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WHO ARE PI KAPPA DELTANS AND WHY DO THEY GRAVITATE TO FORENSICS?

By

Hal Holloway, Carolyn Keefe, and Robert Cowles

Dr. Holloway and Professor Cowles are Associate Professors of Speech Communications at California University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Keefe holds the same rank at West Chester University of Pennsylvania and was recently named the PKD recipient of the first E.R. Nichols Educator of the Year Award.

Self-knowledge for groups is no less beneficial than for individuals. The more that an organization can discover about itself, the better it can serve its members, promote its goals, and make long-range plans. This article describes our attempt to gain insight about the undergraduate members of Pi Kappa Delta.

Methodology

In 1987, during the opening session of the 75th Anniversary Convention-Tournament of Pi Kappa Delta in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, we administered a demographic and attitudinal survey to the undergraduates in the assembly room. The anonymous survey consisted of 60 items; the first 17 obtained demographic information by asking direct questions about matters such as age, sex, and years in forensics, and the next 43 elicited student attitudes about forensics. These latter items, stated declaratively, broke into seven value-of-forensics categories: (1) educational, (2) career, (3) interpersonal, (4) winning, (5) judging, (6) priorities, and (7) fun. The attitude items were not presented sequentially in these categories but were randomized, and the Likert scale was used to measure attitude strength. Percentages for each of the five Likert positions, as well as for non-responses, were calculated. Item repetition was achieved by negation and synonymous expression. One hundred and seventy-one students handed in the survey, but four responses were disqualified as incomplete or patterned, leaving 167 surveys, or 32% of the 527 undergraduate attendees' as the basis for the study.

Need for the Study

Only four studies have asked questions similar to those in this project. Hargis (1948) issued questionnaires to Michigan high school principals to obtain demographic information about state high school debate champions. He also sent questionnaires to 47 former debaters to elicit their reactions to the debate experience. Rieke (1974) obtained 467 replies from college forensic directors who provided information about forensic programs and participants in two-year and four-year schools. More germane to this inquiry is Bill Hill's study (1982), "Intercollegiate Debate: Why Do Students Bother?" His questionnaire,

administered to debaters at three southeastern tournaments, yielded 90 usable responses to the directive: "List **in order of importance** as many reasons as you can that accurately describe your motivation for being involved in debate." Lastly, Matlon and Keele (1984) surveyed participants in the National Debate Tournament from 1947 to 1980. From 703 respondents, answers were obtained to questions about their post-college achievements, perceptions of debate, recommendations to debaters and forensic directors, and educational implications of debate.

As can be seen, three of the above studies (Hargis, Hill, and Matlon/Keele) concerned only debaters. Although Rieke's survey yielded demographic information about students involved in both types of activity, it did not include attitudinal questions nor did it survey the participants themselves. Therefore, none of the four studies offers either a sufficient or a recent base from which to generalize about current Pi Kappa Delta students. The present study, however, was designed to gain demographic and attitudinal information directly from both PKD debaters and individual events speakers.

Summary of the Demographic Section

Inasmuch as the survey had two parts, we shall present the results of each section separately. First, we shall summarize the data from the 17 demographic questions.

Age - Ninety percent of those polled were 22 years of age or under, 8% between 23 and 30, and only 2% between 31 and 50. None were over the half-century mark.

Sex - The figures on the gender ratio show that more women than men participated in the tournament: 53% to 47%.

Race - Of the 163 students who responded to this question (four omissions), 88% marked Caucasian, 6% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 2% Native American. None indicated Asian.

Marital Status - Ninety-two percent had never been married. Of the remaining 8%, 5% were currently married, 2% divorced, and 1% widowed. None were separated.

Parenting Responsibilities - When asked, "Do you have parenting responsibilities for one or more children?" 95% responded negatively and 5% affirmatively.

Year in College - Twenty-five percent were freshmen, 23% sophomores, 29% juniors, and 24% seniors.

