Developing argumentation supporting both sides of a topic teaches balance, understanding and tolerance for other people's views. Weighing evidence results in a higher commitment to ethical and moral argumentation. Policy testing and evaluation leads to a higher sense of social and civic awareness; which, in turn, leads to increased social advocacy and governmental participation. (p.1)

Foote and Holm (2011) reiterated this, showing how forensics is uniquely positioned to foster service learning and connectedness within campus communities. Jensen and Jensen (2006) identified forensics as a means of improving a variety of communication competencies that benefit students academically and interpersonally. Bartanen, (1998), Kuyper, (2011), and Rogers (2005) cited academic success and stronger academic performance over non-competing peers as benefits of team participation. Furgerson (2012) touted the acquisition of advanced research skills. The depth and breadth of research showcasing the skills gleaned while participating in collegiate forensics is vast.

What makes involvement in co-curricular programming unique is that the learning extends beyond the classroom, which is one of the criterion the HLC requires for accreditation (Criterion 3. Teaching and Learning, para. 3E). Bartanen (1998) argued that forensics ". . . offers students of varying skill levels oral and written communication opportunities not possible in the traditional classroom" (p. 9). There is a plethora of data illuminating how involvement in competitive academic teams can advance learning of both hard and soft skills in ways difficult to achieve in a traditional classroom setting (Copeland & James, 2016; Copeland, et al., 2015; Galagan, 2010; Hinck, 2003). Despite the existence of such a rich collection of data, the link which connects the data to mission statements is often lacking.

Assessment of Mission Statements

Measuring actions that seem to advance a mission statement is often problematic due to the vagueness of language and difficulty in operationalizing the verbiage used in most mission statements (Camelia & Marius, 2013). Furthermore, most universities have missions rooted firmly in the liberal arts, which further complicates the ability to tangibly measure outcomes due to difficulties quantifying philosophic phrasing focusing on personal growth (Davis, Ruhe, Lee & Rajadhyaksha, 2007). In their study, Cady, Wheeler, DeWolfe, and Brodke (2011) found the difficulty in measurement increases when ". . . there is no attempt to clarify, explain, or operationalize the concepts" (p. 76). Despite said difficulties, measurement of mission statement fulfillment is critical at both the institutional and programmatic levels.

At the institutional level, data showing mission statement fulfillment are key to a university's accreditation process. At the programmatic level, aligning with, and furthering a university's mission

statement is vital to program survival (Bartanen, 2006). Milsap (1998) wrote, "Forensics programs must find a way to integrate with the campus as a whole so that the entire campus community can see and benefit from the existence of the forensic program on campus" (p. 17). Sellnow, Limperos, Frisby, Sellnow, Spence, and Downs (2015) wrote ". . . future research linking instructional communication and forensics education will not only expand the scope of instructional communication research but also strengthen the argument for including forensics education in the communication discipline (p. 427). Providing the link between forensics, education, and mission fulfillment is especially critical in times of external funding cuts that necessitate internal budget cuts (Copeland, et al., 2015). As higher education further emphasizes market-model approaches to funding academics, institutions are forced to become narrower in focus and concentrated in areas that seem to support a model of income generation (Bartanen, 2006; St. John, Daun-Barnett, Moronski-Chapman, 2013). Therefore, scrutiny is frequent towards smaller academic programs such as competitive academic teams, which are not viewed as financial contributors to the larger university income (Bartanen, 2006; Littlefield, 2006). A report produced by the Student Affairs Leadership Council (2011) explained, "At a time when additional funds are scarce, co-curricular outcomes can be a factor in resource allocation decisions" (p. 6). Bartanen (2006) agreed, explaining, "Those programs and curricula, which are able to document their value, rigorously and empirically, will flourish as universities embrace the culture of accountability and efficiency" (p. 35). Forensics educators must provide assessment driven data that proves their importance to the campus community (Walker, 2015).

Analyzing the results gleaned from studies on participation in competitive academic teams reflects a distinct trend; participation seems to enhance academic performance while in school, foster involvement and engagement both in and outside of the classroom, which bolsters participants' feelings of belonging, and benefits them past graduation by preparing them to be civic-minded and ready to contribute their social capital to society. In the case of The University of Central Missouri, the skills garnered by participation on co-curricular competitive academic teams such as forensics seem to contribute to a well-rounded, liberal arts education, thus upholding the Learning to a Greater Degree contract and overall mission statement. Though without proper measurement and documentation, this assertion remains unproven. What is lacking is the correlation linking specific program-based data to the host university's mission, thus advancing the following research question:

RQ: How do the participating competitive academic teams in this study advance the university mission statement and Learning to a Greater Degree contract?

