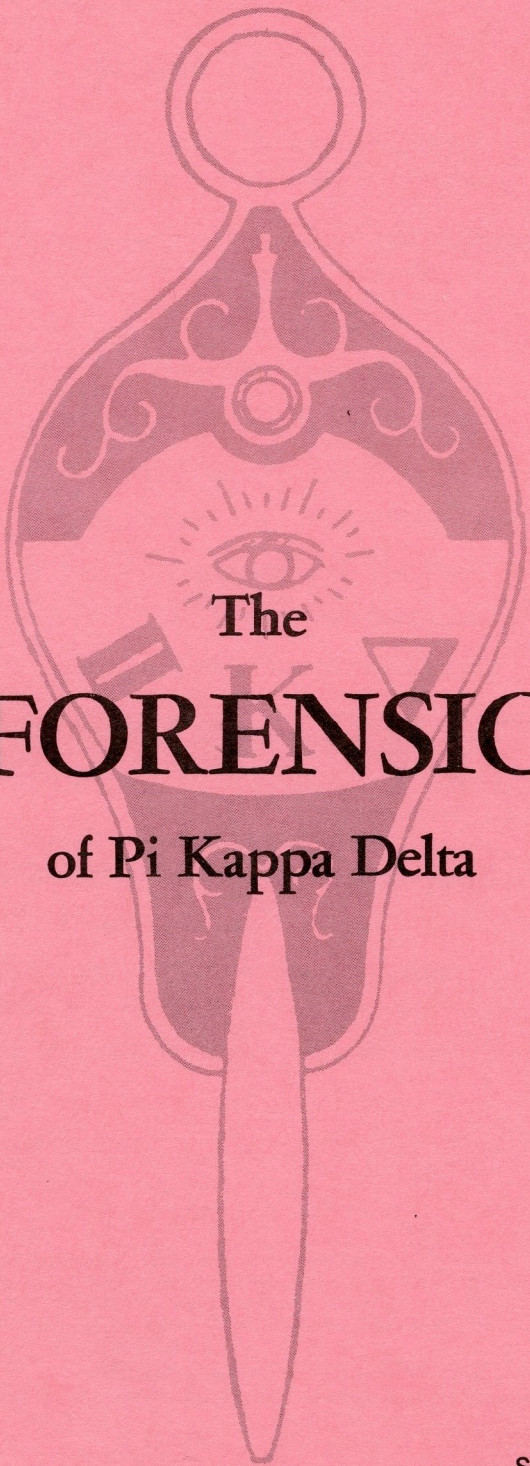

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A PARADIGMATIC VIEW OF THE INDIVIDUAL EVENTS REVOLUTION/STRUCTURE

By Michael P. Kelly, Ph.D.
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> Close historical investigation of a speciality at a given time discloses a set of recurrent and quasi-standard illustrations of various theories in their conceptual, observational, and instrumental applications. These are the community's paradigms, revealed in its textbooks, lectures, and laboratory exercises. By studying them and by practicing with them, the members of the corresponding community learn their trade.
>
> Thomas S.. Kuhn[1]

Almost a generation ago, in *Coaching and Directing Forensics,* Donald Klopf and Carol Lahmann outlined objectives or goals for public speaking events. These goals included experience and/or training in 1) the research process, 2) subject analysis, 3) selecting and organizing material, 4) analyzing audience reactions, 5) delivering a speech, and 6) understanding of current national or international problems.[2] Several observations should be noted: First, these goals or objectives *when achieved* may concomitantly serve as "educational values" derived from the practice of the forensic process itself. Second, these goals and objectives are equally as applicable to the debate format as they are to the prepared events format. Thus, in answer to the question "Is a particular individual event 'educationally valuable'?" forensic professionals need look no further for criteria of values than the above stated goals and objectives of the activity. The educational value of a particular event can and should be measured in terms of how well the event meets the goals and objectives articulated by the forensic community.

The rapid growth of individual events over the past twenty years might seem to suggest that "experimental events have the potential for improved achievement of the already-agreed-upon goals and objectives of the forensic commuity." The presupposition of this hypothesis rests first and foremost upon the possibility of creating and structuring "new" or "experimental" events. For, without this ability to create and structure new/experimental events, the potential enhancement of whatever "educational values" we wish to promote, is doomed to flounder. It is necessary, thus to review where we have been over the past twenty years in forensics, to review what might be called the revolutionary creation of a new paradigmatic structure of forensics, namely, the individual events paradigm as it is particularly manifested in prepared speaking events.