Major in College - Nearly half of the students (47%) said that their major fell into the category of the humanities, including the performing arts. Social studies attracted the next largest group (21%), with education running a close third (20%). Science and technology came in fourth (13%) and business fifth (10%).

Grade Point Average - This question asked students to disclose their GPA on the basis of a 4.0 system. The results are as follows: 3.5 or above (35%); 2.5-3.4 (36%); 1.5-2.4 (8%); 1.4 or below (1%).

Forensic Scholarship - Thirty-seven percent answered "yes" to the question, "Do you presently hold a forensic scholarship?" and 63% responded "no."

Forensics as Requirement - For 17% of the students, forensics was required by their major or program, but for 83% forensic participation was voluntary.

Type of Forensic Activity - Seven percent were involved only in debate, whereas 58% competed only in individual events. Over a third (34%) entered both. One person (1%) did not respond. Of the 12 persons who debated exclusively, eight were males and four were females.

Number of Years in Intercollegiate Forensics - Nearly half (47%) had been in intercollegiate forensics for one year, 20% for two years, 20% for three years, and 13% for four years.

Number of Years in High School Forensics - Twenty-seven percent had not been in forensics during high school, but 31% had participated for four years, 22% for three years, 11% for two years, and 8% for one year.

Holding an Office in Forensics - Forty percent of those polled were an officer in their forensic organization or Pi Kappa Delta or both. Fifty-nine percent did not hold office in these groups, and 1% failed to respond.

Involvement in Other Campus Organizations - To the question "In addition to forensics, are you involved in campus clubs, activities, and/or publications?" 87% replied on the positive side, whereas only 13% said that forensics was their only activity.

Holding an Office in Other Campus Organizations - Forty-seven percent of the students served as an officer in some other campus group, and 53% did not.

Employment - Roughly a quarter (24%) of the students did not hold a job to

earn money during the school year. In regard to the extent of employment, 23% of the **overall respondents** worked 8 hours or less each week, 37% (9-20 hours), 12% (21-39 hours), and 5% (40 or more hours).

Discussion of the Demographic Characteristics

The above data show that most participants at the 1987 PKD Nationals were traditional college age and Caucasian in race, had never been married, and did not have parenting responsibilities. The respondents quite evenly represented the four college years, with juniors having a small edge over the other three classes. Disciplines within the humanities proved to be the most popular for major study, and over one-third of the students claimed to have a GPA of 3.5 or above. Most competitors did not hold a forensic scholarship nor were they required to participate in forensics. More students devoted their efforts exclusively to individual events than to debate alone or both types of activity. The large number of competitors (nearly half) were in their first year of intercollegiate forensics, but almost one-third of the total respondents had spent four years in high school forensics. Most students were also active in other organizations on campus, and many held office in these groups and/or forensics. Over three-quarters of those polled had a paying job during the school year.

Inasmuch as only one previous study has collected demographic data on participants at specific national tournaments in a given year, (Friedley and Manchester, 1985) and that study dealt with gender alone, no broad comparison can be made. In regard to gender, however, the 1987 PKD Nationals had a large percentage of women (53%) than in the 1984 NDT (15%), NIET (42%), and NFA (48%). Whether the higher proportion of women over men indicates a trend in forensics cannot be ascertained without comparable data from national tournaments since 1984.

An unexpected finding is that one-quarter of the respondents were freshmen. If we assume that the best competitors are entered in national tournaments and that competitors improve as they gain in experience, we might predict that freshmen would be fewer in number than upperclassmen. In this case, the fact that PKD membership is the only entry qualification may have contributed to the strong representation of first-year college students. Inasmuch as there are no comparable data for the other nationals, we cannot determine the typicality of this occurrence.

We do know, however, that sizable numbers of the participants had accumulated considerable forensic experience in high school. Fifty-three percent of those in their first year of intercollegiate forensics (not necessarily college freshmen) had spent three or four years in high school competition. That length

of preparation was also claimed by 42% of those in their second year of college forensics, 54% in their third year, and 72% in their fourth year. Of the strictly freshman group, 68% fell into the above length of previous experience. Thus a further examination of the data reveals that the participants had a longer forensic history than was first apparent.