Methodology

Participants

This IRB approved study is a qualitative case study of The University of Central Missouri's competitive academic teams' relationship to the Learning to a Greater Degree contract. Four of UCM's 19 competitive academic teams participated in this study based on the following requirements: the team must be engaged in a competition that is organized by a regional or national organization external to the University, faculty from the sponsoring department must serve as the team's coach, all team competitors must be enrolled as students in good standing, the team must compete in more than one competition per year, and their competition structure must lead to a culminating event, such as a state, regional, or national competition. The four teams that met all requirements included: Mock Trial, DECA, Lambda Alpha Epsilon (LAE), and the Speech & Debate (Forensic) team. Although for the purpose of this article, only the results pertaining to forensics will be reported.

Data Collection

Data were collected in three stages, via electronic survey, focus group, and interview during a three- month period. The first stage consisted of interviewing the four coaches of each of the participating teams. In the second stage, the researcher conducted two focus groups per participating team (eight total), one with current team members, and one with alumni team members. The researcher distributed an electronic survey to current and alumni members who were unable to participate in the focus groups. The questions posed to the first three populations utilized the definitions of each pillar provided by the University. The focus groups had a total of 28 participants, and the electronic surveys received 55 responses (current competitors, n=30, alumni competitors, n=25). The final stage consisted of interviewing four University administrators who either contributed to the development of the Learning to a Greater Degree contract, or are responsible for student learning and engagement. The interview questions for administrators were open-ended and non-directive, seeking additional description and clarification of each pillar as a means to identify and organize emerging themes within the data from coaches, alumni, and competitors.

Data Analysis

The creation of the coding sheet was based on the definitions of the pillars of the Learning to a Greater Degree contract and University mission statement. The analysis of the data identified overarching themes linked to the codes through the use of unbiased coders, elabo-

rations from administrators, and through triangulation measures verified across data sets to decrease potential for bias.

Results

Data analysis illuminated three overarching themes in conjunction with the mission statement and subsequent Learning to a Greater Degree contract, centering on how involvement impacts: 1) participants as students, 2) participants as citizens, and, 3) participants as professionals. The direct quotations used to advance each theme were provided by forensics participants only. Please contact the researcher for full results that include representation from all participating teams. The first theme, participants as students, supports pillars one and four of the Learning to a Greater Degree contract (engaged learning and future-focused academics). The second theme, participants as citizens, shares similarities with pillars two and three of the contract (worldly perspective and a culture of service). The final theme, participants as professionals, aligns with pillars two and four (worldly perspective and future-focused academics). Although this original case study gathered, analyzed, and included data from four different competitive academic teams at the host institution, for the purposes of this article, the results will speak primarily to the linkage between forensics and the Learning to a Greater Degree contract.

Theme I- Participants as Students

Engaged learning.

University administrators described engaged learning as educational opportunities that utilize the practical application of skill and theory. Respondents from the interviews, focus groups, and surveys articulated that the scrimmage and tournament structure provides an opportunity for students to practice and apply what they learn in class in an outside setting. As the coach explained, the University's competitive academic teams serve as a lab, similar to that within the science field. In class, students learn various skills, such as how to research, think critically, write effectively, and create engaging presentations. Co-curricular involvement serves as the lab setting, where students engage in the application process, which deepens their understanding of the concepts. One alumnus participant explained:

> My courses just made more sense after I was involved with forensics. I was able to think quickly and efficiently through my coursework, and I not only knew the structure of writing a paper, but I understood how the structure worked to create a persuasive and logical stance.

Another alumnus shared, "By constantly having to recall and apply classroom content, my academics were enriched, which led to a

heightened understanding of most topics we discussed in class. My knowledge never grew rusty since it was being used so often." A current participant shared a similar sentiment, "Participating on the team gives me the opportunity to further develop my professional speaking skills while encouraging the Socratic way of thinking. Instead of simply asking for the answer, I research for the answers." Another current respondent explained, "The team setting is different from the classroom. It forces us to learn in a different way. Every day is a test, and we have to apply information differently." The unique, out-of-class experience contributes to a well-rounded and deeper academic experience that administration desire and the HLC mandates for accreditation.