During this period there have been at least 22 different prepared events offered in intercollegiate forensic competition. An accompanying table lists those events alphabetically. Column 1 indicates the first year the event appears to have been offered; Column 2 indicates the last year the event appears to have been offered; and Column 3 indicates the greatest

recorded frequency-of-offering for an event in any one academic year. The source of this data is as follows: the 1965-66 to 1979-80 data was obtained from the *Intercollegiate Speech Tournament Results* records; no data was analyzed for the 1980-81 through 1983-84 academic years; and the 1984-85 data was obtained from the "AFA Tournament Calendar 1984-85" of anticipated tournaments.[3] It should be noted that the more recent *Intercollegiate Speech Tournament Results* annuals recorded approximately twice the number of tournaments that the 1984-85 AFA calendar lists. Assuming that there has not been a major decline in the number of tournaments held each year since 1979-80, the most recent data may be better interpreted in Column 4 as a "percentage of frequency."

A mere recitation of the fluctuating data over the past twenty years does not suffice to address the issue of the educational value of any of the various prepared events that have been offered in that time period. What this historical data does suggest is a quasi-free-market determination of forensic value rather than a purer "educational" value of these prepared events. As Jack Howe, long a chronicler of college speech tournament results argued some years ago . . .

> The popularity of . . . events has been determined solely by their frequency of appearance in tournaments. One wonders, however, if they would retain this same order if a vote were taken among the students who compete in them.[4]

Even the "free marketplace" concept of forensic value has to be tempered by several caveats. First, the existence of national individual events championships that offer less than 25% of the events that have been offered over the past 20 years obviously mitigates against the opportunities of the remaining events ever gaining any widespread currency. Second, there are clearly outer limits to the number of possible events that any given invitational tournament can realistically accommodate in a weekend tournament (the current maximum is 17 events at Southern Connecticut State University tournaments). Third, there are outer limits to the number of individual events a given competitor can participate in on a given weekend tournament. Fourth, the genre of prepared speaking events are not boundless.

Twenty years ago there were less than a handful of individual events offered in a given academic year. It must be noted, however, that this observation is only applicable to inter*collegiate* forensics. Having been a high school forensic professional in northern Illinois in 1965, the author is aware that the standard smorgasbord of individual events at the high school level, at least in Illinois, was ten discrete and distinct events all sponsored annually in a District, Regional, and Statewide championship structure, that in turn, influenced the weekly high school invitational

tournament offerings. Clearly, however, this panoply of individual events was far from the norm at the college level at that time. *ISTR* suggests that the average number of individual events offered at a tournament twenty years ago was *two*. That average has increased steadily over the years until today where it is closed to *ten* events per individual events tournament. Approximately half of the average ten events offered at any given tournament are prepared individual events. These 4--5 standard prepared events in turn represent less than 25% of the distinct and different prepared events that have been devised, created, and offered at various tournaments over the past 20 years.

At some point, as the table suggests, so-called "new" or "experimental" events become duplicative and the entire expansive process becomes implosive and repetitive

STATISTICS ON PREPARED EVENTS OVER THE PAST TWENTY YEARS

EVENT	Column 1 first offered	Column 2 last offered	Column 3 most offered	Column 4 84-85 %	Observations
ADS/STE	pre-65	curr.	84-85*	85 %	growth "nationals" linked
Argument Analysis	76-77	curr.	84-85	3 %	slow growth
Communication Analysis	73-74	curr.	84-85	62 %	growth "nationals" linked
Speech to Convince	77-78	curr.	84-85	3.5 %	
Demagogic Speaking	78-79	curr.	n.c.	1 %	
Editorial Comment	73-74	curr.	84-85	1 %	
Epideictic Speaking	74-75	curr.	84-85*	6 %	virtually constant after first year
Eulogy	73-74	73-74	73-74	Ø	
Expository Informative	pre-65	curr.	84-85*	97 %	growth "nationals" linked
Forensic Criticism	72-73	curr.	n.c.	.5 %	
Legal Speaking	?	curr.	?	.5 %	
Literary Criticism	76-77	curr.	84-85	3.5 %	
Manuscript Speaking	pre-65	74-75	67-68	Ø	
Motivative Speaking	77-78	78-79	n.c.	Ø	
Organizational Communication	75-76	79-80	n.c.	Ø	
Persuasion Oratory	pre-65	curr.	84-85	93 %	
Propaganda	72-73	75-76	n.c.	Ø	
R-TV Broadcasting	pre-65	curr.	77-78	3 %	appears to be declining
Rhetorical Criticism	pre-65	curr.	79-80	14 %	declining in favor of Communication Analysis
Sales	pre-65	curr.	84-85	5 %	
Stimulative Speaking	75-76	75-76	n.c.	Ø	
Stump Speaking	75-76	?	n.c.	?	

