is, those in power can have moral intentions, but through their actions still cause closure.

Discursive closure is primarily effective due to its unobtrusive appearance. It is not enacted through blatant action, but through “everyday micropractices” (Deetz, 1997, p. 134). These micropractices can be characterized in eight categories: neutralization, naturalization, subjectification of experience, pacification, topical avoidance, meaning denial, legitimation, and disqualification.

Neutralization is the practice of treating actions, which are clearly rooted in a value system, as if they are value-free. The perception of value-free structures within organizations “occurs in part because the originators are separated from the structures they initiated” (Markham, 2011, p. 8). When the action is separated from its association with its originator in the mind of the member, it appears to be free of the originator’s values, when in reality it is just as laden with them. Attempts by members to question these structures will “be perceived as arbitrarily argumentative because it attempts to impose value statements in neutral territory” (p. 8). This automatic devaluation of

argument, then, staves off discourse that might threaten the status quo by critiquing the negative effects of structures which privilege those in power and marginalize those who are not. “While individual behaviors may be up for critical discussion, the premises of the organization or the shape of the field is not” (p. 8).

Naturalization is observed when members understand “the socially produced as given in nature” (Deetz, 1992, p. 190). Like neutralization, naturalization reifies group structure as separate from its creators. However, it takes it a step further in that members now assume that the existence of the structural is organic, rather than socially constructed for a purpose. “Organizing processes such as definition, metaphor, identification, framing, and so forth solidify in [member’s] minds the [structure] as something that simply ‘is,’ not something that was invented and therefore changeable” (Markham, 2011, p. 8). Deetz (1992) explained that when naturalization occurs, the history of structures is not only forgotten but completely deleted through the use of language. “Metaphors get absorbed into language and then disappear as metaphors. Terms and definitions are simply accepted, for the most part, as descriptions of what is universal and real” (p. 8).

Subjectification of experience refers to the practice of members with authority deemphasizing the relevance of a member’s objections as being “simply a matter of opinion,” (Deetz, 1992, p. 194). Essentially, objections are reduced to opinions, which the collective holds are personal instead of public and cannot be quantifiably correct or incorrect. Subjectification occurs as a consequence of the Western emphasis on individuality. Perception is thought to be an individual matter, with so-called personal opinions only being relevant through the subjective experience of a given individual and entirely inconsequential to any other person whose perception differs. This individualist



emphasis works in tandem with emotivism (Macintyre, 1984), the pervasive concept that moral assessment is a matter of emotion with no connection to logical rationality (Mangham, 1995). This limits critique in that legitimate objections can be dismissed as matters of purely personal opinion.

Pacification occurs when "institutions sustain their power by using the form of public deliberation in order to empty its content" (Doxtader, 1995, p. 185). Specifically, institutional members with authority will engage in what appears to be legitimate public debate on an issue, when in reality it is a farce designed to conceal their maintenance of their own power. What appears to be a true undertaking to hear and respond to members' concerns is simply organizational theatre, where those with power will discuss concerns with no actual intent to solve them. This "process by which conflictual discussion is diverted or subverted through an apparently reasonable attempt to engage in it" limits critique by causing members to believe that their voiced concerns are being heard (Deetz, 1992, p. 196). Further, these processes undermine complaints of detractors as the members vested with institutional power appear to be proactive. "They work precisely because they are relevant, but they divert attention away from the things that the interactants can change... to the things that cannot be changed" (p. 197).

Topical avoidance describes the imposition of normative standards which make the discussion of certain subjects prohibitively taboo. Such norms "often function to preclude a discussion of the values that define propriety and order and the benefits that certain groups acquire from them" (p. 192). Markham (2005) explained that "certain discussions among groups may be unpleasant because they focus on the politics of experience, contest the norms of the group, or raise unpopular ideas" and, as groups have

an inherent “impetus to get along,” these discussions will be minimalized despite their importance (p. 8). When certain topics, specifically those which criticize institutional structures, are not considered polite to discuss, those in power are able to avoid the resultant loss in power that might otherwise occur. This process shares similar qualities with interpretive framing (Mumby, 1988) in that both prohibit the discussion of certain subjects.

Meaning denial takes place when "a message is present and disclaimed, said and not said" (Deetz, 1992, p. 194). More precisely, this phenomena describes when those members with authority accompany a particular action with a message disavowing their true and underlying purpose. This process where “one possible interpretation of a statement is both placed in the interaction and denied as meant" (p. 194) allows the member with power to act with impunity, as plausible deniability shields them from responsibility for the action’s consequences. This prevents critique and maintains dominant power within the organization as meaning denial "preclude[s] the critical examination of what was said" (p. 194). Fundamentally, the acting party cannot be critiqued for the actions he or she is taking when, in the perception of the membership, he or she is ignorant of the possible consequences.

Legitimation is understood to be the rationalization of decisions “through the invocation of higher order explanatory devices” (Deetz, 1992, pp. 195–196). Higher order explanatory devices are appeals to values held sacred to the organization. For instance, Rudd (2000) discussed an appeal to capitalistic ideals when a symphony was persuaded to value profitability over artistic merit. As all members likely believed in the myth of the American Dream, it was reasonable to expect that the group would value

staying in business over their artistic integrity. Other examples include references to patriotism or Christian values by American politicians trying to justify their policies. This limits the ability of individual members to criticize policies, as those who object appear to not only be opposing the policies, but the values invoked by the policymakers. As individuals do not wish to appear to be, for instance, blasphemous by opposing a policy a member with authority claims is God's will, critiques will be necessarily underutilized.

Finally, disqualification is the process by which only certain members are sanctioned to speak on a given issue, while all other voices are delegitimized. This is, in its purest form, a usage of the *ad hominem* fallacy, in which the individual, and not their message, is determinant of the message's value. The primary means by which disqualification is utilized is through the filter of expertise. Only certain members, either through education or experience, are considered qualified to speak on a topic. If a member lacks the group's sanction of expert status, their message is devalued, despite its quality. This assists in the maintenance of power as those in authority are the ones who bestow the status of expertise, allowing said members to only deem those who are favorable to themselves as qualified to speak.

The eight means of discursive closure, in addition to their normal functionality, synergistically cause three additional effects which maintain the power of those in institutional authority: ethical sealing, ethical bracketing, and double dehumanization (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2003). These effects function in tandem as a layered process resultant of discursive closure.

“Ethical sealing occurs when a particular set of moral judgments and issues is selected and maintained as the set, singling out a limited number of demarcated themes as

objects of ethical consideration” (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2003, p. 8). Organizations and institutions, from corporations to professions in general, establish codes of ethical behavior that their membership is expected to adhere to. “The codified, and almost formal, nature of ‘the rules of the game’ makes them impersonal and lends them a pretense of objective existence. They are there and are to be followed as something natural and self evident” (p. 8). While ethical sealing applies to the organization as a whole, not all members may necessarily subscribe to the institution’s ethical standards, yet still comply with them. This process is known as ethical bracketing, where a member substitutes organizational ethics for his or her own when engaged in institutional activities. Kärreman and Alvesson (2003) reported a case study of Swedish journalists, noting that some may object to practices within the field, but comply as they are expected to. A member who takes issue with the organization’s ethics “can voice as much moral indignation as he or she likes, but it will not be recognized as a voice speaking with moral authority. Rather, it will be recognized as ‘out of bounds’” (p. 9). This “out of bounds” treatment is an enactment of topical avoidance. Further, ethical bracketing is a result of the subjectivication of experience, as “moral convictions are systematically viewed as private and individual concerns, apart from the set of convictions that exist in the moral reservation created by ethical sealing, they are also viewed as something that each individual must manage” (p. 9).