The overwhelming majority of respondents credited involvement on the team as being a primary factor to successful overall academic performance. However, overall GPA was not the only component of academic performance positively impacted by participation. One respondent shared, "I take classes and coursework more seriously, because I know it will help me on the team," while another explained, "The dedication you learn from participating on the team translates into my academic life which leads to good grades and having strong relationships with my professors. I'm a better leader in my classes and within group projects now." Several respondents mentioned strong relationships with faculty as positively impacting their academic learning and achievement. One alumnus reflected:

> Through the dedication and compassion of the coaching staff on the debate team, I was able to grow as an individual, both inside and outside of the classroom. I was encouraged to set goals that were slightly beyond what I thought I could accomplish, and was then given the help and guidance to reach (and go beyond) what I thought was possible. No other professor had nearly the impact on me as my coach.

Respondents also shared feelings of being a more successful and valued member of the campus community, feeling they were "a part of something bigger," which led to a more engaging collegiate experience. Several respondents reported feeling a strong sense of belonging to the larger campus community, they experience higher levels of academic success, more satisfaction with their learning environment, and the development of life skills that will lead to successful professional and personal lives.

Future-focused academics.

The second pillar under the participants as students theme was that of future-focused academics. University administration defined future-focused academics as actively preparing students to be ready to join, and excel in the professional ranks upon graduation. The students, coaches, and administrators who participated in the study all agreed

that involvement on competitive academic teams provided a safe environment to practice and apply the life and content-based skills students needed to be successful in the workforce. One respondent shared, "I now have a voice, and I feel like that is more important than any technology. Technology changes, but there will always be a need for communication skills." Another explained, "The things we learn and do within our community are very important to the real world. It makes you an effective communicator and an active listener. These skills will never be less valuable." Participation dramatically impacts students' ability to grasp, retain, and apply such important skills, making them stronger students and leaders, while also preparing them to enter the constantly evolving workforce and world. One alumna shared:

> We are learning a technology that is thousands of years old, the human voice. It allows you to understand how you fit into the world, and how you can use your voice to change the world. And that is a skill that is not likely to change in the future.

Many respondents addressed how participation on competitive academic teams increases the propensity to obtain an advanced degree. Competitors were more confident in their abilities to handle the rigors of graduate level coursework due to the skills acquired during their time with the team. The coach spoke to how team-affiliated students are consistently at the head of their graduate classes. Alumni respondents who had obtained an advanced degree furthered this conclusion by explaining they were better prepared both in technique and mental strength to handle the level of critical thinking and increased research and writing loads that accompanies graduate level coursework.

Theme II- Participants as Citizens

Worldly perspective.

Regarding the worldly perspective, the head coach provided support for how participation on competitive academic teams impacts the perspective of participants. Teams travel to different regions of the state, country, and sometimes even internationally to compete, giving participants numerous opportunities to interact with individuals from various institutions and industries. While reflecting on her experience, one alumna shared:

> I had never been on an airplane prior to joining this team- and there were many others like me. I got the opportunity to travel and engage with students from the United States and Europe, discussing various current events. We saw the world from their perspective, and in turn, were able to grasp an understanding of a perspective we would have never gotten had we not been offered these opportunities from this team.

Not only do the participants meet and interact with individuals from across the world, they are critiqued by individuals representing varying cultures and perspectives, which serves to increase tolerance for the views and opinions of others.

In addition to the travel involved, there is a high level of exposure, by the very nature of the activity, to considering multiple perspectives on a given issue. This calls for advanced critical thinking and higher-order thinking. One alumnus advanced this explanation:

> In a lot of rounds, you have a profound moment where you are forced to reconcile with issues and perspectives right now. You have to listen to their arguments and figure out how to respond to them. You realize the world is so much more complex. Debate forced you to engage with diversity every weekend, and it forced me to grapple with issues I wouldn't have normally.