Summary of the Attitudinal Section

The following table shows the attitudinal items arranged according to the seven value categories. One item out of the 43 could not be classified so it was omitted from the summary. The percentages shown across the scale have been rounded off to the nearest whole numbers.

TABLE 1

Key: SA - strongly agree; A - agree; N - neutral; D - disagree; SD - strongly disagree; NR - no response. Statement of the "I value forensics because . . ." items will be truncated whenever possible.

Student Attitudes Regarding Value of Forensics

Value Categories and Questions	Percentages of Respondents					
	SA	A	N	D	SD	NR
Educational Category						
1. I value forensics because I can learn to interpret literature I like.	19	34	30	7	2	8
2. . . . it offers a unique avenue for creative self-expression.	34	50	13	2	1	1
3. . . . I find preparation and participation intellectually stimulating.	28	50	14	7	1	1
4. . . . I gain knowledge in current affairs, analytical skills, and communication skills important for citizenship in a democracy.	35	44	14	4	1	2
5. . . . of the opportunities for travel.	23	38	25	10	4	0
6. . . . it helps me in college/university courses.	18	46	20	11	4	1
7. I value comments on ballots because they help me recognize key issues, qualities of good evidence, clarity of logic, and effective organization of ideas.	32	49	14	2	2	1

8. I value forensics because I can carefully research an interesting topic.	14	50	28	5	1	2
9. I value comments on ballots because they help me improve as a communicator.	42	45	8	3	1	1

II. Career Category

1. I value forensics because forensics looks good on my vita or resume.	26	40	22	8	3	1
2. . . . it offers training and insights in interpersonal communication that will prove valuable in my future occupation or profession.	61	32	5	1	2	0
3. I do not value forensics very highly. Rather, I see it as a necessary activity that I must endure for educational and future professional reasons.	1	4	5	26	59	4
4. I do not consider vita or resume building a major reason for participation in forensics.	7	28	25	28	10	2
5. I value forensics because it offers training and insights in public communication that will prove valuable in my future occupation or profession.	53	43	4	0	0	1
6. . . . it helps me build a strong record in extracurricular and co-curricular activities for a persuasive job resume or vita.	17	41	24	12	3	3
7. I plan my forensic and other extra-curricular and/or co-curricular activities to facilitate getting good letters of recommendation.	5	12	30	37	15	2

8. The number of forensic trophies won is of utmost importance for getting into graduate school and/or securing a good job.

1 6 14 37 41 1

III. Interpersonal Category

1. I value forensics because I can observe the behavior of other human beings as we interact with all our good and bad qualities, moral, intellectual, and emotional.

22 38 28 5 5 2

2. . . . of my close association with my coach.

17 29 26 14 11 2

3. . . . I can learn more about myself.

30 51 14 2 2 1

4. . . . it offers training and insights in interpersonal communication in social relationships.

25 50 19 2 0 4

5. . . . I can learn more about my fellow human beings.

19 44 26 4 3 4

6. . . . I enjoy meeting students from other colleges and universities.

38 46 13 2 1 1

7. . . . I enjoy the comradeship with others on my team or squad.

44 38 10 5 2 1

IV. Winning Category

1. I need to win because I hold a forensic scholarship.

1 3 11 12 56 17

2. The most important aspect of forensics is winning awards and trophies.

3 4 14 29 48 1

3. I value winning more than social relationships and comradeship with other students.

3 9 13 32 42 2

4. I do not consider winning the most important aspect of forensics.

40 38 10 8 4 1

5. I value winning awards more than learning communication theories and techniques and/or principles of argumentation and debate.

