

## Induction Checks

Although successful pretests indicated that the two treatment conditions contained the intended extemporaneous speaking organization constructs, additional induction tests were performed on the study participants. Reliability analysis of the 5 item scale indicated an  $\alpha = .86$ . The scale reliability is strongest when all 5 items are included. Additional analysis indicated a successful manipulation of the extemporaneous speaking conventions. An independent samples t-test pointed to a significant difference between the means of the groups (The groups that had the organization convention present ( $M = 11.69$ ) and the groups that had the conventions not present ( $M = 26.39$ ),  $t(1, 64) = -11.095$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The lower mean score for the organization convention group indicated that participants in that group were able to identify the components of the convention. The higher mean score for the organization convention absent group indicated that participants in that group were not able to identify the components of the convention. Thus, we can conclude that the treatment conditions were successfully induced.

## Hypothesis Testing

A number of significant results were found in relation to the hypothesis. Hypothesis one examined judges overall impression of the speech. Participants were asked to rate their overall impression of speech they viewed on a 7-point Likert type scale (1= Superior to 7= Poor). H1 proposed that judges exposed to the speech containing the organization constructs would rate the speech as being superior to the speech that was not organized in the normative fashion. An independent sample t-test comparing the mean scores of the two conditions supported hypothesis one, finding that judges did give significantly better overall rating score to the conventional speech (Table 5).

Additionally, results indicate support for hypothesis two. The largest mean difference between individual speech factors was reported for the organization of the speech (Table 3). Participants rated the conventional speech as having superior organization when compared to the unconventional speech. The content of the two speeches are arranged the same way except for the absence or presence of the conventional organization prompts, yet participants viewed the conventional speeches organization as excellent and the unconventional speech as just being average in the way it was organized.

Where organization was seen as being the most different by the two treatment conditions, delivery was perceived as have the smallest difference. Analysis of the results did not support hypothesis three, delivery ratings means for the two groups were not statistically significantly different (Table 5). The means between the two groups were different and in the direction of the hypothesis but the differences were too small to rule out sampling error. Hypothesis three



not being supported does have a positive turn, indicating that the delivery confounds between the two speeches were controlled and were not a factor in judges' perceived differences in the two speeches.

Although only 128 words were removed from the unconventional speech, and all of those words were organization indicators (preview statement, review statement, etc....) and not content, significant differences were perceived by participants regarding the analysis of the two speakers. Judges rated the conventional speech as having stronger analysis than the unconventional speech, supporting hypothesis four (Table 3).

Results also pointed to a strong positive correlation among all the speech rating factors (Table 4). Since all four single item factors were highly correlated, they were summed to create a fifth factor, Total Speech Score. The total speech score rating was created to provide a factor that took into account all the factors of analysis (Overall Impression, Delivery, Organization and Analysis). The total speech score rating was highly correlated with all of the individual speech score factors. Also, an independent sample t-test indicated a significant difference between the conventional and unconventional speech groups, with the conventional speech receiving the better total speech score (Table 5). The correlation analysis points to a strong relationship between speech factors, one speech factor can have a strong effect on how another is perceived. For example, this correlation matrix indicated that if a speaker is perceived to have poor delivery, s/he will be thought to have poor analysis, overall speaking skills and organization. Furthermore, if that speaker is thought to have good organization, that speaker will be thought to have good delivery, analysis and overall speaking ability.

The total speech score statistic was used to test the fifth hypothesis. Hypothesis five offered that judges of high experience would give poor ratings to the speech that failed to comply with the conventional organization norms. ANOVA was used to explore the difference between treatment conditions, years involved in extemporaneous speaking contests, and total speech score. Judges with three years involvement or less in extemporaneous speaking contests were placed in the low experience group (N=31), and judges with more than three years of experience were placed in the high experience group (N=35); this served as a median split (Table 2). For judges that viewed the speech with the conventional speech organization elements, years involved in extemporaneous speaking contest had no effect on total speech score. Judges in the conventional organization group had no difference in mean score, regardless of experience level (Table 5). The results were different in the unconventional organization group, the low experience judges total speech score rating was lower (perceived as better) than experienced judges (Table 5). Low experience judges scores increased 1.58 points for the total speech score when viewing the unconventional speech. High experience judges scores increased 4.41 points for the total speech score when viewing the unconventional



speech. A contrast effects weighted ANOVA suggested that a large portion of the variance in total speech scores is explained by the model of Table 5,  $F(1,62) = 16.67$ ,  $p < .05$ , eta squared .21. These results strongly support the fifth hypothesis.