When occurring together, ethical sealing and ethical bracketing produce double dehumanization. This phenomenon occurs when both the member and those he or she interacts with are both dehumanized by the aforementioned effects (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2003). Rather than being treated as human beings capable of actualization, the

organization treats them, with their willing consent, as instruments. “The idea of being instruments substitute the notion of being a human agent, guided by conscience and practical reason (an end), with the notion of being a functional utility (a mean) regulated by external constraints” (p. 10). The end result of these three effects serves to minimize, if not eliminate, critiques which may upset the balance of power within organizational culture.

When members experience discursive closure and ethical sealing which results in ethical bracketing and double dehumanization, they become fully institutionalized and cease to be regarded as human, by themselves or others, in the context of the organization. This total and complete domination deprives them, willingly, of the voice that could be used to question, critique, and change the institutional structures which dehumanized them. The power structure within organizational culture, then, is self-perpetuating.

In summation, though organizations and their accompanying cultures are in a constant state of change, those with power and authority within the institution are able to use discursive closure, ethical sealing, ethical bracketing, and double dehumanization to maintain their status. However, in the tradition of critical theory, the unmasking of these structures of power provides a basis for members to both recognize and alter existing patterns of behavior which reinforce the status quo within organizational culture. In doing so, members are better able to enact meaningful change and prevent further dehumanization.

### **The People's Court: Determining Qualifications of Debate Judges**

The angriest that a person is ever likely to observe a debater is upon discovering that a judge awarded them a loss in a round where they perceived themselves to be inevitably victorious. In the inflamed competitor's opinion, he or she had clearly and unquestionably won the round and the judge had made the decision erroneously. In the mind of the debater, the fault lied not with his or her inability to persuade the judge of the superior merits of his or her arguments, but with the judge's inability to comprehend the greatness of his or her case. The implication of the competitor's rage is that some individuals are more qualified to adjudicate competitive debate rounds than others.

This notion that there is such a thing as a qualification for a judge begs the question of what said qualifications would be. In order to understand the standards that would encompass judge qualifications, it is first important to understand the function of a judge. Bartanen (1993) specified three functional qualities of a debate judge. Judges simultaneously play the role of educator, referee, and trustee. In the function of an educator, the purpose of a judge is to assist students in the process of learning. By providing educated responses to students' communication via ballots, judges teach students the standards of acceptability for speaking, decorum, courtesy, logic, argumentation, and reason. In fulfilling the function of a referee, the judge "must appropriately apply contest rules and render a fair and impartial decision. This referee function requires the judge to understand both the structural (contest rules) and situational (nuances of competitive speaking and debating) elements of competition" (Bartanen, 1994, p. 249). Finally, as a trustee, the judge must necessarily protect the activity of

debate by enforcing the standards of the community. Together, the trinity of functions defines what it means to be a debate judge.

There is little dispute over the functions of a debate judge. Instead, the debate that has raged for over half a century concerns who is qualified to meet those functions (Nelson & Eaves, 2012). In simplistic terms, the question comes down to whether the role of adjudicator may only be filled by an expert or if the general public possesses the capability to function as a judge. This particular issue stretches far beyond academic debate and has been a point of contention for the administration of justice. Certain institutions exist that provide expert judges in an effort to create justice. For instance, the Supreme Court of the United States, and indeed the entire appellate judiciary, is filled with experts in jurisprudence. However, experts are not the sole administrators of justice. The jury system, for instance, is specifically designed to allow the non-expert general public to maintain control over the determination of criminal guilt or civil liability. However, even in the jury system, there remains a degree of expert control. Juries are only permitted to decide issues of facts, while the expert judge has sole decision power over issues of law. Certain information that judges believe would unduly prejudice the general public jury are excluded from the trial to keep the bias-producing facts from the jury's eyes and ears. In addition, a judge can take a decision from a jury's hands when, in his or her expert opinion, no reasonable person could find an individual guilty or liable for certain actions. In sum, the administration of justice utilizes experts, the general public, and a hybrid of both in the process of adjudication.

The question of whether expertise is necessary to judge a debate round has long been argued by forensics professionals (Cox & House, 1991). Even prior to the creation of NDT, the qualifications of debate judges were being discussed in literature.

As early as 1928, A. Craig Baird would hint at the basis for the current controversy... concerning audience and judgment “In judging the efficiency of an oral argument you should of course give chief consideration to the material or ideas rather than to delivery. In reality, however, audiences give great weight to presentation though your arguments are a bit flimsy, you will often carry weight with the audience, if not with an expert judge, by means of your superior delivery” (McGee, 1998, p. 316)

Holm (1940) advanced the argument that training in debating was a necessary prerequisite to effectiveness as a debate judge. The argument that a debate judge should be an expert has continued into present scholarship.

Gass (1988) promoted the belief that expert judges were necessary to maintain high educational standards in the activity. Cox and House (1991) furthered this dialogue, stating that the purpose of using expert judges “is to further the educational goals of debate. A pressing question is how to select qualified judges in order to insure that the activity accomplishes the purposes for which it was designed” (p. 49). CEDDA, for its part, has directly repudiated any attempt to allow ballots into the hands of anything but the most qualified experts. For instance, CEDDA has implemented systems which, by design, only allow expert judges. “The widespread adoption by CEDDA of systems of judge ‘strikes’ (even at the national tournament) and mutual preferred judge selection give students the means for avoiding the influence of judges utilizing an audience standard.”



(Weiss, 2002, p. 127). Attempts to change the philosophy by tournaments utilizing non-expert judges have largely failed due to the lack of support from CEDA programs (Audience Standard). Most tellingly, “at its 20th Anniversary Assessment Conference, CEDA coolly rejected a task force motion, ‘Resolved, that CEDA recognizes the existence of real-world debate.’” (Weiss, 2002, p. 128).

The primary issue with the use of expert judges is the lack of diversity.

“Unfortunately, there are limited numbers of traditional judges and traditional judges are increasingly homogeneous in their judging expectations.” (Bartanen, 1994, p. 250).

Expert judges are primarily former competitors who were rewarded for exhibiting specific behaviors by judges when they competed. These competitors-turned-judges learned that legitimate judges rewarded those behaviors and punished others. When they became judges, they emulated the same style of judging they had come to know as competitors, thus homogenizing the judging pool. Further, these judges “judges tend to reflect the ethnic, gender and socioeconomic make-up of the activity in which they participated,” thus decreasing the availability of diverse role models in debate (Bartanen, 1994, p. 251). “These factors all contribute to the perception, true or false, that competitive forensics is an ingroup activity. This creates a variation on the ‘glass ceiling’ of the workplace” (Bartanen, 1994, p. 251). Outsiders are either forced to adopt the homogenous paradigms of these judges or risk never achieving competitive success. The fact that most NDT, CEDA, NPDA, and NFA-LD tournament invitations require schools to bring so-called qualified judges with them to tournaments further cements this ceiling (Butler, 2002). Butler identified two problems with this request. First, there exists no universal touchstone for judge qualifications. Second, qualifications tend to look at a

judge in terms of competitive background. Otherwise intelligent individuals who were never debaters themselves are assumed to be incapable of determining the proper result of a round.

