

Contemporary Argumentation and Debate

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I Concur, You Are Absolutely Correct that I am Correct: Agreement as an Argumentative Strategy

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Traditional argumentation theory tells us that debates are most successful when opponents disagree, highlighting areas where one participant outshines the other (Kelley, 1962; Levassuer, & Dean, 1996). During the 2008 presidential debates, however, Senator Barack Obama initiated a debate technique that seemed to contradict accepted debate logic. He frequently agreed with his opponent, while creating substantial arguments. This study employs a discourse analysis of the debates between Senator Obama and Senator John McCain to identify the technique of agreement employed in the 2008 presidential debates. The applicability of agreement as an argument form in additional debate contexts is also explicated. Proven agreement types such as agreement for the common good (Lang, 1987), backhanded compliment (Benoit, 2007; Kelley, 1962), and agreement for the sake of being polite (Dailey, Hink, & Hink, 2005) are identified. Furthermore, three additional types of agreement in the form of an argument, including agreement as counter-contention, agreement as an expression of bi-partisanship, and agreement as a touting strategy are posited.

Debates provide a forum for contestants to distinguish positions while presenting the merits of their own position. Since disagreement is necessary for a debate to occur, statements of agreement seem counter-intuitive. Given the seemingly contradictory nature of agreeing during what is, by definition, a disagreement, argumentation scholars have wrestled philosophically with the role of agreement in debates. In the struggle over the legitimacy of agreement as a strategy in debate, two clear contentions have emerged. The first contention asserts that agreement in debate contradicts the purpose

and function of debate in general. The second contention acknowledges that agreement does occur in debate regardless of how nonsensical it may seem.

The paradoxical expression of agreement in debates became a topic of interest during the 2008 United States presidential debates between Senators Barack Obama and John McCain. In the first general election debate, Senator Obama often employed explicit statements of agreement with Senator McCain. The McCain campaign and its supporters noticed the surprising rhetoric and consequently created an entirely new marketing strategy. The McCain campaign aired advertisements across the nation exploiting Obama's statements of agreement. The message of the Republican campaign essentially stated, "Senator McCain is the best candidate to lead America and Senator Obama agrees." This marketing strategy reflected the traditional sense of argument which views language of disagreement as essential to debate and language of agreement as consent to defeat.

Scholars have noted the presence of agreement in presidential debate; however, extant research aimed at establishing a discernible technique for agreement within debate is limited. This study further investigates the form of agreement in a debate context, via the 2008 presidential debates. While the context and exemplar used for this study is in the political realm, this paper seeks to establish forms and/or structures of agreement as arguments that can be applied to debate in a broader, more generalized, context. Thus, this paper focuses on agreement and process rather than Presidents, politics, or content.

We compile in two ways techniques for using agreement within a debate. First, we identify three forms outlined in the current literature in order to establish the ways agreement usage has previously been

documented. We then conduct a discourse analysis of the 2008 presidential debates. Based on these findings, three additional forms of agreement as argument are posited. We also note the implications of these findings to debate settings beyond a political context. Finally, the limitations of this study and other areas of potential research are articulated.

Synthesizing Debate (Dis)Agreement

Ehninger (1970) explains that an arguer is someone who is convinced another's beliefs are "invalid or pernicious" (p. 102). The arguer thus engages in an argument in order to "set [the other] party straight" (Ehninger, 1970, p. 102). In this sense, an argument involves at least two or more people who go through "a process... reason[ing] their way from one set of problematic ideas to the choice of another" (Brockriede, 1975, p. 180). A debate follows these same principles but places a higher value on critical thinking and evidential clashes in both support and opposition of a proposition (Freeley & Steinberg, 2009). The inclusion of critical thinking means arguments can occur not only about the reliability of the content of an argument (Moore & Parker, 2004) but in regards to the validity of the form (i.e., syllogism, Toulmin model, co-orientational model) as well (Inch, Warnick, & Endres, 2006). If both sides of an issue are critically debated before a general public audience, it is referred to as a "public debate forum" (Ziegelmüller & Kay, 1997, p. 218). Presidential debates have become one of the most watched public debate forums, allowing for the general citizenry to witness and critically analyze public argument (Goodnight, Majdik, & Kephart, 2009).

Americans first witnessed televised presidential debates in the 1960 contest between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon. Prior to the 1960 cycle, presidential

candidates debated in primaries, but the Kennedy-Nixon debates represented the first televised debates between presidential candidates in the general election. It was 16 years later before Americans witnessed another televised presidential debate. Since then, debates have become an expected part of presidential campaigns (Hellweg, Pfau, & Brydon, 1992). Between the 1960 and 2008 election cycles, 27 general election presidential debates have been televised, providing voters access to candidates and giving scholars fertile ground for research. Scholars have studied such areas as the ways candidates use reasoning, style, impact, cohesion, competence, and form (e.g., Benoit & Hansen, 2002; Holbert, Hansen, Caplan, & Mortensen, 2007; Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988; Pfau, 2002).

A number of scholars have questioned the legitimacy of labeling presidential debates as debates at all, calling them “joint press-conferences” (Lanoue & Schrott, 1991, p. 156), “counterfeit debates” (Bitzer & Reuter, 1980, p. i), or simply, “joint appearances” (Farah, 2004, p. 29). McKinney and Carlin (2004), however, suggest the obvious use of arguments in presidential debates make it natural that theories of argumentation and debate guide presidential debate studies. Kephart (2005) sees such criticism linked with the expectation that presidential debates function within a forensic model. He argues that presidential debates be considered as a form of deliberative debate which provides for “deliberation based in the exchange of arguments” in an attempt to deal with “reasoned disagreement in pluralistic societies” (p. 381). Kephart (2005) thus broadens the concept of debate to include defensible appeals made to everyone involved in the deliberative process.

The introduction of televised debates provided voters a new forum for viewing candidates. In his book, *Political Campaigning*, Kelley (1960) argues for rational campaigning which takes place when campaign

discussion provides voters with adequate information about policies, personalities, and issues. One way in which rational campaigning happens, according to Kelley (1960), is when candidate differences are exposed in a public forum. These forums provide candidates the opportunity to highlight disagreements with their opponent in such areas as personality, interest, affiliation, and policy commitment. For Kelley, “only these provide a basis for choice” (1960, p. 14).

Benoit’s functional theory of political campaign discourse echoes Kelley’s basic assumption (Benoit, 2007; Benoit, & Harthcok, 1999; Benoit, Pier, & Blaney, 1997). Benoit (2007) advocates for the comparative function of campaigns, in which candidates work to distinguish themselves from their opponents through campaign messages. In other words, it is imperative that candidates disagree with their opponents in order to create legitimate, clearly defined alternatives from which the voter can choose. Since the goal of a campaign is to win more votes, candidates must separate themselves from their opponents and provide reasons why voters should choose them over other candidates. Debate appears to be among the most effective forums for accomplishing this task. In debate, candidates are “required to disagree” (Levassuer, & Dean, 1996, p. 131). It is a form of “verbal combat” in which winners and losers are determined (Doerfel & Connaughton, 2009, p. 204).

Given the competitive nature of debate, expressions of agreement between candidates seem unusual and even counter-productive. Poggi, D’Errico, and Vincze (2011) define agreement as “a relation of identity, similarity, or congruence between the opinions of two or more persons” (p. 466). Agreement in a presidential debate could threaten to eliminate distinctions, deprive voters of a sense of choice, and create the

perception of capitulation (Doerfel & Connaughton, 2009). In discussing campaign rhetoric at large, Kelley acknowledges that agreement is not unusual in discussions of basic public policy goals, but he notes, “what is rare, is for them to admit that they agree” (1962, p. 359).

Forms of Agreement

Despite the potential pitfalls and seemingly contradictory nature of agreement in debate contexts, candidates do tend to express agreement during debates. Kelley’s (1962) analysis of the 1960 campaign found more instances of agreement during the four debates between Nixon and Kennedy than in non-debate appearances (Kelley, 1962). Kelley identified three forms of agreement in the Kennedy-Nixon campaign process. First, candidates agreed when they could not oppose the common good. Second, agreement formed a backhanded compliment and lastly, agreement was used as a form of politeness.

Common good. Debaters rely on agreement to create an ideological foundation, the common good, in order to move the debate toward specific policy-making proposals. Lang (1987) suggests that candidates attempting to attract undecided voters should avoid dangerously controversial issues and inflammatory rhetoric, instead relying on agreement to argue for the common good. Sharing a stage makes it difficult for one candidate to portray himself/herself as the only one who truly cares about the common good of the country. Other forms of campaigning allow a candidate to portray his or her opponent as being less concerned with the issues facing the nation, but the prospect of “imminent rebuttal” in the debate context changes the equation (Ellsworth, 1960, p. 799).

Kelley (1962) and Lang (1987) implicitly suggest

that agreement in such cases is forced. How can a presidential candidate not agree with such overarching themes as security, prosperity, peace, and the wealth of the country he/she seeks to govern? If one candidate leads the way in presenting the issue, the opposing candidate is forced to agree. Once candidates acknowledge agreement, the debate can shift from the shared goals to the diverse means they propose for achieving these goals. By expressing agreement on transcendent ideals, candidates lay the groundwork for specific policy-making disagreement.

Backhanded compliment. A second form of agreement appears outside of the debate context. In observing Nixon's agreement language in other campaign contexts, Kelley (1962) notes what he called a "backhanded compliment" (p. 359). Normally, a compliment identifies a positive attribute of a person but a backhanded compliment points out a negative attribute albeit with a positive presentation. Kelley's notion of a backhanded compliment, when combined with Benoit's (e.g., 2007) functional theory of politics, allows for the form of a backhanded compliment to be identified: the structural process of acclamation-attack.

Acclamation-attack. Benoit's functional theory of politics states that an acclamation involves a candidate's self-appraisal in which he/she highlights his/her character or policy position as superior to that of his/her opponent (Benoit, 2007; Benoit & Harthcock, 1999; Benoit et al., 1997). With acclamation, candidates aim to make themselves more appealing than their opponent by emphasizing their stronger qualities (Benoit, 2007). An acclamation can involve a candidate speaking about his/her superior political track record, more effective policy concept, or better understanding of the nation's needs.

Attack, on the other hand, differs from acclamation

in terms of its focus (Benoit, 2007; Benoit & Harthcock, 1999). When an acclamation has a personal focus to it, it becomes an attack. Debates and political campaigns offer candidates the opportunity to question the personal qualifications and character of their opponent (Benoit, 2007). When agreement as acclamation language is spoken, it is thus entirely possible that a simple agreement could be a veiled attack.

Agreement in the form of a backhanded compliment (acclamation-attack) becomes a type of argument. Kelley (1962) provides an instance of Nixon incorporating the acclamation-attack technique during a campaign speech. For this backhanded compliment, Nixon pointed out that he and Kennedy agreed, but only after Kennedy changed his position. Instead of complimenting Kennedy (acclamation), Nixon creates a premise for attacking Kennedy. By accentuating Kennedy's agreement with him, Nixon is then able to highlight the stability and consistency of his own position while simultaneously attacking Kennedy's inability to initially make the right choice. In this scenario, agreement takes the form of an acclamation-attack structure as an argument for why Nixon is the superior candidate.

Benoit and Harthcock (1999) found a higher percentage of acclamations present in debates than either attack or defense. Additionally, Kelley described backhanded compliments as being present in the campaign process and not within the debates proper. However, we postulate the acclamation-attack form could take place within a debate. The form of the argument allows for an arguer to incorporate backhanded compliment in a debate since the structure is not dependent on a campaign specific context.

Politeness. A third documented form of agreement provides a civilizing influence on the overall campaign

(Lang, 1987). Whereas the majority of campaigning is spent exposing differences between the candidates and trying to disconnect voters from a candidate's opponent (Benoit, 2007), debates offer candidates the opportunity to appear more civil than his/her general campaign rhetoric. When asked during a debate in the 2008 campaign why the campaign had turned so negative, McCain suggested the problem could have been prevented had his opponent, Senator Barack Obama, accepted his request for more debates (Commission on Presidential Debates, 2008c).

Politeness theory supports the civility argument. Since presidential personality and personal perception plays a key role in voter preference (Pfau & Diedrich, 1993; Vancil & Pendell, 1984), there is risk associated with a candidate appearing too disagreeable (Jamieson & Birdsell, 1988). The ability to acknowledge similarities with an opponent is one element of politeness that improves a candidate's personal image (Dailey et al., 2005). By expressing agreement, candidates can appear to be polite, above the politics, and more concerned about the country than their own campaigns.

The backhanded compliment is the only form of the three uses of agreement found in current literature that can be seen as a type of argument. Common good and politeness are incorporated into debates and campaigns to improve perceptions of character value. It is our contention, however, that there is more at work than meets the eye when agreement occurs in a debate. When used as a form of argument, such as the backhanded compliment, agreement allows candidates to put a new face on old politics. Thus, we offer the following research question:

RQ: What additional argumentation forms of agreement are used in a debate, if any?

Method

Our investigation of the types of argument through agreement language is based on a discourse analysis of the three 2008 presidential debates between Senators Barack Obama and John McCain. The debates spanned a time period of 20 days with intervals between the debates of 12 days and 8 days, respectively. The first presidential debate, held on September 26th, took place at the Ford Center on the campus of the University of Mississippi in Oxford. Jim Lehrer, executive anchor and editor of the *NewsHour* on PBS, served as moderator and asked the candidates questions. The second debate was held on October 7th on the campus of Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. Tom Brokaw, anchor of NBC News, served as moderator within a town hall format in which a small audience of undecided voters personally addressed questions to the candidates. The third presidential debate was held on October 15th at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. CBS News anchor Bob Schieffer served as moderator and asked the candidates questions.

We obtained written transcripts of the debates from The Commission of Presidential Debates official website (www.debates.org). The discourse analysis of the transcripts followed a three-step coding process. The first level utilized instances of agreement within the debates. The second code level relied on the previously identified literature for argument type codes. A third and final coding utilized categories generated by the authors of this study.

Code Level One

Basic terms/phrases indicating agreement defined the first code level. This research design emphasized explicit language of agreement rather than mere inferences; we looked for precise language in which

a presidential candidate articulated agreement with his opponent. Agreement is identified as a debater's expression of a shared view or premise with his opponent through repetition of his opponent's view as his own or explicit statement of agreement. We excluded agreement with the moderator or independent participants in the audience, as well as agreement with former Presidents, other world leaders, or members of the candidates' party. The analysis was confined to instances in which one candidate expressed explicit agreement with the opposing debater. We regarded as key terms such words as "agree," "right," "give credit," "no doubt," "it's true," "commend," and "support[ed]." These terms, along with other words and phrases (specified later for each debate), provided a base level code for isolating episodes of agreement that occurred during the three presidential debates of 2008.

Code Level Two

We applied a second code level to the McCain/Obama presidential debates of 2008 using themes from existing literature on agreement as argument. These themes consisted of agreement as common good, backhanded compliment, and politeness. Three coders independently analyzed the instances of agreement identified in level one coding and categorized each as either common good, backhanded compliment, politeness, or other.

Code Level Three

We applied a third level of coding to instances of agreement identified as "other" in code level two. Coders independently performed constant comparative analyses of these instances to compile new categories of argumentative forms using agreement language.

Results

A superficial reading might not reveal anything

revolutionary about the use of statements of agreement in the 2008 Presidential debates. However, upon closer inspection, it became apparent that argumentative techniques were taking place in which agreement was being used as a type of argument.

Code Level One

The first level of coding of the three presidential debates of 2008 identified 24 statements of agreement made by a debater to his opponent. These statements were the unit of analysis for the study. At least two coders agreed on the categorization of all instances of agreement within all three coding levels, providing intercoder reliability throughout ($\kappa = .95$). The specific terms used to indicate agreement were relatively diverse. The first debate contained 11 statements of explicit agreement. The key terms: “right,” “as [opponent] mentioned,” “agree,” “give [opponent] great credit” (on topic previously mentioned by opponent), and “there’s no doubt” identified episodes of agreement. The recurrent term “right” identified eight of the 13 episodes with six of these eight prefaced by an adverb to form the phrase “absolutely right.” On two occasions, the term “agree” is used and on one occasion each “as [opponent] mentioned,” “give [opponent] credit,” and “there’s no doubt” is used.

The second debate contained five episodes of explicit agreement. The word “agree” and the phrase “it’s true” indicated agreement. Four episodes used the term “agree.” “It’s true” was used only once to indicate agreement.

The third debate contained eight statements of agreement. The following words or phrases indicated cases of agreement: “and I supported [the opposition],” “agree,” “we both want,” “I give you credit,” “sure,” “it’s true,” and “absolutely right.”

Code Level Two

Results of the second coding level supported the types and occurrences of agreement drawn from extant literature. As projected by previous researchers, we found instances of agreement for the sake of the common good (two occasions) and agreement for the sake of politeness (four occasions). Backhanded compliment was not present in these debates. The absence of this particular argument type supports Kelley's (1962) assertion that backhanded compliment does not occur within the context of Presidential debates.

Code Level Three

Current literature provided explanations for six of the 24 instances of agreement identified in the 2008 presidential debates. Code level three sought to thematically identify the form of the remaining 21 statements of agreement. Analysis of these statements led us to articulate three new structures for the way agreement forms a type of argument: (1) agreement as counter-contention (12 instances), (2) agreement as an expression of bi-partisanship (3 instances), and (3) agreement as touting (3 instances).

Analysis

The majority of agreement found in the 2008 presidential debates was categorized outside the types outlined in current literature. The void between the abundance of agreement language present in the debates and the available literature describing agreement in debates suggests the need for new ways of describing the form of agreement in debates.

Literature Forms Supported

The existing literature describes two types of agreement in debate rhetoric: agreement for the common

good and politeness. A third type of agreement has been noted in non-debate rhetoric which we expected to be present in the 2008 debates. First, Senator Obama used agreement to express his interest in providing for the common good of the people of the United States. Clearly, he would be hard pressed to disagree with Senator McCain's assertion that "budget cuts are a dire necessity" (Commission, 2008a, p. 12) or that America is "the greatest nation on Earth" (Commission, 2008b, p. 22). Instead, by agreeing with McCain that cutting government spending is needed to better the country, Obama could explain the advantages of his plan and compare it to McCain's budget reform policy. This finding verifies the assertions of Kelley (1962), Ellsworth (1960), and Lang (1987) that fundamental agreement to create a common ground allows differences between the real world policy-making tactics of each candidate to be the focus of the debate rather than values and metaphysical moral issues.

Second, scholars have described backhanded compliment as a form of agreement outside the context of debate (Benoit et al., 1997; Kelley, 1962). We suggested backhanded compliment could and would appear as an agreement type during the debates investigated. After completing our analysis, however, we discovered no instances of this form of agreement in the debate and the available literature was upheld. Neither candidate incorporated the backhanded compliment as a form of agreement at any time during the three debates. Further research outside the realm of these transcripts could still find backhanded compliment present in debate, but this study cannot provide evidence that backhanded compliment occurred in the Presidential debates of 2008.

Finally, existing literature asserts that agreement language can maintain a cordial, relaxed environment. For instance, after McCain introduces Vice Presidential

candidate Sarah Palin's track record of working with and supporting organizations who help people with special needs, Obama responds that he "thinks it's very commendable, the work she's done on behalf of special needs, I agree with that, John" (Commission, 2008c, p. 17). Agreement in this instance, as the literature explains, keeps a friendly, unimposing environment. The acceptance and acknowledgement of the positive aspects of Palin's support of those with special needs allows for an amicable debate moment.

New Agreement Forms

In addition to verifying previous research on agreement, we identified three new types of agreement in the debate format. Thus, we answer our research question by concluding that agreement does exist in debate as a form of argument beyond those forms articulated in the current literature. A thematic analysis of the additional agreement statements found agreement as a type of argument in the form of a counter-contention, an expression of bi-partisanship, and as a touting strategy.

Agreement as counter-contention. Counter-contentions are used to attack an opponent's evidence/reasoning by demonstrating he/she has incorrectly and illogically applied information to a particular issue (Freeley & Steinberg, 2009). While it would seem that agreement and *counter-contention* are mutually exclusive, an inspection of Obama's technique proves otherwise. Ironically, Obama incorporated agreement into his argumentative offense against McCain, structurally and deceptively refuting McCain's arguments. Agreement was found as three different types of counter-contention: disassociation, blame turn, and rebuttal.

The first type of agreement counter-contention employed in the debate is a disassociation argument. In

an agreement-disassociation argument, one candidate agrees with his opponent about a negative situation/object and then immediately disassociates himself from the negative situation/object. For example, in the first debate, Obama countered McCain using an agreement-disassociation tactic. He explained that “Senator McCain is right that often times lobbyists and special interests are the ones that are introducing these [negative] kinds of requests, although that wasn’t the case with me” (Commission, 2008a, p. 7). Obama countered by first agreeing with the negative idea McCain presented – specifically, that lobbyists and special interest groups have power that needs to be curbed – but then disassociating himself from the assertion’s negative connotations. In this way, he presented agreement as an argument in the form of an agreement-disassociation counter-contention. The structure of the agreement-disassociation counter is thus clear. A agrees situation X is bad but A is not associated with X.

We observed a second type of agreement counter-contention: a blame turn. A turn, in debate terminology, occurs when a debater uses an opponent’s statement to his/her own advantage, turning the statement against the one who originally made it (Freeley & Steinberg, 2009). Obama employed this technique, turning McCain’s own evidence and logic against him, during the debates. By using blame turns, Obama did not have to directly refute McCain’s warrants; he was able to simply point the finger of blame back in McCain’s direction.

Obama used the agreement as blame turn tactic several times in the debates, but never so prominently as near the end of the first debate. McCain articulated negative connections between the Bush Administration and the U.S. involvement in Iraq. Moderator Lehrer asked Obama if he saw the same connections McCain had just mentioned. Obama agreed, “Oh, there’s no doubt,” and

then turned his response into an attack on McCain by blaming him and the Republican Party: “look, over the last eight years, this administration, along with Senator McCain, have been solely focused on Iraq” (Commission, 2008a, p. 34).

The basic structure of agreement blame turn is apparent in the above example. A agrees with opponent B’s statement X, yet X reflects poorly on B, not on A. Obama thus successfully turned McCain’s contention into an attack on McCain. In this instance, Obama did not have to provide a direct response to the issue introduced; he merely shifted the negative spotlight on to McCain. By agreeing with McCain’s language and subsequently turning the statement, Obama was able to associate McCain with the unpopular Bush administration, consequently arguing against McCain’s policies on Iraq.

Agreement language also formed a direct rebuttal counter-contention. Previous literature suggests that using agreement as rebuttal is counter-intuitive because the purpose of a rebuttal is to overcome opposing evidence by introducing *other* reasoning that will destroy its effect (Freeley & Steinberg, 2009). We found instances, however, where Obama structures agreement language to successfully rebut statements made by McCain. He does this by agreeing with one of McCain’s conclusions, but pointing out the faulty logic leading to the conclusion. In this way, the audience is made aware of fallacies in McCain’s reasoning.

The most prominent example of agreement as direct rebuttal is demonstrated in the second debate. McCain attempted to discredit Obama’s policy on Iraq by emphasizing Obama’s lack of war experience. McCain concluded that Obama’s lack of experience made it impossible for Obama to understand the nature of the issue and therefore it would be impossible for Obama

to assess the situation and decide on a correct course of action. Theoretically, Obama should have directly negated McCain's assertion by presenting evidence to the contrary. Instead, Obama agrees with McCain, saying, "I don't understand. It's true." (Commission, 2008b, p. 22). He continues, "I don't understand how we invaded a country that had nothing to do with 9/11" (Commission, 2008b, p. 22). He never has to explicitly state McCain's failures in logic behind his support to invade Iraq; it is implied and understood in the technique of the agreement rebuttal presentation. The structure of argument that overcomes the challenge of using agreement as rebuttal becomes, A agrees with B's conclusion X, but B's reasoning for X is faulty. Obama agrees with McCain and in the process, provides the type of counter-argument Freeley and Steinberg (2009) label as necessary for a successful rebuttal.

Expression of bi-partisanship. A second form of agreement used in the 2008 debates is bi-partisanship. McCain claimed several times that he was willing to reach across the aisle and rebel against his own party if it meant a successful policy-making compromise could be reached. Obama provided an example of an instance in which he agreed with McCain to provide empirical evidence of successful bi-partisanship on his part. He mentioned "the financial rescue plan that Senator McCain and I supported" (Commission, 2008c, p. 3), indicating he was open to the idea of bi-partisanship and encouraged it with his own actions.

The bi-partisan form follows a structure of compromise and problem-solving. A agrees with B that plan XY was the right solution for both A and B. In this way, both A and B are given positive attributes, and neither party is shown to be superior to the other. Both candidates relied on the form of bi-partisan expression to argue for their abilities to negotiate on a bi-partisan level.

Touting differs from disassociation in that when a speaker employs touting, he/she explicitly highlights his/her own positive attributes instead of simply distancing him/herself from a negative implication made by an opponent. The debater agrees with his/her opponent about a topic and then touts that particular topic to sell his/her position. When used this way, agreement in the form of touting becomes a type of positive argument.

For example, in the first debate, Obama agreed with McCain and then used the agreement to put himself in a positive light by claiming he had done just what McCain said was the right action. He stated, "Senator McCain is absolutely right that the earmarks process has been abused" (Commission, 2008a, p. 7). He then turned this to his advantage by highlighting how his record proves he has not only avoided the negative implications of McCain's claim but also moved against the negative concept. He further explained that is "why I suspended any requests for my home state, whether it was for senior centers or what have you, until we cleaned it up" (Commission, 2008a, p. 7). Obama agreed with McCain that dirty politics should be stopped and then provided evidence that showed he is not the proper target for McCain's complaints and accusations. In fact, Obama used McCain's arguments to his advantage to highlight the positive actions he had taken against the negative occurrences he and McCain agreed existed. Argument as agreement touting takes the form of A agrees with X and X is associated with A. The touting technique thus highlights the positive attributes of the arguer through agreement with the opponent.

Discussion

Of the six types of agreement argument used by the candidates in the debates, the counter-contention blame turn strategy dominated the agreement rhetoric,

though it was used almost exclusively by Senator Obama. Argument counter-contention forms (including all three sub-types) accounted for 50% of the agreement instances by Obama. Overall, Obama used the form of agreement as a counter argument to McCain's assertions more than he used any other agreement argument type.