### Qualitative Comments

This study does not only explore the quantitative elements of the data gathered from participant, this study also examined the contents of qualitative comments made by participants. The questionnaire provided a space for general comment, (standard speech tournament judging ballots proved a similar space for comments). Judges in the tournament settings and in this study were not required to provide written comments. Of the participants in the study, only 37 provided written comments. Sixteen participants provided written comments for the conventional speech and twenty-one judges provided comments on the unconventional speech. The comments were examined for whether they related to delivery, analysis, organization and overall impression. Additionally, comments were examined for differences in experience level (High/Low) and differences based on condition.

Participants that provided written comments for the conventional speech were equally split with regards to experience level (High=8/Low=8). Nine of the sixteen subjects in this condition made comments on the speaker's delivery. Of the nine judges that commented on delivery, six judges had negative feedback and three provided positive comments. Some of the negative delivery comments included, "speaker lacked passion," "used repetitive gestures," "seemed stiff," and "vocally too much on the same level." Participants that provided positive delivery feedback we even more abbreviated, for example, "good delivery," "excellent delivery," and "well articulated." There was no discernable difference in delivery comments based on experience level.

Seven subjects in the conventional speech groups provided comments on analysis. Three judges provided negative responses regarding analysis and all three of those judges were in the high experience category. The negative analysis comments included, "Some of the logic of the speaker was based on opinion," "not enough statistics in the 1st point," and "introduction point was unimportant." In the same condition group, four judges provided these positive comments on the analysis in the speech, "excellent use of refs. and quotes," "facts were well supported with data," "speech with good sources," "well thought out," and "excellent analysis." Of the four judges that provided positive analysis feedback, two were high in experience level and two were low in experience level.

In the conventional organization condition only two judges made comments on the organization of the speech. Both judges made positive comments about the conventional organization and both judges were in the low experience level. One of the judges provided



these comments, "Intro, three points of analysis, signpost, summarizing conclusion were all present. Well Done!" The judge provided a near word-for-word recreation of the conventional organization paradigm and praised the speech for compliance. On the other hand, experienced judges provided no praise or comments for the conventional organized speech in regards to its organization.

The results of the content analysis for the unconventional speech groups comments were slightly more dramatic. Of the twenty-one participants that wrote comments for the unconventional speech 12 were in the high experience group and 9 were in the low experience group. Of the twenty-one judges in this group, 14 wrote comments on the delivery of the speech. All fourteen judges' delivery comments were negative in content and those comments were not significantly different in content from the negative delivery comments provided by the judges in the conventional speech group. Of the fourteen judges in the unconventional group that offered written comments on delivery, 8 were rated as being high in experience and 6 were rated as low in experience.

Judges in the unconventional group also contributed comments with respect to the analysis of the unconventionally organized speech. Three judges in the unconventional condition provided positive feedback regarding the speeches content. The positive comments included, "documentation was impressive," "10 unique sources," and "good use of quotes and evidence." All three of the judges that gave positive analysis comments were in the high experience group. Only one, low experience judge wrote negative comments on the unconventional speech's analysis and that comment was merely a request for more analysis.

The judges in the unconventional group who commented on the organization of the speech provided the most extensive written feedback. Seven judges opted to comment on organization and all seven judges provided negative feedback. Six of the seven judges that commented on the poor quality of the unconventional speeches organization were high in experience and three of those six were individuals that had made positive assessments of the unconventional speeches analysis. One judge commented, "Lack of sign-posting and clear answer to topic weakened the overall presentation." Another judge provided a detailed explanation of how the speech should be organized: "Points to be covered should be outlined or numbered advising us why tobacco companies should be punished. Then each area should be developed and supported. Finally, in the summary or conclusion, a recap or review points again would be helpful to tell the folks what you told them." This same judge stopped the experimenter as he handed in his questionnaire and said, "This is not an extemp speech. You need to have a numbered preview and review." One of the other high experience judges that praised the speeches content went on to write, "However, the lack of structure in the body made it difficult to follow. "The one low-experienced judge that penned



negative comments wrote, "points jumped around." Overall, the organization comments by the judges in the unconventional group demonstrate a dramatic negative impact on high experience judges' overall impressions of the speech. One judge in the unconventional group wrote, "Could win a 'local tourney'- would get nowhere at state or nationals. Knows nothing about economics." The judge that wrote the previous comments was a high experience judge from the California sample. These comments are ironic when the speech is a transcript of the national champions' final round speech and that speaker was also the California state champion.