Regular engagement with diversity and varying perspectives led students to report feeling increased levels of empathy towards others, ultimately leading to tolerance and acceptance as foundational within their own broader perspectives. Many reported how competing heightened their sense of compassion and empathy, especially in settings where contrasting views are present. One individual remarked, "It has given me a greater appreciation for social differences, and has made me a more patient and caring individual. This will translate into every career that I choose." Another explained, "Being involved in forensics gave me the opportunity to debate against students from foreign countries that live the hypotheticals we typically speak about." Experiences such as this provide a deeper examination of and engagement with the world beyond the state, region, and country. This allowed individuals to have greater levels of understanding and acceptance of diversity. Another alumnus encapsulated his experiences beautifully when he shared:

> Debate forced me to reconcile with different ideas, to be more micro-politically aware, specifically regarding how discourse shapes reality and impacts people. It forced me to become more aware with how I engaged with the world, how my language impacts the world and certain groups of people.

In summary, co-curricular involvement engenders a deeper understanding of and ability to empathize with diverse groups of people and perspectives.

Culture of service.

The second pillar that aligns with the participants as citizens theme was that of a culture of service. The data made clear that volunteerism, or service learning was not simply an event teams participated in casually. Rather, service is something woven into the team's culture. Numerous respondents spoke to participating in a great deal of service or advocacy projects throughout the year in an attempt to teach the

importance of civic service. One respondent shared "Advocacy projects are a part of our team culture. Being an informed person is part of what we have to do as a society. It's our civic duty." Furthermore, the very nature of forensics seems to inherently be service-oriented as the foundation of the activity is to speak about issues and injustices that are often unheard of or avoided. One alumni respondent summed up the relationship between service and forensics perfectly. "Speech and debate helped me realize the critical intersection of speech and action. I now firmly believe there is no action without speech, nor speech without action. The activity made me more considerate of those in my community."

Additionally, once participants experienced the importance of service, they ultimately became much more aware of their surrounding world, and even more so, the needs that exist within it. Engagement in such diverse service related experiences contributed to a better understanding of civic engagement. By integrating service into the guiding philosophy and actions of the team, competitors have greater opportunities to become a more engaged global citizen, which in turn, teaches the importance of civic engagement, service, and contributing to the creation of a greater collective society.

Theme III- Participants as Professionals

Worldly perspective.

Several respondents spoke to how exposure to diversity was foundational to their team experience, reflecting the pillar of a worldly perspective. Participants explained that by critically engaging in issues effecting various cultures, ethnicities, sexualities, and genders, they had a greater level of understanding and acceptance for all voices, regardless of background, color of skin, or status. One alumni participant elaborated:

> I don't see the globe as segments anymore, and I'm sensitive to people from all walks of life. My work since graduation has been dedicated to diversity and human rights. I have respect for these issues because I was given the opportunity to learn and engage them as a competitor.

Participants do far more than simply understand diversity. Rather, they have a deep appreciation and respect for it. This valuing of diversity leads to the production of a better world, which the administration identified as being a key component to the worldly perspective pillar. When engaged learning is paired with the teaching of diversity, graduates are better prepared to enter the global society. They are the voices of empathy, understanding, and reasoning who are capable of being innovative problem solvers, advancing justice and civility in the professional realm.

Future-focused academics.

The second Learning to a Greater Degree pillar most prevalent under the participants as professionals theme was that of future-focused academics. One administrator participant stated, "When students graduate and join the workforce, we hope they are able to add value to an employment opportunity as soon as they walk out the door." The most common sub-theme to emerge throughout the entire study was how involvement led to increased networking opportunities with professionals or scholars within the field, thus increasing one's ability to secure a job post-graduation. Whether in academe or otherwise, several alumni participants commented on how their co-curricular experiences led to receiving more interviews and better job opportunities. The coach reiterated this, explaining how involvement leads to countless networking opportunities within the professional and academic fields to which non-competitors have less access.

Involvement did not just help individuals secure jobs through networking opportunities, however. Within those jobs, participants are often more successful due to the skills gleaned through participation. Alumni respondents shared numerous stories identifying how the skills obtained while participating have impacted their professional lives. One respondent explained, "The team teaches both public and interpersonal communication skills that are necessary for any post-graduation path, whether it be in academia or the work force." The majority of alumni who are currently in the workforce agreed. One alumnus responded, "Everything I did to prepare for competition was a skill that I use every day to lead my team and serve my customer base. I can't think of any better preparation for a professional life than being on a speech and debate team." In short, the opportunities afforded to participants are aiding in securing employment and propelling participants to greater levels of professional growth due to the skills they possess.