While there is no universal standard for qualifications, Butler (2002) identified a base of knowledge that NDT/CEDA judges are expected to have, stating:

As a community, debate judges are expected to know how to evaluate critical arguments and how to measure pre-fiat and post-fiat obligations or the difference between them. Judges have been socialized through contact with debaters in teaching them, contact with fellow coaches, or through their own debate training to be versed in the rules of competitive debate. This author argues that judges are socialized inside of this debate community about areas of jargon (i.e. “T” and “turn”), evaluating arguments (pre- vs. post-fiat), and style (speed), just to name a few examples. (pp. 28-29)

Butler continued that judges’ knowledge of the format makes them valuable to tournament directors and increases their chance of being hired.

In addition to lack of diversity, the embedded nature of expert judges within a community creates problems in decision-making within rounds. Most notably, an expert judge is significantly more likely to award a win to “the team they actually thought lost the round because of some perverse reason. This might involve benefiting their own team, exacting revenge on a disliked team or coach, or because one team has substantially more ‘reputation’ than another” (Snider, 1984, p. 127). This corrupt judging is a direct result of the same involvement with the activity that makes a judge so appealing to the circuit in the first place. A community judge who presumably has no dog in the fight will

likely decide the round on its merits, rather than on reputation or for the purposes of competitive advantage.

Finally, the exclusive use of expert judges and the resultant style is likely to alienate a portion of the general public extremely important to the future of forensics as an academic competition: campus administrators. The late Al Johnson, one of the founders of CEDA, stated “I am certain it concerns most of us to have to admit we would not want our Dean or President to hear a round of CEDA or NDT” (Johnson, 1994, p. 3). Bartanen (1994) further explained:

Too many contest rounds are not places you would take your children, Principal or Dean. It is far from unusual to hear or see incomprehensible delivery in debate speeches; profanity-laden interpretation selections; casual dress; and other practices far different from the idealized public speaking, oral interpretation, and argument skills taught in textbooks. These practices, often tolerated or encouraged by traditional judges, may preclude nontraditional groups from participating in forensics. The contest round may appear as a difficult, alien environment. (pp. 249-250)

The alienation experienced by administrators certainly has dreadful consequences for the future and funding of forensics teams. Forensics coaches have rightly expressed the worry that “the decline or death of some university forensics programs... is linked in some way to the perception that intercollegiate debate is now divorced from its analogues in the Real world of forensic and deliberative public discourse” (Which Audience, p. ).

Gaer (2002) offered an alternative to the view that judges must be experts for the activity of debate to be considered legitimate, stating, ““we as a community and

especially as judges and coaches need to...get out of the rut we have created... [and] stop attempting to simplify the coaching and judging process by adding formulaic rules to a creative and expressive activity” (p. 55). In response to criticism that only expert judges promote in-round education, Gaer went on to claim “there is not a coach/judge among us who would argue that this activity could be even more educational if we only take the time to develop an open mind when it comes to the events we coach/judge” (p. 56). Johnson (1994) expands on this concept, writing ““that we, as professionals, lack the courage to penalize students who fail to communicate or speak only in jargon that people outside the activity cannot understand” (p. 3).

The solution proffered by Cirlin (1998) is that debate organizations should “take a tip by paraphrasing Shakespeare and ‘shoot all the judges.’ i.e., let's get the highly experienced, highly trained, super analytical judges out of the back of the room” (p. 344). Cirlin went on to state:

Obviously the NDT speaking style can only be successful when employed in front of a judge who both comprehends and prizes that style. The most common reaction from a lay observer to a top NDT debate round is incredulity. They find it incomprehensible and more than a little bizarre. So the first thing we've got to do is to put lay judges in the back of the room. (p. 345)

The concept of judges consisting of members of the general public is not foreign to debate organizations. “In its beginnings, parliamentary debate under the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) valued ‘lay’ judges as an important factor in shaping the nature of the activity (Kuster, Olson, & Loging, 2000). The first NPDA constitution supported the use of general public judges, stating “The composition of the

judging pool is critical to training students to speak before audiences and to discourage negative practices such as very rapid delivery and excessive reliance on evidence” (Kuster, Olson, & Loging, 2000). However, just as the history indicates that the organization valued public judges, it also indicates a near-instant negative response to their presence. At the 1993 NPDA, the first resolution to eliminate community judges was offered (Kuster, Olson, & Loging, 2000).

The consistent objection to the use of community judges is that “while the representatives of the public realm may be experts in their respective fields, there are no guarantees that they are prepared to fully appreciate the rules governing the debate contest” (Gotcher & Green, 1998, p. 91). That is, the debate community perceives that community judges are incapable of making incorrect decisions. Empirical research, however, has not supported this proposition. “Cox and House investigated claims that nontraditional judges were unreliable when compared to trained judges. Their study suggests that nontraditional judges do not substantially deviate from decisions made by trained judges” (Bartanen, 1994, p. 250). In summarizing existing research on the use of community judges, Bartanen concluded, “No empirical evidence demonstrates that nontraditional judges are less capable than trained judges of judging debate” (p. 250).

Bartanen outlined distinct benefits of using community judges. These include “strengthening the educational value of forensics [and] promoting greater public visibility and support for the activity” (p. 253)

Regarding the increase in the educational value of forensics, students debating in front of community judges learn to adapt to real audiences. Johnson (2007) noted a need for real audiences, stating “My concern lies with the inherent contradiction in the practice

of sequestering ourselves at a tournament to compete in an event designed to teach skills necessary to persuade an audience - any audience". He went on to claim that the sole solution to "ensure that our students are learning skills that will transfer readily out of competitive debate and into the Real world is to make the venue in which they test those skills as much like the Real world as possible". Former NPDA president Trapp echoed this idea, writing "debate at its best is an event that ought to be enjoyable and educational for public audiences seeking information, education, and even entertainment" (p. 85). Hada (1999) summarized the arguments for increasing education by employing community judges, stating:

Our tournaments provide no audience. If this research is at all meaningful in what it suggests for speakers, we cheating our students by not providing them audiences. How do our tournaments allow us to evaluate audience analysis and speaker anxiety? In professional settings, our former students will encounter audiences who will have a myriad of responses to their presentations. If speaker anxiety is related to pleasant audiences under certain conditions (and to unfriendly audiences in certain conditions) as their study suggests, we need to make an intentional effort to provide audiences in forensics. (p. 35)

In addition to increasing the educational value of debate, the use of community judges promotes greater public visibility for the activity. Bartanen (1994) explained "The long-term health of debate depends upon the continued perception of university and general communities that debate is a valuable rhetorical and educational form" (p. 50).

Johnson (1997) expanded on the point, writing:

We can no longer afford the luxury of bemoaning the decrease in support of forensic programs that serve only a minuscule portion of the student body. To be healthy, we must be visible. To be visible, we must offer a product that is accessible to all.

Simply put, if universities do not both notice debate and believe it to be valuable, funding will decrease and institutional programs will vanish. As debate in the NDT/CEDA style is not something seen as valuable to a campus administrator, it serves no purpose for it to become visible. The resultant change from the use of community judges, however, promotes both visibility and value.