Implications

The implications of this study are two-fold. First, the findings extend the literature on agreement as argument. New forms and techniques of agreement have been defined and structurally outlined. Three types of agreement as argument in the form of a counter-contention – disassociation, blame turn, and rebuttal – have been articulated. We have also shown that agreement can also be used to demonstrate a form of bi-partisanship. Finally, we have identified the form of agreement as touting.

Second, from a structural standpoint, each of these three agreement forms could be incorporated into a debate outside a political context. All three types of agreement as counter-contention, along with touting, are structurally independent of context. Additionally, bi-partisanship as a form of agreement can have broader application beyond political contexts. The structure integrates both compromise and problem-solving techniques that could be utilized during a wide range of situations ranging from interpersonal relationships or small groups to competitive debates, etc.

Limitations

By parametricizing the study to focus solely on the discourse used during the debates, several areas of influence were not considered. The focus of this study concerned agreement as a form of argument. We used written manuscripts to review occasions of agreement.

We readily concede that nonverbal communication may have played a vital role in the complete portrait of the function of agreement (e.g., facial expressions during agreement, whether agreement is made while looking at the opponent, etc.), but this was outside the parameters of this investigation. This research is limited to discovering the linguistic forms of agreement.

Future Research

The implications of this study build a foundation for future research. A longitudinal study comparing the use of agreement in the 2008 presidential debates with past and future debates would help give further context and potential meaning to forms of agreement. It would be interesting to analyze the political content of agreement such as what issues or policies are repeatedly agreed upon. Likewise, agreement as argument should be studied in non-political debate contexts to determine effects, impacts, and successful strategies.

We believe the most intriguing area for future research is related to Barack Obama's extended use of agreement as opposed to only one use of agreement by John McCain in the debates. Our study observed that, in the presidential debates of 2008, Obama was responsible for 26 statements of agreement, while McCain was responsible for only one such statement. The first debate featured 13 instances of agreement, each one made by Barack Obama. John McCain never explicitly stated he agreed with his opponent on any issue at any time in this debate. This pattern was repeated in the second debate, with Obama again being solely responsible for initiating agreement; McCain never once indicated agreement. The second debate is fascinating in that it contains the fewest episodes of agreement – less than half the number of occurrences found in each of the other two debates. Perhaps this is due to the radically different

format of the second debate, which was conducted using a town hall structure in which audience members were invited to read their questions to the candidates. A precise rationale for this variation may be a fruitful topic for further research. In the third debate, unlike the previous two debates in which Senator Obama was the sole initiator of agreement, Senator McCain expresses agreement on one occasion.

Obama's extensive use of agreement compared to McCain's gives rise to questions of a critical nature. Did the political significance of being the first black presidential nominee contribute to his use of agreement in an attempt to overcome perceived cultural stereotypes? Did the difference in age and experience between Obama and McCain contribute to an increased use of agreement on the part of Obama? What impact did the non-incumbent nature of the election cycle have on the use of agreement? Such questions deserve attention in future research.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to discover if the agreement rhetoric positively impacted the audience's perception of Obama and/or negatively impacted audience perception of McCain. For instance, in the eyes of viewers, did McCain's resistance to agree contradict his own statements that he would reach across the aisle in a bipartisan effort? Now that the results of the election are known, scholars can investigate the impact of agreement in the form of argument.

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CAD FORUM

Introduction to the Special Issue on Digital Debate and Assessment

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Contemporary Argumentation and Debate's mission has long been to provide a venue for professional forensics educators to share their research and observations. As the larger educational landscape undergoes dramatic revision, speech and debate are not immune from these changes.

In this special issue, we have chosen to identify two important dynamics that are currently transforming higher education and debate: (1) the increasing prevalence of academic assessment, and (2) the rising use of technology. These two trends are working together to dramatically influence the learning environment for today's students. Over the course of the past two years, panels were organized at the National Communication Association annual conference and outstanding papers were commissioned from that research. This issue therefore reflects several years of consideration and inquiry by some of today's leading forensics professionals.

Over the last few years, assessment has been something of a buzzword in academic circles. The rising cost of college tuition has been one of many factors driving greater interest in demonstrating the utility of specific educational programs. For many educators, assessment may be something that they can

recognize the theoretical utility of, even if they are leery of how it applies to their curriculum. This dynamic is especially prominent for the resource-heavy demands of intercollegiate forensics. Especially in times of modest university budgets, there are consistent pressures for directors of debate and forensics to demonstrate the necessity of programmatic funding.

The first two articles in this special issue accordingly provide a valuable effort to close the conceptual gaps between intercollegiate debate and assessment. Sarah T. Partlow-Lefevre authored “Arguing for Debate: Introducing Key Components for Assessment of Intercollegiate Debate Programs,” which represents the single most comprehensive effort to make assessment usable for debate professionals. She not only explains the growing trend of assessment, but also discusses how these approaches should be utilized by debate programs. Partlow-Lefevre identifies a four-step assessment cycle of establishing expectations, reviewing team practices, gathering evidence, and evaluating the results. These materials are provided in very specific terms and she offers sample instruments for different program models. The entire essay treats assessment as a process that must be customized for a specific institution. Finally, her essay examines a series of different types of evidence that may be valuable for assessment programs. She explores how a director can utilize media coverage, photographs and video, academic performance, time logs, student evaluation, pre- and post-tests, self-report surveys, diversity measures, cumulative results sheets, rankings and awards, and alumni success. This essay should be considered the foundation for assessing debate programs.

Shifting from the broader demands of assessment to specific instruments of assessment systems, Sarah Stone Watt provides “Authentic Assessment in Debate:

An Argument for Using Ballots to Foster Talent-Development and Promote Authentic Learning.” Her piece makes a compelling case for a revision of contemporary understandings of ballots and post-debate evaluation instruments. Her work assesses the scope of concerns with current post-debate evaluation practices and explores how these instruments could be better understood as expressions of authentic learning processes. Nicely framing debate within the broader search for accountability within higher education, Stone Watt identifies how debate could best be understood as a “high-impact” practice. Further adding value for any director of debate and forensics, she discusses the importance of measuring growth and improvement in students throughout their academic careers. This perspective is a valuable addition to any of the current discussions of the role of debate assessment and balloting and her conclusions offer powerful suggestions for future reform.

Stone Watt’s discussion of electronic balloting is also a useful transition to the ubiquitous role of technology in modern debating. Within intercollegiate policy debate, which is the foundation for much of the second half of our special issue, the dramatic expansion of technological use in debating is obvious to even the most casual observer. The process of researching and constructing arguments had already moved to a larger process, but now the means of debating and sharing these research materials have also undergone a digital transition. Debating today requires a consideration of how the students, their arguments, and their technology work together. Travis Cram’s contribution, entitled “Putting Debate Back Into Debate: Digital Debate and Evidence,” is a valuable examination of this nexus of competitive practice and technological utility. He contextualizes paperless debate as part of a larger paradigm of “debate as information

production.” His critique of this perspective draws upon foundational concepts of argumentation and debate. Cram’s conclusions offer a provocative means of ways to enhance the utility of the research skills taught through policy debate.

R. Jarrod Atchison’s and Ian Miller’s “Open Source Debating: The Justifications and Responses to Deacon Source Version 1.0,” offers an institutional view of how one of the nation’s most prominent debate programs has pioneered efforts to make research fully transparent. They describe Wake Forest University’s transition to an open source model of evidence and argumentation where all of the collected documents used in their speeches are publicly available. Their research offers significant insights into the process of abandoning the traditional notion of evidence as purely private good, even in a competitive environment. This case study then expands to consider the reflection both of their program, but also to the participants at one of the largest and most prestigious tournaments. The combination of both internal and external perspectives on this transition is a significant addition to our understanding of how technological change is manifested in debate programs.

Each of these articles provides a novel perspective on challenges that are redefining debate practice, as well as the craft of being a professional debate educator. We are proud to include this special issue in the concluding issue under our editorship.

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Arguing for Debate: Introducing Key Components for Assessment of Intercollegiate Debate Programs

Sarah T. Partlow-Lefevre, *Idaho State University*

Assessment is a growing trend in higher education. This essay argues that stakeholders in intercollegiate debate programs should proactively begin assessment. Programs should follow a four-step cycle of assessment by establishing expectations, reviewing team practices, gathering evidence, and evaluating the results. A significant portion of the essay focuses on types of evidence suitable for assessment of debate programs. Importantly, programs should choose evidence that is closely linked to their programmatic expectations and goals. This essay encourages programs to use the vast array of evidence already available and to gather other easily obtainable data to measure assessment goals. Such proactive assessment practices may allow programs to justify maintenance and expansion of their teams to administrators who have no direct knowledge of intercollegiate debate.

Assessment of programs in higher education is a growing trend. Rather than view such requirements as a threat, debate and forensics programs should view assessment as a highly effective way to “reach out to the public and explain the value of their pursuits” (Heiland & Rosenthal, 2011, p. A34). Good assessment promotes faculty thought and encourages critical reflection on their educational practices, methods, and results (Wagenaar, 2011). Carey (2010) suggests that effective assessment works for an institution by demonstrating the quality of its academic practices to the outside world. In debate, assessment should be used for the same purpose. Indeed, assessment gathers information about the success of student learning in relation to various educational objectives (Heiland & Rosenthal, 2011). Assessment

works best when “faculty members are involved in the design, implementation, and analysis of student learning” and “will only be effective . . . when faculty fully embrace the process” (Wang & Hurley, 2012, p. 1). Indeed, “faculty ownership of the process” is necessary to use assessment to promote learning (Johnson, 2012, p. 465). Debate faculty and other stakeholders should be proactive in producing assessment practices that reflect the multifaceted nature of the activity. To engage in assessment effectively, debate programs need to begin gathering and using the vast array of empirical and experiential data available to them.

What Shulruf (2010) identifies as a “lack of empirical data in analysis of extracurricular activities” is also true in college debate (p. 606). Debate assessment should examine “aspects of participation including what motivates participation, how and why students participate, and how such participation impacts on their outcomes” (Shulruf, 2010, p. 609). While participation in extracurricular activities is positively correlated with academic achievement, more research needs to be done on assessment of extracurricular programs that are academic in nature such as debate (Branch, 2003; Broh, 2002; Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999; Gerber, 1996). Good assessment rests on the ability to provide evidence and measure outcomes. Rather than relying on “faith” that debate and forensics positively affect students, debate programs should “find solid evidentiary support” for their claims to programmatic success (Heiland & Rosenthal, 2011, p. A34). Such evidence-based assessment practices are more and more frequently required to meet accreditation standards. However, they also provide an opportunity to improve debate programs and to explain the innovative, high-impact, and academically valuable practice of intercollegiate debate to administrators and others who

may have limited exposure to the activity. In this essay, I contextualize some basic aspects of programmatic assessment in the context of debate. I do this by identifying a broad cycle of assessment and examining each stage of this cycle in terms of debate.

Understanding Assessment as a Cycle

As debate programs begin to consider assessment, understanding its cyclical nature is paramount. Anwar, Ahmed, and Al Ameen (2012) outline a basic assessment cycle in an academic setting. They write,

The assessment process is an essential part of a typical instructional cycle encompassing certain tasks; namely, planning, teaching, assessing, analyzing, and improving . . . This cycle enables various stakeholders to make informed decisions for making students' learning experiences more interesting and valuable. (p. 279)

As stakeholders in debate, debate faculty members should begin to conceptualize the variety of ways that assessment can be used to improve their programs. While institutional assessment guidelines vary, all assessment should be viewed as "an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning" (Angelo, 1995, p. 7). According to Angelo (1995), the key steps in the academic assessment process are: (1) to set "explicit and public" expectations for the program; (2) to "set appropriate criteria and high standards for learning quality;" (3) to collect and examine evidence "to determine how well performance matches those expectations and standards;" and (4) to use the results to "document, explain and improve performance" (pp.7-9). Angelo's (1995) description of the assessment cycle assumes an academic program rather than an extracurricular program. However, assessment of debate programs both inside and outside the classroom should

follow a similar trajectory.

Additionally, Janak (2012) discusses three steps of assessment including: “(1) choosing key competencies; (2) developing a rubric for student understanding; and (3) choosing and developing the measures that will be used” (p. 24). Janak (2012) recognizes that there are “hundreds upon hundreds of competencies that we can expect to impart to our students and thousands of definitions to evaluate their growth” and suggests that evaluators emphasize “the critical five or six competencies that are most pertinent to your unique campus and program” (p. 24). He elaborates, stating that definitions of success should be tailored to each individual program. To evaluate these competencies, stakeholders must examine a variety of tools and choose those that work best for a particular debate program. Janak (2012) suggests the use of various measurement tools to provide a complete analysis while not overtaxing a program. In addition to implementing Janak’s (2012) three steps of assessment, using the assessment data is imperative. Indeed, Pike (2012) suggests that a clear understanding of how the data will be used is essential to designing an effective assessment process.

In this essay, I draw on Angelo (1995), Janak (2012), and Pike (2012) as models to propose a four stage cycle of assessment for debate programs as extracurricular activities. First, debate programs should establish written statements of expectation, which may be referred to as objectives, purposes, or mission statements depending on the linguistic preferences of the host institution. What is it that a particular program seeks to accomplish? As there are a multitude of possible outcomes, they should be written down, limited in number, discrete, and assessable. Second, programs should examine their practices in relation to their desired outcomes. Is a program providing the experience

necessary to reach stated expectations? Third, programs should identify assessment tools and methods that best assess the desired outcomes. These measures will vary greatly based on the stated goals. Fourth, careful consideration of the uses of results should lead programs to improve their practices and possibly garner additional resources.

Establishing Written Statements of Expectation

Initially, debate programs should establish specific statements of expectation. Statements of expectation may be referred to as missions, visions, outcomes, etc. by various institutions. Each school will have a different vocabulary and slightly varying definitions of these terms. For the purposes of this essay, I use *statement of expectation* as an all-encompassing term referring to a program's desired results. Creating statements of expectation is a vital step in preparing for program assessment. Stassen, Doherty, and Poe (2001) explain,

A clear statement of . . . objectives serves as the foundation for the entire plan – shaping the kinds of questions you will ask, the assessment methods you will employ, and determining how useful your assessment results are for making programmatic changes. (p. 9)

Writing guidelines for what a program would like to accomplish is directly linked to determining the metrics for a particular program's evaluation. Such written statements encourage the program to focus activities to achieve the desired outcomes. For example, a debate program that has an expectation of broad participation and promotion of greater public understanding of debate in everyday political discourse will establish statements of expectation different from a program that seeks competitive success on a national debate circuit. While these are common aspirations, there are myriad possible

approaches for debate programs tied to the nature of their host institution. Statements of expectation should be written down, used to guide everyday activities, and should determine the best types of evidence used later in the assessment process.

In each case, “assessment practices” should be “tailored as carefully as possible to meet the defined need” (Broadfoot, 2005, p. 128). It is important to remember that assessment is a broad and complicated enterprise that seeks to understand the complexity of human learning and growth. Therefore, stakeholders in debate assessment processes should remember that “assessment is . . . not, and can never be, a science: it is a craft and a social process” (Broadfoot, 2005, p. 129). Indeed, assessment of debate programs should be carefully tailored to fit individual teams and their universities.

Before conceptualizing desired expectations, debate programs should seek out assessment documents from their institution. Assessment is intended to promote the “educational values” sought after by a particular program within the context of the broader educational values of the host institution (University of Central Florida, 2005). Each institution should have its own assessment documents or guidelines, which may contain institution specific vocabulary. Some universities will stress visions or mission statements while other will focus on desired outcomes. Additionally, institution-specific documents may also have templates for goals and mission statements. While some schools publish their assessment documents on their websites, others maintain them internally. So, I recommend a visit to the appropriate assessment office to gain an understanding of the process at a particular debate program’s institution. Understanding institution-specific vocabulary and how it is used in the assessment process

allows debate programs to function within the particular assessment rubric of their host institutions. This could translate into great time savings as written statements of goals, missions, and outcomes can be crafted in institution specific language for internal audiences. In this way, such documents may be prepared in the most efficient manner possible while maximizing the chance that they will be persuasive to internal institutional audiences.

Second, debate programs should consider the many possible benefits of participation on a debate team. A few examples of such benefits are: improvements in critical thinking, development of argument and strategic thinking skills, knowledge acquisition, competitive success on a variety of levels, and civic engagement. While the above benefits of participation are fairly academic in nature, debate is a multifaceted, experiential activity. Therefore, it is important that statements of expectation reflect the depth of debate's impact on students' lives. To this end, they should be developed through consideration of several factors including: (1) type of debate and forensics activities (e.g., individual events, parliamentary style debate, policy debate, online debating, debate across the curriculum, or public debate); (2) the purpose of the style or format a particular team chooses to engage (e.g., promoting public deliberation, developing research skills, developing various computer skills, promoting competitive success, heightening student learning in the classroom, etc.); (3) the particular skills or outcomes students may achieve (e.g., public speaking, eloquence, rapidity of thought, research skills, knowledge in particular areas, etc.); and (4) the diversity of learning environments and student exposure to those environments (e.g., research, tournament travel, practice debates, public forums, online forums, etc.). Additional considerations include educational and career outcomes

the students will reap from participation (e.g., access to graduate school, admission to law school, specialized internships reserved for debaters, etc.), possible direct benefits to the students from their involvement in undergraduate mentoring and research for your program, and spillover academic success, personal growth, etc.

A program's statement of expectations should also highlight the distinctive nature of the debate program. Some questions to consider when answering this question include: Does the competitive academic nature of the program provide students a nexus between academic and real world experiences? Does the program provide the students with essential training that cannot be accessed through other activities or is more effectively accomplished than in other pursuits? In what ways does the experiential nature of the debate and forensics world differ from other programs offered at the institution? Does the high-impact nature of debate make it a particularly influential experience for students?

Statements of expectation will vary depending on the type of team they are written for. A well-funded policy debate team from a private university that plans to engage on top tier competition (ABC) may have significantly different expectations than a regional policy team housed in a public university that has more limited travel opportunities but also engages in public debate (XYZ). I provide sample statements of expectation for each below in Figure 1. While these statements are modeled on the University of Central Florida's (2005) assessment documents, they are instructive as general examples. In every case, programs should adjust the statements to reflect the format and priorities of their host institution. However, the differences between the two samples are useful for understanding the ways that statements of expectation are linked to choice of evidence for assessment.

Figure 1: Sample Statements of Expectation

Sample Statement of Expectation for ABC

University Debate Team: The intercollegiate debate team at ABC University seeks to train highly skilled students in the research, speaking, and analytic thinking skills necessary to obtain top levels of success in policy debate through travel to 8-12 nationally competitive policy style tournaments each year. Outcomes for students include: (1) Enhancement of student's academic success through research and critical thinking skills; (2) Developing networks of future colleagues; (3) Preparation for entry to top tier graduate or law schools, and access to specialized internships in policy fields; (4) Top tier competitive success in academic debate. ABC Debate promotes the development of critical thinking skills, knowledge of policy issues, speech writing skills, and high levels strategic thought and understanding necessary to success in a variety of business, legal and political careers. In addition to highly transferrable skills, the intensity of the program seeks to provide students with the ability to experience and excel in a fast paced, intellectually demanding environment. The debate team at ABC University is unique because it is an extracurricular program that includes the excitement and competition common to sporting activities in a highly academic environment. It thus prepares students for upper echelon professional success after graduation.

Sample Statement of Expectation for XYZ

University Debate Team: The public and intercollegiate debate team at XYZ University seeks to train a broad cross section of students in research, speaking, analytic thought, public debate and deliberation to promote participation in both regional policy debate and public debate forums. Regional travel and a series of well-

publicized on-campus debates will round out the students' experiences. Outcomes for students include: (1) Enhancement of student academic success through research and critical thinking skills; (2) Preparation for entry into graduate or law schools, the workforce, and access to specialized internships in policy fields; (3) Enhancement of public dialogue and deliberation in the campus community. XYZ Debate promotes development of critical thinking skills, an understanding of public deliberation and democratic discussion of various ideas, exposure to policy issues, and ability to analyze issues in a variety of fields (e.g. legal, political and social). In addition to producing actively engaged citizens, XYZ Debate helps students prepare for success in a variety of legal, business, and political careers. The debate team at XYZ is unique because it provides both competitive academic experience and direct engagement in the campus community. Each of these learning environments prepares students to be engaged and productive citizens after graduation.

While there are some similarities in the statements in Figure 1, the ABC University statement suggests a program that has a relatively large budget, high levels of coaching support, and continuous, high-level success in intercollegiate policy debate. XYZ University, on the other hand, reflects a program that may have less money for travel, less coaching support, and be in a university that expects large numbers of students to participate. The point here is not to assess the relative merits of each type of program. Rather, it is to recognize that individual debate programs have varying expectations contingent upon many factors such as budget and type of institutional host. Given the diversity of programs, it is essential to understand that distinct statements of expectation influence the data a program chooses to use

in assessment.

After completing a statement of expectation, a director should outline specific goals. Guidelines for establishing goals include,

- Identify three or more goals that are important (i.e., strongly related to the mission and that will help to achieve the vision).
- Goal statements should describe the expected performance of the student or specific behaviors expected from graduates of the program.
- Don't identify too many goals, particularly when first starting out. (University of Central Florida, 2005, p. 23)

Goals should direct the methods for assessment and activities the program engages in during the period of assessment. At least three goals should be identified. But, programs should remember that too many goals may interfere with the ability to accomplish them. New goals may be established as initial goals are met or the nature of the program changes. "The general format of a goal statement is: 'To (action verb) (object) (modifiers)'" (University of Central Florida, 2005, p. 23). With a focus on "student learning and not the . . . activity," goals should reflect the program's statement of expectations and be possible to assess (University of Central Florida, 2005, p. 23). In each case, the goals should express the unique qualities of the program's statement of expectations. To illustrate, I use the University of Central Florida's (2005) assessment document as a model to outline sample goals for both ABC and XYZ University Debate Teams in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Sample Goals

Sample Goals for ABC University Debate Team:

Goal One: To provide core students with extensive experience in a dynamic, fast-paced, and intellectually demanding environment.

Goal Two: To prepare students to enter graduate school, law school, specialized internships, or other areas of advanced training.

Goal Three: To have students complete their debate education with high levels of competitive success in national venues and transferrable skills such as critical thinking, speech writing, and research.

Goal Four: To prepare students to network and succeed in a variety of demanding business, legal, and political professions.

Sample Goals for XYZ University Debate Team:

Goal One: To provide a wide variety of students with exposure to the dynamic, fast-paced, and intellectually demanding environment of intercollegiate debate.

Goal Two: To prepare students to enter graduate school, law school, specialized internships, or other areas of advanced training.

Goal Three: To have students complete their debate education with regional competitive success and additional skills in critical thinking, speech writing, and research.

Goal Four: To prepare students to engage in their communities and the democratic process through the practice of public deliberation.

While the goals for both teams are similar, there are key differences. For ABC University Debate, goal one specifies extensive experience in policy debate for a few core students, while for XYZ University Debate, it specifies the desire to expose a large number and variety of students to some intercollegiate debate. Goal two is the same for both programs. Goal three differs in degree of acquisition of the stated skills and expectations of competitive success. While goal three for ABC University requires very high levels of competitive success for a small number of students, goal three for XYZ University asks the program to seek to provide limited competitive success and improve the skills of a larger number of students. Finally, goal four varies significantly for XYZ University highlighting the democratic deliberation aspect of the program. Whereas ABC University Debate intends to prepare students to excel in a wide variety of professional jobs, XYZ University Debate is primarily interested in producing engaged and informed citizens. The means to achieve these goals will be quite different. A school such as ABC University would need an extensive travel schedule to the most competitive tournaments, plenty of practice and research from the students, and large amounts of one-on-one coaching time to perfect students' ability to compete. XYZ University might travel to a few regional tournaments a semester with less one-on-one coaching time and more group preparation, while choosing to develop an extensive series of on-campus debates stressing deliberation of public issues. I will not develop a full explanation of the programmatic differences here except to note that such variations require different choices about what evidence to use in programmatic assessment.

Programmatic Practice: Aligning Activities and Expectations

After a program has established a statement of

expectation outlining particular visions, mission statements, desired outcomes, etc., it is important to examine the program's practices for consistency with goals. Referred to as "constructive alignment," this involves "the process of synchronizing teaching methods, learning activities, and assessment tasks with [a] course's learning outcomes" (Keshavarz, 2011, p. 3). Each part of a program's activity should work to fulfill parts of the program's expectations. Programs need to ask honest questions such as: Are the activities the program engages in directly tied to meeting programmatic expectations? In what ways? Are there activities that the program engages in that distract from meeting expectations? Are there beneficial activities the program engages in that are not represented in the statement of expectation? If stakeholders in a debate program engage these questions and find that there are activities that do not add to the mission of the program or are not fully reflected in the statement of expectations, then they may wish to adjust their practices or statements of expectation. Such adjustment might include revising the statement of expectation to reflect more accurately the activities the team engages in or reducing time spent on activities that distract from or do not contribute to meeting programmatic expectations. For example, a debate team that highlights civic engagement and public debate ought to prioritize these activities while downplaying travel for competitive purposes. On the other hand, a debate program with expectations that are focused on national rankings may choose to spend less time developing public debate opportunities. In each case, the debate program should focus the majority of its efforts on activities that produce outcomes consistent with stated expectations.

Gathering Evidence: Assessment Tools and Methods

Once expectations are established and practices

are aligned with expectations, debate programs should examine the expectations in relation to the available means of measurement. In assessment, evidence-based analyses show that your results are “scientifically sound” or accurate (National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices [NREPP], 2012). In addition to quantitative measures, I argue for qualitative assessment, which incorporates a wide variety of types of evidence that can be used to support program assessment. Indeed, assessment should “include qualitative and quantitative, and mixed methods” (Wise & Barham, 2012, p. 27). In fact, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (2009) stresses, “assessments must include quantitative and qualitative methodologies as appropriate, to determine whether and to what degree the stated mission, goals, and student learning and development outcomes are being met” (p. 35). For debate programs, this means assessment may be measured in a variety of ways. In particular, stakeholders should choose methods that best assess their ability to provide results consonant with their stated expectations.