4 8 16 31 38 4

V. Judging Category

1. I value comments on ballots because they help me improve as a participant in forensics.
2. I do not pay attention to comments by judges, including constructive criticism, because I win many trophies anyway.
3. In general, judging in individual events is fair.
4. In general, judging in debate is fair.
5. I do not pay attention to comments by judges, including constructive criticism, because I am too busy to revise my presentation.

50 41 4 3 2 0

2 1 7 29 57 3

4 35 34 19 4 12

3 21 41 7 6 22

1 7 12 35 40 1

VI. Priorities Category

1. Participation in forensics conflicts with earning better grades.
2. I experience stress from balancing the demands of forensics with the demands of other aspects of my life.
3. I value forensics more than my other extra-curricular and/or co-curricular activities.
4. Participation in forensics conflicts with social activities.

10 29 21 28 11 1

25 50 17 6 1 1

27 36 24 10 2 1

21 35 22 16 5 1

5. Participation in forensics seriously conflicts with other valued extra-curricular and/or co-curricular activities.	8	31	32	22	4	2
6. Participation in forensics seriously conflicts with my job-for-money schedule.	11	29	19	20	13	8

VII. Fun Category

1. I value forensics because I enjoy participating in individual events and/or debate because it is fun.	44	47	6	2	1	1
2. I participate in forensics mainly because I find it an enjoyable activity.	46	39	11	1	1	1

Discussion of Student Attitudes

To facilitate discussion of the data, generally we shall use SA and A percentage sums and also D and SD percentage sums as indicators of attitude strength for a particular item under scrutiny.

I. Educational Category: to what extent did students value forensics for its educational benefits?

Pi Kappa Deltans, like the individuals polled in the Hargis, Hill, and the Matlon/Keele studies of debaters, showed a high value for the learning provided by forensics. For each of the nine items under I, the agreement sums run from 53% for a statement involving only oral interpreters to 87% for one of the two ballot items in this category. Perhaps the most interesting finding here, as well as in the judging category, is the high agreement that ballots are a good teaching tool (81% for ballots as helpful in recognition of key issues, good evidence, clarity of logic, and effective organization and 87% as helpful in improving communication). So strong was the students' perceived educational value of forensics that the mean agreement percentage for all the 15 items related to education (nine in Educational Category, two in Career Category, and four in Interpersonal Category) is 75%.

II. Career Category: to what extent did students value forensics as enhancing their graduate school and career opportunities?

The tournament participants saw forensics as a means to improve interpersonal and public communication skills that are occupationally valuable. If fact, the

highest agreement percentages in the entire survey are found in the career category (96% for training and insights in public communication and 93% for training and insights in interpersonal communication). Although 58% voiced agreement on the value of forensics in resume building, only 38% viewed it as a benefit as a major reason for participation. Furthermore, they did not see trophy winning as crucial for gaining admittance to graduate school and/or securing a good job. Generally, the responses of the Pi Kappa Deltans were similar to those in the Hill study in which "Career Preparation Needs" ranked fourth out of six topic groups.

III. Interpersonal Category: to what extent did students value forensics for interpersonal opportunities and development?

A fact that anyone connected with forensics can observe was confirmed by this study: students enjoy their association with team members from other schools. The highest agreement (84%) for any of the seven items in this category was registered for the "meeting students from other colleges and universities" statement. Intra-squad companionship also pulled a high agreement percentage (82%), as did self-knowledge (81%). Coaches who want to be buddies with their team members can take little encouragement from the fact that only 46% of the respondents valued forensics for their close association with their coaches.

IV. Winning Category: to what extent did students value the winning of forensic awards?

According to the answers in this category, the participants did not value winning as an end in itself. Rather, 69% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the notion that trophies are more important than learning communication theories and techniques and/or principles of argumentation and debate, and 74% valued social relationships and comradeship more than winning. Although 37% of the students held a forensic scholarship, for only 4% was winning a necessity.

V. Judging Category: to what extent did students value the comments of judges and consider judging fair?

Replies in this category further confirm that students perceived the ballot as instrumental to learning. Ninety-one percent of the subjects agreed or strongly agreed that ballots help them improve in forensics. This high affirmation for the ballot does not negate the fact that some students did not think that judging is fair, either in individual events or debate. Over a third of the subjects took a neutral position on both items related to this matter.