* Based upon extrapolation.

curr. = currently offered
n.c. = no change

providing mere refinements of previously offered events. The *ISTR* record clearly indicates that only one event included today by a national individual events tournament did not exist 20 years ago and, hence, might be labeled a successful prepared event that entered a trial market, received a modicum of support, and was eventually berthed in the National Individual Events Tournament roster of prepared events. That event is Communication Analysis. Some forensic professionals might even argue with this example by claiming, with much justification, that it is merely an expansion of the older and more restrictive Rhetorical Criticism event. One might convincingly argue that the only *truly,* new experimental event introduced in the last 20 years that does not have a clear generic antecedant to an older event or a regional event is Organizational Communication. And that event died aborning.

Physical and temporal constraints aside, the generic limitations on further experimentation into as yet unplowed fields seems unlikely. Virtually all of the events introduced in the last 20 years can be viewed as either parts of a larger whole or refinements of prior offerings. Editorial Comment, for example, can be viewed as a part of the larger whole of Argument Analysis, both of which could be clustered with such related events as Communication Analysis, Forensic Criticism, Literary Criticism, and Rhetorical Criticism. Propaganda can be viewed as the counterpoint of Demagogic Speaking. The Speech to Convince, Motivative Speaking, Oratory, Persuasion, Salesmanship (sic), and Stimulative Speaking can be viewed as another cluster. Eulogy and Stump Speaking can be viewed as parts of the larger whole of epideictic Speaking.

With this background it might be accurate to conclude that our experimentation with a variety of prepared events which began in the mid-1960s reached its zenith about five years ago and that any experimentation that may lie over the horizon would be revolutionary rather than evolutionary. The concept of paradigmatic structures is fully applicable to the issue here. The rise of individual events in competitive speaking can be viewed as a paradigmatic revolution in the academic forensic structure which overwhelmed the previous debate tournament dominant format that had emerged in the 1930s which in its turn had overwhelmed the anterior audience-centered, *truly* "Oxford-style" (one university team invites another university team to debate an issue for the education and illumination of a public audience) format that existed earlier in this century.

Thus, experimentation, if it is to be found at some future date, may lie in a radical reformulation of what the larger forensic enterprise is about and should be about. There is little likelihood that any true experimentation will occur in the prepared events as we know

them today. That process has essentially been witnessed and concluded. At the present time we are captives of the individual events paradigm that our revolution created almost a generation ago. All that remains in this epoch is continued refinement of individual events that have already been experimented with. The revolution is over; experimentation is dead. Until the next, as yet unforseen revolution, only refinement remains.

ENDNOTES

[1]Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago:* University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 43.

[2]Donald W. Klopf and Carroll P. Lahmann, *Coaching and Directing Forensics* (Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Corporation, 1967), p. 195.

[3]See *AFA Newsletter*, ed. James W. Pratt (Vol. 6, No. 3; June 1984), pp. 14-52.

[4]*Intercollegiate Speech Tournament Results*, ed. Jack H. Howe (Vol. XVIII, 1978-79), p. 106.

"THE STATUS OF CEDA DEBATE IN THE SOUTHEAST"

by
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Based on the number of schools participating in CEDA debate and the generally positive assessment of CEDA given by observers, it is clear that CEDA debate is becoming a popular and widespread academic activity nationally.[1] When an activity develops the national status that CEDA has, it is important to begin a process of self-analysis—to monitor and evaluate the activity—in order to clearly understand how our activity is being conducted and what implications can be drawn from the current state of our activity. One initially important way of beginning the process of self-analysis is to attempt to characterize the development of CEDA within the various geographical regions of our country. Understanding the way CEDA has developed and the way it is practiced regionally will not only call to attention important differences that exist within our association regionally, but will also provide valuable insight into the common areas of focus shared across regions. In short, we can learn much by understanding how our colleagues and debaters in other parts of the country view CEDA and its role in the education process.

