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THEMED ISSUE

DEBATE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM: ISSUES OF INTEREST AND CONCERN

Interrogating the Myth of the "ISM": An Analysis of Dominant
and Subdominant Culturally Linked Perceptions and
Engendered Motivations for Continued Participation in
Intercollegiate Competitive Debate

JACK R. ROGERS, ARTHUR RENNELS, CHYANNE
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Full Parliamentary Debate: The Glasgow Model
CHRISTOPHER RUANE

Parliamentary Debate as Social Argumentation: A Quasi-Logical
Perspective
STEPHEN J. VENETTE



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The *Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta* invites authors to submit manuscripts related to scholarship, pedagogy, research and administration in competitive and non-competitive debate. In keeping with the vision of the present administration of Pi Kappa Delta, the Editor and Editorial Board seeks articles that are especially about ways to increase diversity in forensics. The Editorial Board will consider manuscripts of this nature of top priority. Manuscripts submitted by undergraduate students and previously unpublished scholars will also receive serious consideration.

This journal reflects the values of its supporting organization, *Pi Kappa Delta*, which is committed to promoting "*the art of persuasion, beautiful and just.*" The journal seeks to promote serious scholarly discussion of issues connected to making competitive debate and individual events a powerful tool for teaching students the skills necessary for becoming articulate citizens. The journal seeks essays reflecting perspectives from all current debate and individual events forms, including, but not limited to: NDT, CEDA, NEDA, NPDA, Lincoln-Douglas debate, as well as NIET, NFA, and nontraditional individual events.

Reviews of books, activities, and other educational materials will be published periodically (as submitted), and those submissions are also sought. Potential authors should contact the Editor regarding the choice of materials for review.

All works must be original and not under review by other publishers. Authors should submit **3 print copies AND a PC-Compatible disk version** (for editing purposes). Submissions should conform to **APA guidelines** (5th edition). Manuscripts should not exceed 25 double-spaced typed pages, exclusive of tables and references; book reviews and educational materials should be 4-5 double-spaced pages. Submitted manuscripts will not be returned. The title page should include the title, author(s), correspondence address, e-mail address, and telephone numbers. The second page should include an abstract of 75-100 words. The text of the manuscript (including its title) should begin on the next page (with no reference to author), with the remaining pages numbered consecutively. Avoid self-identification in the text of the manuscript. Notes and references should be typed and double spaced on pages following the text of the manuscript. Tables should be clearly marked regarding their placement in the manuscript.

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THE FORENSIC OF PI KAPPA DELTA (ISSN:0015-735X) is now published twice yearly, Winter and Summer, by Pi Kappa Delta Fraternal Society. Subscription price is part of membership dues. For alumni and non-members the rate is \$20.00 for 1 year, \$40.00 for 2 years, and \$60.00 for 3 years. Second class postage is paid at Ripon, WI. Postmaster and subscribers: Please send all address change requests to: PKD, 125 Watson St., P. O. Box 38, Ripon, WI 54971. **THE FORENSIC** is also available on 16 mm microfilm, 35 mm microfilm, or 100 mm microfilm from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Rd, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Interrogating the Myth of the "ISM": An Analysis of Dominant and Subdominant Culturally Linked Perceptions and Engendered Motivations for Continued Participation in Intercollegiate Competitive Debate

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Abstract: For decades, the forensic community has studied the participation and success rates for women and minorities within intercollegiate competitive debate. While theories of causation ranging from differences in argument style to outright racism and sexism abound, one thing remains certain – no significant inroads have been achieved in terms of increasing participation rates for women and minorities. The subdominant cultures remain disproportionately underrepresented. The temptation to rely on the myth of the "ISM," racism and/or sexism, as the predominant factor discouraging participation and limiting success is both simplistic and self-limiting. The purpose of this study is to examine culturally linked perceptions of debate participation, its costs and benefits, and how personal outcomes motivate continued participation. The study collected data from 125 intercollegiate debaters (48 white male, 77 female and/or ethnic minority) targeting 13 areas of possible motivation for continued participation. The study concludes that if students are motivated by differing, culturally specific rewards, the current model of rewards within intercollegiate debate may need modification to stimulate increased participation by subdominant cultures.