Discussion

Analyzing how participation on a competitive academic team impacts participants as students, citizens, and professionals provided strong support, affirming the Learning to a Greater Degree pillars and subsequent mission statement are being fulfilled and advanced by competitive academic team participation. The coach, as well as current and alumni competitors all provided accounts of how participation bolsters academics in a way a traditional classroom cannot, which allows forensics participants to develop a diverse knowledge base of applied skills. The data highlighted the many ways contributing to a culture of service is engrained in the team's philosophy by providing specific examples of the various service and advocacy projects completed. Ample evidence showcased how the very nature of the team and competitions advances an understanding of diversity and a worldly perspective that prepares students to excel interperson-

ally and professionally.

The data further support Astin's (1984; 1985; 1993; 1999) claims regarding the importance of student engagement levels in relation to academic and personal success in college. This study extends previous claims by showing how involvement leads to success post-graduation as well. The findings support previous research identifying relationships with faculty members as one the strongest influencing factors on academic success and overall retention rates (Burris, Ashorn, Akers, Fraze, Brashears & McCulloch, 2010; Kuh & Hu, 1999; O'Keeffe, 2013), while also advancing how such relationships can positively impact one's professional career or ability to obtain an advanced degree. Student engagement in out-of-class activities such as co-curriculars is a defining component to a successful academic career that should not be underplayed (Astin 1984; 1985; 1993; 1999). However, the impacts of student engagement extend far beyond the time spent as a student on campus, which is what links involvement to mission statement fulfillment. The interpersonal, analytical, and communication skills co-curricular involvement produces are the very skills 21st century employers seek (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). Employers are in search of ethical, caring leaders who can empathize and work with others (Levi, 2013; Northouse, 2013). This study showed how involvement in forensics cultivates empathy, acceptance, and collaboration within participants, characteristics which are directly aligned with the Learning to a Greater Degree tenants and subsequent mission statement. As students, these are the individuals the University is proud to graduate. As professionals, these are the types of leaders our evolving society seeks (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Levi, 2013; Northouse, 2013). They are the individuals actively living the mission statement pre- and post-graduation.

Although not tied to the research question, a pressing note of discussion emerged, centering on the importance of program evaluation and alignment with institutional goals and objectives. Although forensics is rich with pedagogic value that spans beyond competition, it can be easy for coaches and programs to forget that forensics does not exist in a vacuum. In their 2014 article, authors Kelly, Paine, Richardson, and White wrote:

> For decades the assessment of what constitutes "quality performance" in collegiate forensics has been rooted in a mysterious and unsupported collective conception of unwritten rules and performance practices related to a very narrow and instinctive set of standards. This casual system for documenting the efficacy of teaching practice in collegiate forensics is insufficient to meet the standards and expectations for higher education assessment in the 21st century. (p. 38)

It is time the forensics community heed the words of Bartanen, K. (1998), Bartanen, M. (2006), Copeland, et al., (2015), Littlefield (2006), and Milsap (1998) and strengthen the connection between forensics and the university. There is a need for more research that

links forensics with instructional communication and university outcomes (Sellnow et al., 2015). Programs that contribute to the direct fulfillment of the mission statement and pedagogic outcomes of the institution will have a better chance of longevity and survival (Bartanen, 2006).

The challenge for forensics programs is to provide data that highlights their unique ability to advance the university's mission. As Cady, Wheeler, DeWolfe, and Brodke (2011) explained, the difficulty in mission statement measurement increases when ". . . there is no attempt to clarify, explain, or operationalize the concepts" (p. 76). Thus, one must attempt clarification and operationalization. There are two ways operationalization can occur. First, when universities implement a learning contract, or similar variation, as a means to fulfill the mission, oftentimes, more tangible goals are identified as compared to the rhetoric most often used in mission statements. Essentially, the learning contract often provides the specific goals and outcomes that are lacking in the mission statement. It is the specifics that can be operationalized and measured. Second, even if a university does not employ some sort of more-defined contract, operationalization can, and should, still occur by implementing audience analysis and adaptation techniques. Essentially, programs must consider and utilize the thoughts of their target audience. University administrators are typically the individuals charged with creating and assessing the institution's mission. Therefore, dialogue with those administrators, focusing specifically on their interpretations of the mission can lead to operationalization and the creation of assessment tools. In this study, the researcher used the provided definitions of the four pillars of the Learning to a Greater Degree contract to begin creating questions and assessment tools, but it was the elaborations provided through interviews with the administration that were critical to the operationalization process.