Despite the obvious benefits, there are still detractors from the use of community judges. Bartanen (1994) summarized the crucial point of contention, writing:

A critical question underlying this point is whether diverse judging pools are superior to homogeneous ones. The ultimate answer to this question depends upon whether we view forensics primarily from an educational or competitive perspective. A competitive perspective requires homogeneous judges. You would not, for example, want umpires with diverse standards in a baseball game. If the point of a forensics contest is to find a winner, then we should prize consistency and rely on traditional judges. If, on the other hand, we conceive forensics as an educational forum, diversity should be valued. (p. 253)

The elimination of community judges in want of competitive success necessitates the question, "Should teams get that far if they are doing things that couldn't be understood by a public judge of the caliber we are considering here?" (Kuster, 2007, p. 7). Cirlin (1998) further responded to the argument, stating:

That is precisely what is wrong with the sub-culture as it commonly stands. A highly trained and intensely inbred audience. By opening up this important aspect of the activity to the “real world” (so to speak) we force debaters to adjust to real world audiences. I thought that's what the activity was supposed to be about in the first place. (p. 349)

In a final rebuttal, Hada (1999) stated:

However, we must remember that forensics is primarily a means to an end, and not an end in itself. The skills perfected within forensics are directly applicable to *all* other professions. Therefore, how much more necessary it is that forensic students be involved with a diverse audience. They should be communicating to real people in real terms, so that we, the “experts,” can offer clearer and more honest guidance toward their development. (p. 36)

In summation, the presence of community judges who represent the general public is far more beneficial to debate as a whole than the so-called expert judges who are ingrained in the separatist subculture of forensics. Community judges may provide the necessary vaccination against the disease of NDT/CEDA style. To date, IPDA is the only organization that both promotes inclusivity and privileges the use of lay judges. An examination for the symptoms of the NDT/CEDA disease will illuminate whether the community judge vaccine is functioning.

### **Down With the Sickness: An Examination of Practices Within IPDA**

While the IPDA experiment with public debate is markedly different from its predecessors, the organization is not without critics and legitimate concerns. In the sixteen years since its founding, the organization has undergone changes. Whether those



changes are symptomatic of the same disease that infected NDT, CEDA, NPDA, and NFA-LD is the purpose of this study.

Cirlin (1998) explained the founding principles of IPDA, writing:

If educators were starting from scratch and designing debate as a pedagogical activity, they would probably want to be sure that 1) it was in fact educational—that it reflected classroom principles of effective persuasive discourse (assuming, of course, that our classroom teaching makes sense), and 2) that it was fun—that is, enjoyable for the participants, judges, and observers. If the activity were unnecessarily complex and difficult they would streamline it; if it set up needlessly arduous barriers for new interested students to join, they would redesign it to fix that problem; if the entire activity seemed ridiculous to intelligent neutral observers, they would figure out what was wrong and make changes. Public Debate was developed with exactly these educational goals in mind. (p. 340)

In that sense, Cirlin designed public debate within IPDA to function in a certain manner. He explained:

Within the Public Debate subculture, any persuasive effort will involve a debater (having or lacking credibility) who is making a persuasive argument (which either does or does not have emotional significance) in the form of a narrative (which either does or does not make logical sense) to a lay audience (who will either embrace or reject the story's perspective). (p. 341)

That initial description may no longer be fitting. Key (2009) noted several major differences between the styles IPDA employed when he was a competitor in 2003 and

when he returned as a coach in 2008. During that five year time span, Key explained that fundamental changes in organization occurred due to the introduction of weighing mechanisms, the widespread use of the internet, and rampant calls of definitional abuse. Taken together, these three elements mark a stylistic change within IPDA rounds.

Weighing mechanisms are an IPDA term used to describe criteria (Duerringer, 2008). In essence, they are a means of making decisions. Duerringer provided the analogy of a husband and wife buying a car to illustrate their use. A convertible, for instance, can be the best choice if the criterion is sportiness or fun in driving, but the same car would fall short if measured in terms of lowest monthly cost. While weighing mechanisms are, on their face, a useful tool, the restrictions they place on a debate round make the experience less educational and fun for all involved. Duerringer continued:

Imagine being possessed of an excellent argument about the potential of the affirmative advocacy to infringe upon privacy and restrict free speech. Now imagine listening in horror as the affirmative begins her closing speech by telling the judge to ignore those important points because those arguments, though interesting, are non-topical because the weighing mechanism for the round demands that those harms be quantified in finite ways so as to be weighed in the cost-benefit-analysis. (p. 15)

This artificial restraint placed on the round limits arguments and lowers education. It further handicaps the Negative while dictating the type of argumentation that is considered valid, while dismissing all others. “The Affirmative has essentially bound the hands of the Negative to creatively construct arguments, instead forcing clash to come in a neat package that the Affirmative is clearly ready for” (Key, 2009, p. 5). Most often,

the Affirmative claims the right to set the weighing mechanism. This gives the Negative very few options. They may accept the mechanism that the Affirmative provides, provide a counter weighing mechanism (Duerringer, 2008), or completely ignore it and almost certainly lose the round (Key, 2009). It also unfairly balances the use of preparation time by both sides. The Affirmative is free to construct a case around the weighing mechanism he knows will be employed. “Meanwhile, the Negative must spend their 30 minutes preparing cases for Preponderance of Evidence, Resolution of Future Fact, Cost/Benefit Analysis, Comparative Advantage, Independent Voters, and a plethora of other terms invented to advantage one side over the other” (Key, 2009, p. 5).

The consistent use of weighing mechanisms is also harmful to the goal of IPDA to produce persuasive arguments aimed at real world audiences. “We should not be the ones telling them how to judge the round. Instead, we should be trying to adapt to their standards, because that’s exactly how it works in the real world” (Key, 2009, p. 5). Key summed up the argument about the damage to the real world style, stating:

No jury ever found for a plaintiff because the defendant didn’t argue the weighing mechanism. No salesman ever closed a deal based on a technicality. No statesman ever moved an audience through his use of artificial restraint. If we are truly to train for the real world, we must remember first and foremost that speaking is an audience centered sport. We may win the round on a technicality, but at what cost? (p. 5)

In addition to the use of weighing mechanisms, the widespread use of the internet presents an issue for IPDA. McMullen (2011) explains that when he was a competitor, the internet was mostly unavailable. Instead, his team attempted to ensure that there

existed at least one expert within its membership on any foreseeable subject. Instead of relying on the world wide web, they relied on each other. McMullen's team utilized "logic and rhetorical analysis more than facts and figures. Today, few debaters attempt to go into the round without internet research on even the most rudimentary topics" (p. 29). Key furthered the point, writing "In fact, if the internet will not be available, programs have been known to protest loudly. One exasperated coach was even heard exclaiming that his debaters didn't know how to debate without the internet" (p. 6).

Today, the internet has become a crutch for IPDA debaters. According to Key, for the majority of "controversial topics, and even many that are not, there are pages and pages of prescribed arguments available. Rather than arguments born in the fires of wit and pressure, we are continually flooded with arguments as fresh as canned soup" (p. 6). This is particularly concerning as the use of the internet became the catalyst for the focus on information which led to the demise of CEDA (McGee & McGee, 2000). IPDA was designed to eliminate the excesses of the past, but now evidence presses have become commonplace (McMullen, 2011). In addition, the original rules prohibited debaters from even copying evidence onto their flowpad (Cirlin, 1998). That original rule, which Cirlin stated was "required and not an optional rule of public debate" is required no longer (p. 348). This compounded with the availability of information on the internet has shifted IPDA from rhetoric to information processing. Key summarized the frustration the use of the internet has caused, writing:

Unfortunately, rhetoric has fallen by the wayside in the digital age, and we've let it happen. Rounds are no longer won by the person with a silver tongue, but with the most googled evidence. Facts and figures have replaced ethos, pathos, and

logos. Our sources are questioned, anecdotal arguments and pure logic are no longer considered valid, especially compared to what was just pulled of Ask.com. This has dropped the focus on rhetorical ability and reduced our form of debate into a competition of who can ask Jeeves more questions during prep time. (p. 7)

The third problem Key identified was rampant calls of abuse. IPDA allows the Affirmative to set definitions, so long as they leave the Negative ample ground to argue (Duerringer, 2010). If the Affirmative does not provide adequate ground, the Negative's only recourse within the rules is to redefine the round so that both sides have equal footing. Topicality, then, is not supposed to be an argument and certainly not a voting issue. While this is what the rules dictate, this rarely occurs in round. When the Negative feels the Affirmative has defined the round unfairly, or even in a way they do not prefer, they cry abuse and attempt to persuade the judge to vote against the Affirmative on that basis alone. "Abuse no longer means the take on the resolution is illegitimate, just that the Negative doesn't like it" (Key, 2009, p. 3). This an example of a widespread ethical violation in which competitors are "creating false rules in an attempt to 'force' lay judges to vote for them" (Hobbs & Pattalung, 2008, p. 23).