The overall analysis of the qualitative comments provides some interesting insight and support. Of the comments provided, the majority of the comments were negative. Only eight of the thirty-seven judges provided positive speech feedback. The vast majority of the written comments were negative delivery comments ( $n=23$ ). The total number of comments on organization and analysis were only 20. These findings support the results of the ballot content analysis done by Harris (1986), that found that the majority of ballot comments were on a speakers delivery and yet those same judges rated organization as the most important factor in assessing the speaker. These findings further support Harris claims when looking at qualitative responses in the unconventional groups. Judges' responses in the unconventional group seemed to indicate that the failure to be clearly organized trumped the speaker's analysis and delivery positives and resulted in a lowering of their overall impression of the speech.

## DISCUSSION

### Convention Strength

The initial question that set this research into motion was: Is there an organization convention in extemporaneous speaking contest, and if there is one, how strong is the convention? The data gathered in the study points to a very strong organization convention governing the extemporaneous speaking event. One piece of empirical data provides strong support of this argument, the total speech score mean differences for condition. For the participants that viewed the conventional speech, their total speech score ratings indicated that speech would be considered an excellent speech. For the participants that viewed the unconventional speech, their total speech score ratings indicated that the speech would be considered an average speech. Even with delivery and analysis factors being controlled for, the conventional speech scored stronger ranking in every area of evaluation. The two speech transcripts varied in only 128 words with the majority of those words repeated in the preview and review statements. So, for there to be major differences in the overall perception of the speech strength we need to look at were the differences are most dramatic and examine each of the speech factors.

The first four hypotheses offered explored each of the major speech



factors (Delivery, Organization, Analysis and Overall Impression). Each factor, except for speech delivery, was significantly adversely effected by not complying with conventional forensic organizational techniques. Delivery was rated as being poorer and was approaching a significant level ( $p=.108$ ). The largest difference between means of speech factor was in regards to organization. The conventional speech had a mean organization score of 1.67 (Superior Organization) and the unconventional speech had a mean organization score of 3.09 (Average Organization). One factor that could explain the drop in all the score is the speech factors Pearson's correlation analysis. Table 4 indicates that all of the speech factors were highly correlated. That is, if a speaker has a major error in any one area this would invite more "disciplinary" scores in the other areas. The major error in a speech factor area in this study would be the absence of the organization convention.

One question still remains: Is there a normative organization convention? In order to get at whether the construct is conventional hypothesis five was employed. Using experience and treatment condition as independent variables and total speech score as a dependent variable, the conventional element was brought to light. When looking at speech factors, judges differed very little based on experience when viewing the conventional speech. For the speech factors of delivery and analysis, high experience judges saw the conventional speech as being slightly better then low experience judges. The differences were more pronounced when looking at experience level and the unconventional speech. High experience judges analysis scores jumped from a mean of 1.93 to a mean of 3.05 based on treatment condition; where low experience judges went from a mean analysis score of 2.06 to a mean score of 2.36. These findings are most profound when looking at total speech score. Judges that viewed the conventional speech did not differ in total speech score based on experience level ( $\underline{m} = 8.06$ ). Yet, there was a profound difference in total speech score based on experience for participants viewing the unconventional speech. Low experience judges gave the unconventional speech a mean total speech score rating of 9.64 and high experience judges gave the unconventional speech a mean total speech score of 12.47, a significant and substantial increase. These results provide a strong foundation for the argument that a *normative convention* is present. Since judges of high experience are well versed in the conventional elements of a speaking contest, it follows that the high experience judges would recognize the violation of the unwritten rules and enact punitive scores to bring about speaker compliance with the norms of the event.

The qualitative comments that the judges wrote also provide strong evidence for the presence of a normative organization convention governing the extemporaneous speaking event in competitive forensics. Of the judges that watched the conventional speech, no judge of high experience wrote any comments on organization, and only two low experience judges provided comments and those



comments were positive. In the unconventional group six high experience judges penned extensive negative comments on the organization of the speech and only one low experience wrote comments about the lack of organization. These numbers are important, in that they suggest the norm. High experience judges did not comment on the organization of the conventional speech because it was normal. As judges we do not traditionally offer comments for the norm but rather comment on the "exceptions to the rule." As is the case for the six high experience judges that commented on the unconventional speech's lack of organization, those judges felt compelled to point out the abnormality.

The effects of not complying with the convention can have dire effects on speakers, exaggerated in later tournament competition that utilize more experienced judges (e.g., final rounds of major invitational tournaments, state championship tournaments and national championships).