It is the hope of the researcher that other universities will adjust and replicate this study on their own campuses as a means to highlight the importance and value competitive academic teams offer to the greater university community. As the results of this small study have demonstrated, competitive academic teams can be a valuable asset in the production of data and evidence to support the HLC accreditation process, which benefits not only the teams themselves, but also all interested and invested stakeholders, who are the same individuals who are often in charge of making the difficult decisions regarding funding. Validating the critical role that competitive academic teams serve to both support and supply substantive data and evidence of the university's mission and/or learning contract is paramount to the future success and survival of such programs.

Conclusion

In times of financial instability and unpredictable levels of support, program-specific data that highlight the benefits students gain from co-curricular participation, as well as how the activity contributes to the overall success of the institution is critical to obtain. We must not forget the suggestions made by Astin (1999) and pleas advanced by Bartanen, K. (1998), Bartanen, M. (2006), Copeland, et al. (2015), Littlefield (2006), and Milsap (1998) to engage in further research analyzing the relationship that exists between co-curricular programming such as forensics to campus pedagogy and desired student outcomes. Such research may provide beneficial evidence showing how co-curricular programs can be used to meet the HLC's institutional accreditation standards, which may lead to program survival and longevity.

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Memes: The Interaction Between Imagery and Subculture
An Analysis of Situation, Race, and Gender on the Pi Kappa Delta Social Media App

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Abstract: *Pi Kappa Delta, a leading organization for intercollegiate speech and debate, annually hosts a national competition, during which competitors have recently been able to create and post memes via a mobile application. While it is well-known that memes are a function of participatory culture, no analysis has yet examined memes exclusively consumed by the same subculture which created them. In this study, we examine the implicit messaging of this memetic imagery in regards to race, gender, and event type, and by doing so, gain insight into both the intercollegiate forensics subculture, and the function of memes in a dedicated subculture.*

Introduction

Society as a whole creates and internalizes cultural norms, which are reflected both in the technology we use and in the way we use it. The images and dialogues disseminated through social media reveal the subconscious "benchmarks" of their creators; they answer the question, "what do you see as normal?" Since the answer has profound implications on those who do not conform to these norms, it becomes an ethical question as much as a cultural or technical one.

Unfortunately, the steady progression of technology has often outpaced the ethical reflections needed to guide its use (Marshall, 1999). As more data becomes easily accessible, technology users must necessarily develop ethical guidelines to follow, including responsible ethical guidelines for jokes and/or photos shared on social media. These ethical guidelines must include considerations related to stereotyping and representativeness in order to best serve the diverse community

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which uses social media platforms.

Included in this community is the intercollegiate forensics subculture. Intercollegiate forensics is a formalized platform in which students can actively engage in persuasion, productive dialogue, and competitive speaking. Pi Kappa Delta, the oldest national intercollegiate forensics organization in the United States, hosts its national tournament biannually (Pi Kappa Delta, 2017) in an alternating pattern with the national convention. Pi Kappa Delta and its community members communicate during this tournament through the Pi Kappa Delta mobile application. In addition to providing scheduling updates, timing notifications, and other services, the application serves as a platform for a "meme contest." These memes are humorous and/or endearing images with accompanying text, often intended as jokes.

In this paper, we explore whether disparities exist in the categorical representation of memetic imagery in this app, and whether these disparities may subtly reflect biases in the intercollegiate forensic culture. How community members view themselves and others is influenced by the visual media they consume and create; the meme is no exception. The intentional or unintentional messages of internet memes have widespread implications, as internet memes shape public discourse and identity formation (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). Because memes are rarely "owned" by a creator, but rather incite a process of writing, re-writing, and sharing over the course of their dissemination, memes are considered to be artifacts of participatory culture (Juza, 2013). Thus, they tend to both reflect and shape the beliefs and attitudes of the culture in which they are shared (Juza, 2013).

By examining the potential implications of memes upon the assessment of individual sub-cultures, we hope to expand the literature on memes as a cultural and literary phenomenon. The literature on memes focuses primarily on particular kinds of memes or on the manner of a meme's dissemination through social networks, rather than on the direct interaction between memes and the subculture which both creates and consumes them. We posit that this is largely due to the size and interconnectedness of most U.S. subcultures, and that the intercollegiate forensic community provides a unique opportunity to isolate a subculture and analyze its internal communication.

This study is also relevant to forensics itself, as it may indicate inequalities or disparities between perceptions of its participants. This is important because while memes reflect their creators, they also begin to shape perceptions of their consumers, whether through inaccurate or absent representation.