Because debate can be described both as experiential learning and as a high-impact educational practice, assessment tools should reflect the broad values inherent in these concepts. As experiential learning, debate “promotes learning through direct experience, often outside the classroom” (McKenzie, 2013, p. 26). Experiential learning is “applied action” outside the classroom that allows students to “better develop one’s personality. . . and be better able to act with ever greater autonomy, judgment, and personal responsibility” (McKenzie, 2013, p. 27). It can “be transformative, creating new knowledge, skills and attitudes for students that neither theory nor practice alone can accomplish” (Qualters, 2010, p. 55). As a high-impact educational practice, debate trains students who thrive “in a world

of strong global focus,” can “think in cognitively complex ways,” are information literate, and have “strong communication skills” (Leeper, 2009, pp. 154-155). Accordingly, assessment methods must measure the complexity of debate as a learning process. In general, “assessment instruments are no longer confined to the simple, act-oriented, lower level cognitive process achievement test. The old “marking” yardstick . . . is clearly no longer adequate” (Drews, 1962, p. 11). For debate, the notion of evidence-based assessment should encompass a variety of types of non-traditional evidence such as photographs and videos, which allow programs to convey the dynamic fast-paced nature of the activity. Such evidence should be integrated with statistical and other data because it demonstrates the richness and intensity of student engagement in a way that numbers alone cannot.

When choosing which type of evidence to use for assessment purposes, a program must consider its ability to measure or demonstrate particular team goals. For example, ABC University Debate’s first goal is: *To provide core students with extensive experience in a dynamic, fast-paced, and intellectually demanding environment.* To assess this goal, a program must consider a few factors: What is extensive experience? Where is the student population drawn from? What aspects of the debate experience convey the dynamic, fast paced nature of the activity? In this case, the program might choose to use various types of evidence to document team performance in relation to the goal. For example, time logs can show the extensive nature of the experience. To assess the quality of students participating in a program, assessors might look at average grade point averages in comparison to the student body population, previous debate accomplishments, or other academic and extracurricular activities.

For XYZ University Debate, goal one differs somewhat. XYZ Debate's first goal is: *To provide a wide variety of students with exposure to the dynamic, fast-paced, and intellectually demanding environment of intercollegiate debate.* In assessing this goal, a program must measure the number and diversity of students participating on the squad. Diversity factors might include demographic factors such as age, race, socioeconomic background, sex, student interests, individual pursuits, and chosen majors. In addition, the number of students participating can demonstrate that the program is reaching a cross-section of the undergraduate population. To assess the nature of the involvement and intellectual rigor, time logs, photographs, videos, and samples of debate evidence or work product may be used. Goal two is the same for both ABC Debate and XYZ Debate. It is: *To prepare students to enter graduate school, law school, specialized internships, or other areas of advanced training.* The most direct and compelling way to measure this goal is to keep a record of alumni accomplishments.

For ABC University, goal three states: *To have students complete their debate education with high levels of competitive success in national venues and transferrable skills such as critical thinking, speech writing, and research.* Several types of evidence assess this goal. Initially, the competitive success aspect of the goal can be directly supported with tournament results such as records of speaker awards, team awards, team rankings, etc. Since this goal calls for success in national venues, a program would also want to provide evidence that the tournaments that the team participated in were truly national events by examining the number of teams participating in a particular tournament and their geographical diversity. To assess transferable skills such as speech writing and critical thinking, and

research, directors might choose to implement pre- and post-tests. There are standard tests for measuring critical thinking skills, some of which are discussed in later in this essay. Because debate is a unique activity, programs should explore alternate formats for such tests such as videotaping speeches. For example, a program could assess speech writing skills on a yearly basis by recording a student's practice speech at the beginning and at the end of a debate season and providing written assessments for each. Programs should retain all research produced by the team. This can be assessed by examining at the variety of topics, the depth of research into topics, and the page count produced in a single year.

For XYZ University Debate, goal three is similar. It reads: *To have students complete their debate education with regional competitive success and additional skills in critical thinking, speech writing, and research.* Initially, critical thinking, speech writing, and research skills may be measured in the same way as for ABC Debate. Goal three differs for XYZ debate because it asks for regional competitive success, which can be measured through individual results, team results, and points standings. Regional and national tournaments can provide fruitful evidence for analysis. For this type of assessment, a program might examine their results in relation to the results of peer institutions. Cumulative results sheets can track individual debaters over time, noting improvements in win percentage, speaker points, elimination round participation, etc.

Finally, goal four for ABC Debate states: *To prepare students to network and succeed in a variety of demanding business, legal, and political professions.* In this case, a program monitors the career successes of alumni. For XYZ Debate, goal four reads: *To prepare students to engage in their communities and the democratic process through the practice of public deliberation.* For XYZ

Debate, goal four requires alumni contact, but asks the director to keep track of slightly different information. Contact with alumni, perhaps even periodic alumni surveys, should allow programs to gather information about public engagement.

While the benefits of debate in general are being studied quantitatively, individual programs should develop assessment measures that are relevant to their programmatic expectations (Anderson & Mezuk, 2012; Colbert, 1995; Gregory & Holloway, 2005; Mezuk, 2009; Mezuk, Bondarenko, Smith, & Tucker, 2011). It is increasingly important to offer evidence that collegiate debate programs provide substantial benefits to the student populations they serve. To that end, I discuss some tools for engaging in evidence-based assessment. Depending on programmatic expectations, there are a variety of types of assessment measures that demonstrate student development through debate. These measures should be closely tied to the individual program's statement of expectations and goals. Media coverage, team photographs and videos, students' academic performance, time logs, student evaluations, pre-tests and post-tests, self-report surveys, diversity measures, portfolios, tournament cumulative results sheets, rankings and awards lists, and alumni success can all be used to provide evidence of a thriving program.

Media coverage. One type of evidence that is available to debate programs is external media coverage. If programs can show that they consistently produce positive press for the university, the debate team may be seen as a valuable recruiting tool and a public relations asset. This type of coverage can be encouraged through frequent press releases, including high quality digital photographs and well-advertised public debate events on hot topics. News releases should highlight the prestige, scale, and difficulty of the tournament. Naming peer

institutions, rivals institutions, or high profile institutions the team has defeated is an effective way to draw attention. Press releases should also include interesting non-debate related information. For example, a debate article I wrote about Harvard was picked up by our local media because the debaters were stuck in Hurricane Sandy. Additionally, planning cross curricular debates with other academic units can promote debate across the curriculum and might bring additional positive attention to the debate team.

Photographs and videos. Second, while photographs alone do not provide a measure of student learning, they can and should be included in assessment materials. Photographs can convey the nature of the team environment and student involvement in a manner that purely written analyses may miss. Photographs humanize team members, display trophies, and convey the intensity of the debate activity in a fashion that might be difficult to do through other assessment tools. Videos of individual speeches or whole debates can be used in a similar way. Such videos provide examples of student participation and may be evaluated for signs of student growth and advancement.

Because debate is a unique activity, programs should explore alternate formats of assessment such as recording and evaluating speeches. For example, a program might assess speech analytic speech skills on a yearly basis by recording a student's practice speech at the beginning and at the end of a debate season and providing written assessment for each. Not only would this practice provide excellent evidence for assessment, it would benefit the team by promoting debate success as students and coaches formally reviewed student speeches and suggested areas for growth and improvement.

Academic performance. Third, programs should closely monitor students' academic performance. Statistics, such as completion rates of debaters in comparison to the broader student body population, can provide evidence. Additionally, programs can track academic performance by comparing the debaters' grade point averages to the averages in the rest of the student population. Programs may also choose to examine students' grade point averages prior to debate participation and after involvement with debate. If it can be shown that debate participation enhances learning in non-debate environments, programs will be one step closer to effectively proving the worth of their activity and communicating its value to those not directly affiliated with debate.

Time logs. Fourth, to show the extensive nature of the experience, programs might require students to keep logs of time spent working independently, time spent working with coaches, time spent traveling, and time spent in competition debate. Such numbers can become impressive quite rapidly. For example, assume that a two person team traveled to five 8-round tournaments a semester, did two practice debates a week, and spent 10 hours a week preparing and researching arguments. In a 16 week semester, that team has logged 256 hours of preparation time alone. Factoring in travel time of 25 days and actual competition time of 120 hours (assuming 40 debates at 3 hours per debate), the intense nature of the participation becomes clear.

Student evaluations. Fifth, Rowland and Atchison (2009) argue that "every successful debater has a story about a director/coach who changed his/her life" (p. 67). Indeed, coaching performance is at the heart of a debate team's ability to meet expectations. Yet, "traditional measures of teaching effectiveness such as student evaluations are rare for a director's/coach's

debate related activities” (Rowland & Atchison, 2009, p. 67). While Rowland and Atchison (2009) note that standard teaching evaluations may not “be appropriate for determining the teaching effectiveness of a director/coach” (p. 74), I suggest that evaluations crafted for a debate team can provide a good gauge of many aspects of a program such as team climate, director and coach behavior, effectiveness of coaching, etc. Although an incomplete measure, student evaluations may be used with other assessment tools to address performance in relation to written expectations for individual debate teams. Student evaluations can and should be administered to debaters each semester. Programs might choose to have all coaches evaluated by the students. Evaluations can be customized to ask a variety of questions in order to assess any particular metric of concern. Evaluations are valuable because they provide anonymous feedback from program participants. Programmatic evaluations that are not dependent on evaluating a particular coach might also be employed. Questions could rate the participation level and the students’ overall perceptions of various components of the program including their tournament and non-tournament experiences.

Pre-tests and post-tests. Sixth, programs can implement pre-tests and post-tests for yearly topics and for programmatic participation. Each year, debaters learn an enormous amount of information on a specific topic area. Programs can develop a short test designed to measure the debater’s knowledge about the topic area before commencing research. Administering the same test at the end of the season will give the debaters an opportunity to demonstrate clearly their advancement in knowledge of the debate topic. Eventually, debate organizations such as the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) may begin to publish pre-tests

and post-tests for each topic cycle. Currently, the CEDA Working Group on Assessment is exploring the development of such measures. However, for now, debate programs would need to develop such tests themselves. Additionally, programs can develop a standard test for students entering the program. Such a test might include debate questions, general political knowledge, and questions designed to measure critical thinking ability in addition to incorporating more open ended questions that identify expected outcomes and what the debaters feel that they have actually accomplished through programmatic participation. To assess transferable skills such as speech writing, critical thinking, and research programs might choose to implement pre-tests and post-tests.

A third option is to use a standard test of student skills such as critical thinking. Much qualitative analysis supports the claim that debate develops critical thinking skills (Lundberg, 2009; O'Donnell, 2009). Individual programs wishing to demonstrate this among their debaters might employ a standard test such as the *Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT)*. The CAT measures students' information analysis skills, creative thinking skills, learning and problem solving skills, and communication skills (Stein & Haynes, 2011). In developing the test, faculty enumerated "a core set of skills they believed to be important components of critical thinking across disciplines" (Stein & Haynes, 2011, p. 45). The advantage of a test such as the CAT is that "considerable work has been done to establish the CAT's validity by comparing student performance on the test with other measures of academic performance and measures that might reveal critical thinking skills" (Stein & Haynes, 2011, p. 46). In other words, most administrators should find the CAT compelling. Another advantage is a standard scoring system allowing

programs to assess their students in comparison to a much broader student population drawn from 50 schools nationwide (Stein & Haynes, 2011). However, the CAT requires internal faculty to score the test and costs \$200 for each year the test is used, in addition to a \$5 fee for each test administered. Despite the cost, the CAT is one potential tool for programs wishing to demonstrate the critical thinking skills learned in debate. Because “critical-thinking skills are regarded by many faculty as the most important outcome of an undergraduate education” (Stein & Haynes, 2011, p. 49), such a tool could prove invaluable for a program wishing to demonstrate debate’s remarkable power in developing critical thinkers.

Self-report surveys. Seventh, self-report surveys are a relatively efficient and effective method of assessment. Gregory and Holloway (2005) implemented self-report surveys for social work students who participated in debates as part of the curriculum. Students filled out surveys rating their knowledge about the topic, their understanding, their argumentation skills, their confidence, and the experience as a group process (Gregory & Holloway, 2005). Their results included comments such as “it gave me an insight that may not have been presented in an essay. It gave two sides to each argument” (Gregory & Holloway, 2005, p. 626). Over the course of debate, students shifted from 80% reporting okay understanding and 20% reporting poor understanding to 3% reporting excellent understanding, 48% reporting good understanding, 45% reporting okay understanding, and 3% reporting poor understanding after the debate. In combination, open-ended responses and quantitative self-report measures can present a fuller picture of student growth. Similarly, a debate program could implement a self-report survey at the beginning and at the end of the debate season asking students

to rate their knowledge of the topic or current events, understanding of the issues involved, critical thinking skills, strategic understanding, partnership skills, speaking skills, etc. Giving students a chance to provide open-ended responses can provide additional qualitative data. Such data is a robust resource for assessment. This method allows programs to ask students about issues that closely linked to their expectations and is simple to implement.

Another option is to use an existing measure such as the *Bases of Competence* test, which is a self-report survey designed to measure “generalist skills needed by higher education graduates” (Berdrow & Evers, 2010, p. 420), with a focus on skills such as learning, organization, problem solving, analytic thought, listening, communication skills, decision making, leadership, conflict management, organization, conceptualization skills, and creativity. These and other skills are compartmentalized under “four bases of competence, *Managing Self, Communicating, Managing People and Tasks and Mobilizing Innovation and Change*” (Berdrow & Evers, 2010, p. 432). Berdrow and Evers (2010) make this self-report assessment available in their article, which focuses on implementation in a business school environment. Because this test measures “skills important to employees and employers in today’s workplace” (Berdrow & Evers, 2010, p. 432), it may be persuasive to administrators. The test can be administered as a paper survey or online and may be used to assess changes in student performance over a longer period of time. Debate programs that wish to use this test might choose to emphasize measurement of debate related skills.

Programs wishing to survey the students should focus on priorities that reflect their statements of expectation. To avoid overwhelming the students, “consider keeping

surveys short and doing the assessment more often but with fewer questions” (Wise & Barham, 2012, p. 28). Additionally, programs should think about presenting assessment questions in “modes that consider how students best like to interact” such as “scaled or open ended questions on Facebook, Twitter or blog sites” (Wise & Barham, 2012, p. 28). Done right, a survey can be a powerful tool to measure student learning outcomes and competencies developed through debate.

Diversity measures. Eighth, many institutions are trying to promote diversity. Debate programs wishing to include diversity as a measure should remember that promoting diversity includes both encouraging a diverse student body and promoting principles and practices that embrace diversity. The first can be measured by assessing demographic diversity factors among team members. The second may be assessed through measurement of diversity inclusion factors in the practices of a team. But, it is important to heed Ghosh’s (2012) advice and to remember that,

Diversity alone is not excellence, but excellence is enhanced and enriched by diversity. After all, diversity is a fundamental characteristic of human and natural life; indeed, it assures our achievement of excellence, which can only come through our difference and capacities to respond to the many challenges that characterize our existence and survival. (p. 363)

As a principle, diversity can contribute to academic success. Ghosh (2012) stresses that “diversity and excellence reinforce rather than contradict one another” (p. 350). Enhancing diversity in student populations and in the practices of a debate program can heighten excellence and become a persuasive way to measure programmatic success.

Indeed, promoting a diverse team can directly affect academic success among ethnic minority populations. Despite increased enrollments in undergraduate institutions, many ethnic minority populations struggle to complete undergraduate degrees. Pinel, Warner, and Chua (20005) write, “more ethnic minorities enroll in college than ever before Despite this increase in enrollment, less than 50% of all African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinos/Latinas enrolled in college . . . complete college” (p. 481). Debate programs wishing to promote diversity as a primary expectation can anticipate the ability to provide all students, and particularly students in ethnic minority groups, with the academic skills and other support to graduate in substantially greater numbers. This effect has been well documented in high school debate. For example, “students who joined a debate team were 42% more likely to graduate from high school. Among African American males . . . debaters were 70% more likely to graduate and three times less likely to drop out than nondebating peers” (Belanger & Stein, 2013, p. 17). Promoting the value of diversity among the student population can increase academic engagement for all learners (Rose, 2007). In other words, diversity promotes greater engagement among all students affiliated with a program regardless of their demographic classification.

For assessment, a program seeking to demonstrate inclusion of a diverse population must keep records tracking the number and diversity of students participating on the squad. Diversity factors might include age, race, socioeconomic background, ability status, religion, veteran status, sex, etc. as “there are many ways that people differ from one another” (Wynne, 2012, p. 32). Over time, a program that graduates students from underrepresented populations in a greater

proportion than the average student population will develop a powerful argument for their effectiveness as a team. For example, based on the statistics above, assume an institution graduates less than 50% of their African American students. In a population of 10, that would be five students. A debate program that could show an 80% graduation rate among African Americans would have compelling evidence of their effectiveness as eight out of 10 of their African American students graduated. I believe the graduation rates in an effective program might be even higher. This type of evidence should make diversity-minded administrators take note.

Diversity can also be measured by student interests, individual pursuits and chosen majors. A simple survey can be used to gather this type of information about a team. In addition, the number of students participating should be counted to demonstrate that the program is reaching across the undergraduate population. Debate programs should generally reflect the diversity of the student body population. In some cases where diversity is a primary expectation, a debate program may be more diverse than the population of the host institution as a whole. Debate programs that have an imbalance in representation of the diversity at their universities should closely examine their practices.

In addition to diversity in the demographic factors of a debate team, programs can measure their ability to promote “diversity as a learning goal” (Bowers, 2009, p. 3). Some institutions such as the University of Oklahoma are moving in this direction. To bring assessment practices into line with OU’s “Core Values,” they developed a statement to guide examinations of diversity including,

- Respecting others includes demonstrating an interest in . . . knowledge of others . . .

- To value diversity of opinion is to consider all opinions in decision making and problem solving.
- Freedom of expression occurs in a social and cultural environment that is supportive of the same . . .
- To value other ethnic and cultural backgrounds, one must appreciate the complexities of the same and understand that our interactions with others are informed by our conceptions of a wide variety of differences (such as notions of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, veteran status, nationality, religion [sic], age, ability status, sexual orientation, and so on). (Bowers, 2009, pp. 3-4)

Practices that promote diversity as a learning goal can be measured through survey research. For example, Nelson Laird (2011) measured inclusion of diversity factors in college courses by surveying instructors on 12 different items such as “Students gain an understanding of how to connect their learning to societal problems and issues,” and “You address your potential biases about course-related issues during class” (p. 574). Debate programs may choose to use measures developed by their host institution, to create their own measures, or to use Nelson Laird’s (2011) diversity inclusion measures as a model to develop questions for a survey that could be administered to debate students. In every case, providing substantive data measuring diversity in the practices of the team could be beneficial to programs trying to meet institutional and programmatic expectations for diversity.

Portfolios. Ninth, according to Paulson, Paulson, and Meyer (1991), a portfolio is “a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student’s efforts in one or more areas” (p. 60). Such a collection of work is designed to illustrate “a complex and comprehensive view of student performance in context” (Paulson et al., 1991, p.

63). Portfolios could be developed by individual debaters or for a team as a whole. The ability to demonstrate a high level of complexity makes portfolios particularly suitable for use by debate and forensics programs. As an added benefit, “if carefully assembled, portfolios become an intersection of instruction and assessment: they are not just instructions or just assessment but, rather, both” (Paulson et al., 1991, p. 61). Debate programs generate many work products suitable for use in portfolios such as videos, photos, media coverage, and evidence. While Burch (2011) cautions that “it is widely accepted that portfolio assessment requires a considerable investment of human resources and time” (p. 1029), she argues that “a less resource intensive strategy could be a feasible option” (p. 1030). Debate teams are already producing many items that would be appropriate to the creation of richly textured, multi-layered portfolios for program assessment purposes. Thus, the time investment to produce stunning portfolios may not be enormous. Instead, it would be a matter of gathering, analyzing, and presenting products most programs already produce.

Silveira (2013) notes that “paper-based portfolios are still viable” but that e-portfolios are preferable to “provide . . . a thorough student profile supported by documented evidence of skills developed over time” (p. 16). Additionally, Andrade (2013) refers to e-portfolios as “a high-impact educational practice that can be used to document learning in progress as well as its culminating effects” (p. 1). Andrade (2013) states that e-portfolios are a good way to mix qualitative and quantitative evidence, which provides great “appeal for documenting evidence of learning to both internal and external stakeholders” (p. 1). Electronic portfolios are suited to current debate practice because most evidence, photographs, videos, and media coverage are created digitally or easily accessible in a digital format.

Portfolios require direct student involvement. Banta (2007) describes the process that will best integrate learning and assessment in portfolio creation. She writes,

The most authentic assessment will be achieved through electronic portfolios for which students themselves develop the content . . . Students select graded, written, spoken, and artistic works from courses throughout their college careers, as well as photographs and videotapes of speeches, work-related events, and other leadership experiences on and off campus to illustrate their achievement of the expected outcomes. They write reflective essays to demonstrate the connection between portfolio artifacts and expected outcomes. (Banta, 2007, p. 12)

It is clear that the process of creating a portfolio is a learning process for the student. If a program chose to ask students to create portfolios, it would help students to grow academically and as debaters. According to Andrade (2013), “as students engage in the process of gathering and reflecting on evidence of their learning, they make connections across general education and major coursework and even co-curricular involvements” (p. 1). The contents of the portfolio should be carefully chosen to “to exhibit student effort, progress, and achievement . . . [and] . . . can include any number of assignments or creative tasks the students have completed” (Silveira, 2013, pp. 15-16). For debaters, portfolios could include recorded speeches, photographs, media coverage, selected flows, notes on decisions, and evidence. Leeper (2009) notes, “Debaters produce an enormous quantity of research over the course of a year. Much of this work is exhaustive and very high quality. After the season, the work typically goes into a file and stays there” (p. 153). Portfolios might be one way to demonstrate evidence as a work product to administrative and other audiences.

The final requirement for effective portfolios is evaluation designed to demonstrate student progress. Silveira (2013) explains, "Ideally, each artifact in the portfolio has been chosen to document student growth and has been assessed by both student and teacher against a detailed rubric" (p. 16). Fortunately, in debate, coaches and students are constantly evaluating performance. The portfolio itself might include video of decisions in practice debates, coach evaluations of evidence, ballots, or other instructive demonstrations of debate's evaluative process. Indeed, graphs measuring student growth in win percentages or speaker points might complement videos of debate speeches demonstrating the student progression over time.

Cumulative results sheets, rankings, and awards.

Tenth, debate competition and pedagogy are linked. Rowland and Atchison (2009) posited, "competition serves a pedagogical function" (p. 72). They explain,

In debate . . . the competitive aspects of the activity are a means to a pedagogical end. Debaters are motivated by the competition to do an enormous amount of work researching and preparing arguments, work that they would never do in the same quantity or with the same intensity without the competitive motivators. (p. 72)

Put differently, debaters work very hard and learn a gigantic amount in the process of preparing, refining arguments, and debating. In addition, Segal (2009) observes, "Administrators have a stake in claiming debate success for the larger university reputation. This already occurs when school presidents and academic provosts cite accomplishments of the debate team as evidence of the school's academic excellence" (p. 201). Because of its educational and reputational benefits, debate success should be an integral part of the assessment process.

To demonstrate success, programs have a built in assessment resource in tournament results sheets. Cumulative results sheets provide a vast amount of information that can be measured in a variety of ways. This information can measure the success of individual teams through total win-loss, affirmative win-loss, negative win-loss, number of debates participated in, the schools debated against, and the schools beaten. For example, a program could determine an individual team's number of victories against peer institutions and aspirational institutions. Assuming a team has a high win percentage against their peers, this information can be used to make a case for competitive success.

Additionally, cumulative results sheets can track the progress of individual debaters. Programs may choose to examine debaters' improvement over the course of single year or his or her debate career. If a program graphs each debater's success in wins and speaker points across the course of his or her debate career, it can begin to make claims about its impact on students' long-term learning outcomes. For example, a program may be able to claim that a large percentage of students (hopefully 100%) show significant improvement on one or more performance measures over time. Rather than merely stating such outcomes, the ability to provide data including graphs injects these claims with the verity that only evidence can provide.

Another way to incorporate results sheets into assessment is to make them available to those examining the success of the program. The sheer amount of information available on these sheets is often impressive to those outside the debate community. It demonstrates the magnitude of the debate undertaking to external reviewers. Programs can use cumulative results sheets to determine total amounts of participation. Number of debates, hours spent debating, days spent participating,

and numbers of competitors encountered can all provide numerical means for explaining the merits of the program to administrators and other audiences.

Programs should keep records of awards for individual debaters and cumulative lists for teams. Knowing the total number of awards won in a year, the number of first place awards, the number of awards during the director's tenure, the number of awards won by an individual throughout his or her career, etc. can be used to demonstrate impressive levels of success for those evaluating the team. Additionally, programs should monitor the rankings throughout the year and print evidence of their highest rankings. This can be done for individual teams as well as for the squad. It can be done for both regional and national rankings and for the different published ranking systems.

Alumni success. Finally, much anecdotal evidence exists suggesting that debate contributes to success after graduation. Lists of former debaters include individuals such as Lamar Alexander, Jimmy Carter, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Lee Iacocca, Lady Bird and Lyndon Johnson, John F. Kennedy, Franklin Roosevelt, Theodore Roosevelt, and many others (Segal, 2009). Loudon (2009) explains that "the most compelling evidence for the benefits of a debate education comes from our alumni-those for whom involvement in intercollegiate debate had a profound impact on their lives" (p. 57). Testimonials affirm the value of debate. For example, Washington Quarterly Editor Alexander Lennon (2010) said, "policy debate has been an indispensable element of my education" (p. 58). While such work reifies the importance of policy debate in particular, it cannot be used for assessment of programs that successful individuals did not attend. However, it points in a productive direction for assessment of debate teams. Segal (2009) writes, "The successes of debate alumni are fertile ground for

administrators seeking to enhance perceptions of their university and looking for models from which to draw inspiration for current student bodies” (p. 201). Indeed, alumni accomplishments should be used to assess individual debate programs.