The results of this study seem to provide competitors and coaches with little choice to achieve success at the highest level, follow the convention. As coaches, we admit coaching the convention, yet we have become bored with the convention. There are, of course, strong reasons for a pedagogy grounded in the ease of following the "conventional" organizational pattern. Conversely, there also is a value to encouraging more creative, fluid and conversational interactions with what could lead to a more innovative and subtle organization. This study served as a test, exploring how harmful using unconventional organization would be in a forensic extemporaneous speaking contest. The results indicate that a move at this juncture would be detrimental to any extempore that would make such an attempt, inviting a rethinking of the powerful but stilted organizational conventions.

## **Future Implications**

Surely, the status quo in extemporaneous speaking has some inequities. The issue remains as to what can be done to make the event more consistent and less frustrating for those involved in the activity. One option is to make sure all judges are informed of the convention elements. This would create a stronger baseline for judging and eliminate some of the variance in scoring. Another option would be requiring judges to disclose their criteria before each round. Like debate today, judges are asked if they like speed, philosophical critique arguments, and the like. Event judges would disclose their level of experience, style preferences, thus allowing the truly extemporaneous speaker an opportunity to better tailor his/her speech to the tastes of the evaluator.

Another improvement may be to retain the advantages of formula based instruction and judging for less experienced competitors, while simultaneously establishing alternative criterion for experience competitors who reward experimentation and originality. Additionally,



steps for the future could include more research, writing and forums for coaches to explore why we teach and coach certain techniques. Conventions rule many forensic events as if they were laws. Coaches need to talk more about why conventions are used. Clearly, there is some justification for elements of the organization convention, but why is it so ridged and should it be so ridged in form? These are questions that must be discussed in the future by the larger forensic community and by research.

Table 1: Years Involved in Extemporaneous Speaking and Number of Rounds Judged

Years Involved	Frequency	Cumulative Percent	Rounds	Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1-3 Years	31	47.0	0-10	28	42.4
4-6 Years	19	75.8	11-20	22	75.8
7-10 Years	7	86.4	21-30	5	83.3
11-13 Years	5	93.9	31-40	5	90.9
14+ Years	4	100.0	41+	6	100.0

The years involved in extemporaneous speaking were significantly correlated with four speech factors (Table 2). As the participants years involved in extemporaneous speaking increased, participants assigned poorer ratings to the speeches overall quality, speech delivery and organization.

Table 2: Correlation Between Years Involved and Speech Factors

Years Involved	Overall Rating	Delivery	Organization
Pearson Correlation	.274*	.294*	.290*
Sig. (2-tailed)	.026	.016	.018
N	66	66	66

Table 3: Differences In Speech Factor Ratings

Speech Factor Ratings	Conventional Organization Means (n=33)	Unconventional Organization Means (n=33)	t-test Values *p<.05
Overall Rating	2.15 (SD=.90)	2.79 (SD=1.02)	t=2.63 df=64 p=.011*
Organization	1.66 (SD=1.02)	3.09 (SD=1.47)	t=4.59 df=64 p=.000*
Delivery	2.24 (SD=.90)	2.64 (SD=1.05)	t=1.63 df=64 p=.108
Analysis	2.00 (SD=1.00)	2.76 (SD=1.34)	t=2.94 df=64 p=.012*
Total Speech Score	8.06 (SD=3.43)	11.27 (SD=3.99)	t=3.51 df=64 p=.001*



Table 4: Speech Factor Correlation Matrix

Factor Correlation **indicates correlation is significant at the 0.01 level	Overall Rating	Delivery	Organization	Analysis	Total Speech Score
<b>Overall Rating</b> Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	1.00	.805** .000 66	.605** .000 66	.706** .000 66	.887** .000 66
<b>Delivery</b> Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N		1.00	.440** .000 66	.613** .000 66	.798** .000 66
<b>Organization</b> Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N			1.00	.719** .000 66	.842** .000 66
<b>Analysis</b> Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N				1.00	.896** .000 66
<b>Total Speech Score</b> Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N					1.00

Table 5: Comparison of Total Speech Scores, Experience and Condition

Total Speech Score Means	Conventional Organization	Unconventional Conventional
Low Experience	8.06 SD=3.34 N=17 (-1)	9.64 SD=2.89 N=14 (0)
High Experience (Planned contrasts in parentheses. F (1,62) =16.67, p<.05)	8.06 SD=3.62 N=16 (-1)	12.47 SD=4.31 N=19 (2)

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