"Staus" is a term that can mean different things according to the context in which it is used. In this paper, I will use "status" as a term designed to indicate apparent trends in the development and practice of CEDA debate. As such, I will attempt to address four important questions: (1) What type of students are participating in CEDA debate in the Southeast; (2) Why are students participating in CEDA; (3) How are CEDA debates judged in the Southeast; and (4) In what ways can CEDA debate be improved? Addressing each of these questions should provide our colleagues from other parts of the country with a better understanding of the flavor and nature of CEDA debate "Southeastern style."

The information I will report in this paper was obtained from two sources. First, survey questionnaires designed to elicit information relevant to the four questions mentioned previously were completed by both coaches and debaters from several active Southeastern CEDA programs. A content analysis of ballots collected from a CEDA tournament was also performed in order to supplement information derived from the questionnaires pertaining to the third question, "How are CEDA debates judged in the Southeast?" Second, all of the information derived from the questionnaires was supplemented by informal discussions with both coaches and debaters in order to provide a richer understanding of their perceptions relevant to the issues addressed in this paper.

The methodological procedures used in this report were designed to provide data relevant to the issues identified as fundamental to a process of self-analysis. Although sample sizes obtained mandate qualification in the scope of conclusions that will be made,[2] they, nevertheless, are useful in the following ways. First, the procedures demonstrate how questions relevant to self-analysis can be addressed. Second, the procedures produced sufficient data to allow us to draw preliminary conclusions of possible important trends of CEDA debate in the Southeast.

What Type of Students are Participating in CEDA Debate in the Southeast?

Questions of "type" are context-centered just as are questions of "status." "Type" of student in this report is defined simply in terms of debate experience level. This is a useful characterization of type since experience level of the participants is an important factor in any debate, and because it enables us to determine if CEDA debate, is in fact, meeting the very important objective of increasing the opportunity to participate in academic debate for students generally.

To determine the type of students participating in CEDA debate, coaches were asked to characterize their squads according to the percentage of those which represented five different experience levels. The percentages provided by each coach were then averaged for each experience level in order to determine a composite percentage of debaters within each of the five experience levels. The results of this procedure are reported in Table One.

Table One. Composite Percentage of Debaters within Five Categories of Experience.

Experience Category	*Composite of Percentage*
No high school or college experience	38.1
One year college but no high school experience	24.0
High school but less than one year college experience	18.2
No high school but more than one year college experience	8.6
High school and more than	

one year college experience 11.1

These results indicate that the vast majority of CEDA debaters (70.7%) are participating in CEDA debate despite the fact that they did not attain debate experience while in high school. In addition, these results indicate that most CEDA debaters (80.3%) have one year of college experience or less compared to the relatively few (19.7%) that have more than one year of college experience.[6]

These results suggest two important findings. First, it seems clear that CEDA debate *is* providing a forum for student participation regardless of the student's previous debate experience. Such a finding is reassuring in that it reinforces CEDA's position as an academic activity accessible, in practical terms, to all students. Second, however, these results suggest that the development of CEDA debate in the Southeast is in its infancy, at least according to the percentage of debaters that are "seasoned veterans" with more than one year of college experience under their belts. As such, coaches and judges of CEDA in the Southeast shoulder a particularly heavy burden to guide and nurture the debater's understanding of the focus and principles of CEDA.

Why Do Students Participate in CEDA Debate?

The debate community attempts to survive within an academic environment which continually demands justification for the professional, financial, and time resources expended by our programs. The realities of this "age of accountability" force those of us involved in debate to be able to answer fundamental questions such as "What motivates students to participate in debate?" and "What value do students get from their participation?" Determining why CEDA debaters participate in debate, therefore, is a necessary step in the process of self-analysis.

Two items on the survey questionnaires were designed to address this question. First, debaters were asked to rank order a set of twelve possible motivational interpretations[4] in order to assess their perceptions of why they participate in CEDA debate. This procedure, and the motivational interpretations included in the list of twelve were selected from a similar study conducted over a much larger sample.[5] The procedure, therefore, was deemed to provide a fairly accurate indicator of motivational perceptions. Second, the debaters were simply asked to list the five most important skills and abilities they felt participating in CEDA debate enhanced for them. The motivational interpretations of the debaters were tabulated by averaging the rank (1-12) assigned to that motivational response by each debater. This procedure produced a composite mean rank which provides a comparative indicator of the importance of each of twelve possible motivational responses. Responses to the debater's assessment of skills and abilities improved by participating in CEDA de-