VI. Priorities Category: to what extent did students find that forensics conflicts with other aspects of their lives, and did they value forensics over other extra- and co-curricular activities?

When asked to respond to a general statement about experiencing stress from balancing the demands of forensics with demands from other aspects of their lives, the students gave a 75% positive response. From the four items that specify possible activities with which participation in forensics could conflict, these agreement percentages emerged: social activities, 56%; job-for-money schedule, 40%, or roughly half of those employed; other extra- or co-curricular activities, 39%; and, earning better grades, 39%. Only in the case of student social life do the percentages exceed 40, and for 63% of the subjects, forensics has a greater value than other extra- or co-curricular activities. (This latter number represents 72% of those involved in them.)

VII. Fun Category: to what extent did students value forensics for its fun?

The message from this category is clear and resounding: not only did 91% of the students find individual events and debate were fun, but overall 85% participated in forensics mainly because it was enjoyable.

These Pi Kappa Deltans, then, valued forensics for its educational benefits -the development of public, interpersonal, and intrapersonal communication skills -that they found useful and that they expected would aid them in their future roles. Although the students realized that forensics helped make them "look good" on their resumes, they did not value their participation or winning as merely an entree to graduate school or a career. They prized their intra-squad and inter-squad associations but tended not to have a close relationship with their coaches. Although some competitors perceived unfairness in judging, as a whole they paid attention to judges' comments because they were instructive. Conflicts between forensics and other activities were common in their lives but generally did not loom as major problems. Whatever forensics meant to them, it provided fun.

Conclusion

This demographic and attitudinal study concerns participants at only one of the several national tournaments. Further research should be undertaken to determine if the findings are typical of undergraduate students attending the nationals sponsored by the American Forensic Association, the National Forensic Association, the Cross-Examination Debate Association, and Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha.

A follow-up study at some future Pi Kappa Delta national convention-tournament is also recommended. It would provide information about demographic and attitudinal changes that might occur among its student membership. For Pi Kappa Delta historians and other leaders, such longitudinal data would be important.

Whether or not this particular study generates others, we can conclude that the Diamond Jubilee celebration was an auspicious time for PKD students to report on who they were and why they had gravitated to forensics.

Notes

¹Letter, Harold Widvey, Secretary-Treasurer of Pi Kappa Delta, September 2, 1987.

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DERRYBERRY NAMED OUTSTANDING TEACHER BY MISSOURI GROUP

BOLIVAR, MO - Bob Derryberry, chairman of the department of communication at Southwest Baptist University, was awarded the Outstanding Teacher Award by the Speech and Theater Association of Missouri at the group's fall convention Sept. 22-24 at the Lake of the Ozarks.

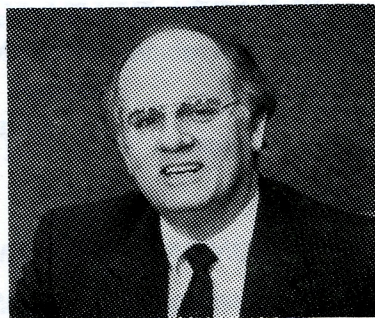
In addition to honoring Derryberry with the Outstanding Teacher Award, the group elected him its vice president and president-elect.

Derryberry's honor is definitely well-deserved. He has coached SBU's speech and debate program for 25 years. In addition to amassing an outstanding tournament win record, he has set a strong Christian example for his students.

Under Derryberry's direction, the SBU forensics team has had a four-year undefeated sweepstakes record. That record also includes two Pi Kappa Delta National Tournament titles and two Tri-Province Tournament titles. For the past seven years, SBU has won the Missouri State Tournament.

In addition to coaching and teaching, Derryberry has authored or co-authored several publications including the textbook **The Complete Book of Speechwriting** with professors Harte and Keefe, now in its second edition.