I recommend that programs stay in touch with alumni at all levels of participation and follow their progress after separation from the team. An overwhelming number of debaters continue on and obtain advanced education or become successful in a variety of fields. Not only are these alumni a team’s most successful and powerful advocates, their success also reflects positively on the team itself. Most programs will find that very high percentages of their four-year participant alumni were successful after graduation. Contrasting these numbers with the statistics describing the general student population at a particular institution will allow programs to provide empirical evidence measuring their teams’ ability to accomplish their goals.

A debate program should maintain close ties with alumni for several reasons, including programmatic assessment. Initially, a program should examine alumni achievements at different levels of participation. In other words, is there a difference between success levels for alumni who participated for one semester and alumni who participated for four years? Programs may find that alumni who participated for at least one semester have higher admission rates to graduate school and law school and are more likely to receive internships and funding for such participation than the average undergraduate. Additionally, the relationship between debate participation and post graduate and professional studies will become stronger for students who maintained longer associations with the debate program as undergraduates. In many cases, I expect that programs will find extraordinarily high rates of participation in advanced

training and very high rates of graduate funding for four year program participants.

Contact with alumni, perhaps even periodic alumni surveys, should allow programs to gather information about public engagement including: participating in or organizing community volunteer activities, running for city, state or national office, leadership positions in the community, popular blogs, etc. To this end, debate faculty should maintain contact with alumni and provide alumni with information about the program. An alumni newsletter can both keep alumni in contact with one another and provide updated information about the alumni that can be used to assess the programmatic effect. In each case, stakeholders should remember that such results can be compared to available statistics about the wider student population at their institutions. This information can also be used to nominate alumni for awards from the university and to generate media coverage of a program. Finally, Segal (2009) points out that “the most successful debate programs have, not coincidentally, been the ones to make the strongest effort to develop alumni relations” (p. 200). So, in addition to aiding in assessment, alumni networks can become powerful advocates for and supporters of a debate program.

Considering Results: Where Do We Go From Here?

Once assessment materials have been completed, the program should examine the results closely. Stakeholders need to review the evidence of programmatic success as well as areas for improvement and decide “what responsive actions, if any, will be taken” (Johnson, 2012, p. 466). This stage is particularly important where problems are identified because it allows swift and appropriate corrective action. Assessment provides programs with an opportunity “to review and utilize the

assessment results by suggesting changes that might be necessary to improve the quality and standard of future offerings . . . with the aim of enhancing overall effectiveness” (Anwar et al., 2005, p. 284). This logic applies to debate programs as well. If debate programs use assessment results in a proactive way, then they can identify concrete avenues for changing their practices in a way that has the greatest potential to enhance students’ experiences. Such enhancements might improve competitive results and help to raise a program’s profile in a variety of venues.

Assessment results may also provide evidence that a debate program requires additional resources. As stakeholders examine results and develop a plan, they should consider questions such as “How do they plan to use the assessment results to improve the course? Who shall be responsible for implementing the plan? What resources will be required to carry out the plan?” (Anwar et al., 2005, p. 284). Thus, the process can provide evidence of a job well done, a plan for future growth and development, and a venue for requesting resource augmentation. In addition to making the case for university resources, assessment results can draw alumni in. Positive results give alumni a sense of pride and accomplishment and promote a feeling of connection to the program. Debate teams with strong alumni networks might also use this information to aid university development officers in “establishing, improving, and maintaining alumni relations” (Segal, 2009, p. 201). As Segal (2009) clarifies, the resources alumni provide include but go well beyond financial support. Segal (2009) suggests alumni can aid in career placement, external marketing, maintenance of institutional memory, team operations, coaching, and establishing lasting relationships with the program. When debate stakeholders honestly engage each step

of the assessment process, they have the opportunity to enhance the already rich learning environment of debate and to raise the profile of their programs among internal and external audiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while I have identified a basic cycle of assessment for debate teams and included several areas for gathering evidence, my ideas are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, I hope to spark a conversation about assessment and provide a starting point for programs to claim ownership of the process. Debate programs are in control of their assessment destinies. Rather than seeing assessment as a threat or an inconvenience, programs can begin to use and gather evidence that is already available to them. In this way, programs can use assessment to communicate the incredibly complex, experiential, high-impact, exciting, and challenging nature of debate to those outside the activity. Ideally, evidence that debate positively affects students' lives and accomplishes lofty goals may help some to secure additional funding and others to justify their continued existence. As stakeholders in the debate activity, we have a vast amount of experience making arguments. Now, let's take the time to gather the evidence and to use assessment to make arguments for debate.

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Authentic Assessment in Debate: An Argument for Using Ballots to Foster Talent-Development and Promote Authentic Learning

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Debate programs would be well served by participation in the culture of assessment in education. Debate is a high impact practice ideal for facilitating authentic learning. The activity has strong potential to bring about positive change in students through talent development. The ballot can serve as one productive tool for assessing talent development by providing direct evidence of student learning and advice for further improvement. Ballots provide direct evidence of a students' ongoing learning process by encouraging expert review of student performances over time. The balloting process could be enhanced to provide even stronger evidence by encouraging judges to offer more holistic feedback in the form of qualitative written comments.

As both college cost and societal demand for access to higher education continue to rise, people have taken a greater interest in what students are getting in return for their investment. Parents, employers, and lawmakers are increasingly concerned with whether students are learning the right skills and information, and whether college is making a difference in the lives of those who attend (Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions [CRAC], 2003). The seven regional accrediting agencies throughout the United States have responded to these concerns by calling on institutions to offer evidence of student learning and demonstrate that they use that evidence to make informed decisions regarding program improvement (CRAC, 2003). In order to meet these demands, institutions are looking to faculty to provide assessment data (Bresciani, 2006).

The increased emphasis on assessment has led to a redefinition of the term. Rather than simply describing a practice of student testing to evaluate learning, assessment has become the buzz word for a much larger system of holding educators publicly accountable for helping students achieve certain competencies. The language of assessment is now well engrained in institutions across the United States who recognize that everything from accreditation to financial stability may depend on their ability to demonstrate student success in meeting prescribed learning outcomes (Astin & Antonio, 2012; Bresciani, 2006). The assessment process is no longer limited to the classroom; it now reaches all corners of the institution, including co-curricular activities such as debate. As a result, debate coaches are increasingly called to justify their programs by demonstrating that debate helps students achieve core competencies or meet institutional learning outcomes.

The debate community has long touted the educational benefits of the activity. Published scholarship outlines debaters' gains in critical thinking, research skills, academic achievement, and career success (Chandler & Hobbs, 1991; Colbert & Biggers, 1985; Greenstreet, 1993; O'Donnell et al., 2010; Rogers, 2005). However, in the current era of assessment, existing broad-based studies are no longer enough evidence to demonstrate the value of debate as a learning experience. Schools and accrediting associations are looking for faculty to speak the language of assessment and, in that language, offer direct and indirect evidence that demonstrates a causal connection between individual teams' "educational practice and educational outcomes" (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. x). While high school programs and Urban Debate Leagues have made progress in this regard (Arbenz & Beltran, 2001; Billman, 2008; National Association for Urban Debate Leagues

[NAUDL], 2013), the debate community in general lacks mechanisms for consistent assessment of its programs, and college programs in particular lack sufficient assessment data to demonstrate their role in fulfilling national and institutional learning objectives.

In this current climate, debate educators would do well to recognize their involvement in what assessment scholars call “authentic learning.” Researchers have found that students learn more by doing than by merely listening and encourage educators to offer students opportunities to experiment with complex issues they are likely to face as they enter the workforce (Lombardi, 2007). Authentic learning differs from traditional learning, which is focused primarily on knowledge acquisition, in that it emphasizes the way that students employ knowledge to solve problems within particular “communities of practice” (Brown, 1999, para. 31). Authentic learning typically focuses on “complex problems and their solutions, using role-playing exercises, problem-based activities, case studies, and participation in virtual communities of practice” to prepare students for life outside of the academic environment (Lombardi, 2007, p. 2). Lombardi (2007) posits that authentic learning is particularly valuable when it enables students to make connections that cut across disciplines. Authentic learning is more likely to occur in the context of a “high-impact” practice in which students integrate diverse theories and concepts, share ideas with faculty and peers outside of class, judge the value of information, and learn from perspectives other than their own (Brownell & Swaner, 2009). These practices have been shown to help students “earn higher grades and retain, integrate, and transfer information at higher rates” (Kuh, 2009, p. 14). While it may seem obvious to debaters and coaches that the activity embodies both authentic learning and high-impact

practices, debate practitioners have not all managed to translate that message to administrators, parents, and legislators, who make important decisions regarding co-curricular programs. The way to do that is through the regular reporting of assessment data concerning debate.

At the 2012 National Communication Association Convention, Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) President Sarah Partlow Lefevre (2012) identified a long list of ways that debate coaches could gather information that would be beneficial for assessment. She explored the use of pre- and post-tests for topic knowledge, student evaluations, cum sheets, rankings, and more. Her talk demonstrated that there are indeed a vast number of options for coaches looking to assess their program. However, for a coach just getting started on the process, the sheer number of options may be overwhelming. Additionally, many of the available assessment tools add a significant amount of labor to an already demanding job. To make assessment both beneficial and manageable for debate teams, practitioners need an efficient tool that is adaptable to the learning outcomes of diverse programs, provides valuable evidence of student learning, and enables them to directly assess authentic learning. I argue that the ballot is an ideal assessment tool to meet these needs. In order to demonstrate the value of the ballot in assessment, I begin by reviewing some of the literature on assessment and its goals. Then, I argue that the ballot is both a means of providing programs with direct evidence of authentic student learning and a tool for program improvement because it provides expert feedback that fosters talent-development. Further, I contend that some modifications can and should be made to existing practices to make the ballot an even stronger source of assessment data.

Literature Review

Regional accrediting agencies have agreed that their goal is to “focus on the quality of student learning without specifying, beyond general categories, what that learning should be—in short, to promote *standards* without *standardization*” (CRAC, 2003, p. 1). This means that schools are still, in many ways, free to set their own goals as long as they meet them. However, completion rates alone are not evidence of meeting acceptable standards. Schools must show that they are assessing different kinds and levels of student learning. As a result, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has identified “essential learning outcomes” that cut across disciplinary boundaries and “are relevant to work and life in the 21st century” (2012, p. 1). The AAC&U learning outcomes focus on: “inquiry and analysis; critical and creative thinking; integrative and reflective thinking; written and oral communication; quantitative literacy; information literacy; intercultural understanding; teamwork and problem solving” (2012, p. 1). These outcomes reflect overarching aims of higher education that ought to guide institutions in formulating their own desired learning outcomes.

Establishing institutional learning outcomes, as well as learning outcomes at lower levels (program, course, student, etc.), offers schools the chance to articulate their values by explaining the results they seek to attain. Additionally, these assessment models “focus attention on the fundamental problems of defining and measuring those outcomes that are relevant to the goals of the educational program in question” (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 32). In thinking about assessment of the educational experience, it is important to examine a variety of factors that influence student learning. Some factors relevant to outcome achievement are the preexisting talents a student brings with them when entering the program, the

experiences a student has in the program, the resources invested by institutions and educators into a student's experience, the program's means of facilitating student learning, and the talents a student emerges with at the culmination of their experience (Astin & Antonio, 2012; Dwyer, Millett, & Payne, 2006).

Too often, educators only measure the achievement of outcomes at the culmination of an educational experience. However, focusing only on the end result of the educational experience tends to produce data without a clear standard for discerning what the data means. For example, it is common for professors to offer a final exam to assess how much students learned from the course. Yet, Astin and Antonio (2012) explain

All of us who have taught college students over the years know well that if a student is sufficiently bright and talented at the start of the course, it is possible for that student to do quite well on a final exam without really learning much of anything in the course. On the other hand, it is possible that a student whose performance on the final exam is mediocre may, in fact, have learned a great deal in the course, especially if the student began the course with no knowledge of the subject matter and with minimal examination performance skills. (pp. 32-33)

This example demonstrates that focusing only on a culminating measurement, such as an exam or a win/loss record, to measure student learning outcomes not only prevents educators from accurately assessing how much students are learning, but also denies educators the ability to consider environmental factors that make a particular practice succeed or fail for certain students.

An equally problematic trend in the assessment of higher education is the implicit assumption that excellence is primarily tied to financial resources and

academic reputations. This assumption is reflected in prominent college ranking systems such as those of *U.S. News and World Report* (Morse, 2012). It is true that institutions with more financial resources and higher institutional rankings may have an easier time attracting highly sought after faculty and students with high grades and test scores. However, neither of these factors demonstrates what students are learning when they enroll in the institution (Astin & Antonio, 2012). Similarly, debate programs with more resources and higher rankings may recruit talented high school debaters who are able to perform well in college-level competitions, but those programs still need to be able to demonstrate what and how their students are learning as much as a program with fewer resources and lower overall rankings that primarily focuses on novice recruitment from within the institution.

Given the prevalence of the outcomes-based model of assessment, the debate community would do well to find a way to demonstrate that the activity plays a role in training students to achieve national and institutional learning outcomes. However, the community must take care not to reproduce the mistakes made by educators in assessing outcome achievement. While debate educators may not provide final exams, measures such as win/loss records, speaker points, or placement in a given tournament or season may provide comparable forms of culminating evidence. Furthermore, debate educators may be tempted to examine the correlation between resources and reputation as measures of program excellence. While all of these variables are likely to contribute to the larger picture of what it takes to succeed in debate competition, they should not overshadow the importance of assessing what and how students are learning within the debate context.¹

Rather than understanding program excellence

based primarily in competitive success, students and institutions would be better served if debate educators increased their focus on the authentic learning process and defined a program's excellence based on the "ability to bring about positive change in students," which "should be measured in terms of the growth and improvements in students over time" (Tam, 2002, p. 214). This model, which Astin (1993) calls the talent-development conception of excellence, measures program excellence by the ability to develop talent regardless of a students' starting place. This model would allow debate educators to combine existing measurements of success with an emphasis on sustained feedback and evaluation over time to see that students experience authentic learning.

Students come to debate with diverse educational backgrounds and varying levels of experience with the activity itself. Debate educators would be better able to assess their program excellence, translate their findings to administrators, and make strategic decisions regarding program improvement if the community focused on a talent-development approach. The talent-development approach relies on the ability to demonstrate that debate has an impact on "students' knowledge and personal development" (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 7). To demonstrate this, programs need to focus on the various ways that debaters change and improve over time.

The assessment process can contribute to talent development by providing direct feedback to students and indirect feedback to coaches regarding "the effectiveness of various educational practices" (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 252). Astin and Antonio (2012) contend that these goals are best achieved through a performing arts theory of education wherein students and educators receive direct feedback concerning their performance and advice on ways to improve. This

feedback should be based on “holistic judging,” in which student performance is judged based on a number of different dimensions. Unfortunately, “one problem with holistic written evaluations of student performance . . . is that they do not readily yield quantitative estimates of student performance” (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 60). Some people also object to holistic judging because they argue that the process is too labor-intensive. In the remainder of this essay, I will characterize the ballot as an existing source of holistic judging that, if used properly, can overcome these criticisms and enable debate educators to focus on a talent-development model of assessment that not only demonstrates program excellence, but also positions them to articulate their role in fostering an authentic learning environment that contributes to the fulfillment of both national and institutional learning outcomes.

The Role of the Ballot

More than two decades of research has established the existence of certain “high-impact practices” which demonstrate “the value of active, engaged, and collaborative forms of learning for students” (Kuh, 2009, p. 32). High-impact practices are characterized by a number of elements which are central to academic debate. High-impact programs tend to:

Demand that students devote considerable time and effort to purposeful tasks; most require daily decisions that deepen students’ investment in the activity as well as their commitment to the academic program and college. . . demand that [students] interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters, typically over extended periods of time. . . participating in one of these [high impact] activities increases the likelihood that students will experience diversity through contact with people

who are different from themselves. . . even though structures and settings of high impact activities differ, students typically get frequent feedback about their performance in every one. . . participation in these activities provides opportunities for students to see how what they are learning works in different settings, on and off campus. Finally, it can be life changing. (Kuh, 2009, p. 17)

These high impact practices are ideal for facilitating authentic learning. The current list of high impact practices includes activities like undergraduate research, first year seminars, learning communities, collaborative assignments and projects, and diversity/global learning, but fails to account for academic debate. George Kuh (2011), founding director of the National Survey for Student Engagement, recognizes that co-curricular activities such as debate may be high-impact practices, but they were not included in the AAC&U report on high-impact educational practices because “we don’t have research. . . that documents their impact” (personal communication, October 22, 2011). Waters and Stone Watt (2012) explain that there is a need for debate programs to establish and measure learning outcomes that not only demonstrate authentic learning, but that also showcase the activity’s ability to draw students from diverse majors, at different points in their educational experience, and with differing levels of activity-specific knowledge together in a collaborative learning environment.

Debate practitioners need assessment data to demonstrate that the activity is a “high-impact” practice. The debate ballot provides an opportunity to collect data that demonstrates authentic learning focused on communal problem solving, one that can be adapted to speak to institutional and program learning outcomes, and can provide holistic judgment and direct feedback

to foster “talent development.” The ballot is an ideal starting place for assessment because it provides direct evidence of student learning through regular evaluation by external expert reviewers at various stages of student development throughout a given school year.

Direct Evidence

At its core, assessment is supposed to provide educators with evidence of what is working and what needs improvement. Astin and Antonio (2012) explain that, “assessment results are of most value when they shed light on the causal connections between educational practice and educational outcomes” (p. x). Evidence of these causal connections tends to come in two forms: indirect and direct. Indirect evidence is based on students’ reflections on learning. It calls for students to interpret how their knowledge and skills have been enhanced by the learning experience. Direct evidence comes from “analysis of student behaviors or products” (Allen, 2008, p. 1), in which students are judged based on the knowledge and skills they demonstrate. This type of evidence can offer quantitative scores or rankings, as well as provide qualitative description regarding the interpretation of student knowledge and behaviors (Palomba & Banta, 1999). The ballot is designed to provide direct evidence of student learning.

Ballots offer three quantitative measures of student learning: (1) win/loss, (2) speaker rankings, and (3) speaker points. The debate community is adept at evaluating teams based on their wins and losses at various tournaments. Coaches, who generally have experience as both debaters and judges, are able to evaluate their own teams and benchmark against other teams based not only on win-loss records, but also the quality of a win or loss based on the quality of the tournament, opponent, and critic for a given debate.

They are also able to assess improvements in student performance based on numerical speaker rankings and points. While speaker rankings are easy to evaluate, points are more ambiguous. Speaker points were once calculated based on a rubric provided at the top of the ballot (Cirlin, 1986; Leeper et al., 2010). This system did not completely prevent ambiguity in the assignment of points, but it did make them more meaningful than they are today. Currently, speaker points may be given on a 30 or 100 point scale, depending on the tournament, and there is very little consensus regarding what a particular score means. Judges are free to evaluate speaker points differently based on personal opinion, level of competition, national versus local tournaments, judge or debater identity, and more (see, for example, Galloway, 2010; Kelsey, Evans, Marty, & Reid-Brinkley, 2012; Rubaie, 2011). Leeper et al. (2010) conclude that speaker points today “have become disconnected from meaningful criteria, and, instead, reflect a general sense of whether the debater is competent” (p. 152). Since the standards for competence in this model are debatable, it is difficult to make causal connections between speaker point fluctuations and student learning. The lack of consensus on this issue heightens the need for additional qualitative feedback to help with ballot assessment.

Until fairly recently, judges were obligated to take time filling out the bottom of the debate ballot with reasons for their decision. They provided written feedback concerning both the arguments and students’ performance in the debate. Unfortunately, “the written ballot as a tool to convey the reason for decision has gone the way of the dodo” (Leeper et al., 2010, p. 152). Judges now tend to offer verbal feedback after the round, which is valuable in giving students an immediate reason for their win or loss and helping them identify improvements they might make as the tournament goes on. While there

are clear benefits to this model of post-round discussion, there are two apparent drawbacks that are pertinent to assessment: (1) the amount of information can be overwhelming for students to process, particularly on the heels of an intense two hours of debate; and (2) coaches are rarely able to sit and listen to or record each of their teams' post round discussions. As a result, students are free to take the advice that resonates with them, and the information that makes it back to the coach is, if anything, only partially reflective of the judge's feedback. While the debate community would "never hope to lose the in-depth critical review of a student's arguments that a conversation about a specific debate can provide" (Leeper et al., 2010, p. 152), a return to qualitative feedback on the ballot would provide a much needed supplement to these conversations and offer programs the direct evidence they need to draw causal connections between their educational practices and the outcome of a given debate. The increasing use of electronic balloting on platforms such as www.tabroom.com should make it easier for judges to document their feedback because they can type directly into the ballot during the debate and edit their comments before saving them (Bruschke & Nielson, 2006). These platforms also have the potential to provide both coaches and national organizations with a database of the quantitative and qualitative data for both assessment and broader research purposes.²

Expert Review of Authentic Learning

The ballot not only provides direct evidence of student learning, it offers a space for debate experts to give feedback on authentic learning. Schools have long focused on high impact practices such as internships and apprenticeships to evaluate authentic learning, and have recently begun to include other performance based activities in that category (University of Central Florida, 2012). Despite its emphasis on complex

simulations of real world problem solving, debate is one performance based activity that is generally ignored in these discussions. The qualitative comments on a debate ballot could offer programs the evidence they need to demonstrate that debate is an authentic learning experience by providing evidence of the multiple, varied, and complex problem-solving tasks students are engaged in throughout the course of each tournament. These comments are arguably more valuable than the average authentic assessment measure because they come from well qualified external reviewers.

While most authentic assessment is done by faculty members evaluating their students' performance, debate teams have the unique advantage of supplementing their own assessment with multiple expert reviews each time they compete. Whereas authentic assessment of activities such as internships may benefit from a single external expert review of student performance in the form of a supervisor evaluation at the culmination of the internship, debaters are evaluated by at least six different judges with expertise in academic debate at every tournament they attend. The average college debate tournament judging pool consists of former debaters, graduate assistants, and faculty coaches, most of whom have (or are in the process of obtaining) advanced degrees in their fields, and have multiple years of experience in the activity. While individual teams' values influence their perception of judge expertise, that vast majority of debate judges meet the standard for "expert review" in that they possess specialized knowledge of the activity and the standards by which it ought to be evaluated (Case, Jorgensen, & Zucker, 2004). Judges bring diverse knowledge and perspectives to the assessment process. Rather than simply viewing the post-round critique as advice on how to win the next debate, debate judges ought to also be seen as providing authentic

assessment data to be used in program improvement.

In order to assess authentic learning experiences, Herrington and Herrington (2008) explain that “the learning environment needs to ensure that the assessment is seamlessly integrated with the activity and to provide the opportunity for students to be effective performers with acquired knowledge, and to craft products or performances in collaboration with others” (p. 73). The debate ballot provides a space where the judge can offer an evaluation of a debater’s knowledge, performance, collaboration with their partner, and/ or adaptation to the opposing teams’ arguments. While the judge’s decision in a round is final, the ballot is a reference point for collaboration whereby debaters, coaches, and judges can work together to refine a particular argument or performance. Beyond providing input on a student’s choice of argument, judge feedback also tends to offer advice on additional areas for research, alternative perspectives on an issue, and community norms. This begins an iterative process whereby the debater learns to adapt not only to a particular judge, whom they will likely encounter again, but to a given perspective on debate. Rather than being a one-time assessment at the end of an experience, each debate ballot is a small piece of the ongoing authentic learning and assessment process wherein the student presents what they have learned, solves problems by responding to opponents, is evaluated by an expert, and uses that feedback in collaboration with teammates and coaches to add to their knowledge and/or modify their performance in anticipation of the next evaluation.

Qualitative feedback on ballots could aid coaches with two important elements of the authentic assessment process: scaffolding and reporting. Scaffolding in the coaching process is a crucial part of authentic learning because it calls on educators to avoid a didactic approach

in favor of one that “provides for coaching at critical times, and scaffolding of support, where the teacher and/or student peer mentors provide the skills, strategies, and links that the students are unable to provide to complete the task” (Herrington & Herrington, 2008, p. 73). While debate coaches may already engage in scaffolding to help students improve, the written ballot provides a means of formalizing that process in a way that better lends itself to institutional reporting. Currently, a coach may scaffold by hearing a post round critique or talking to a debater about what they are struggling with and then determining the best coach or peer on the team to mentor the debater in their attempt to resolve the problem. While this process may occur at multiple points throughout a tournament or team practice session, there is rarely an opportunity for the coach to reflect on and record the process. By collecting written ballot comments over the course of a season, coaches can compile written evidence of student learning and areas for improvement. They can not only use this evidence to improve their coaching and scaffolding throughout the season, but also to report to their institution what expert reviewers have said regarding their successes and areas for improvement. At the end of each debate season, coaches should be able to use excerpts from qualitative ballot comments as evidence to demonstrate the authentic learning process and fulfillment of stated learning outcomes to their institution.

Holistic Judging and Talent-Development

Assessment scholars have long criticized the testing model “for providing inadequate or superficial feedback to students” (Lombardi, 2008, p. 4). When debaters focus solely on the win or loss in a given debate, we reproduce the problem. Instead, Leeper et al. (2010) argue that it may be time to move beyond a model of competition so focused on winning and begin to ask ourselves what

practices we want to incentivize. The debate community seems to be doing this, to some extent, in post round discussions and deliberation on CEDA Forums concerning the implications of arguments and judging criteria on participation and success in the activity. Increased reliance on the ballot, and qualitative written feedback, as a tool of assessment offers teams the ability to understand wins and losses in an effort to improve talent development.

The ballot offers a site where judges can express their holistic evaluation by providing feedback on multiple facets of the debate that may not be possible in a short post-round discussion. The current model of post-round discussion assists in talent-development by offering “direct feedback to the learner” (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 252), but it does not go far enough in providing indirect feedback to the coach. The typical post-round discussion is a condensed time in which debaters and judges are still processing the outcome of the debate, packing up their belongings, and thinking of what comes next, whether it is a meal or another debate. In this short time, the judge often attempts to share not only their rationale for deciding who won and lost, but also other pieces of advice about arguments, style, research, and more, as well as address debater questions and document any arguments or source citations they might want for their own coaching purposes—this is a tall order. This approach fails to recognize that in learning, sometimes less is more. Researchers have found that educators attempting to cover “vast amounts of material may actually *impede* understanding and lower student achievement” (Lombardi, 2008, p. 4). This may be why, after a detailed post round discussion, debaters report back to coaches that they lost the debate because the judge didn’t understand their arguments, or the judge was biased, without reflecting the thoughtful advice

they were just given. Writing feedback on the ballot, rather than trying to discuss everything with students following the debate, would allow judges to focus their post-round critique on smaller amounts of information that are immediately useful to debaters in a given competition, and easy to digest. They could leave more complex feedback on the ballot for debaters and coaches to process later, when they are working on improvements for the next tournament.