Literature Review

Pi Kappa Delta and Competitive Forensics

Intercollegiate speech and debate, often known as "forensics," is a competitive activity encompassing multiple speech and debate events. Compton (2006) elucidates the goals of forensics, which include: "the pursuit of excellence in public speaking, debate and literary performance" (27). He also notes that participants in the forensic community are committed to "intellectual scholarship" and "insightful practical and pedagogical research" (27).

While many intercollegiate forensics organizations exist, Pi Kappa Delta is "the oldest collegiate national forensic organization of its kind in the United States" (Littlefield, 1996). The Pi Kappa Delta website explains that Pi Kappa Delta was founded in 1911 by John Schields and Egbert Nichols, who "felt the need to create an organization for colleges across the country to recognize orators and debaters." Its motto, "art of persuasion, beautiful and just," indicates its pedagogical approach; though competition is important, it is not the primary purpose of the organization (Littlefield, 1996). Pi Kappa Delta's list (2017) of organizational values focus upon the need for diversity, respectful dialogue, and inclusion. The former President of Pi Kappa Delta, David Bailey, notes on the same page that speech and debate fosters "research, independent and critical thinking, and leadership." These values correspond with those of the forensic community outside Pi Kappa Delta. As a whole, the intercollegiate forensic community prioritizes inclusiveness and social/legal justice, though these priorities do sometimes come into conflict with student competitive success (Walker, 2016).

Social Learning in the Culture of Forensics

Students who participate in competitive forensics are socialized into a community through a process that can "deeply influence an individual's sense of self or identity" (Croucher, Long, Meredith, Oommen, & Steele, 2009, 74). While little research has been done to investigate the impact of competitive forensics upon individual identity (Croucher et al., 2009), social learning remains a critical aspect of the organizational culture of competitive forensics, as it is the mechanism through which competitive norms are often established (Reid, 2015).

Social learning in this case extends beyond the content of individual speeches. Reid (2015) notes that even female competitor's choice of clothing can and has indirectly communicated that females must adhere to normative feminine standards in order to succeed competitively. It follows, then, that memes which characterize competitors or events in particular ways can be a mechanism through which this social learning occurs.

Diversity and Other Issues in Forensics

Competitive forensics constitutes a unique organizational culture, which the memes of the Pi Kappa Delta represent. Because memes are artifacts of participatory culture, they should reflect the forensic community's priorities, biases, and habits, of which there are many.

The culture of forensics emphasizes diversity in particular; one survey found that 54% of debate team members were female, and 58% of individual event participants were female (Allen, Trejo, Bartanen, Schroeder, & Ulrich, 2004). Research is inconsistent regarding whether females or males identify more with forensic culture, though the more recent research suggests that men do (Croucher, Thornton, & Eckstein, 2006; Croucher et al., 2009). There was no difference between the motivation of male and female competitors (Croucher et al., 2009).

Forensics has been less effective in cultivating ethnic diversity, as of 2006 and 2009; 70% of debaters were European, 10% were Asian Americans, 7% were African American, and 7% were Hispanic (Allen et. al., 2004). Though there are more Asian American participants than African Americans, African Americans tend to identify more with their forensics programs than do other minority ethnic groups (Croucher et al., 2009). Croucher, Thornton, and Eckstein (2006) found similar results, with 76.9% of respondents choosing Caucasian for their ethnicity.

Because organization identification directly relates to a competitor's motivation to succeed (Croucher et al., 2006), these discrepancies in identification between ethnicities may indirectly or directly impact competitive success. Students who identify less with their forensics organization, or who feel they belong in the organization less than do other competitors, may perform more poorly, and thus perpetuate incorrect and negative competitive stereotypes.

Social Media and Memes

Social media is defined by Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (61). Social media has also created unprecedented opportunities to access information, engage in public dialogue, and respond collectively, fulfilling a broad purpose (Shirky, 2011). Within this, there are subcategories of social media; the Pi Kappa Delta application is a mobile social networking, or MSM, application. MSM applications are "social structures consisting of individuals or organizations connected through specific types of interdependency [such as a shared interest in forensics]," in which a user can access a variety of different services (Jabeur, Zeadally, & Sayed, 2013, p.71). On the Pi Kappa Delta app, these services include options as varied as the competition schedule and the meme contest.