In addition to the violations of core IPDA principles identified by Key, several other troubling practices have come to light in recent years. Drake (2008) states his frustration that IPDA in its current form does not teach true rhetoric. Duerringer (2010) specifically questioned the educational merits of the style of resolutions typically found in IPDA. This same argument was part of the impetus for changing NPDA resolutions to their present NDT/CEDA style (Jensen, 1996). Hobbs and Pattalung (2008) identify a regular practice of debaters fabricating evidence as judges have no ability to check their

veracity. The same pattern was observed in NPDA by Nelson & Eaves (2012) and by Dimock (2006) who cited the practice as a reason to consider the organization a pedagogical failure. Lowery (2009) decried the use of the general public as IPDA judges, stating that he only permitted lay judges that he determined were qualified enough. He admittedly did so with full knowledge of the “IPDA foundation of using lay judges as a sort of ‘beachhead’ against the excesses of traditional debate formats” and for “a reason that some IPDA purists would probably find objectionable” (p. 3). Instead, he took it upon himself to enforce what he erroneously refers to as “embracing a more realistic sense of lay judge utilization.” This rogue interference with the judging pool highlights the same concerns that Johnson (1994) expressed about the desires of NPDA to do away with community judges.

In addition to internal practices, IPDA is suffering from the effects of the same inclusivity that spelled the end of NDT, CEDA, NPDA, and NFA-LD. Despite designing the format to be immune from the excesses of its predecessors, “some strategies of IPDA debaters may be driven by the ghosts of our NDT/CEDA past” (Cirlin, YEAR). Ducote and Puckett (2009), whose program came to IPDA from NPDA, argued for IPDA to adopt the use NDT/CEDA style technical arguments. Specifically, they advocated for the acceptance of topicality, kritik, and meta-debate. In addition, while native to the IPDA organization, Drake (2007) implores IPDA debaters to learn and employ policy debate tactics, stating:

[I]n moving away from CEDA and Parli., we have also moved away from policy resolutions. So, we should keep, or go back to, teaching how to run a policy case. Our students should learn the stock issues. They should be challenged to think

through harms and advantages. They should understand plans and how to present them. This improves our ability to think logically. (p. 6)

The existence of these practices imported from NDT and CEDA, along with the aforementioned negative practices, are symptoms of the disease. The destruction of NPDA was deemed the result of the leadership's refusal to pass rules (Diers, 2011). Notably, Diers (2011) viewed this hands off philosophy to culminate in NPDA president Trapp's statement that that "my primary reaction is that I don't want to become a rules cop" (p. 43). In a recent e-mail exchange between the Chair of the IPDA Governing Board and the Executive Committee, Managing Director Jorji Jarzabek expressed opposition to the creation of a rule prohibiting collusion between a judge panel when deciding an elimination round, stating we should not be "the Judge Police" (Jarzabek, personal communication, December 19, 2012). Specifically, rule creation was opposed, in part, because she felt that the rule would invade "the tournament culture... of trust and professionalism" (Jarzabek, personal communication, December 19, 2012). While it was acknowledged that the intention of the proposed rule change was to protect the debaters, she stated "I think that our job as coaches is not so much to protect the debaters, as to prepare them for these debates and for advocacy in the real world" (Jarzabek, personal communication, December 19, 2012). The similarities between the statements of Trapp and Jarzabek are alarming. In both cases, leaders of a debate organization refused to pass rules to protect the format because they believed that doing so would infringe on the culture of the group. Such a refusal led Diers (2011) to conclude that this policy of non-rulemaking was the genesis for the end of NPDA as a rhetorical format. It gives one pause to wonder if the same might be written about IPDA in years to come.

Evans (2008) stated that all styles “of debate have begun with ethos, pathos, and logos [as] primary concerns. As the different styles developed they evolved into concentrating on logos and forgetting about ethos and pathos. IPDA now stands at the beginning of that evolutionary step” (p. 11). In the 2013 meeting of the IPDA Governing Board, Evans reported on how much more cordial and professional the northwestern states he judged in IPDA at the Pi Kappa Delta national tournament were than those on the primary IPDA circuit in the southeast (Evans, personal communication, March 21, 2013). He stated that his assistant coach and IPDA Executive Secretary, Keith Milstead, had remarked that it was like watching IPDA as it was a decade before. In Evans’ words, “we have met the enemy, and he is us” (Evans, personal communication, March 21, 2013).

IPDA stands on a dangerous precipice. It is already showing symptoms of the disease that brought down its predecessors. Whether such a disease is temporary or terminal is worthy of examination.



## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

This study employed a method of performative organizational autoethnography, informed by Grounded Theory, using documentary film as a medium. In seeking to produce this thesis, a number of considerations were reflected upon in terms of content. Specifically, in recognizing the problem that intercollegiate debate has historically transitioned from a public to a technical format, the proper methods by which to identify, explain, and solve the issue were central to the deliberation. These considerations led to the choice of method informed by Grounded Theory, stemming from organizational autoethnography, in the medium of documentary film. In order to defend the choice of methodology, the justification behind the project, an explanation of why each specific method was chosen, and finally elaboration on how each stage of analysis works effectively in combination will be provided.

#### **Justification**

The first consideration in the choice of methods was the accessibility of the final product. Simply put, most individuals do not read graduate theses. While a search of the literature could find no statistical data concerning how often graduate theses are electronically reviewed from services like ProQuest or checked out from libraries, the anecdotal evidence from seasoned scholars supports this assertion. Notably, Cassuto (2011), an English professor at Fordham University, wrote in an article published in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that “Ordinarily fewer than five people will read your thesis. That's not counting those with whom you share DNA or a bed.” Germano (2005) stated “An unrevised dissertation is a manuscript no one wants to see” (p. 17). Germano

went on to discuss the troubles many graduate have publishing theses and dissertations into books as publishers, who are profit-minded, understand that a general audience has no interest in reading it.

While the general public is unlikely to read this thesis, they are significantly more apt to view it in the form of a documentary. Netflix, the dominant brand in streaming media, has a library of hundreds of documentaries, from popular films by directors like Michael Moore to independent productions. While Netflix does not release viewing statistics, their recent choice to create original documentaries for their exclusive broadcast speaks to the likely high viewership of this category of film (Dionne, 2013). While this film will not be commercially released, there is a high viewership among documentaries freely available on services like YouTube, where I plan to publish my film. YouTubeDocumentaries.com catalogs free documentaries published to YouTube. The mostly highly rated film on the site, *Zeitgeist: Moving Forward*, has over 21 million views as of December 1, 2013 (Joseph, 2011). While this degree of viewership is unexpected for this thesis, the fact remains that even several hundred views would allow this work to reach a substantially larger portion of the population than the five who are likely to read a written thesis.