Debate ballots already address the primary critique of current holistic evaluations of student performance by providing quantitative feedback. Qualitative feedback on the ballot would assist coaches with the second portion of the talent development model by “informing the practitioner about the effectiveness of various educational practices” (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 252). The debate community is intimate enough that judges are occasionally able to speak directly to a particular coach’s pedagogical practice, but it would be unreasonable to expect every judge to do so in every debate. Instead, qualitative comments highlight important moments in a given debate, which can help coaches reading the ballot later to determine whether their team’s performance in the round reflects an understanding of the coaching they have received. Qualitative feedback on the ballot may help educators to draw the necessary connections between outcomes such as win/loss records, rankings, and speaker points, and the debaters’ arguments, and performance in the debates themselves. It would also provide a record, over time, that coaches could analyze to establish recurring factors evident in a students’ performance that point to success or failure in meeting established learning outcomes.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The primary criticism of the holistic judging model

is that it is too labor intensive (Astin & Antonio, 2012). However, debate judges are already engaged in this labor intensive process; the ballot simply provides a means of recording their existing efforts. The recent increase in online balloting also mitigates this concern because it allows the judge to type comments into a form as the debate progresses and edit them before sending.

Shifting ballots to an online platform provides opportunities to overcome the limitations of the existing ballot format for research purposes. However, in addition to the need for judges to write more qualitative feedback on their ballots, there are two modifications that would make the ballot an even more useful tool for assessment. First, the debate community should adopt a universal speaker point scale. Multiple debates over what particular points on a given scale mean to individual judges have demonstrated our inability to reach consensus about the difference between, for example, a 27.5 on the 30 point scale and 70 on the 100 point scale. Since codifying a particular interpretation of the numbers on a given scale, or equating numbers on one scale to numbers on another, has proven to be a losing battle, we would do well to at least pick a scale and stick with it so that we are comparing a similar method of scoring across all tournaments in a competitive season. Second, to counterbalance the ambiguity of speaker points, we should also return to some form of rubric embedded in the ballot. Astin and Antonio (2012) suggest that a simple way of making quantitative and qualitative measures more useful is to “have the evaluator also complete a brief set of rating scales, with each scale representing a different skill, area of knowledge, or personal quality” (p. 60). They liken this approach to scoring essays or adjudicating musical and artistic competitions. This is an approach seasoned debate judges are familiar with from the

American Forensics Association (AFA) ballots, “a long standard in the debate community” (Cirlin, 1986, p. 86). The AFA categories such as delivery, analysis, reasoning, and evidence, are a good start, but the advancements in rubric creation and electronic balloting mean that we could develop something that better serves the community’s assessment needs. The AAC&U’s essential learning outcomes may provide a good starting place for the development of a rubric with clear and concise evaluation criteria and a simple Likert scale for evaluation. To improve the usefulness of the rubric, the online ballot could either display or link to a set of quality definitions which provide a more detailed explanation of what a debater must demonstrate in order to achieve a particular placement on the scale (Reddy & Andrade, 2010).

The CEDA Research and Assessment Working Group (2013) is examining two important changes in this regard. First, they are drafting prospective learning outcomes for the activity that address some of the goals outlined by AAC&U and reflect some of the unique skills debaters acquire. Second, they are considering how these learning outcomes might be measured through the use of a rubric embedded in the online ballot whereby judges can offer brief but pointed feedback concerning the particular performance they observed in a given round. Both the general learning outcomes and rubric process still require additional research and testing before they can be implemented to improve on the existing ballot system.

One additional issue that must be addressed as the debate community continues to consider the best ways to assess ballots and other forms of evidence demonstrating student learning is the need for informed consent. Typically, if assessment data is collected by an educator “to provide feedback to students, improve a course or

program, or provide findings to . . . [an institutional assessment office] for university-wide educational program improvement” (Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, 2013, para. 1), they do not need approval from an institutional review board (IRB). This means that coaches should be able to assess their teams’ ballots for the purpose of improving their program and reporting program data to their own institution. However, if the debate community wishes to make ballots publicly available for wider assessment purposes, or utilize data from ballots in published research or grant applications, researchers may need to seek IRB approval and devise a means of obtaining informed consent before analyzing ballots.

Conclusion

After decades of development, assessment is here to stay, and is increasingly being used to hold institutions and programs accountable (Weiner, 2009). Debate programs are in need of evidence of student learning that demonstrates their ability to meet established learning outcomes. Furthermore, programs would be well served by assessment mechanisms that not only address learning outcomes, but position debate as a co-curricular activity uniquely suited to meet increasing demands for high-impact authentic learning experiences. The ballot has the potential to meet these needs if it is used strategically.

The ballot has the potential to serve as an ideal assessment measure for multiple reasons. First, it offers direct evidence of student learning in the form of both quantitative and qualitative feedback that can address varied learning outcomes. Second, it provides multiple opportunities for external expert review of student learning. Third, it refocuses assessment on talent-development rather than resources and reputation.

The ballot assists in talent-development by offering direct feedback to the student while also conveying that information to the coach for use in improving their educational practices. Fourth, the collection of ballots over time provides evidence of students' knowledge and skills development across a season, or even a full debate career. Fifth, the ballot offers debate advocates a space from which to demonstrate that their students are engaged in high-impact and authentic learning. While each debate team will find it necessary to supplement this assessment measure with appropriate forms of indirect evidence that they are meeting or exceeding institutional goals, the ballot is an existing measure that gives every team direct evidence of student learning.

With an increased commitment to providing detailed ballot feedback, the debate community could offer programs the ability to document their success in meeting national and institutional learning outcomes. In order to begin using ballots in this way, debate programs should first document their goals in the language of assessment by crafting a written set of student learning outcomes. The program's student learning outcomes should align with those of the institution and be stated in such a way that they,

Specify what students will know or be able to do as a result of the activity. . . They should be observable (and when appropriate measureable). They should be clearly written and easily understood by faculty, students, staff, administrators, and even parents. (Office of Institutional Effectiveness [OIE], 2013, para. 2)

The statements should employ verbs that describe what actions students should demonstrate by the end of a given season, or their participation in the activity (OIE, 2013). Throughout the season, coaches should

make note of the ways that students demonstrate their achievement of, or need for assistance in achieving, the stated learning outcomes. This is where ballot comments and, perhaps in the future, rubrics will be useful as evidence for the coach's observations. They should also document the strategies and scaffolding used to assist students in achieving the outcomes. At the end of the season, coaches should draft a report for their institution, using ballot data as one form of evidence, which indicates whether and how their program is achieving the student learning outcomes set at the beginning of the season. This is also an opportunity for coaches to be honest about where their program may fall short of meeting program or institutional objectives and consider what improvements are necessary.³

Ultimately, assessment should provide feedback to an educator that helps them gauge the "impact of their educational practices and policies" and make adjustments to enhance their effectiveness (Astin & Antonio, 2012, p. 141). The ballot is an existing tool designed to do exactly that. However, debate practitioners are not currently using the ballot to their strategic advantage in assessment. With some minor modifications, the debate ballot could provide not only a way to assess and improve individual programs, but also to make larger scale arguments concerning the benefits of debate across educational contexts.

Notes

¹ Research in the field of education suggests that students do show higher improvement in performance when attending esteemed, “resource-rich” institutions (Arum & Roska, 2011; Astin, 1993; Astin & Antonio, 2012).

² As of this writing, judges can type comments into ballots on tabroom.com, but most don’t. Those comments that are made are not currently available to coaches, but I understand that this is an issue administrators are addressing.

³ Improvements may be things that the program itself needs to work on, or they may indicate a need for assistance from the institution. For example, our program successfully relied on assessment data to demonstrate the need for resources to hire an additional coach.

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Open Source Debating: The Justifications and Responses to Deacon Source Version 1.0

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In this essay, we chart the history of the adoption of Deacon Source, the first squad-wide adoption of open source debating, by Wake Forest University in the fall of 2010. After explicating the decision to adopt open source, we examine the results of a survey on Deacon Source conducted at the 2011 Franklin R. Shirley Classic.

The 2012 National Debate Tournament (NDT) represented a significant milestone for the college debate community. Georgetown University's win against Northwestern University on a 3-2 decision was significant for several reasons, not the least of which was that it represented Georgetown's first NDT victory since 1992 and included a team of two college sophomores. Two elite academic institutions battling it out for a national championship is hardly a new event in the pantheon of college debating. What was new, however, was that Georgetown University won the NDT debating open source. Open source debating is the practice of making the full text of a team's evidence available to the public rather than simply sharing the citation.

Georgetown's win was important because, for the vast majority of the NDT debate community's existence, a "great debater" was the student willing to spend hours, if not days, in the library researching the debate topic in order to create an asymmetrical advantage over his/her opponent. By contrast, Georgetown won the 2012 NDT *sharing* their evidence—the resource that was once fiercely guarded. In the old model of evidence production, debaters sought to restrict access

to the evidence on a topic that his/her opponent did not have in order to create an important advantage in an activity that increasingly prioritized research and evidence over presentation style. As anyone who has observed an intercollegiate debate at the NDT since the age of Lawrence Tribe knows, the stereotype of smooth speaking debaters waxing poetically over which quote from our nation's founders was more apt for the topic is long gone. Today, many debaters, judges, and coaches, have elected to prioritize the depth and complexity of argumentation that comes with speaking at breakneck speeds over the traditional presentation skills. Although the virtues and drawbacks of this change are not the subject of this article, the methods used to produce and distribute the research for these conversations are.

In order to sustain the depth of debates over the complex topics used in policy debate today, students, judges, and coaches have developed research skills that make academic policy debate one of the most rigorous intellectual activities available for college students. According to O'Donnell, "One of the obvious benefits of policy debate is that it teaches research skills in a manner 'unparalleled in the world of academics' (Fritch 1993/1994, 7). No undergraduate college class assignment requires as much research as debate does" (2010, p. 37). O'Donnell continues:

Robert Rowland argues that 'debate, more than perhaps any other educational activity at the university level, teaches students about both the importance of research and the wealth of material that is available' (1995, 101). The research effort undertaken by debaters over the course of a single year's topic is often greater than the work to obtain a law degree or dissertation (Parcher 1998). Many debaters spend as many as 20 to 30 hours per week doing research (*ibid.*). A typical debate team gathers

enough evidence to write thousands of pages of argument briefs. (2010, p. 37)

These research skills not only prepare debaters for a lifetime of success in every field imaginable, they are also crucial to competitive success. Once upon a time, a debate team's evidence was considered as sacred as the playbook of a National Football League team. Young debaters were scolded for losing research files and veteran debaters had complex organizational schemes that were impenetrable to the casual observer. Debaters were willing to share their evidence, temporarily, with the judge and the opponent in any given debate, but the only information that was considered "fair game" to take away from your opponent at the conclusion of the debate was the citation. This norm was so strong that, in 2003, a coach was actually removed from participating at the NDT after it was discovered that he/she was scanning evidence rather than recording the citation. Less than 10 years later, the NDT champions were freely sharing the full text of their evidence with the entire debate community for all to see and utilize as they saw fit.

Although there were many milestones in the transition to open source debating, this article focuses on the internal deliberation that led to its adoption and the community response to Wake Forest University's "Deacon Source" open source project. We hope that this essay continues the long tradition of recording significant moments in the practice of intercollegiate debate like the essays and books by Cowperthwaite and Baird (1954), Emerson (1931), Keith (2007), Nichols (1936), Ringwalt (1897), and others. This essay, then, is less focused on defending the benefits of open source debating. We recognize and acknowledge that there are many arguments for and against open source debating that are not reviewed here.¹ Instead, we hope to help record the history of the early steps towards open source debating

and the initial reaction of the broader debate community in an effort to provide some background on the starting point for a broader conversation over the advantages and benefits of the practice. In order to chart the initial adoption by Wake Forest University, we will outline the internal deliberation of the Wake Forest debate program. To examine the community response, we review the results of an IRB-approved survey on Deacon Source that was distributed at the Franklin R. Shirley Classic Tournament hosted at Wake Forest University in the fall of 2011. We hope that the combination of oral history and qualitative measures will help future scholars of debate to get a broader sense of this important moment of change in the intercollegiate debate community (Harrigan, 2012).

Deacon Source Version 1.0

In the fall of 2010, the Wake Forest debate program announced that it would make the full text of all of the evidence used in competition debates available for public use. The first version of this open source project was very simple: at the conclusion of each tournament, the Wake Forest coaching staff would accumulate all of the speech documents from the Wake Forest debaters and post them to a public wiki labeled "Deacon Source."² The files were categorized by team, side, opponent, and tournament. In order to review the evidence, a competitor or coach downloaded each individual speech document. During the 2010-2011 season, 11 teams from Wake Forest representing hundreds of individual speech documents were hosted at Deacon Source.

Although Deacon Source was the first official open source policy, the concept of open source debating has been a part of a broader community conversation for some time. Michael Antonucci was one of the first proponents of open source debating, and he should

be credited with any subsequent adoption of open source given his early efforts to explain the theoretical underpinnings and potential benefits at a time when the concept was deemed as heretical by the vast majority of the debate community. According to Antonucci, the earliest intersections of open source and competitive debate took place in high school debate as an argument advanced by Lexington High School debaters Leo Zimmerman, Alex Jenson, William Sears and Daniel del Nido, who were coached by Leslie Phillips and Antonucci (2010). Those arguments triggered a discussion in the high school debate community, which spilled over into the college debate community (Antonucci, 2010). As early as 2005, Antonucci had proposed a “strong version” of open source debating wherein, “evidence enters the collective pool *before* you read it. In fact, entry in the collective pool is a *precondition* for the reading of any specific piece of evidence” (2010, para. 14). Later, in conversation with Dr. Eric Morris, Antonucci would help direct the conversation towards a “weak version” of open source wherein teams only made previously read evidence available. It is no coincidence that Antonucci was an assistant coach at Georgetown University when they won the 2011 NDT debating open source.

Despite the early conversations across high school and college debate, major technological hurdles had to be overcome before open source debating could be adopted without significant cost. The primary problem was that evidence production and recitation took place through the medium of paper. Although it would have been possible to scan the thousands of pages of evidence and upload them to a central database, the labor involved made it cost prohibitive. The first technological hurdle that had to be overcome was transitioning away from paper to electronic forms of evidence production and presentation.

In many ways, the spirit of open source programming was a part of the debate community long before open source debating was adopted by any debate program. Aaron Hardy, Alex Gulakov, and Naveen Ramachandrappa played pivotal roles in the development of paperless debate. Hardy and Gulakov gave freely of their time and resources to produce Microsoft Word templates along with detailed instruction manuals that enabled debaters to transition from paper to paperless debating. Ramachandrappa developed a pivotal manual in the production of electronic evidence. All three released their templates and manuals for free and dedicated countless hours to improving their products for the debate community's benefit. As is the case with any technological innovation (including the eventual transition to open source debating), there are advantages and disadvantages to paperless debate. Although space limitations prevent an in-depth discussion of the practice of paperless debating here, it is important to recognize that it is unlikely that the transition to open source debating would have been possible without the ability to quickly and efficiently distribute evidence. By 2010, Wake Forest University was one of a dozen or so debate programs that had adopted debating paperless. Paperless debating allowed Wake Forest debaters to construct individual speech documents by copying and pasting evidence from electronic files. These individual speech documents could be saved so that debaters could produce an accurate record of exactly what evidence was presented in any given debate. These advances in paperless debating made open source debating possible.

Although advances in paperless debating made it possible to adopt an open source debating platform as early as 2008, the decision to post the full text of an entire squad's evidence had not been adopted by any program as of the fall of 2010. There were, however,

instances where individual teams in high school and college debate were posting the full text of their evidence to public caselists.³ One of the most significant moves towards open source started with the high school National Debate Coaches Association's (NDCA) open evidence project, which gained permission to post evidence produced at summer debate workshops online for public use.⁴ Until the NDCA's open evidence project, large high school debate squads would gain an additional advantage by sending debaters to a wide variety of summer workshops to accrue a bigger set of evidence.

The decision by the Wake Forest debate program to move towards open source debating happened as a result of tragedy. The sudden and unexpected passing of Ross Smith, the director of debate at Wake Forest, in the summer of 2009, resulted in a moment of self-reflection for one of the oldest and most successful debate programs in the country. The list of accolades that Smith accomplished in his time at Wake Forest includes two NDT championships and two more NDT final round appearances. Beyond the competitive success, however, Smith was dedicated to the notion that privileged programs like Wake Forest had an obligation for community service that extended beyond winning the NDT. Towards that end, Smith and Tim O'Donnell, Wake Forest alumnus and the Director of Debate at Mary Washington, founded the Open Source Debate Foundation which had as its mission, "the connection of the research and analytic capacities of the academic debate community and its graduates to the wider political and policy communities" (Stables, 2009, para. 14). Smith was also a proponent of open source debating and, despite the technological barriers, had proposed it to the Wake Forest debate program as early as the 2006-2007 season. According to Antonucci, Smith had watched future Wake Forest debater Will Sears arguing in favor of open source

while recruiting him to Wake Forest. Despite Smith's passion for open source, the debate team voted against adopting open source and unfortunately, he did not live to see his vision for Wake Forest debate become a reality.

In the fall of 2010, Jarrod Atchison took over as the new Director of Debate, and the program returned to the question of open source debating at the annual pre-season retreat in Fancy Gap, VA. Aside from the competitive risks associated with open source debating, the squad discussed two major objections to open source: (1) the potential for freeloading, and (2) the potential reduction in the community emphasis on research skills. Fortunately, intercollegiate debate was not the first community to consider the implication of open source platforms. Although the stakes for the intercollegiate debate community were high, the monetary stakes associated with companies and programmers adopting open source programming and software development made the decision to post speech documents online seem painless by comparison. With millions, if not billions, of dollars at stake, the earliest proponents of open source software confronted similar objections. Their experiences supported the idea that the decision on adopting open source debating should not be made based on the practices of the least committed members of the debate community.

There were three arguments against the risk of freeloading that the Wake Forest debaters found persuasive. First, the norm of disclosing full citations including full URLs and key phrases meant that freeloading was already possible within the debate community. Albeit easier under an open source system, it was conceivable that a freeloader debater could invest all of his/her time into simply tracking down citations to existing pieces of evidence using the publically accessible caselist information. In this way, the gains associated

with trying to keep the information private were not that meaningful. A supplement to that argument was that any gains a freeloader could gain from using existing evidence were offset by the resulting drive towards innovation that would result from the Wake Forest debaters disclosing more of their arguments. In other words, because freeloaders may use the full text of a Wake Forest debater's evidence, the Wake Forest debaters now had an extra incentive to research the next evolution in an argument to ensure a competitive advantage.

The combination of minimal gain and increased innovation is documented within the open source software community. Von Hippel and von Krogh note:

Eliminating the assumption in collective action models that a free rider will be able to obtain benefits from the completed public good that are equal to those a contributor can obtain. Instead, it proposes that contributors to a public good can inherently obtain private benefits that are tied to the development of that good. These benefits are available only to project contributors and not to free riders and represent a form of 'selective incentives' for project participation that need not be managed by collective action project personnel. To explore these ideas, consider first that contributors to an open source software project must engage in problem solving to create novel code. When they freely reveal this code to the project, it becomes a public good. However, the problem-solving process and effort used to produce the code have other important outputs as well, such as learning and enjoyment, and a sense of 'ownership' and control over their work product. (2003, p. 216)

People familiar with intercollegiate debate will immediately see the analogy between the problem-

solving creativity in software design and the focus on the process of generating arguments for competitive debate. The willingness of open source programmers to share the endpoint of their process is instructive because it reveals the role of selective incentives in any open source system. For the Wake Forest debaters, the focus on the process over the product was an easy translation since the squad definition of success is setting a high goal and, in the process of trying to achieve it, seeing what you can become. The free riders may have the evidence, but for the participants in an open source evidence platform, the real benefit is the process of constructing the argument in the first place.

The second argument against the free rider concern was a definitional challenge to the term. One of the primary arguments in favor of adopting an open source evidence platform was that it was necessary to help reduce resource disparities between debate programs. Simply put, the Wake Forest debaters agreed that one person's free rider is another person's less privileged debater, trying his/her hardest to participate in intercollegiate debate at a less resourced program. There are certainly bigger resource disparities between debate programs than evidence production, including but not limited to, availability of scholarships, assistant coaches, travel budgets, and a variety of other resources. In the context of freeloading, however, the Wake Forest debaters were persuaded that one entry barrier to participating in traditional policy debate is the amount of evidence required to be competitively successful.⁵ Many of the community's most privileged programs include coaching staffs with no obligations for teaching, academic research, and/or university service (Hingstman & Hahn, 2010). These programs have specialization within their coaching ranks designed to research specific genres of arguments or specific opponents to improve

the chances of their debaters to win the NDT. Many of the community's least privileged programs, on the other hand, include directors of debate with full teaching loads, traditional academic research expectations, and/or service to their universities (Hingstman & Hahn, 2010). These programs do not have the luxury of assistant coaches, much less former NDT champions that are only expected to contribute evidence towards their program's competitive success.

Given that many underprivileged programs often start with debaters with little to no high school experience in policy debate, it is simply not realistic to assume that their debaters can reasonably compete with the assistant coaches that have no academic obligations, much less their peers that come into intercollegiate debate with a tremendous amount of research experience from high school debate. Indeed, many of the most privileged programs have the human resources to assign people the sole responsibility of researching the evidence that is publically available through the caselist. Investing human resources into researching the citations allows privileged programs to invest the rest of their human resources in new argument innovation while ensuring they have their "bases covered" with the existing arguments. The people tasked with researching existing citations are not deemed freeloaders by the privileged programs, nor are they excluded from the benefits of the argument innovations done by other people on their own teams. Any strong advocate of the free rider argument would have to agree that squads that share evidence among themselves are also susceptible to free rider debaters using their own squad's evidence for a competitive edge over harder working debaters from lesser privileged institutions. In the end, it was decided that sustaining a diverse set of programs and helping to increase the overall participation in debate was worth

the risk that a free rider might use open source to attain competitive success that he/she did not “deserve.”

The last response to the freeloader objection that the Wake Forest debaters found persuasive was that most, if not all, debate programs already use the community constructed knowledge to research and innovate arguments. The underlying assumption of the free rider argument is that it is unfair that the free rider is gaining a benefit from the intellectual property of another person’s efforts. The Wake Forest debaters agreed that, unlike the software/programming world, the vast majority of all evidence read in a debate comes from someone else’s intellectual work in the first place. The notion that any debater and/or debate team could lay claim to the intellectual property of evidence that is parsed from someone else’s intellectual efforts was not persuasive. The combination of arguments and the specific deployment of evidence obviously represent an act of creativity that is unique to intercollegiate debate. That creativity, however, is not preserved by hiding the full text of the evidence and, in fact, may be hindered since access to the hidden text may spark new areas for argument innovation. The disclosure of the taglines, organization, and key phrases through the publically accessible caselists means that, even if a person believed preserving intellectual property at all costs, there was little intellectual effort to be lost by disclosing the full text of the evidence. What is gained is the possibility for younger debaters to focus their efforts on learning how arguments are constructed. The Wake Forest debate team decided that open source debating was a middle ground between “teaching someone how to fish and letting them starve in the process.” The speech documents would provide a model for less experienced debaters in how to construct arguments while providing coaches from less resourced programs a set of resources

that could serve as a basic evidence packet on the topic.

The other major objection to open source was a concern that community wide adoption would diminish the emphasis on research skills. The importance of research skills should not be underestimated. For many directors, coaches, and administrators, the most important defining feature of policy debate is its emphasis on teaching research skills. The Wake Forest debaters were persuaded that an open source platform may actually increase the emphasis on research skills in three ways. First, for the participants in an open source system, there is a greater need to research to maintain a competitive advantage. The relationship between a debater's research and his/her competitive advantage stems from two variables—surprise and delay. One of the primary reasons that the Wake Forest debaters supported a “weak” version of open source rather than the “strong” version outlined by Antonucci (2005) was precisely because they wanted to maintain the competitive drive to innovate. In the strong version of open source, a participant would have to upload an argument before it could be deployed in a debate, which the debaters felt would dis-incentivize argument innovation if the argument had to be made public in advance. The weak version would continue to incentivize debaters to innovate arguments, but the speed of community wide adoption, scouting, and review is much faster in an open source system.

Without open source, debaters can rely on a lag time between when an argument is deployed and when it can be re-deployed by the competition. As noted above, for privileged squads, there is less lag time between a citation being posted on the caselist and a squad having the argument before the next tournament, which is a result of the human resources available to the more privileged institutions. The rest of the debate community

is forced to make choices about what portions of the caselist they have time to research, meaning that most non-open source debate teams have a competitive advantage over the less privileged institutions simply by virtue of the time it takes for the less privileged institutions to “catch up” to the arguments they have already deployed. When the Wake Forest debaters realized that the lag time is greatly reduced in an open source system, they understood that they would have to work harder to ensure that their argument innovations create a competitive advantage. Simply put, allowing the entire debate community access to your arguments in the immediate aftermath of the competition would mean that the Wake Forest debaters would have to work *harder* to maintain a competitive advantage over the competition. This sentiment was echoed by Jonathan Paul, Georgetown’s Director of Debate, immediately after winning the National Debate Tournament when he noted, “Open source definitely encouraged our students to work harder. We collectively felt it was vital to significantly innovate our arguments after each tournament.” (Paul, 2012, p. 1).