PRESIDENT'S PAGE



R. DAVID RAY

Two years ago in La Crosse, Pi Kappa Delta made a pledge to meet again in St. Louis on March 22-25, 1989. La Crosse was a wonderful gathering of those committed to the Pi Kappa Delta tradition of meeting biennially as a national organization. St. Louis and the University of Missouri at St. Louis will again offer us the opportunity to celebrate

fellowship of our order and to display forensics skills in spirited competition. If you have not received your official entry form, contact Michael Bartanen immediately. We look forward to your chapter being a part of the St. Louis experience. To be sure, there is no gathering quite like Pi Kappa Delta, and St. Louis will be the place to be in March.

While in New Orleans at SCA I received a number of inquiries from schools about joining Pi Kap. The reason is you. Pi Kap has an outstanding reputation in the forensics community because of quality individuals and chapters in our membership. Thus, we are continuing to grow and there is no better time than the convention year for a school to become affiliated with us. Now is the time to encourage your colleagues to join Pi Kap. Please have the interested school contact Terry Cole soon. Or better yet contact Terry and request that information be sent to the interested school. The convention year also prompts a rush of memberships. Please send your new individual memberships as they are completed, instead of waiting until just before the convention.

The Council has worked on several important projects since 1987. We look forward to sharing with the convention the results of those efforts. We think that you will be pleased as Pi Kap moves forward toward the future.

This issue of the Forensic contains recommended constitutional changes to be voted on at the convention. I would encourage each chapter to take time to study them before the convention. If you have any questions regarding constitutional changes prior to convention, contact Bob Derryberry.

I hope that each of you are making plans to arrive in St. Louis by noon on March 22 so that you and your students can participate in the developmental conference on the future of Pi Kappa Delta. Robert Littlefield has put together an excellent program. Additional information is included in this issue.

National Council has done everything possible for you to have a quality experience in St. Louis. We look forward to greeting you over the Easter break 1989 when again Pi Kappers will demonstrate "The art of persuasion, beautiful and just."

PI KAPPA DELTA NATIONAL CONVENTION AND CONTEST RULES

**March 22-25, 1988
St. Louis, Missouri**

General:

1. CONVENTION AND TOURNAMENT ENTRY FEES:

Each Contestant and Director: \$35.00 - Convention registration.

Each Additional judge/alumni/guest: \$17.50 - Convention registration.

Each Debate team: \$10.00 - entry fee.

Each Individual Event slot: \$4.00 - entry fee.

Each Participant in Development Conference: \$15.00 (incl. lunch)

2. Each student delegate/participant must be an undergraduate student in good standing who has not completed nine semesters of forensics participation. Each delegate/participant must be a PKD member or have filed a membership application with the National Secretary-Treasurer.

3. All tournament entries must be **POSTMARKED** and sent to the Tournament Director by March 9, 1989. A school cancelling or dropping entries after March 13, 1989 will be obligated for full fees.

4. All questions regarding tournament events not covered by the rules will be decided by the contest committee and the contest chairman. Tournament rules questions should be directed to Dr. Michael Bartanen, Department of Communication Arts, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, WA 98447. Office phone: 206-535-7764

Judges:

1. All competing chapters must provide judges covering the number of slots entered by the chapter. A qualified judge covers:

(a) Nine IE slots, or

(b) Two debate teams and Five IE slots, or

(c) One debate team and Seven IE slots, or

(d) Four L-D debate entries and Five IE slots

A LIMITED NUMBER OF HIRED JUDGES MAY BE AVAILABLE AT THE RATE OF \$15/UNCOVERED SLOT IN IE; \$30/UNCOVERED LD ENTRY; \$60/UNCOVERED TEAM IN DEBATE. ONLY REQUESTS MADE DIRECTLY TO THE TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR WILL BE CONSIDERED AND SUCH HIRED JUDGES WILL BE ALLOCATED ON A FIRST COME/FIRST SERVED BASIS.