Further, the choice to use the performative medium, digital storytelling, as a method speaks to the general argument of this thesis that debate ought to be public. The main critique argued within of styles like NDT and CEDA is that they are inaccessible to a general audience and designed to be appreciated only by a select few members of a segmented academic community. Should this thesis have been entirely written, it would

likewise be designed for such an audience, thus causing it to partake in the same exclusionary practices that this thesis opposes.

### **Organizational Autoethnography**

Boyle and Parry (2007) explained the premise of organizational autoethnography, stating “autoethnographic accounts are characterized by a move from a broad lens focus on individual situatedness within the cultural and social context, to a focus on the inner, vulnerable and often resistant self” (p. 186). However, organizational autoethnography shifts the focus. “In an organizational autoethnographic account, the lens moves from cultural and social situatedness to the inner self and then back again to the situated individual” (p. 186). While arriving at the personal is the end of individual autoethnography, organizational autoethnography does not stop there. Instead, the end goal is an exploration of “how the individual self interacts with, resists, cajoles, and shapes the organizational and institutional context in which he or she is situated” (p. 186). Boyle and Parry (2007) provided justification for organizational autoethnography through two arguments. First, they argued “this approach has the ability to connect the everyday, mundane aspects of organizational life with that of broader political and strategic organizational agendas and practices” (p. 186). Second, they stated that “that autobiographical and retrospective approaches are more likely to unearth and illuminate the tacit and subaltern aspects of organization” (p. 186).

Beginning with the first argument, organizational autoethnography examines and illuminates the everyday actions which define an organization. As these actions are commonplace, they are often overlooked. However, through the introspective lens of this approach, their important connections to the larger organizational zeitgeist can be

realized. In this aspect, the approach fulfills a crucial purpose of autoethnography in that it conveys the struggle humankind experiences when attempting to make sense of our lived experiences (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The second argument held that the approach increases the likelihood of exposing the facets of an organization that do not normally come to light. The most important aspect of this ability is the exploration of subjects that might otherwise be “shrouded in secrecy” by the organizational elite (Ellis & Bochner, 1996, p. 25). Therefore, “organizational autoethnographies can provide first-hand accounts of taboo topics such as sexual harassment and bullying, motherhood at work, various moral dilemmas and highly charged emotional situations in the workplace” among other controversial subjects (Boyle & Parry, 2007, p. 189).

### **Grounded Theory**

Grounded Theory is the process by which theory is “discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to the phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). When seeking to generate theory, Grounded Theory is a sensible approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In traditional research methods, a mass of literature is reviewed, hypotheses are invented based on the current research, and subjects are tested to prove or disprove said hypotheses. In Grounded Theory, a brief preliminary review of literature is allowed but not required (Charmaz, 2006). The purpose of such a review is to familiarize the researcher with concepts related to the field of study without prejudicing him or her as to what might be discovered.

Traditional Grounded Theory relies on the use of extensive interviews (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Subjects are specifically asked to comment on topics being investigated

generally, with little direction provided by the researcher. In doing so, the theory is built from the genuine responses of the participants rather than the preconceived notions of the researcher.

One of the hallmarks of Grounded Theory is the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Rather than waiting until all examinations are complete to begin, coding and comparison happen after each examination. Initially, each examination is compared to all previous examinations. Eventually, as theory begins to emerge from the data, all new examinations are compared against the theory to test if the theory encompasses the new situation or needs modification in order to do so.

Another distinction between Grounded Theory and traditional research is the purposeful use of non-random sampling. Termed ‘purposive sampling,’ the researcher deliberately includes certain individuals who possess the characteristics desired for study (Glaser, 1978). The researcher, having coded and compared all examinations, will use the data he has gathered to decide who to examine next in order to continue testing and constructing the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Generalizability is not a necessary goal of developing Grounded Theory. Instead, it is to provide “evidence enough only to establish a suggestion—not an excessive piling up of evidence to establish a proof” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, pp. 39-40). Grounded Theory develops conceptual categories which may be later tested empirically, and thus is not troubled by small sample sizes (Stern, 1994). Samples are considered complete when the core concepts are both saturated and exhaustive (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). That is, examinations cease when the theory ceases to need modification to encompass new data.

Each examination will begin by the compiling of as much available data from the

participants as is necessary to develop an accurate picture. Data collection will cease when new information is no longer available in each new source. Each descriptor will be marked and copied to a document away from the rest of the gathered data. Once all relevant descriptors and remarks are compiled in a separate document, each will be open-coded using a constant comparative method to collapse similar codes. Open coding is “the analytical process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101). When open-coding, data should be condensed into the smallest unit of meaning possible.

Following the completion of initial coding, short descriptions will be recorded for each code. Data will be additionally compressed by examining semantic relationships between the codes. Throughout the process, continual analytic memo writing serves to define concepts and connections between them (Glaser, 1992).

In compressing data into concepts and properties, Glaser (1992) stated that three goals should be kept in mind. The first goal is to examine what the data is a study of. By constantly focusing on this goal, researchers are able to examine whether the data demonstrates what was originally planned to be studied, or if new concepts not previously considered are emerging. The second goal looks to what the data suggests. These suggestions, emanating from the data itself and not the researcher’s suppositions, form concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Finally, the third goal demands the researcher examine what is occurring within the data. These occurrences, known as properties, are descriptors of concepts (Glaser, 1992).

Following compression into concepts and properties, the next step in Grounded Theory analysis is axial coding. The purpose of axial coding is to create categorical

dimensions connecting the various concepts and properties (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Categories are created to explain ideas within data, while subcategories are concerned with the process-related elements (Charmaz, 2006).

Finally, theoretical coding integrates the categories around a central set of core concepts. These core concepts contain all aforementioned categories and subcategories, organizing them in a way that explains the particular phenomena studied. The goal of theoretical coding is to abstract complex concepts into a cognizable theory (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, conceptual framework is therefore created to illuminate the phenomena. This framework, then, is the end goal of Grounded Theory.

**Use in this study.** While Grounded Theory will inform the process of examination, it will not be followed explicitly. Instead, the theory will be modified to suit the intended purposes of this study. As demonstrated in the literature review, an extensive review of literature was conducted as opposed to the limited review Grounded Theory typically permits. The reason for this derivation is that a knowledge of past trends and the causes thereof in intercollegiate debate organizations is necessary to appreciate the past and current happenings within IPDA. In essence, in order to examine whether IPDA is immune to the disease of technical debate, an understanding of the symptoms and progression of the disease in other patients is necessary.

Data was gathered using a process of minimally guided interviews. The initial subject was asked to comment on the nature of debate in general, the trends of intercollegiate debate, and the current state and past of IPDA. Following the extensive interviewing process, participants were given as much liberty as possible to freely comment however they chose. Samples were not selected randomly, but in respect to

their relationship with IPDA or intercollegiate debate in general. In total, 26 interviews were conducted. Participants were either coaches or students who have participated in IPDA since its inception. Interviews were conducted over the course of seven months and were filmed at a location of the interviewee's choice. The interviews ranged from fifteen minutes to an hour, depending on the length of the interviewee's answers. Each interview was reviewed to create an ever-changing set of concepts and properties. Once these were deemed exhaustive, the axial coding and finally theoretical coding were employed to create a theoretical framework to answer the research question. This theoretical framework guided the selection and arrangement of the pieces of the interview for the final performance, a documentary film.