The second argument in favor of increased emphasis on research skills was that the *more* squads that participated in open source, the *more* emphasis there would be on research skills. The fear that open source would dis-incentivize research is akin to the free rider argument previously discussed. The people that would be dis-incentivized to do research would be the squads that choose not to participate in open source and, instead, choose to use the community evidence pool without additional research. Although it is certainly possible for a squad to simply use open source rather than doing any form of research whatsoever, the Wake Forest debaters were persuaded that the benefits of the increased research emphasis for them and for any other

participating institution outweighed the potential that others would give up the competitive benefits that stem from individual squad research. Simply put, the debaters were not convinced that the Wake Forest squad decision should rely on whether or not open source would discourage research among the people who already have little motivation to do research. Instead, the debaters believed that the more institutions that opt-in to an open source model, the more research the community would produce as a whole.

The last argument that persuaded the Wake Forest debaters was that in the new era of digital literacy, open source debating would emphasize new conceptions of debate research that better account for the information environment we find ourselves in on a daily basis. Stables argues, "Today's literacy challenge is not just about locating information, but increasingly how to curate this volume of information" (2011, p. 249). As noted in the introduction, the old model of debate research relied on finding the arguments that no one else had found up until that point. Although much of the formula for argument innovation still depends on researching the next level of an argument that has not been deployed yet, open source encourages a new set of research wherein debaters and coaches *use* the existing community set of evidence in new ways. Within an open source evidence platform, participants are incentivized to consider unique combinations of arguments that the traditional model of research does not incentivize because of the "catch up" effect mentioned previously. Open source creates the intellectual space necessary to re-arrange the evidence pool in new ways, encouraging the re-deployment of arguments to account for both the existing set of responses, and, ideally, catapulting debaters into new sets of literature. As Stables summarizes, "When reviewing the essential

literacy skills in a digital society it is difficult to ignore the powerful ways in which debate could blossom as a central educational practice, especially when considering the importance of idea of play” (2011, p. 251). This phenomena is supported by the broader open source literature which suggests that innovation across platforms takes place more efficiently when programmers can reuse existing code, “Returns on investment in the creation of new knowledge hinges on the extent to which this knowledge can be applied across the development of new processes and products” (Haefliger, von Krogh, & Spaeth, 2008, p. 181).

At the conclusion of the discussion, there was consensus that Wake Forest debate should adopt an open source model of evidence production for the 2010-2011 season. On September 14, 2010, Wake Forest announced the creation of “Wake Forest Open Source Initiative Version 1” by stating, “Wake Forest Debate is pleased to announce version one of our Open Source Debate Initiative. The goal of the initiative is to try to determine if the benefits of greater argument transparency in collegiate debate outweigh the potential disadvantages associated with reducing the amount of research debaters currently engage in when tracking down evidence from citations alone” (Atchison, 2010, p.1). On September 23, 2010, the first set of evidence was uploaded to the Deacon Source wiki. From the first tournament of the year to the 2011 NDT, every piece of evidence read in a speech delivered by a Wake Forest debater was uploaded for community use, representing hundreds of speeches.

Although there was little public discussion of Wake Forest’s announcement, during the 2010-2011 season, the University of Pittsburgh William Pitt Debating Union also adopted an open source evidence model (Kurr, 2010) and the University of Georgia debate program adopted

an open source backfile project designed to help new programs have access to essential evidence (Harrigan, 2010). The conclusion of Wake Forest's September announcement stated, "We are looking forward to assessing this initiative throughout the year. Towards that end, we hope to work with communication scholars in our department to develop a survey in order to gather the debate community's input after everyone has had an opportunity to see the initiative in action" (Atchison, 2010, p. 1). The next section of this essay summarizes the results of that survey.

Community Response

One hundred and twenty six teams representing 68 debate programs gathered in Winston-Salem, NC for the Franklin R. Shirley Classic Tournament on the weekend of November 11-14, 2011. Voted the tournament of the decade for the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the Franklin R. Shirley Classic is considered the NDT of the first semester.⁶ At the tournament registration, the Wake Forest staff distributed a 12-item survey inviting tournament participants to provide input on Wake Forest's open source platform (Appendix A). Surveys were distributed to each participant, and were available to all those participating at the tournament. The registration staff received 49 responses representing current debaters, assistant coaches, head coaches, and directors. Of the 49 respondents, 35 were debaters, five were assistant coaches, two were coaches, two were directors, two identified as "other," and three did not identify.

Although we will outline themes below, the results suggest that the respondents found open source net beneficial. The two broadest questions asked on the issue of whether open source was net beneficial were whether or not the respondents found the speech

documents helpful and whether or not the respondents had ever utilized the information for assisting in a debate competition. All 30 respondents to the question regarding helpfulness agreed that the information was helpful and only three of 33 respondents had not utilized the information for a debate competition. The open-ended answers provide a better context for which parts of the open source model the respondents found beneficial. We identified three themes within the open ended answers: (1) respondents that found open source helpful for reducing resource disparities; (2) respondents that found open source helpful for improving the quality of arguments; and (3) respondents that found open source helpful for teaching research and argumentation skills.

Respondents consistently articulated that the primary benefit of open source is to help reduce resource disparities. There are plenty of disparities that cannot be remedied through any model of evidence production, including differences in travel budgets, coaching resources, and scholarships, to name a few. However, though the survey did not identify respondents by school size, around 10% self-identified themselves as members of “small schools” and went on to note the ways in which open source has helped their participation in intercollegiate debate. One respondent wrote that “Small squads with limited resources find this invaluable; it is inspiring to our novices and motivation for us to update our own evidence.” Another respondent echoed a similar sentiment, “We have two researchers on the team and having this example of research and organization is invaluable to a recovering squad like ours” (original emphasis). Several respondents also wrote that the speech documents were helpful examples for more inexperienced debaters. For example, one respondent noted, “it is extremely helpful in demonstrating argument

diversity to novices while debating for a small school." Commenting specifically on research, one respondent declared, "It allows for easier research for small teams, better strategic knowledge of block responses, and ensures that everything is open rather than restricted." Another respondent added that open source "can guide research efforts and help small schools keep up with research demands." One respondent spoke directly to the question of competitive equity by stating that the primary benefit of open source is, "Leveling the playing field, [by] helping squads with limited coaching generate ideas." As to the prevalence of small schools utilizing open source, one respondent noted, "We debate small schools who utilize Wake's ev[idence] all of the time." Of all of the open-ended answers, the discussion of small schools was the most consistent benefit of open source identified by the respondents.

The second theme is that open source is helpful for improving the quality of arguments. According to the responses, this improvement occurs in two ways. First, open source encourages specificity and deeper knowledge of the topic. One respondent noted, "[open source] allowed us to write specific answers to evidence more quickly than would usually be the case." The respondent went on to write, "It fosters very simple and effective intel sharing, and encourages more specific research and debating." Another respondent wrote that "context for debates is awesome and intel[ligence] sharing makes everyone's args [sic] more specific and better." Along with increased specificity, respondents consistently noted an overall improvement in the quality of the evidence, open source encourages "more access to arguments, [which] allows for better arguments," and that open source "generally raise[s] quality of evidence overall." One of the ways that open source encourages specificity and argument quality is by helping direct

research efforts, as noted by one respondent that wrote that open source, “makes decisions about which cites to cut easier.” These responses support a basic claim echoed by another respondent that open source encourages “more depth into the topic.”

According to the respondents, the second way that open source helps improve argument quality is by providing more information to help opponents better understand arguments. Several respondents articulated that open source “improves the quality of scouting info.” For instance, one respondent wrote, “being able to see highlighting of cards to contextualize arguments is useful. Especially incredibly long cards/args which I have a limited knowledge of.” Another respondent wrote that open source was, “beneficial to see the way a particular team highlights evidence for knowledge of how to debate them.” According to the respondents, the increased information sharing did not just improve argument comprehension before debates, open source, “allows for better assessments of ev[idence] quality.” Other respondents echoed a similar response when noting that open source, “gives insight into card quality.” Respondents noted that the culmination of better scouting information and better evidence assessment leads to better argument innovation by providing, “direction for some new research opportunities” while preventing “bad backfile check debates.” Writing optimistically about the future of open source, one respondent summarized, “It could force teams to do better research and also allows strategy to take a greater importance.”

The last theme is that open source is helpful for improving research and argumentation skills. According to one respondent, open source is “incredibly useful for reconstructing debates for redos and personal speech development.” Another respondent noted that open

source “helps make my speeches better through strategic research and by examining these arguments for learning about argument construction.” Another respondent wrote that open source, “Help[s] to show how a block can be set up and a round may progress.” Finally, a respondent indicated that open source was helpful for teaching debate beyond the confines of intercollegiate policy debate. According to this respondent, open source has been utilized by the instructors at the Detroit Urban Debate League, “for evidence examples” and “research tutorial.”

As the above quotations and data demonstrate, many of the responses to the first version of Deacon Source were positive. There were, however, some respondents that expressed concerns with open source. The primary concerns were the same objections raised during the fall 2010 discussion with the Wake Forest debaters—the potential for free riders and the potential for decreased emphasis on research skills. One respondent noted, “It may lead to teams not cutting their own cards...,” while another respondent feared that open source, “could lead to no one cutting their own ev[idence] and arguments become [sic] repetitive.” Three respondents simply wrote, “freeriders” while another respondent connected both objections by writing, “freeriding reducing [sic] undergrad[uate] research.” Although these objections were predictable based on the fall 2010 Wake Forest discussion, they demonstrate that the debate community is very concerned about the relationship between open source and both competitive success and research skills. Interestingly, when asked whether or not the respondent would be interested in participating in open source, 31 of 38 respondents indicated that they were interested, but some feared the competitive risks associated with it. This fear is best summarized by a respondent that wrote, “I think that it is good for debate if the whole community

does [it]. I just don't want the strategic disadvantage of going first."

Although we believe that the data is important for charting the initial response to open source, we believe there are several limitations to the survey data. First, the surveys were distributed by pen and paper at the tournament in order to ensure that the respondents were current participants in intercollegiate debate rather than an online survey which would have included the potential for a broader audience. This introduces the risk of biasing the respondent rate towards those who had more down-time during a tournament to fill out a pen and paper survey, though given the high number of debaters who were respondents; it seems that many time-pressed individuals were able to complete the survey. Second, we recognize that the sample size is a limitation of the study and hope to replicate the study in the future using alternative survey methods to increase the response rate. Finally, this survey was distributed at a time when there was very few institutions participating in open source debating. Now that there are many more institutions involved in open source, participants across the debate community may have formed stronger opinions about the practice.

Conclusion: From Deacon Source to Open Caselist and Beyond

The community response, although limited in scope and size, was on balance positive and supported the idea that open source may be instrumental in helping reduce resource disparities between programs while encouraging argument innovation. The survey results also demonstrated, however, that version 1.0 of Deacon Source was not an ideal platform for organizing and distributing the evidence. There was one suggestion that stood out to the Wake Forest coaching staff: "find a way

to integrate it with the wiki for consolidation purposes.” The wiki refers to the online caselist where teams disclose the outlines of their arguments along with their citations. Although the first caselist wiki was started by J.P. Lacy when he was an assistant coach at Wake Forest University in the fall of 2011, the caselist was moved to a new site hosted by Aaron Hardy.⁷ The change would be significant since it would remove the need for anyone to go to a separate website to find open source evidence for each squad. In order to integrate Deacon Source into the caselist, Version 2.0 of open source was introduced. The changes included: (1) integrating an entire tournament’s worth of speech documents into a .zip file to make for an easier download; (2) separating the .zip files by affirmative and negative along with separations by team for clearer organization; and, finally, (3) uploading the .zip files as attachment to a team entry into the caselist.⁸ Version 2.0 enabled consumers to go to one central location to find both citations for non-open source squads and open source evidence in a more organized system.

The move to a more centralized system that was already being used by the vast majority of the debate community came with an additional benefit—greater participation. The ease of attaching a speech document to a caselist entry rather than compiling the speech documents and creating a separate wiki for each institution meant that more debaters were able to participate. As noted in the introduction, the eventual NDT winners from Georgetown University, Andrew Markoff and Andrew Arsht, adopted a full open source platform. Other teams, like Dartmouth College’s Zach Elias and Alex Resar, adopted less formal systems but did post entire speech documents from the NDT. For the 2012-2013 season, several institutions including the Baylor University, University of California at Berkeley,

Dartmouth College, the University of Michigan, Wayne State University, the University of Wyoming, and several individual teams such as Northwestern's Peyton Lee and Arjun Vellayappan (runner-up for the 2013 Copeland Award and finalists at the 2013 NDT) have adopted full open source systems as well.

In our opinion, the future of open source evidence platforms will largely be determined by technology and software design. Although there does not appear to be much community discussion supporting a "strong version" of open source that would require uploading an argument in advance of deploying it, there is support for developing a database for storing open source evidence.⁹ A database would allow users to search, tag, assess, and rate the quality of any particular piece of evidence. The result could be a system of peer review where, over the course of a season, debaters and judges would rate evidence producing a final database of evidence that could be sorted to produce the best evidence on a given part of the college topic. Such a database would also provide countless opportunities for academic connections for the debate community beyond the competition setting. Over the past four years alone, the college policy debate community has scoured the relevant literature and compiled innovative arguments related to the Arab Spring, immigration, nuclear weapons, and agricultural subsidies. Scholars, think tanks, and even policy makers would surely benefit from the intellectual labors of the debate community that are currently relegated to individual squad files. As the open source software community has demonstrated, the future of these innovations will depend on the willingness of programs to participate and the continued efforts of our intellectual community to improve evidence platforms.

Notes

1. This essay, for instance, does not address the important objection that open source debating will reduce the incentive for researchers to go back and re-read the original source in its entirety. We did not exclude this argument because it is not an important objection, but simply because it was not a part of the original squad deliberation. For more discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of open source debating broadly, see Casey Harrigan's essay "Open Source Debating: A Difficult Decision."
2. Although the wiki is no longer the central location for open source documents, it can still be accessed at: <http://deaconsources.wikispaces.com/>.
3. In high school, Bronx Science High School's Andrew Markoff and Zach Elias were one of the first teams to post the full text of their evidence online. As the introduction notes, Andrew Markoff would later become the first team to win the NDT debating open source. In college debate, Gonzaga University's Abe Corrigan and James Joseph were one of the first teams to post the full text of their first affirmative constructive online.
4. The NDCA's open evidence project can be found here: <http://www.debatecoaches.org/page/open-evidence-project/>.
5. It is important to note that, both before the Wake Forest decision to go open source and after, there have been highly successful debate teams that do not rely on traditional forms of evidence for competitive success.
6. The question was removed from the community survey for the 2000s.

7. The current college caselist is located at: <http://opencaselist.paperlessdebate.com/xwiki/wiki/opencaselist/>.
8. Version 2.0 for Wake Forest can be found here: <http://opencaselist.paperlessdebate.com/xwiki/wiki/opencaselist/view/Wake+Forest/WebHome>.
9. See the discussion here: <http://www.cedadebate.org/forum/index.php?topic=3582.0;wap2>.

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Appendix

You are invited to participate in a research study about the Wake Forest Open Source website and resources. Completion of this survey should take approximately 15 minutes. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to not answer any question(s) you do not wish to for any reason or discontinue your participation at any time.

1. How often do you visit the Wake Forest Open Source website: <http://deaconsorce.wikispaces.com/>?

2. Have you ever downloaded speeches from the Wake Forest Open source website?

If you answered question #2 “no” skip to question #8?

4. Did you find the information helpful? If so, why?

5. Have you used the information for any teaching activities? If so, how?

6. Have you used the information for any coaching activities? If so, how?

7. Have you used the information for intercollegiate debate competitions? If so, how?

8. What concerns, if any, do you have with the Wake Forest Open Source project?
9. In your opinion, what are the benefits, if any, with the Wake Forest Open Source project?
10. What improvements, if any, would you suggest for the Wake Forest Open Source project?
11. Would you consider participating in an Open Source project? Why or Why not?
12. Please indicate your association with the 2011 Franklin R. Shirley Classic debate tournament:
_____ Intercollegiate debater participating in tournament.
_____ Director of a debate program.
_____ Coach of a debate program.
_____ Assistant Coach of a debate program.
_____ Other: _____

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Putting Debate Back Into Debate: Digital Debate and Evidence

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Digital debate has enabled debaters to seamlessly file, read, and utilize mass quantities of evidence at a level unthinkable under debate's traditional paper medium. This shift has altered how evidence is both produced and tested. A dominant trend in debate has been to view evidence's chief function as making claims. As a result, most debate research in a digital age is characterized by the "production" of specific claims; finding and constructing precise wordings to fit strategic expectations takes priority over providing and comparing the reasoning aspect of argumentation. This approach, which I dub "debate as information production," leads students further away from developing the skills of critically evaluating and judging competing truth claims in evidence. In this paper, I attempt to rectify this imbalance by arguing for prioritizing the perspective of "debate as argument-judgment" over one of "debate as information production," while articulating a set of best practices that educators can call upon to improve debates about evidence when moving forward.

The 2012 National Debate Tournament (NDT) final round between Northwestern University and Georgetown University was the first championship final to feature two teams who were "paperless," or delivered all of their evidence off of computers. A majority of the published ballots also negatively commented on the sufficiency of the evidence presented by either side. The brevity of the negative's evidence was a central feature of the two dissenting critics. Heidt (2012) noted that "this under-highlighting problem is true for a good deal of the negative's evidence" and that greater analysis may have swung his vote (para. 5). Mosley-Jensen (2012) laments "the increasing need to highlight evidence until nearly all of the warrants are stripped out" and argues that

now is the key time to discuss how contemporary policy debate presents evidence (para. 25). This was not the first time that a judge felt compelled to discuss evidence quality in the final round at length (Hardy, 2011), nor the first instance of “bad” evidence being read in a high-profile debate. However, the fact that a chorus of such highly respected educators felt compelled to comment on the inadequacy of evidence on the highest stage in intercollegiate policy debate signals that Mosley-Jensen’s (2012) invitation to discuss evidence should be accepted with haste.

A discussion of the role of evidence in contemporary policy debate is long overdue for two reasons. First, the near-universal shift to a paperless format of debate happened very quickly. In 2008, one team at the NDT was paperless; in 2012, all but a handful of teams were, and as of this current debate season, nearly all of those squads had transitioned to a paperless format. While there have been several attempts to assess the consequences of a digital shift in debate throughout the last two decades (Bauschard, 2006; Polk, 1995; Voth, 2003; Wastyn & Stables, 1995), the speed of technological change has already rendered them largely obsolete. Second, discussions of paperless debate in the community have thus far not evaluated the role that evidence plays during the research and competition phases of debate. There has been a sustained focus on the socio-economic and ethical implications of the format, both in terms of its dangers (Massey, 2013; Willis, 2013) and benefits (Hanson, 2011; Hardy, 2012). The impact paperless has had on traditional debate staples like flowing, oral delivery, and “block-centric” preparation have also been discussed widely (Batterman, 2010; Galloway, 2010, 2012; Hardy, 2010b), but little attention has been paid to the role of evidence, with one exception (Hester, 2010). Given the countless ways that paperless (and digital

debate in general) has enabled debaters to seamlessly file, read, and utilize mass quantities of evidence at a level unthinkable under the traditional paper medium, there is a clear need to evaluate how evidence is typically used.

I argue that an emerging trend of paperless and digital debate is to view the function of evidence as an exercise in producing claims (both claim-finding and claim-making). I dub this approach “debate as information production.” There are three major manifestations of this perspective. First, digital processing tools and paperless debate’s lack of material constraints has allowed researchers to manipulate text to render information suitable to a debate. Second, contemporary debate often privileges evidentiary claims over the presentation of reasons for believing a claim, something that has been compounded by the recent phenomenon of judges reading along with the debaters’ speech documents during a round. Third, contemporary debate privileges evidence production over arguments about evidence through a synthesis of deference to argument-from-authority and the information saturation that characterizes modern life. Each of these trends (to varying degrees) undermines the skills needed to develop argumentative judgment because they incentivize tactics which have limited relevance outside the realm of contest debating. Such tactics include testing evidence through electronic searches for specific wording and emphasizing the wording of claims over the quality of reasons. To rectify this issue, I propose an alternative way of relating to evidence which I call “debate as argumentative judgment.”

I make this argument in three sections. First, I describe some of the central features of “debate as information production” and some of the problems that accompany it. I also argue that the dangers of reactionary responses to paperless debate are equally

unhelpful. Second, I argue that debate educators should prioritize a skill-set and curriculum that is more capable of encouraging debates about evidence and making judgments between competing fact claims. The alternative view of “debate as judgment” is established as a possible starting point to accomplish this goal. I suggest some new practices that will aid students in making judgments and comparisons about evidence in their debates while still achieving competitive success. Finally, I conclude by considering some possible objections.

Debate as Information Production

If someone entered a contemporary college policy round after having been away from the activity for a decade, many of the accepted tests or challenges of evidence would strike them as quite strange. “I want a line in your evidence that says...” is a commonly heard challenge in cross-examination. Conversely, evidence is often defended with the ardent assertion that “my evidence literally says...” Often, so much textual information is provided that debaters resort to using the “find” feature in Microsoft Word or a web browser as a way of proving or disproving the presence of a specific claim. Debaters have become increasingly less engaged in the process of comparing the reasons offered for believing any particular claim. Instead, they seem to be searching out argumentative essences, using electronic search tools as some sort of litmus strip to determine the presence or absence of content. But why have these practices become more common?

This behavior and the problems of excessive highlighting and underdeveloped warrants that Heidt (2012) and Mosley-Jensen (2012) targeted in their final round ballots are not isolated examples. Instead, they are an increasingly common part of collegiate debate

practice at both the regional and national level. Viewed holistically, these practices constitute a worldview for how many students and researchers relate to evidence; the ways in which evidence is used conveys how they view its purpose. In this section, I explore “debate as information production,” calling attention to the ways that evidence is not simply processed or applied, but how claims are *produced* as the central element of debate. Evidence is produced through the digital manipulation of the text, the prioritization of advancing evidenced claims over reasoning, and through a synthesis of deference to argument-from-authority and the information saturation that characterizes modern life. To describe these trends, I draw upon observations from the 229 debates I judged during the 2010-2013 debate seasons, as well as from analysis of the open-source debate documents from the 2013 Dartmouth College Round Robin.

First, evidence is produced through the digital manipulation of the text. Debaters have always searched out the best language or claims provided by an author, but the shift to an entirely electronic method of evidence production has made several problematic practices commonplace. It is now accepted to underline only partial clauses or chunks of a sentence and link them to other partial clauses. Doxtader (1989, p. 423) comments on how the process of “selective highlighting” distorts an author’s voice by magnifying the claim and destroying the qualifiers or hedges that are offered, but contemporary practice accelerates these problems. Linking together different claims and clauses while still presenting it as one single card plays into ritualized assumptions of what makes for strong evidence (specificity of wording and predictive claims from authorities) while largely being a product of the debater’s making. Evidence is not fabricated per se, but contemporary practice certainly constructs it according to community expectations.

Producing evidence in this manner creates a by-product of unused words and content that is shrunk down to a miniscule size. In the past, surrounding contextual evidence was omitted through the use of ellipsis and reproducing single sentences. Such evidence was always vulnerable to challenges because it lacked a supporting context for the judge to evaluate. Now, however, large bodies of contextual information are provided but the source's supportive reasoning and grounds are reduced to a font size that makes evaluating that information difficult. To be clear, this phenomenon was not uniquely created by the shift to a paperless platform; many of the teams that are still reading evidence printed on paper engage in this practice. However, both traditional and paperless teams prepare digitally, using electronic sources or scanning software to convert printed materials to digital text. This aspect of digital evidence production has been prominent in college debate for about a decade and was the result of cheap scanning technology, improved optical character recognition software, and a greater availability of digital books and academic journals. Although it is part of a broader digital shift, paperless has compounded the problem of unused text by removing any material constraint on the quantity of data a debater can take to a tournament because tub-space and luggage fees are no longer a factor.

The lack of agreement about what should be read by the judge when assessing evidence further compounds the problem of manipulating information. This problem is hardly new, with some discussion in the past about whether judges should be reading evidence at all (Butler, 1983). Paperless debate has also stimulated an ongoing discussion regarding whether judges should obtain the speech documents before a speech begins. While there are disagreements over when evidence should

be transferred to the judge and how much they should consider when checking claims, there is often consensus that judges should only read what portions of the evidence have been read by the debaters. This creates a Catch-22 that further discourages evaluating the quality of a student's interpretation of evidence; what is read by a judge is only what the debater has selected. If digital research enables a high degree of evidence manipulation, judges will only be assessing claims that have been constructed in some sense by the debaters.

Rendering arguments from evidence in turn undermines the traditional tools that debaters have to challenge evidence quality. Some might suggest that the best solution to the problem of shrunken text or manipulative highlighting is to simply leave it to the debaters to read the non-highlighted portions and make arguments about the evidence. A quick look at the quantity of data involved in a typical speech from the Dartmouth Round Robin demonstrates the limits to this approach. The average number of words of evidence text in the first affirmative constructive was 21813 words, while only 2402 of those words were actually read. Among the four open source teams that were analyzed, no team read more than 11% of the evidence text in their affirmative case. Matters improved on the negative, but not by much. Critical arguments (kritiks) had the highest percentage of words read at 18.5%, followed by on-case attacks at 16%, but counterplans (10.7%) and disadvantages (12.6%) were still very low. Relying on debaters to locate weaknesses in their opponent's evidence in the non-highlighted portions is tantamount to handing them a copy of an article from the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* and asking for a list of criticisms and counter-arguments after nine minutes. Relying on what the opponent has selected of their evidence to ground their challenges does not resolve the issue either, given

that selectivity is what has created the problem of waste text in the first place. Thus, the opportunity is there for a debater to read and challenge evidence based on what is not read, but there is such an overwhelming volume of textual information provided that such content is present but functionally absent.

Second, contemporary debate produces evidence through a structure that dramatically downplays the need for providing the reasons for believing a claim. Before discussing how contemporary debate falls short of providing complete arguments, it is first necessary to lay out the traditional model of argument. At a minimum, an argument must consist of advancing a claim and providing at least one reason for believing it to be true (Schiappa & Nordin, 2013). In everyday conversation (and some debate contexts), it is normal and appropriate to omit some pieces of the argument to facilitate efficient communication (Ziegelmueller & Kay, 1997). Given competitive debate's pedagogical focus on enhancing argumentation skills, however, a debater should clearly communicate their claim, evidence, and reasoning. Ziegelmueller and Kay (1997) argue that all arguers must meet a burden of proof by proving their assertions, while Freeley and Steinberg (2000) note that evidence and reasoning should accompany every claim. Rowland (1987) establishes the triad of claim, evidence, and reasoning as the "minimum standard" of argumentative viability:

The most appropriate standard for evaluating burden of proof is argument comprehensibility. The debate judge should evaluate probabilistically any argument which is defended with *both* a reason *and* evidence that the judge perceives as supporting the argument. (p. 195, emphases added)

Anything falling short of this baseline should be strictly

disregarded by the judge, according to Rowland (1987).