If we are to educate all of our students to the best of our abilities, then the lack of cultural diversity . . . clearly is a problem – one we ignore at our own peril – Peter Loge (1991, 83).

Foundations and Review

For decades, Forensics professionals have argued against the mar-

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ginalization of and for the deliberate inclusion of subdominant cultural groups in intercollegiate competitive debate – perhaps more so in the last decade than at any other time in our community's history. A wealth of scholarly articles, papers and academic presentations exist both to educate the forensic community and to illuminate the path towards a more inclusive, reflective forensic experience for our students (Bartanan, 1995, 1998; Bile, 1999; Bjork, 1993; Bruschke & Johnson, 1994; Crenshaw, 1993a, 1993b; Bartanen, 1995, 1998; Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin & Piercy, 1998; Hobbs & Hobbs, 1999; Hunt & Simerly, 1999; Jensen, 1993, 1994; Knutson, 1996; Loge, 1991; Logue, 1985, 1987, 1991, 1993; Medcalf, 1984; Parson, 1994; Preston, 1997; Rogers, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1997; Rowland, 1993; Schroeder, 1993; Simerly, Hunt, Gerard, McGee, & Stepp, 1996; Sowards, 1999a, 1999b; Stepp, 1993a, 1993b, 2000; Swanson, 1994; Tuman, 1993; Vang, 1994; Wade, Edmonds, Rorie, & Huber, 1995; Wilkins & Hobbs, 1997; Williams, McGee, & McGee, 1999; Worthen & Pack, 1993). As a collective entity, we have resoundingly endorsed the goal of diversity and inclusiveness. Scott Jensen (1994) advances this goal when he writes "[T]he ethic of diversity is essential if the forensic laboratory experience is to be worthwhile and legitimate" (109). Therefore, "[A]s a community of forensic educators, we must dedicate ourselves to a pedagogy which provides significant educational opportunity without regard to the demographics of the participant" (Rogers, 1995b, 21). Toward this end, Crenshaw argues that "[P]articipation issues should play a prominent role in our discussions of debate culture" (1993, 94).

As a direct result, there has been a literal explosion of research in the area of women and minority participation in intercollegiate competitive debate.¹ The forensic community has made significant progress over the past few years towards understanding the complexities of the differing presentational styles, argument forms and analysis of subdominant cultural groups hoping to bridge the gap between understanding, tolerance and both significant representation and participation in debate. None would argue against the goal of significant inclusiveness and its overall contribution to the pedagogy of a complete forensic experience and resulting education. In spite of our efforts, the participation and success rates for women and minorities within intercollegiate, competitive debate remain disparagingly low. This disparity continues to mar the face, both public and private, of our activity.

A cursory examination of the available statistics reporting women and minority participation will demonstrate how little significant progress has been made to redress this issue. In 1997, Jack Rogers offered a statistical analysis of participation rates for women and minorities in CEDA debate. Those statistics were based upon the work of Loge (1991), Logue (1987, 1991) and Rogers' analyses of tournaments through the end of the 1994-95 competitive season. An update of participation rates for CEDA and three other debate organizations

reflecting the more recent work of Simerly (1996), Hunt and Simerly (1999), Sowards (1999) and Stepp and Gardner (2000) are reported in Table 1.

Table 1
Participation Rates for Women and Minorities in Debate

	White Male			Female			Minority		
	Novice	Open	Nationals	Novice	Open	Nationals	Novice	Open	Nationals
CEDA									
1990	42%	68%	79%	44%	31%	11%	14%	1%	10%
1995	44%	71%	83%	41%	26%	10%	15%	3%	7%
2000	51%	80%	87%	39%	18%	10%	10%	2%	3%
NPDA									
1990	51%	57%	68%	43%	38%	24%	7%	5%	8%
1995	49%	63%	80%	47%	34%	14%	4%	3%	6%
2000	55%	61%	61%	44%	33%	32%	1%	6%	7%
LD									
1990	71%	78%	81%	25%	19%	15%	4%	4%	4%
1995	68%	77%	82%	24%	20%	13%	8%	3%	5%
2000	64%	68%	88%	25%	21%	9%	11%	11%	3%
IPDA									
1998	55%	61%	71%	41%	31%	25%	4%	8%	4%
1999	49%	63%	70%	45%	30%	23%	6%	7%	7%
2000	53%	68%	58%	41%	29%	37%	6%	3%	5%