### **Documentary Film**

The medium of documentary film was chosen to express the performative organizational autoethnography. The reason for this choice relied on MacDonald (2010)'s postulation that "A written report could never fully capture the blur of the cultural performances I experienced" (p. 42). The use of documentary film as a medium of performance is not unheard of. Bergman (2004), among others, performed an analysis of a documentary as a performance.

Documentary film, in its use of images of the real world for the purposes of personal expression" is situated well as a medium of performance (Winston, 1995, p. 20). Through the process of narration by the filmmaker, the medium is also well suited to performative autoethnography as "narration also functions as a personal interview in the film. The documentary interview component is a culturally agreed upon form in which



the audience, filmmakers and the interviewees all participate” (Bergman, 2004, p. 24).

Bergman continued her explanation, stating:

All the participants in the filmic triangle (filmmaker, interviewee, audience) partake in a frame whose performance reflects the contemporary understanding of what truth should look like and sound like in a documentary interview. The documentary interviewee’s style of performance is one that closely resembles theatrical naturalism. (p. 24)

Zola (1968) advocated performance that produced scientific representation, stating, “We are an age of method, of experimental science; our primary need is for precise analysis” (p. 361). According to Zola, such precise analysis is only accessible through naturalistic performance, as is found in documentary interviews. Berman (2004) added to this line of thought, stating the “performance of naturalism then privileges a kind of voyeurism by providing a distance between the audience and the filmically observed” (p. 25) and that the audience “experiences a vicarious pleasure in viewing another’s representation with none of the risk of interaction as well as none of the apparent work in the production of knowledge” (p. 25).

Documentary film, in this sense, is what Lambert (2013) referred to as digital storytelling. It is the process by which technology is used to overcome the de-storification of culture. Stories are used to affirm, create, and recreate identity (Lambert, 2013). The process of de-storification deprives individuals and organizations of these benefits. By engaging in digital storytelling through documentary film, an organization’s identity may be transformed.

Finally, the camera itself plays a role in the performance. “From its inception, the

camera's use and relevance have been complicated, and acknowledging the nature of this technology is one key to interpreting its engagement with its creators as well as with its audience" (Bergman, 2004, p. 31).

### **Conglomerated Methodology**

In total, the use of documentary as a medium provided a means to effectively express the organizational autoethnography which this study employed. By providing actual video of the subjects expressing themselves combined with the use of images, video clips, and narration, the organization's collective voice can be best represented.

Subjects were a variety of competitors and coaches, both past and present, along with founders and other prominent members of the organization. By using a diverse pool of interviewees, the film was able to capture multiple perspectives. The use of modified Grounded Theory was able to produce, from many voices, a unified perspective. The audience, which is intended to be members of the IPDA community, is invited to experience this message in a manner stimulating to the auditory and visual senses. As they partake in the digital storytelling, their conceptions of the organization are both deconstructed, reorganized, and finally realized. The nature of the digital storytelling allows the audience to fully experience both the theory and the process of its creation through autoethnography (Spry, 2001)

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DOCUMENTARY SUMMARY**

While the film itself, which is included with this thesis, must be viewed in order to truly experience the performance, an outline of its contents are provided below.

#### **Introduction (00;00;09;04)**

This section begins the film by contrasting the popular conception of academic debate in film against the actual practice of policy debate. The premise that debate ought to be fun and educational is first introduced. The audience meets the narrator, who describes his background with debate. A brief history of intercollegiate debate is shown through animation. Finally, the narrator explains the premise of the documentary.

#### **What is debate? (00;09;30;01)**

This brief section serves to define debate, for the purposes of the film, to the audience. It also exposes the audience to some of the interviewees and the conglomerated conversational style of the film.

#### **History of IPDA (00;12;28;05)**

The history of IPDA is told through the voices of two founding members as well as an early competitor. This sections frames IPDA in terms of its purpose, as well as providing insight as to the reasons for its creation and practices.

#### **What is good debate? (00;40;05;12)**

Here, the audience is exposed to the normative belief of the IPDA community concerning how the practice of intercollegiate debate ought to exist. Specifically, topics such as delivery and connection with the audience are investigated in detail.

### **What is bad debate? (00;44;50;13)**

In this section, the IPDA community reflects upon negative practices within intercollegiate debate. Notably, the community believes bad debate is technical and fails to engage with the audience. This becomes crucial later in the film, as the same practices eschewed by the community are shown to be practiced by it.

### **How does it go from good to bad?(00;51;10;13)**

Interviewees discuss the transition of debate from possessing positive to negative qualities. As with the previous section, its relevance is not only in the content itself, but in relation to the later criticism of the organization. Specifically, a primary reason for the change is identified as an emphasis on competition.

### **Competition vs. Education (01;02;14;11)**

In this section, the dichotomy of competition and education is explored. The community acknowledges both the benefits and disadvantages of competition, both in debate and general and within IPDA specifically.

### **Who should judge debate? (01;15;45;03)**

The emphasis on competition transitions to a discussion of the judge, who plays a crucial role in competition. The benefits of the lay judge, in terms of the skills taught to students, is discussed at length.

### **Is IPDA changing? (01;36;10;07)**

In what is perhaps the most important section of the film, the interviewees discuss criticisms of changes within IPDA which mirror their earlier complaints about bad debate and speculation as to why debate changes. By having previously established the

organizational norms for debate, the same voices then collectively identify how the organization is violating them.

**So what's the point? (02;02;35;27)**

Rather than end on a negative note, which is unlikely to cause the recipients to positively receive the message, the audience is reminded of the unique benefits that IPDA has historically provided. Specifically, that the best parts of IPDA have little to do with the competition and everything to do with the people involved. This frames IPDA and intercollegiate debate in general, not as a competition, but as a community.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **REFLECTIONS**

The central purpose of this thesis was twofold. First, it sought to answer the question of why intercollegiate debate has repeatedly transitioned throughout its history from a public to technical style of argumentation. Second, through the performance of an organizational autoethnography in the form of documentary film, it sought to stifle this change within IPDA by exposing the hidden processes which cause the transformation and making these formerly seemingly natural processes strange and uncomfortable for participants.

The film's interviews began with a simple premise: debate ought to be two things, fun and educational. While often left on the editing room floor, this same statement was repeatedly echoed by multiple participants as something of a mantra of the organization. It is worth noting that of the two espoused qualities, neither is indicative of competition. The organization, on its face, worships at the twin altars of enjoyment and enlightenment.

In its 16 year history, IPDA has relished in its difference. Its founder, Alan Cirlin, noted that, to his knowledge, no other debate organization has ever begun with the premise of achieving a specific pedagogical end. Where other organizations celebrate debate, as Web Drake termed it, as verbal chess performed before expert referees, IPDA took the opposite path. As Debbi Hatton phrased it, IPDA seeks to bring debate to the masses, both in terms of its participants and its audience.

For this reason, IPDA sought to be revolutionary through the purposeful inclusion of judges with little to no knowledge of competitive debate norms. By employing these so-called 'lay judges,' IPDA sought immunity from the zombie infection that is the shift

to technical debate. Their logic was simple. Spreading, jargon, kritiks, and the other hallmarks of technical debate would be lost on the lay judge. Therefore, if competitors did not want to lose, they would avoid these strategies at all costs.