If a structurally complete argument consists of a claim and the evidence and reasoning to believe that claim, many debaters' arguments would be graded as incomplete or failing in the classroom. Because so much emphasis is placed on locating precise language and entering such claims into the debate's record, much evidence fails to conform to most conventional interpretations of a complete argument. In place of reason-giving, debaters utilize tag-lines in a variety of manners. Sometimes, the tag is used to make a factual statement, such as "Incentives inevitable" (Georgetown University, 2013) or "SMR grants were just given out" (Wake Forest University, 2013). The worst examples of this practice are those cards that are unhelpfully tagged as "extinction" or "more evidence." Most often, a single claim or series of linked claims are presented without reasons for believing any of them. For example, the following tagline makes five distinct claims and zero reasoning for why those claims are true: "Obama pushing immigration NOW – should pass – avoiding political divisions key. Guns and Money fights now won't thump it. Fighting for high-skilled workers, path to citizenship, and a guest worker program" (Emory University, 2013). Another tactic is to advance a series of claims about the strategic function of the argument for resolving the debate with little to no reference to content. "Solves every advantage except Development and avoids Politics and the ITER DA – the perm links" (Wake Forest University, 2013) and "50 state energy policy solves better, sparks federal modeling, and solves leadership warrants" (Wake Forest University, 2013) are two examples of this. Each tag makes three distinct claims about what the argument accomplishes in the debate game with no basis for understanding why.

The above examples are not outliers. An aggregate

analysis of the 1AC and 1NC speech documents from the Dartmouth Round Robin shows them to be the overwhelmingly preferred method of advancing arguments early in a debate. “Extinction” or “nuclear war” was advanced as a legitimate argument over 20 times throughout the 1ACs and 1NCs by the open source teams that were analyzed. More importantly, the vast majority of tags do not meet the basic rule of thumb of being phrased as a “because...” statement. Operationalizing Rowland’s minimum standard of a claim, evidence, and reasoning makes it clear how common this practice is among the activity’s best teams. Affirmative teams presented reasons in their tag-lines only 20% of the time. On the negative, disadvantages contained the fewest reasons, with 89% of tag-lines using only a claim. Kritiks and on-case attacks were once again significant exceptions, only omitting reasons 52% and 65% of the time. However, presenting reasons for only half of the evidence that is being read in a speech is hardly a level to be satisfied with.

The dearth of explicitly flagged reasoning may help to explain two major phenomena associated with paperless debate. First, the lack of flowing by debaters (Gordon, 2012; Hardy, 2010a) might be because there is a greatly diminished value to flowing. If the debater’s primary task is to identify and challenge an opposing argument, flowing no longer yields the essential information due to the dominant method of tagging and delivering evidence. While some form of flowing will always occur in order to reduce competitive liabilities against analytic arguments that are not included in the speech document (Morris, 2012), declining flowing skills will likely remain as long as structurally incomplete arguments thrive.

Second, the lack of orally presented reasoning may explain why some judges have found it helpful to obtain speech documents before a speech begins. Many highly

respected and well-preferred judges have argued that this practice helps to improve cross-examinations, speed up the decision time, and make cheating (e.g., card-clipping) easier to catch (Green, 2012; Harris, 2011; Morris, 2012). Harris unequivocally states how significant the practice has been for him and his judging:

I find myself far more engaged in the debate from beginning to end when the speeches are jumped to me. I feel completely reenergized as a judge. I no longer have the experience of having to read cards after the round just to figure out what the debaters are talking about. (2011, para. 2)

This statement also says a lot about the nature of a typical contemporary debate round *without* the judge having the evidence in front of them; it suggests that rounds are disengaging, de-energizing, and filled with moments where the judge has no idea what the debaters are talking about. That certainly describes many of the debates I have judged over the past few years. My goal is not to settle the debate over whether judges obtaining documents ahead of time is desirable, but challenging debaters to orally present their reasoning in a manner that is easily comprehended might be a helpful corrective that does not run the risks of accepting less clarity or reasoning (Morris, 2012), increasing judge intervention (Gordon, 2012) or undermining the tenets of face-to-face debating (Hester, 2010).

Third, evidence is produced through a synthesis of a trained deference to argument-from-authority and the information saturation of the digital age. Debate practice has long relied on “expert testimony” to provide the grounds for debate evidence for a few reasons. The topics selected are often complex and require the authoritative voices of experts in the field to help sustain debate. Additionally, the need to have a publically

accessible literature base to facilitate preparation and clash between colleges necessitates the use of published evidence.

While utilizing evidence and research is essential for healthy policy debate and is one of the chief assets of the activity, the broader cultural shift towards digital information has created a crisis for our traditional understanding of argument-from-authority because it has challenged the very concept of expertise. The means of information production online are vastly more democratic, allowing the circulation and creation of arguments from sources that fall well short of possessing either expertise or journalistic credentials. The ability to publish information directly through tools such as blogs is utilized by both experts and non-experts alike. Sources are also increasingly more specialized in terms of topics, ideological interests, and political interests.

This new digital landscape has enabled debaters to research in new, creative ways and helped to introduce new voices into debates as well as remove some of the barriers that previously kept experts from contributing their perspective on current and breaking events. The most compelling example of these new possibilities may be the 2011-2012 democracy assistance topic; professors and fellows at major organizations like the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace utilized blogs and social media to weigh in on the rapidly unfolding events of the Arab Spring. The 2006-2007 courts topic also exposed these same challenges and illustrated the opportunity and problems that surround the use of non-reviewed, expert evidence (Bauschard, 2006).

The problem occurs when we map over our ritualized assumptions about authority onto the new landscape of digital information. A few decades ago, it was perfectly reasonable to associate published evidence with

expertise because most sources were either directly from experts, had passed some level of external review, or were products of a professional media and internally qualified. There was also a much smaller literature base to draw from. This association no longer obtains in today's information saturated world; there is not much hyperbole in stating that one can find just about anything on the internet. The problem is compounded by the activity's emphasis on advancing specific claims. If expertise is assumed and the reasons for an argument are not required to be provided, there is very little basis on which to judge some claims better than others. Moreover, argument-from-authority by its very nature is often misunderstood or misused by debaters; those with a stake in the activity should prioritize teaching more accessible forms of reasoning when at all possible (Zompetti, 2005). If traditional assumptions about evidence and authority are uncritically applied to the modern digital landscape, a perverse form of post-modernism emerges. For contemporary debate practice, it is not that there is no truth, but that instead everyone is an expert. While non-peer reviewed, unqualified evidence has always been a part of debate, the demand for specifically worded, hyperbolic language and the emphasis on claim-making has accentuated the use of such evidence.

While each of these three dimensions manifest independently at times, they also help to produce and accelerate each other. The digital manipulation of evidence enables researchers to more directly render text into the specific language or claims needed for debates over "what the evidence literally says" in ways that speak to the needs of debate strategy as opposed to the facts of the issue. This incentivizes research that can pinpoint specialized wording or verbiage over researching the strength of competing claims or the merit of the source,

which is in turn exacerbated by the current agnosticism in source quality. If the strategic wording of a claim is more important than the supporting evidence for it or the source of the argument, the more specific language will be selected by the researcher and presented by the debater. These interlocking and mutually reinforcing practices are not accidental features or byproducts of competition. Such research and argumentative choices are the results of debate-teaching at summer institutes, in practice debates and drills, in the assignments that are designed, and in the oral critiques of judges. This nexus of practices and values constitutes a new approach: "debate as information production."

There are several implications for how this perspective encourages students to relate to evidence in their research and debates. It sees the role of the student or researcher as creating or finding pieces of information to fill out a preexisting strategic structure (e.g., a counterplan, disadvantage, etc.). In most instances, this structure is not a product of inductive discovery to reveal what issues or questions are at the heart of the topic, but rather are argumentative genres that are deductively mapped onto the topic area, squaring the circle of literature to meet our preconceived expectations of a strategic argument. In this world, debate strategy becomes overwhelmingly suggested by what produces competitive results, as opposed to the factual merit or quality of the evidence surrounding an issue.

Evidence ceases to function as argumentative support more broadly within the confines of this approach; its role is transformed into something largely symbolic or ritualistic. It works as a symbolic turnkey that allows a debater to fill out a preexisting strategic formula. This function of evidence pushes students and judges to relate to evidence psychologically, not argumentatively; the conclusions about what is a winning strategy have

already been predetermined in many instances and evidence is simply looked over to confirm what the judge or debater already believes (Gregg, 1967). This relationship severely limits the tools debaters draw upon in testing and challenging evidence and helps to explain why tests of evidence in debate are rarely about the facts or reasoning presented, but simply rituals of searching for specific language, demanding a line of text that “literally says” something or resorting to digital search features to make arguments.

In response to the challenge of this dominant practice, it hardly makes sense to demonize paperless debate. As Harrigan (2010, para. 1) argues, “we (the community) are not going back to paper. Within five years, the vast majority of teams will be paperless and there’s not much that any of us can do about it.” Although some may bristle at this type of “technological determinism” (Hester, 2010), it is important to note that Harrigan (2010) underestimated the rapid shift to paperless by a few years. Paperless debate is no longer “inevitable” or something that can be headed off; it simply *is* contemporary debate practice (at least at the college level). It would be foolish to attempt to turn our backs on the long list of benefits the platform provides, ranging from the economic (avoiding airline baggage fees, smaller rental cars, less fuel consumption) to the pedagogical (it is difficult to imagine the practice of an “open source” initiative without paperless debate). Moreover, trying to ban any particular practice short of cheating is pure folly and anathema to the broader values that structure the activity, as Doxtader (1989) notes in the context of abusive highlighting.

At the same time, it would be equally foolish to believe that the current dominance of paperless debate voids the need for a discussion over the best practices of evidence use, whether this belief is grounded on a naïve

faith that the best ideas will emerge through competition or through simple resignation to the dominance of paperless debate. Technological change determines neither life nor debate; it simply enables new ways of living and debating. To navigate the challenges of digital and paperless debate without resigning to the status quo, it is best to occupy the middle space “between uncritical acceptance and uncritical rejection of new technologies that confront the community” (Woods et al., 2006, p. 101). The task for debate educators is to decide whether current competitive practice conforms to our broader argumentative values about what debate ought to be and what practices can best reflect that. In the next section, I argue that current debate practice should actively seek out ways to encourage more debates about evidence.

Debate as Argumentative Judgment

There is no argument about whether the strategies produced by the dominant approach are successful, but the structural marginalization of reason-giving and evidence quality within those debates should be troubling. “Debate as information production” is dominant because it produces a lot more wins than it does losses. For example, the four teams from the Dartmouth Round Robin that were analyzed in the previous section represent debate’s “best of the best.” Collectively, they accrued 244 wins (78% win percentage) and appeared in five final rounds, eight semi-final rounds, six quarter-finals, and three octa-final rounds during the 2012-2013 regular season. Many of the features of “debate as information production” should be challenged, however, because they discourage more meaningful debates about evidence. This section begins by arguing that debates about evidence are more valuable educationally than the skills of information production. If the case can be made that we as debate educators must attend to more than wins and losses, and if the skills and

vocabulary needed to make judgments about the quality of evidence offered in an argument is best achieved through competitive debate, then a way to encourage more debating about evidence should be found. Thus, after arguing for the primacy of a curriculum of argumentative judgment, this section outlines some beginning parameters for what that approach might look like in practice.

Contemporary debate practice should prioritize a curriculum and skill-set that emphasizes making judgments about evidence over the production of evidence for three reasons. First, other social and intellectual institutions outside of debate have failed to provide opportunities for learning how to make judgments about evidence. Brusckke (2012) believes that argumentation theorists have largely deprioritized the evaluation of evidence based upon the starting terms of their approach. That, in turn, has diminished the ability for experts to weigh in on pressing social issues of global importance, sometimes even on challenges where the fate of the earth is in question. While the average college debate round will likely never determine who lives or dies (the exhortations of the average college debater notwithstanding), it is an important training ground for thousands of students and an important laboratory for testing ideas and evidence. As Muir (1993) argues, debate's distinguishing feature is its methodological approach to testing arguments:

The emphasis on method—focusing on the technique of debate as an educational end—is characteristic of the defense of debating both sides of a resolution. Interscholastic debate, many scholars reason, is different from “real world” disputation... Debate is designed to train students to construct arguments, to locate weaknesses in reasoning, to organize ideas, and to present and defend ideas

effectively, not to convert the judge to a particular belief. (p. 278)

Topics, literature bases, and research skills will change as students move on in their lives, but the skills of comparing the merits of an argument and the evidence underlying it that are offered help prepare students for their professional and adult lives more than the ability to produce another piece of evidence or quote.

Second, the ability to compare and judge evidence and arguments is a skill most unique to policy debate as an activity and should be preferred over the skills of “finding” evidence. Competitive debate has many plausible rationales and provides multiple benefits. To determine which rationale or set of benefits should be prioritized, educators and judges should select those that are most unique to the debate format (Rowland, 1987; Strait & Wallace, 2008).

If one starts from the premise that debate must aspire to a higher end than competition alone (Strait & Wallace, 2008), it becomes clear that making arguments about evidence is something that cannot be achieved through an analogous activity. The opportunity to competitively square off with an opponent’s arguments over 100 times a year is limited to debate while there are ample academic opportunities to learn research skills. No classroom or professional experience comes close to affording the opportunity to focus on advocacy and refutation. The testing of evidence should be placed at the center of the activity because it “provides a rational basis on which to both construct *and evaluate* arguments critically” (Doxtader, 1989, p. 423, emphasis added). Distorting evidence to manufacture claims or suppressing the grounds or reasoning undermines the larger goal of learning how to critically judge different arguments, theories and subsequent policies (Doxtader, 1989).

The need to focus on debates about evidence has also been heightened by the recent explosion in the number of teams who have joined the open source initiative. Started by Wake Forest University three years ago, the movement to share the full text of evidence used online reached critical mass with the 2012-2013 season as dozens of teams around the nation adopted the practice (CEDA Forums, 2012). For better or worse, the odds that an individual debater produced even a majority of the evidence he or she uses in a single debate round have fallen greatly. Whether their evidence came from teammates, coaches, or open source files, more emphasis should be placed on how students argue about evidence because a skillset unique to every debater in an age of information saturation is how well they challenge and test evidence within the parameters of a contest round.

Third, research elements that prioritize finding specific language should take a backseat to making arguments about evidence for two reasons. To begin, research will always take place in other contexts and often in ways that are more rigorous and demanding than policy debate. In-depth research on a single topic is certainly something more unique to policy debate than other academic or professional contexts, but when that research is constrained by the fictions of debate strategy or artificial mechanisms in the topic's wording, students are insulated from important segments of a literature base or exposed to them in ways that are unrealistic. A semester-long upper division undergraduate seminar or graduate level education offer extensive and in-depth research opportunities that are better than what policy debate offers in many ways. Oftentimes, the activity creates "research" that is not usable in any other academic or professional context (Hester, 2010).

Next, the policy debate community is awash in evidence and information like never before. Open

backfile projects hosted at the high school and college level offer instantaneous access to amounts of information that once required being a member of the country's larger debate squads. Beyond open source initiatives, the broader cultural shift to digital information makes finding evidence to support any point easier than ever. High quality, peer-reviewed sources are now often published openly online or accessed by visiting a local university where open guest networks increasingly allow free access to online journals (even if a person is not a student there). The present moment is characterized by an overabundance of information and a skill-set that emphasizes the "finding" parts of debate is no longer helpful; a way of emphasizing the "debating" parts of debate is more important if debate is to provide a unique benefit for students.

I am not suggesting that students cease doing research or collecting information for their debates. I am proposing that we shift the calculus from a prioritization of producing evidence that has evidence-testing as a supplemental benefit, to a calculus that prioritizes evidence-testing with evidence-production as a supplemental benefit. A major component of information literacy is the ability to interact with research resources, both traditional and new, and be able to retrieve and locate information on any number of questions. Debates tend to be better when all participants have significant involvement with the production of the arguments involved. However, it is inevitable that students will have to rely on evidence produced by someone else simply because of the scope of the typical topic and the breadth of established arguments; using evidence from teammates, coaches, or open source is a necessity for most. In order to deal with this reality, debate educators should not posit the production of evidence as the central goal of the activity.

Even if agreement can be reached that debating about evidence is preferable to simply producing more of it, creating a new curriculum is a difficult endeavor. First, a delicate line must be toed that pushes debate in the direction of evidence evaluation while not entirely forsaking the skills of information production. There is always the danger of taking the perfectionist impulse too far in the other direction. A debate universe where coaches produce all of the evidence and information for their students in order to free up student time to focus on learning judgment skills would be as undesirable as the status quo's overreliance on information production. Thus, the alternative of "debate as argumentative judgment" must explicitly start from the initial value premise that debaters should be taught to test and compare evidentiary claims while also being incentivized to seek out and produce evidence that can withstand higher scrutiny. At the same time, this approach must also offer competitive rewards and pay off strategically given that competition is the primary driver of academic policy debate. To that end, I would like to highlight some potential practices that might offer debaters the argumentative tools to shift debates away from the dominant view of evidence production and closer to a world that prioritizes argumentative judgment.

First, debaters should challenge arguments that are structurally incomplete and fail to cross an established threshold of viability. An oft-heard challenge of evidence by debaters is that "it lacks a warrant," but this is often only offered up as a reason to prefer their own evidence over their opponents'. The problem with this passive strategy is that it is only advanced as a weak tie-breaker and the unwarranted evidence may sometimes be preferred because the wording of the claim is more specific or tied into preexisting beliefs about debate strategy. Without holding evidence to a minimum level

of structural completeness, all claims are rewarded some level of probability and it becomes difficult to deter bad argumentation (Rowland, 1987). A debater operating from a terminology of argumentative judgment could establish a framework for evidence evaluation in their first constructive that argues for dismissing evidence that fails to present the grounds and reasoning for a claim in the speech. If the debater advancing the framework convincingly wins the normative desirability for it, they would simply need to establish what evidence was read by the opposition that falls outside of being argumentatively complete and such arguments would be screened out by the judge. The debater could then make arguments about how that screen cuts out essential support for an opponent's argument, thus greatly altering the strategic calculus in any given round.

This framework closely resembles Rowland's "revitalized burden of proof standard" (1987, p. 195), but the key difference is that this challenge must be executed by the debater as an argument instead of utilized by the judge as an evaluative criterion. While having the judge simply toss out arguments has a more immediate effect on an individual debate, it does not achieve the goal of teaching students how to think about and assess arguments structurally (Hill & Leeman, 1997, p. 32). It is also difficult to have a significant impact throughout many debates and debate seasons if the judge is the implementer of this framework because it is structured as a punishment and not an incentive. If a debater wishes to avoid such punishing judges, they will adjust their preferences accordingly (a system that has changed greatly since the time of Rowland's writing). Teaching debaters to make arguments about the insufficiency of arguments creates a competitive incentive to challenge evidence rather than simply reading more of their own.

Three questions immediately come to mind. First,

what might the content of this framework look like? As a minimally acceptable standard, it could argue that an argument is only complete if it provides a claim and the reasons for believing that claim (as well as the evidence if it is a carded argument). There could be more specific variations of this framework as it evolved. There could be a standard for conveying the warrants in the tag of a piece of evidence. This would make debating and evaluating warrants more effective because tags are more easily recorded by a judge than the internals of evidence and the inclusion in the tag signals the active work done by the debater to demonstrate which parts of the evidence prove their claim true.

Second, what is the competitive incentive for such a framework if there are so many other tasks that must be accomplished in a debate? Such a framework argument transforms challenges of opponent's evidence from a passive form of evidence comparison to an offensive (in a strategic sense) argument capable of nullifying large portions of an opponent's arguments. Nor would it be necessary for a debater to win that every card an opponent relies upon is flawed. Just as debaters are encouraged to pick and choose their best link arguments within any affirmative or negative position, they could use this framework to hone in on places where there are crucial evidentiary gaps in an opponent's position and demonstrate why the loss of a particular piece of evidence unravels their entire stance. Knowing the poor state of most evidence files among the policy debate community, such a framework has the potential to pay off enormous competitive yields very early in its usage. As debaters adapt their research and arguments to reduce their competitive vulnerability, the end result might be more debaters who are more prepared to debate the reasons within their own evidence or challenge others. Such an adaptation would eventually nullify the utility of

this hypothetical framework, but it would result in a large gain for the community educationally.

Third, why should debaters be concerned with orally advancing the claim, evidence, and reasoning? It is clearly not required for competitive success; many of the activities most successful do not meet this standard. Additionally, most definitions of argument concede that pieces of arguments are often suppressed in everyday conversation. Why can't the same standard apply to debates? There are two responses. First, competitive success should not be the exclusive end that debate aspires to. Such a view is out of line with the broader educational purpose of the universities and colleges that fund the activity (often with public resources). This mindset serves to further alienate debate from its traditional place in the academy and has numerous reputational costs that make sustaining debate programs more difficult in the long-term (Frank, 2003). An exclusive focus on competition will reinforce a skill set that is conducive only to the narrow situation of winning a competitive policy debate, creating opportunity costs with the skills of argumentative judgment that are essential for students to be successful in life (Strait & Wallace, 2008). Second, explicitly communicating the full structure of an argument improves the overall quality of a debate. It would certainly remove much of the "fog of war" that inhabits many judges, leaving them to reconstruct the entire debate at the end of a round in order to decide a debate. It focuses the debate away from the quantity of claims being made by magnifying the quality of the reasons provided. Explicit reason giving is essential to good argument, as Balthrop argues:

By emphasizing the giving of reasons as the essential quality of argument, evidence which provides those reasons in support of claims will inevitably receive greater credibility than a number

of pieces of evidence, each presenting only the conclusion of someone's reasoning process... If the credibility of the evidence does indeed rest upon these premises, let them be presented explicitly as reasons why the evidence should be accepted in the absence of explanations more specific to the substantive issues... (1987, p. 178)

Thus, the framework offered here has the potential to move debate away from claim-making and closer towards comparing the quality of explanations. Arguments prepared in line with this framework would require the researcher to select the best reasons for a claim and think carefully about how to efficiently and adequately convey those reasons from the start of the debate. Debates about warrants would thus be a central feature of the debate early on, rather than a supplemental feature of the late rebuttals that only a few debaters ever engage in.

There are also opportunities for building in evaluative criteria for evidence comparisons that fall short of investing in an elaborate framework argument. To deal with evidence that has been excessively manipulated in a word processor, proximity and corroboration standards could be developed that give debaters the vocabulary to indict or challenge evidence that falls short of a context challenge but has more teeth than simply griping in cross-examination about evidence quality. Debaters could argue that evidence should be preferred in instances where there is a high degree of proximity between the key components of claims or reasons in the evidence as a way of challenging evidence that is often separated by enormous blocks of shrunken text or that bridges chapters or sections of the source. Debaters could likewise argue for grammatical standards of evidence preference as a way of challenging arguments that are "massaged" out of the text through creative or selective underlining/highlighting. Corroboration

could be evolved as an evidentiary standard in debates to buttress against pieces of evidence that have claims or wording that are sometimes “too good to be true;” challenging debaters to produce other sources that agree would encourage students to evaluate how expansive the support is for their arguments in this way. Attempts to call attention to evidence quality should be encouraged and, more importantly, rewarded even if there is not a full-fledged framework involved. Close calls on a question should go to the debaters making efforts to fully establish their own argument and challenge the reasoning of their opponents.

The erosion of traditional assumptions of authority also requires new standards of evidence evaluation. Instead of relying on the traditional challenges of recency or expertise, varying standards should be evolved that speak more directly to the nature of the source itself. It is difficult to create a taxonomy of possible standards because authority is something that is often entirely dependent on context. Despite that difficulty, posing a few questions makes it clear just how much there is to debate about when it comes to authority. Are the arguments made by a respected professor on a professional blog that has no review more authoritative than those of a Ph.D. candidate whose research has appeared in a peer-reviewed journal? What should be the status of review drafts or experimental versions of academic papers that are hosted on websites such as the Social Science Research Network? Do these represent more timely and creative arguments or are they half-baked and not ready for publication? What about professors or experts who are serving as visiting fellows at partisan think-tanks? Are their academic credentials or their paid self-interests to be preferred? Is the professional blog of a known and respected journalist worth more than an anonymous by-line on

an Associated Press article that has passed editorial review? This list of questions not only demonstrates how the face of information has changed greatly over the past 10 years, but also shows how many areas of exploration are out there for debates on source authority. The ritualistic statement to “prefer my evidence from a professor because their evidence is from a hack” is not well suited to help students navigate the current terrain of information that is available in a digital world.

To a large extent, the solution to the dilemma of source authority is beyond the boundaries of this essay because this is a problem that is largely external to the issue of debate’s dominant relationship to evidence (though it certainly implicates it, as the previous section argued). Even if one entirely disagrees that “debate as information production” is a problem at all, the challenge of resolving the erosion of traditional standards of authority remains. Furthermore, even if the alternative of “debate as argumentative judgment” is incapable of resolving the present crisis of source authority, it fulfills its core objective if it creates a world where students are more actively involved in comparing reasons and warrants throughout the course of a debate.

This brief list of argumentative possibilities is an endeavor that will necessarily fall short for a few reasons. First, often, the most effective, efficient, and strategic ways of expressing an argument are only revealed through competition and the testing of debate rounds. Second, debate norms are rather slow to change. With a constant turnover in the student population every four to five years, it is easy for “lifer” debate coaches to forget that their students have experienced only a fraction of the debates the coach has and thus may not understand the need for developing argumentative judgment. Third, attempting to establish a new teleology for an activity is something that is inherently difficult to control or

predict. However, while it is difficult to give an extensive or exhaustive list of an argumentative curriculum at this point, isolating a few initial practices might help move the discussion over paperless debate beyond its current impasse and towards more meaningful debates about evidence.