While the percentages reported in Table 1 are drawn from a number of sources and reflect certain numeric adjustments (rounding and adjusting for slightly conflicting data between sources), it is important to note two trends: 1) the numbers for Novice participation in all four formats of debate are fairly representative of the demographics for the cultural groups represented, although minorities remain underrepresented in all formats; and 2) the percentages for women decrease markedly and minority participation becomes almost negligible when the competitors are eligible for promotion to the Open division. Women and minority participation drops between 50 and 75 percent after their first year of competition. The participation rates for women and minority competitors at national finals tournaments reflect even greater disproportions. This “phenomenon” is persistent even though conscious efforts — ranging from increased focus at developmental conferences and professional conventions (Bjork, 1993; Jensen, 1994; Logue, 1985, 1987; 1993; Medcalf, 1994; Rogers, 1995a, 1995c; Simerly, 1996; Stepp 1993a, 1993b, 2000), through the publication of a number of articles which specifically addressed the issue (Crenshaw, 1993; Hobbs 1999; Inch, 1994; Jensen, 1993, 1994; Loge, 1991; Logue, 1987, 1991; Parson 1994; Preston 1998; Rowland, 1993; Simerly 1999; Swanson 1994; Tuman, 1993; Vang, 1994), to the appointment of various study groups and investigative committees organized and supported by various national offices of various forensics organizations — continue to draw attention to the problem.

What is it about the nature of the activity that discourages women

and minority competitors so much that they either choose not to participate or leave the activity after such a relatively short tenure? Though theories abound, definitive studies, which link causation to motivation for participation, are relatively few. Some researchers (Bartenan, 1995; Bile, 1999; Crenshaw, 1993a, 1993b; Logue, 1993; Rowland, 1993; Swanson, 1993; Tuman, 1993; Vang, 1993; Wilkins & Hobbs, 1997) posit that the feminist argument style and analysis of subdominant cultures are fundamentally different from that of the dominant culture within the debate community. Building upon the work of Cheris Kramarae's (1981) Muted Group Theory, scholars maintain that language is literally a man-made construction that reflects male dominance and discounts female participation. Argumentation and advocacy are man-made constructs. When women try to overcome this inequality, the masculine control of communication – in this case, the debate round – places them at a tremendous disadvantage. Others have advanced the same perspective from the African American perspective (Loge, 1991; Logue, 1987, 1991; Rogers, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1997) or Hispanic American perspective (Sowards, 1999a, 1999b; Schroeder, 1993). At times, blatant sexism and/or racism are blamed for resulting low participation rates (Hobbs & Hobbs, 1999; Loge, 1991; Rogers, 1997; Sowards, 1999a, 1999b; Stepp 1993a, Vang, 1993). Even the very nature of competitive debate and its reinforcement of the dominant culture's value system has been advanced as responsible for discouraging women and minorities from continued participation and success in debate (Crenshaw, 1993a; Hobbs & Hobbs, 1999; Knutson, 1996; Rogers, 1995a, 1995b, 1997; Sowards, 1999a, 1999b; Tuman, 1993, Vang, 1993).

Central to these theories of explanation for decreased participation, is the myth of the "ISM." Most researchers of this topic point to a pervasive sense of racist or sexist attitudes and behaviors within the competitive debate community as *primarily* responsible for the under-representation of women and minorities. Some researchers are quite sweeping in their conclusions (Hobbs & Hobbs, 1999; Rogers, 1997; Sowards, 1999a, 1999b; Tuman, 1993; Vang, 1993). This body of research is backed by voluminous anecdotal data from representatives of subdominant groups who are critical of their treatment by the dominant debate culture; however, one might question the outcomes of examining the debate experience in a contextual vacuum. If a research study looks for verification that a variable is both present and has a significant impact on the study phenomenon, then it is likely that the variable will be found and reported. In much the same way, if we ask members of a group to express their opinions on a specific issue, we are much more likely to collect anecdotal evidence supporting the existence of that specific area or issue than if we allow the opinion to develop and be expressed naturally as a part of a more broad-based, open-ended interview process. Consider the difference between asking a study respondent if they have been the victims of racist or sexist behavior during their debate experience or asking them to describe a negative experience that made them consider quitting

debate. In both cases, sexist and racist behavior may be identified and described, but with the second, more open-ended question, racism and sexism would be self-identified and not prompted by the nature of the question itself. Often, as researchers and participants, we find that which we hope to find and ignore everything that might challenge our perception of reality. In this case, racism and sexism may have become the "easy answers" to a very complex set of questions.