Those laying for the foundation of IPDA recognized that debate, at its core, must still be a competition. Rather than attempt to vanquish the demon of competitive spirit, the organization sought to tame it, to befriend it. If the parameters of winning were prescribed to require adherence to a public style of debating, then competitors would necessarily adhere to such norms to ensure their continued collection of trophies and season-long points. As demonstrated by the interviews, competition is seen to work in conjunction, rather than at odds, with education. Competition provides motivation for students to improve. It provides an objective measure of their skill. More importantly, however, it provides a means to justify funding to the program's administration. If a program is winning trophies, it improves the universities image. Therefore, the program can count on the sustainment of their travel budget, if not the occasional increase. This demand for excellence in the competitive arena might provide proper motivation for athletic teams, as there is little academic growth possible from hitting a homerun or scoring a touchdown. However, when the activity also seeks to broaden the educational perspective of its participants, the motivation supplied by competition is a double-edged sword.

Chris Medina succinctly stated that the focus of the event will dictate its outcomes. If the goal of an activity is competition, then its norms will be dictated by competitive advantage. If the purpose of the activity is educational, then learning will be privileged over all other ends. The question then becomes whether education and

competition can equitably co-exist. That is, can there ever be such a thing as a truly educational competition or truly competitive education? As Scott Kuttenkuler noted, competition is measurable. Learning, especially in terms of the skills debate espouses to teach, is less objectively observed. Therefore, it stands to reason that competition will overwhelm education in any instance where they coexist. It is easy for a coach to prove that his or her students are competitively successful through hard numbers, wins and losses, and trophies collected. However, it is much more difficult for a coach to effectively demonstrate that his students are learning, especially to be more persuasive. Therefore, knowing the need to justify program funding, it is logical that coaches will lean towards objective competitive results over subjective educational gains when arguing for dollars and cents.

IPDA recognized that competition would overwhelm education under normal circumstances, as it had in NDT and CEDA. As noted previously, it sought to marry the warring aims by creating competition that required students to learn in order to win. Unfortunately, this is the same failed premise behind standardized testing. As in IPDA, those who advocate on behalf of standardized tests claim that if the exams test students over facts and skills society desires they would be proficient in, then they must be proficient in said skills in order to be successful. Instead, rather than actually teaching the skills, teachers began to teach students only how to pass the test, how to win at the competition. The passage of No Child Left Behind, which tied student performance on standardized tests to school funding, only exacerbated the problem. Teachers sought to preserve their jobs and their funding by teaching students only the means necessary to successfully complete the exams. If the legislators who passed NCLB had studied the



trend of debate to shift from public to technical style, they would have known the method would fail. Debate coaches, like K-12 teachers, are not teaching students to be successful, to truly win. Instead, they are both teaching them not to lose.

Educational success is not celebrated in debate. There are no shiny gold cups for the student who learned the most. There is no championship in expanding one's mind. There are simply awards, not for the true winners, but for those who lost the least.

However, in order for debate to remain viable, it must remain a competition. In what is certainly choosing the lesser of two evils, since funding is dependent on universities who privilege winning, coaches are faced with either participating in competition or not having the funds to travel. Therefore, in accepting the evils of competition as necessary, the goal then becomes not to make debate primarily educational, but as educational as competition will permit it to be.

In the 1990s, when Cirlin laid the foundation for IPDA, he considered the lay judge to be the solution to the disease of technical debate. He did not consider, however, that as a living thing, diseases have the ability to adapt and become immune to cures. There was one particular adaptation that Cirlin was not and could not have been aware of: the expansion of the availability and speed of the internet.

In the days leading up to IPDA's birth, the internet was a fancy. It required a dedicated phone line tied to a wall and connected at mind-numbingly slow speed. A decade following the founding, when laptops became cheap enough for most students to own and free wireless internet became a staple offering at most tournaments, the disease mutated to overcome the attack levied by the presence of the lay judge.

Lay judges, as members of American society, privilege information, particularly when it comes from a seemingly reputable source. An individual's argument might be disbelieved, but should so-called credible sources be cited, the argument then appears to have merit. At this point in the middle of the fourth page of this chapter, readers are likely wondering why no sources have been cited. In fact, the arguments herein are probably being questioned for their validity, if not outright dismissed, simply because no other published work is referenced to validate them. This rejection is the heart of the logical fallacy known as the appeal to authority.

It would be hypocritical to the spirit of this work to cite sources within these reflections. After all, is not a reflection within an academic paper, at its core, an argument? Since it is an argument, which holds that arguments should be able to stand on their own without citation, it would be counterintuitive for sources to be referenced within it.

Individuals privilege information. When the near-infinite world of online information became available to debaters during their preparation time, the organization began to change from the inside out. Debaters began to require sources for their opponent's arguments to be considered valid. In turn, judges began awarding losses to those whose arguments relied on unsourced claims, regardless of the warrant provided. Rounds, then, became more about who had better skills mastering search engines than who presented the soundest argumentation. Resolutions, as noted by the interviewees, likewise moved from broad philosophical topics to those that required research to prove.

Claims that the organization was relying too much on sources were dismissed as ignorant. After all, if the point of debate is education, shouldn't students be encouraged to

provide as much information as possible. Ironically, this is the same argument that justifies spreading. The faster debaters speak, the more arguments and information can be provided. And thus, the disease overcame the lay judge and began to turn IPDA technical, not through the inclusion of kritik, but by an overabundance of information.

As noted, calls to turn off the internet during prep and to cease the abundance of sources within round have largely been dismissed. Since programs that utilize these methods are winning, the goal other programs desire to achieve, the community is following suit. This performance, then, seeks to make strange and uncomfortable the practices of IPDA causing the trend. It is worth noting that this thesis did not start off with a presumption as to what causes this change nor whether IPDA was changing. As these changes have been discovered, the performance serves to attempt to halt and reverse the change.

It would be easy for the community to ignore an individual, but it cannot ignore its own voice. By collecting interviews from a variety of participants including founding members, prominent coaches, and current students, the collective whole of the community is represented. The interviews were pieced together in such a way that it spoke one collective message. The community's voice explained what debate was, what it should and should not be, how the transformation occurs, the roles of competition and education, and who ought to judge debate. After hearing those messages espoused, the audience is then exposed to the community leveling the same critiques against itself. Finally, the audience is reminded that IPDA, with its focus on people, has a unique and important purpose.

The identity of the film's creator, as a performer, is also important. Given its history of celebrated difference, IPDA has often been the subject of criticism from members of the forensics community outside the organization. Had this film been produced by one such critic, it could have been dismissed. The complaints of a multi-time national champion, youngest recipient of the organization's highest honor, and former chair of the Governing Board cannot be discharged as unfair critique.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Like any organizational autoethnographic study, the results of this thesis cannot necessarily be considered generalizable beyond the organization itself. While principles of Grounded Theory were relied upon to increase general applicability, the theoretical implications are necessarily limited by the modifications made to the theory.

Future research ought to expand beyond a singular organization in an attempt to ethnographically study the intercollegiate debate community as a whole. Rather than restricting participants to one organization, researchers ought to seek participants from a multitude of organizations including IPDA, NPDA, NEDA, NFA-LD, CEDA, and NDT. In doing so, a clearer picture of this problem, its causes, and possible solutions can be realized.

### **Conclusion**

In summation, this thesis sought to expose the reasons for the historical transformation of debate and to stave off the disease within IPDA. Regrettably, IPDA is not the solution to the problem. The expansion of the internet, which lead to an overreliance on information within rounds, has caused the disease of technical debate to produce a new strain.

This performance seeks to expose the strain within the IPDA community in order to provide opportunity for minimization of its effects. If it is effective, IPDA may not ever be truly free of the disease, but it stands a chance of entering remission. The goal of this performance, at its core, is to remind the IPDA community that debate is still two things: fun and educational, and that when it stops being either, we should stop doing it.

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