Conclusion

I have hopefully made it clear that a good deal of the research and preparation done in contemporary policy debates is lacking from an argumentative perspective. Additionally, paperless debate and its effects are one of the most hotly contested issues currently being discussed by the broader debate community. In all likelihood (hopefully, even), my argument will provoke several objections or points of disagreement. I conclude this essay by considering some of these objections.

The most likely objection to this analysis is that many of these problems are not unique to paperless debate or even digital debate. I agree. That does not obviate the need for the discussion. While paperless debate is a significant change, it did not create many of the issues the community faces regarding the use of evidence. Digital-based research as the overwhelming norm in college debate precedes the shift to paperless by about five years. There are several examples of debate scholars seeking to place the use of evidence in debate on sounder educational footing (Benson, 1971; Newman & Newman, 1969; Rowland & Deatherage, 1988). Moreover, many contemporary problems associated with evidence use in debate have been discussed for some time now. The problems of “selective highlighting” (Doxtader, 1989), the battle for the most recent evidence and negative “unstrategies” (Wastyn & Stables, 1995), and the “cult of information processing” (Polk, 1996) were considered problematic decades ago and have never been entirely

resolved; they have simply assumed a form peculiar to contemporary debate practice. With that said, paperless debate and continued changes in web-based resources have accelerated and compounded several problematic trends in the use of evidence in debate. The fact that many of these practices are not entirely reducible to paperless is hardly surprising; the dominant practice of any community simultaneously reflects its present circumstances as well as the accretions of its history.

Challenging whether bad practice is unique to paperless is also not helpful in the long-term because this argument only disputes the narrative of change rather than defending the practice itself. By only challenging whether any particular debate practice (e.g., bad highlighting, a lack of warrants, generic evidence, etc.) is uniquely caused by a shift to paperless debate, one can forget that such practices are nevertheless descriptive of college debate's status quo. The conversation would be greatly aided if participants stopped asking whether the narrative of change is correct and instead focus on whether certain recurring practices are desirable or not.

A second likely objection is to list a variety of counter-examples in the form of individual teams or individual debate rounds that did not utilize these problematic practices. Others may object on the grounds that some debate squads are not paperless or digital at all. I have sought to focus my analysis on a set of competitive teams that are likely to be widely emulated throughout the college debate community and drawn from my extensive judging experience of the last several years. Some selectivity is inherent in any analysis of competitive debate because it is impossible to observe every speech. It would also be too hasty to conclude that the demand to provide reasoning or argumentative warrants in competitive debate no longer occurs or that these practices reflect a consensus by the judging

community to ignore reasoning or communication. The protracted discussion in the Galloway (2012), Heidt (2012), and Mosley-Jensen (2012) ballots (as well as numerous judging philosophies) indicates that many judges view this element as crucial. Despite these factors, the practices I have described are common in many debates, even if they are not universal. The fact that they are overwhelmingly prevalent among some of the largest and most prestigious debate schools in the country suggests they will become increasingly more common as they trickle-down through the community.

Third, it could be asked whether the changes in practice suggested here are too drastic. A logical alternative might be to simply evolve an additive curriculum that encourages students to do “all of the above” by combining emphasis on evidence production with an emphasis on evidence testing. This perspective is equally unhelpful because it is blind to the practical reality of competitive debate: every choice made by a debater is an opportunity cost with another. As Brusckke (2012) notes about argumentation scholars more broadly, the primary values of the researcher establish a teleology that directs inquiry towards specific features and often away from others. In order to enhance evaluations about evidence, practitioners must establish such ends as their core purpose:

What is needed is new teleology. We, as a group of argumentation professionals, should begin to ask whether significant positions advanced in contemporary public disputes are warranted by available evidence...Structural, critical, and descriptive approaches all account for evidence. But these approaches do not see evidence evaluation as their core purpose. (Brusckke, 2012, p. 69)

Instead of weakly insisting that debaters utilize

and master all of the skills and tools available to them, debate educators would be better served to recognize this opportunity cost and to make a choice to build a debate curriculum and practice that speaks to the skill-set we wish debate to embody. Debate simply can never be everything that we want it to be. For better or worse, every debate round that occurs is the product of different path commitments that has caused debaters to pursue some arguments, strategies, and styles at the exclusion of others. The question that must be decided is whether we are comfortable with the current path debate finds itself on.

Finally, one could argue that the most successful debaters often employ many of the good practices this article advances. On the one hand, this is hardly surprising; good conduct is as much a product of observing the successful and talented as anything else. On the other hand, debate educators have a responsibility to consider how norms and practices at the most elite tier of the activity shape the tiers below. Debaters at the top may be very capable of exercising argumentative judgment in the form of comparing warrants and reasoning, or debating about the significance of source authority because they typically possess keen intellects and great talents. Their research practices inevitably shape the views and approaches of the less experienced or talented, especially in today's world of the open caselist and open source initiatives. As the first section of analysis made clear, the structural components of argument are not being built into the debate from the very start. If influential open source programs began adopting better practices in producing evidence, it may have a positive effect on a disproportionate share of debates around the country. As someone who has had the privilege of judging many of these same teams at times, I would also suggest their own debates would be

helped by focusing on argumentative quality, particularly in the rebuttal speeches of the round.

The practices I have suggested to move the debate community closer towards the ideal of “debate as argumentative judgment” are likely neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for a quality debate. In other words, the framework I have laid out will probably not make the excellent more excellent nor will it prevent the inexperienced from being inexperienced. However, such practices do have the potential to help the vast majority of debate programs, debate rounds, and individual debaters to become much better at debating about evidence and exercising argumentative judgment (a social skill needed now more than ever).

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One If by Land, Two if by Sea, Three if by Format: British Debate is Coming

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The rise of the popularity of the debate format known as British Parliamentary, or World Universities, debate style has surged in the past five years. This format, international in scope and scale, has attracted a lot of attention in the United States, where it continues to spread from New England and California toward the center of the country. This essay reviews the first three books that attempt to make this style accessible for students and instructors who wish to introduce or improve the teaching of this format on their campuses. Specifically, Neill Harvey-Smith's (2010) *Practical Guide to Debating*, Steve Johnson's (2009) *Winning Debates*, and Ian Lising's (2011) *Across the House* are reviewed for their ability to assist the interested teacher of the British Parliamentary format.

Writing in 1923, Professor A. Craig Baird wondered if the British style of debating had an advantage over American debating formats. He wrote, "the English debating style is philosophical and literary, just as ours is practical and legal. The differences, quite pronounced, are not due so much to contrasted debating systems as to markedly differing national experience and training" (Baird, 1923, p. 221). Connected to the national character, so to speak, made debating in America more "legal" and less "literary" than the British style. Baird points out that Swarthmore College and the Debating Association of the Colleges of Pennsylvania have decided to try the Oxford format in the next year. Baird wonders, "Is this movement merely the desire to seek after some new thing in college forensics? Or does the British plan have sound educational merits that justify its general adoption?" (Baird, 1923, p. 216).

Baird's question echoes today in a university debating climate that is similar to his own. Debating clubs and societies in 2013 are making the choice to turn to the British format, called British Parliamentary (BP), or Worlds Debating, with a stunning rapidity. Like Baird, we are right to wonder what changes come with the shift to a British format. Unlike Baird, we have some guidance, and more on the horizon. The most recently published texts on British Parliamentary debating will be welcome to those seeking to understand this trend in competitive debating, and invaluable to those who are making the shift to BP.

The Oxford, or British, format that Baird was concerned about is not the BP format. Baird would be somewhat pleased that BP has taken on the idea of time limits and rigorous judging. He feared the open nature of the British format of debating would discourage participation in collegiate debate among students. However, this does not eliminate Baird's critique of British debating completely. Baird's specific questions are still asked today by many coaches and teachers considering the transition,

Will the adoption of the British system mean a loss of collegiate interest in debating? Will the students who follow this judgeless system submit to the thorough preparation characteristic of the conventional American debate? Will they continue to respect sound reasoning based upon broad and exact knowledge of the question? Under the British system will they develop more ardent convictions? Will they have a less artificial and more attractive forensic style? Will they argue with more conversational ease and directness? (Baird, 1923, p. 216)

There have been a few changes since Baird considered this question, most notably the alteration

of the British format of debate – parliamentary, open, and judgeless – into the British Parliamentary format which is directly judged, not open to just anyone, and attempts to maintain the parliamentary style while being as competitive as any other debate format in existence. These changes have not invalidated the critical questions facing any debate director deciding which competitions to attend – improvement of style, reasoning, and thought are possibly the only reasons why someone would want to participate in intercollegiate debating. Fortunately, the rapid expansion of BP debating is not unique to America, but is a worldwide phenomenon. Three recent textbooks – Neill Harvey-Smith's (2010) *Practical Guide to Debating*, Steve Johnson's (2009) *Winning Debates*, and Ian Lising's (2011) *Across the House* – that deal directly with teaching BP debate address Baird's concerns directly in different ways, and will be reviewed here.

There is a reason why these books are new, and British debating is not so new. In Britain, the idea of a speech communication department is unheard of. Debate programs are student run, student directed, student instructed, and frequently they are student founded. Bring up the idea of a professional debating coach to a debater from the British style, and you get a mix of ridiculousness with a dash of fantastic admiration. In short, British debaters find the idea of professional coaching to be literally awesome. Having the faculty supervision that Baird suggests is not possible on the other side of the Atlantic.

The rise of the British format (called Worlds format these days due to its rapid global expansion) in the United States has created a market for textbooks that could be used in argumentation or debate courses. Two of the three first books entering the field of Worlds Debate textbooks are authored by those who competed in the format, and one from a traditional American coach

who moved into the format by choice. All three books represent something more than just introductory lessons in a new competitive format – they all highlight the need for a *tactical* approach to teaching argumentation, a big difference from the vast buffet of argumentation books currently available to instructors.

The tactical, as defined by de Certeau, makes use of time over place. “It is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing’” (1984, p. xix). Strategy privileges place as a locus of power and advantage, “when a subject of will and power. . . can be isolated from an ‘environment’” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix). Our traditional treatment of the production of argument is to teach the priority of particular theoretical constructs, whether they be from Stephen Toulmin, Douglas Walton, Chaim Perelman, Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, Frans van Eemeren, or the litany of other theorists whose insightful work populates our theory smorgasbord. Unfortunately, the act of debating – as reliant on timing and situation as it is – becomes servile to the ‘truth’ of the theory, always secondary to the assignment of our “in the moment” articulations to the place of the analyzing theory. As Baird (1923) notes, what we have are differences of cultural approach to the act of arguing – a difference that each of these books tries to contend with through a de Certeauian tactical in the face of the often overwhelming strategic.

The authors of the books examined here are not from the field of rhetoric, communication, or argumentation studies. They are practitioners of the art of argument, and the sparse theory in these books is a testament to that. In a tactical fashion, “they are able to combine heterogeneous elements” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix). Something sophistic is resurrected through these books, collections of tips on how to approach the place of the tournament from a position of weakness, with only time

and fractured knowledge on your side. These books will each be a welcome addition to the debate director or coach who values teaching how to construct and present good arguments to varied listeners. The major difference between them is not in quality, but in preference – how the instructor approaches argument, either tactically or strategically. The more one views it toward the strategic, the more one will prefer an approach that sees debate as a skill set, applicable to any situation. If one views it from the position of tactics, one sees it as a practiced art, difficult, if not unproductive, to distinguish from the moment of speech. These books comfortably occupy positions on the strategy-tactic spectrum that offer a vast wealth of instructional assistance to teachers of any view.

The distinctions between the texts only vary in the sense of what you might want to accomplish by assigning them. They do make assumptions about the level of debate competition the reader has been exposed to, or wants to engage in. Johnson's (2009) book appeals to those who have been to and are thinking of participating primarily at competitions. Lising's (2010) book has a broad appeal for those starting to think about competition, and who are curious and want to do well at one. Harvey-Smith's (2011) book provides the most information for those interested in starting a club of their own in this format, from the ground up, and full of practical examples. For the recruiting debate coach assigned to teach an argumentation course, any of these books would serve well for recruiting new team members.

Johnson's *Winning Debates*

The most familiar of these texts to American debate eyes will be Johnson's (2009) *Winning Debates*. Harkening back to Thrasymachus's *Knock-Down Arguments*, the book is a collection of move and counter-

move that best helps the intermediate debater figure out a new stance, grip, or swing for their game. If there is something left out, it's the begged question: Why wrestle at all? Although Johnson's (2009) book does contain moments of philosophical reflection that try to address this question – such as the very enjoyable section on debating “paradox,” this light stitching is not enough to present a compelling, holistic book for an introductory student. This is the most strategic of the three books, seeing debate as the accumulation of skill sets, orders of operation, and lists of commonplaces that the debater can deploy in any situation. The situational is subjected to the structure, and it works well as a text. For a student in an argumentation class, the instructor is going to have to do a lot of intermediary work. If the student has some debate experience, it will be easier. Johnson's (2009) book is the best of the three for the debater transitioning from an American format to Worlds.

Johnson's (2009) book is so meticulously and carefully constructed that you would think it is a tactical military manual. This book was written for the purpose of preparing individuals for top global competition in the Worlds Style. For that reason, it might not be the best book for an introductory argumentation or debate course. Johnson's thorough coverage of strategies for debates is the highlight of the book. These strategies are direct and practical, and appear to be forged from experience and experiments in tournament competition. For example, Johnson offers long lists of “concept sets” which he includes in the tradition of commonplaces extending back to Aristotle. Johnson's use of the commonplaces, stasis theory, presumption, and other familiar ideas from rhetorical theory will be welcomed by those professors who would like some guidance for their feet as they tread into unfamiliar debating turf. The ideas and strategies are refreshing compared to the all-

too-familiar move in many argumentation textbooks of expecting students to construct a sensible argument from pages of overwrought argument theory meant more for criticism than production. Johnson here focuses on the theory as it serves production, never going too deep or too tangential, and always leaving plenty of room for the intrepid debate professor to supplement her instruction with additional theory articles.

Although not immediately coherent for most beginning students, there are several chapters that are absolute gems of instructional material. Johnson's (2009) finest chapter is on adjudication, which he sees as a constructive give and take, rather than an absolute judgment (it's worth noting that he is also the co-author of the adjudication chapter in Lising's book). This chapter is required reading for anyone judging subjective, speech-based competition. Of course, the American debating tradition here is not as well blended, as Johnson reverts to the idea of judging paradigms (or "models" as he calls them somewhat confusingly). The best portion is the "movement model," which suggests that debates should be decided on how far the judge has been "moved" by the speakers in relation to the original position that he or she held. Johnson writes rather honestly that, "The model also accounts for biases the adjudicator may possess and is capable of rewarding teams that challenge those biases" (2009, p. 237). It is nice to see a debate book admit that the arguments made in debates come into the world pre-judged, versus the older and somewhat tired assumption that objectivity is not only the best position from which to judge debates, but an easily accessible perspective. Johnson's movement model would be an excellent pedagogical element to bring into the argument or debate classroom to help students find a workable way to peer critique one another's debates, or, more theoretically, to generate workable models of

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's Universal Audience for situations outside of the debate contest. The theoretical connection is mine, and not mentioned in the text. But it is just one of many examples where the argumentation instructor can connect theoretical reading to the practice of debating, making the students' moments of kairotic *inventio* illuminate theory, in a nice reversal.

Another element that is welcome in an argumentation textbook, but rare to find, is a clear articulation of the bare bones of putting together an argumentative speech. Johnson spends two chapters, and a substantial portion of other chapters, on the pressing need for organization and clarity, giving examples of lead-ins, thesis statements, and claims that students can understand and model in practices or in classroom exercises. The best of these come before the discussion of the rules of the Worlds format, but again, the book assumes you probably are already a little familiar with the basics of contest debate.

Winning Debates is the most theoretical of the three texts, but in a strange way. Occasional mentions of Foucault, Lakoff and Johnson, or Bitzer are dropped into chapters, but are not developed in a manner that either help the students understand the theory, or help the students apply those ideas to the art of crafting argumentative discourse. The best of this comes at the start with a chapter on the philosophy of debating, something that can be used to spark much student discussion in a classroom. But it feels out of place in a text that focuses on the generation of arguments and the generation of speeches that are designed to win debates in competitions. We are a long way from the ham-handed methods of the traditional debate course textbook, but the continued turning back toward that traditional model does reveal how comfortable the "add speeches and stir" model of theoretical instruction has infected our textbooks. Johnson's gestures in that direction with his

citation of theory are far removed from what other texts do. It's refreshing, but does lack a certain coherence. It's best to think of this book as a great collection of ideas, recipes even, for the student with some Worlds debating experience who wishes to find a toolkit of ideas that will help her improve.

Lising's *Across the House*

Contrasted to that tradition is a nearly purely *praxis* view on Worlds debating in Lising's (2010) *Across the House*. Lising, although an outsider to the American debate tradition in many ways, is at the dead-center of the international debating world. His experience as a competitor and a judge at the highest levels of international competition show throughout the book, with mixed results for the reader.

The book is best for those who are teaching a course on Worlds debating to those who have never encountered it before. Each section begins with citation of the Worlds Debating constitution, and then Lising (2010) riffs off of that with stories, expectations, instructions, and tips for how this rule affects speaking and debating in competitions. Some examples can't help but force a smile, as you are certain you are reading an autobiographical detail in coded form, whether it's about students' refusal to remove earbuds while waiting on pairings, or how it might be considered essential to use deodorant while participating in a tournament in warm weather. Lising's amusing anecdotes reflect a teaching practice and style different from Johnson's approach, coming from the halls of American speech communication research. Less a book that highlights theory to back up the approach to invention, Lising's book highlights the particulars that face the debater as she begins to move toward productive argument. For example, Lising gives a very detailed account of how research should be conducted,

and specifically how to construct particular research files on different issues. Such a direct approach might not be appreciated by instructors who have their own preferred methods of researching, but for a course where competition is a possibility, or for someone interested in trying out the format, this sort of direction is essential.

Lising's (2010) attention to delivery, vocal moderation, and other specifics about the body compare nicely to Johnson's (2009) nuance on the construction of arguments. This is not to say that Lising's book is lacking on that topic – it's just scattered over several chapters, and integrated into the specifics of the roles each debater plays during a debate. Lising's chapter on "Matter" is more focused on research, whereas Johnson's long discussions about arrangement and invention blend the two, key for someone who comes from a strategic theory of argumentation versus Lising's more tactical approach.

Lising's great strength is that his book could easily be used for a public speaking course, or other production course, due to the very accessible language and detail on the speech act itself. Phrasing such as, "using colloquialisms in a formal speech is like wearing denim shorts and an 'I'm with Stupid' t-shirt to the prom. You might get away with it, but is it really worth it?" (Lising, 2010, p. 67). Such casual style appears on every page, making the book incredibly accessible and approachable.

Across the House, however, promises a lot more than it delivers. The title of Lising's book comes from the tradition of giving compliments to an opponent – as he says, "an old school form of cheering on your competitor in the greatest display of sportsmanship possible" (2010, p. 4). Lising's whole textbook is a reminder that not only is there life after debate, but you will be inevitably cast into that life. The skills and concepts explored and learned via Worlds debating must be anchored outside

of the competitive tournament, and Lising's book does remind us of this frequently. For example, when discussing the role of evidence in BP, he writes

Building a library of information necessary to win a World Debating Championship will not come overnight. In fact, it will be the long-term commitment to acquiring information that will help not only in a possible career in competitive debating, but in life as a whole. (Lising, 2010, p. 20)

Unfortunately, many times, we are left wanting a few more examples to bolster these real world applications, which, although obvious to the evangelical debater or debate instructor, often are mysterious to the novice debate student. What he offers in terms of accessible style is lacking in exercises, or formula – which is exactly where Johnson's book excels.

The only theoretical moments in this book occur with a particular freshness that will assist students in the construction of speech or debate assignments and provide some new directions to seasoned teachers of the art. Contrasting this with Johnson's (2009) book, suitable for the student asking, "How do I make my speeches better?", Lising's (2010) is a lot more useful for the student engaged with the question, "How do I make speeches now?" For example, in Chapter 13, Lising suggests the use of "rhetorical criticism" as "an excellent technique to help the debater analyze the matter used in a round in a clear and thorough way" (2010, p. 83). The advice given is practical and remarkably free of relevant citations to the titanic literature on the subject, in which even well-read scholars can become bogged down while explicating. But a savvy professor could easily supplement this portion of the text with a favorite scholarly essay in criticism – thus introducing the student to the value of scholarly literature from the

field of rhetoric by connecting it with the act of crafting a persuasive and compelling speech. Lising's book is well-suited for a course focused on doing well in competitive debating, but offers a bit more from the tactical side of debating. Johnson's book and Lising's book are both suited for competitors, but where Johnson fails, Lising provides fillers for those gaps that the inexperienced student (or instructor) will have. Lising does not provide the detailed strategic depth that Johnson offers. The promise of Lising's book is there, but the instructor will have to fill in a lot beyond the rules of a Worlds competition and the interpretation of those rules by a master. We do have instructors in the classroom for a reason.

Harvey-Smith's *Practical Guide to Debating*

Ending on the other side of the spectrum from Johnson's (2009) offering of improvement, and Lising's (2010) suggested starting places, is Harvey-Smith's (2011) *Practical Guide to Debating*. The newest of the three, it is a book that lives up to its title. There is nothing in this slim volume that could be considered even remotely unnecessary. From the outset, Harvey-Smith prepares us for what's to come: "Debate is something you learn by doing. There are a thousand resources and rules you could read before standing up and speaking for the first time. Ignore them – they will overload you" (2011, p. 7). This seems like good advice for the beginning student, but after reading the book, it seems like a first principle for the construction of this text. For the instructor who wants a bit more detail in putting together logical speeches or argument construction, this book will disappoint. But if the instructor wishes to teach a course based solely on student production of argument, it would be hard to find a better text to supplement classroom exercises and instruction. In many ways, this book is a necessary corrective to an American textbook field full

of overwrought, 300-page tomes more interested in conveying curious approaches to argument than giving advice to those engaged in one.

This book is not for the intermediate student, but for the beginner and possibly for the veteran who has plateaued in competition. Harvey-Smith (2011) offers a “back to basics” appeal in his book that reminds us what the point of structured, competitive debate is: to teach people how to get their complex ideas across to varied audiences. All three books could be said to do this, but where the first two books focus on debate skills seen inside and outside of their deployment, *Practical Guide* treats competition as the arena where good debating arrives and thrives. For Harvey-Smith, there’s little worth in discussing argument per se, one must simply do it, and do it a lot to understand it – the book lives up to the word “practical.” Harvey-Smith has written a fully tactical guide to debate, even including varying examples of hypothetical student speeches done in different ways with adjudicator commentary. These sustained examples, offered side by side, make Harvey-Smith’s book unique. There is a tradeoff: what Harvey-Smith could offer in the form of late tournament elimination round strategy, judging adaptation for various competitive environments, and other insightful moments from someone who has had intense competitive experience tends to fall away as he spends his time on the general elements of practice for good, convincing rhetoric. He also offers very clear direction to those wishing to start their own debate club, from initial exercises to the steps involved in hosting a tournament. In comparison, Lising (2010) offers a guide to hosting the World Championships, while Johnson’s (2009) discussions generally assume the presence of a seasoned instructor somewhere nearby. Harvey-Smith offers a concise and clear guide that takes its title to heart. You won’t find Johnson’s martial resources of

commonplaces or Lising's detailed analysis of each paragraph of the rules of competition in this volume. Harvey-Smith offers a guide to almost pure practice, attending to the speech as the theory, and the theory of argumentative speaking as production. In short, Harvey-Smith offers *praxis* from the bottom up.

Each text is excellent within the confines of what makes it different from the others. Some of the differences come out clearly, such as the way each author treats a staple of debate in their own words. Examining all three on one example will clarify, in an anecdotal form, what the overall style of the book is like. Here is each author discussing, in their own words, the concept of proof. First, we have Johnson's (2009) treatment:

Debaters must generate, organize, and present compelling evidence on behalf of their possibility. The evidence may be factual, drawn from qualitative or quantitative representations of data more commonly known (respectively) as examples or statistics, or it may take the form of argument: theories, values, and beliefs are types of evidence that require logical substantiation to be convincing. Regardless of the situation, winning debaters will be adept at choosing and utilizing the evidence most likely to convince the adjudicators of the strength of their preferred possibility. (p. 173)

This quotation's focus and assumption becomes clear when read against Lising's (2010) treatment of the same issue:

Evidence is the material used to support the arguments used in a speech. Without substantiation, a speech relies too heavily on assertions to maintain integrity. The toughest thing about assertions is that they are quite easily shut down as speculative and inaccurate. This destroys the credibility of the

speech (and the speaker for that matter), and the round denigrates into a simplistic pageant of opinion. Evidence becomes vital as the 'proof' that general statements can be based on, not the other way around. (p. 21)

Harvey-Smith's treatment of it is implicit, and done through a sustained example of a debate on legalizing prostitution. But this snippet is valuable for comparison: "In competitive debating, *stating* and *explaining* are key to getting your points across effectively. Without a good command of logic and evidence, your points will not convince adjudicators. But you should not overlook *illustrating* your points as well" (Harvey-Smith, 2011, p. 45).

Hopefully, this example clarifies the total approach of each author. Johnson's (2009) list of types of evidence and proof concentrates on the competition, illustrating to competitive debaters what specific concerns they should have about evidence. Lising's (2010) approaches the person who is newer to debate, justifying evidence for the student, and Harvey-Smith (2011) treats evidence as almost synonymous with 'reason.' Each author's approach and theoretical commitment suits different instructor styles and different student levels. Perhaps the best approach is to select each book by the level of student experience. Each text is a full course itself in this format, but the debate instructor will only be disappointed with any of them if she chooses a text that clashes with her idea of how to best approach the teaching of advocacy.

Baird (1923) would no doubt be in awe of the rapid expansion and large presence of the British style in the United States. No midnight ride necessary this time around, for the British have arrived with three excellent guides in how to approach this new format of debating.

Notes

1. Three hundred forty-eight institutions have attended one or more of the previous three world championships, held annually by a different institution in a different country than the year previous. A list is available at <http://goo.gl/xd9Ny>.

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