This is not to say that racism and sexism do not exist within the debate community or to imply that a "level playing field" exists for every participant in the process. There is too much literature to discard the impact of these "ISMs" on our community. To a degree, all cultural myths are grounded in, at the very least, a perception of the truth. In this case, the authors wish to interrogate the "Myth of the Ism." How much does racist and sexist behavior contribute to the "drop out rate" for women and minority participants? Further, are there other factors, inherent in the practice of competitive debate, that might add their voice to the list of variables, and thus, contribute to under-representation?

Though the theories of causation and the links to participation and success often differ greatly, a meta analysis² of one-hundred and six monographs yields three basic conclusions: 1) While our understanding as a community is increasing, participation rates for women and minorities in all formats of debate remain significantly unchanged over the past three decades; 2) No one would dispute the critical importance of inclusiveness and diversity, though many would argue that the degree of advocacy is directly tied to the advocate's gender and ethnicity; and finally, 3) that further research is needed (Crenshaw, 1993; Greenstreet & Frederick, 2000; Hobbs & Hobbs, 1999; Hunt & Simerly, 1999; Loge, 1991; Logue 1987, 1991; Rogers, 1997; Simerly, et al, 1996; Stepp 2000; Tuman, 1993).

In an attempt to examine this persistent phenomenon and lay the foundation for this study, the authors conducted interviews with a number of competitors, graduate assistants, coaches and Directors of Forensics. These informal interviews took place at tournaments. The participants were as representative of the demographic mix within the forensic community as the tournament entries and time would permit. During these "interviews," the observation was made that participation rates for women and minorities had not significantly increased over past years. After several weeks of interviews and research, it became obvious that while the debate community continues to be dominated by representatives of the white, male, patriarchal culture, there is no shortage of diversity in opinion as to why women and minorities either cease to participate on the collegiate level altogether or quit debate after a relatively short tenure. The question is why? From these interviews, it became clear that while racism and sexism were often identified as one possible explanation, they were by no means represented as the basis or primary motivator among students to exit debate.

While the information gained through the informal interview process did not violate our expectations, several female and minority student competitors suggested an alternative causality to the normal attribution process of the impact of the "ISM's": a lack of rewards sufficient to motivate further participation. These students suggested that competitive success alone was not enough to keep them involved. Personal wellness, performance in their coursework outside of debate, too much travel time, too much time away from important interpersonal relationships, significant involvement in other student organizations important to their professional or academic future, are just some of the de-motivating issues raised through our interview process. Interestingly enough, when these issues were raised with white, male competitors they were quickly dismissed as being relatively unimportant to their decision to continue participation in debate. Could this apparent difference in motivating factors during the decision-making process contribute significantly to the current trend towards low participation rates for the subdominant group? Moreover, does the very manner by which we pursue and practice competitive debate fail to motivate significant participation by women and minorities? Is there something inherent in the process that frustrates our goals of diversity and inclusiveness?

The research and interview process generated the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a significant difference between dominant and subdominant groups in terms of what motivates them to continue participation in competitive debate?

RQ2: Do sexist and/or racist attitudes and/or behaviors function as a primary motivator in the decision of women and minorities to discontinue their participation in debate.

Methodology

Subjects:

The scope and focus of this research was to collect data from a sample reflective of the competitive pool; in this case, specific to competitive intercollegiate debate.³ A purposeful and deliberately inclusive sample of student competitors was collected at seven tournaments. Seventy-eight surveys were collected at seven tournaments with a primarily regional competitive draw, though two of the tournaments were large enough to draw a nationally competitive grouping in the NPDA division.⁴ All of the tournaments fell within the central and upper midwest regions. In order to address concerns over a regional bias, additional data was collected through a mail-out directed towards the membership of the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA), the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA), National Forensic League Lincoln-Douglas (NFA-LD) and the International Public Debate Association (IPDA) across the United States. Surveys were sent to 300 member programs of NPDA CEDA,