

strate to our superiors and ourselves their value in the forensic community. Consequently, I've taken somewhat of a kitchen sink approach, in an effort to make this article as useful as possible to directors looking to justify their programs to administrations, and to start a conversation in the forensic community about how we approach these more intangible outcomes of forensic participation. To that end, I will review literature concerning forensic learning outcomes, drawing a distinction between traditional "academic" learning outcomes and more "humanistic" outcomes that function at an intra- and interpersonal level. I will then touch briefly on how directors can constructively engage their administrations, before offering a few research avenues that future forensic research can explore.

Learning Outcomes of Forensic Participation

When examining literature that purports to demonstrate what exactly forensic students learn, it is clear that forensics offers a wide variety of academic skills. Though Geisler (1985) notes that many competitors in oral interpretation fall short of this goal, ideally, an effective student of oral interpretation should come away from their competitive experience with an understanding of hermeneutic theory and how it applies to performance of a text. A student should be able to understand the importance of preserving the integrity of a text, as well as "honor generic characteristics of a given art work" (p. 78). Finally, students should not only be able to see that many interpretations of a text are valid, but should also be able to clarify which interpretations are more "defensible" and are, thus, more valid.

Gernant (1991) similarly notes a distance between theory and practice in forensics, but maintains that effective oral interpreters display a strong command of literary analysis. Strong oral interpreters have absorbed the concepts of authorial intent, thematic analysis, and the performative link between the audience and the performer. Conversely, Koepfel and Morman (1991) focus not on the literary outcomes of participation in the interpretation events, but the rhetorical benefits. They argue that, by focusing on the argumentative or rhetorical nature of oral interpretation, coaches can help students understand the function of oral interpretation, give students a competitive edge, and "increase the communicative value of the oral interpretation events" (p. 150). Though many of these authors focus on what is missing from current forensic practice, the fact remains that, if all goes well, a student will have achieved a wide variety of impressive learning outcomes.

As for the public address events, literature abounds on the potential learning outcomes of participation in this genre of forensic competition. The entire Fall 1985 edition of the *National Forensic Journal* is devoted to the event of Rhetorical Criticism (Communication Analysis) alone. Rosenthal (1985) focuses on how the activity can reinforce its roots in the rhetorical tradition – how to put the "rhetorical" back in "rhetorical criticism." Benoit and Dean (1985) explore

how CA competitors can broaden their knowledge of so-called “non-rhetorical” artifacts, like literary works and films. Shields and Preston (1985) even note how participation in communication analysis can familiarize a competitor with such concepts as fantasy theme analysis.

The learning outcomes of participation in events like informative and persuasive speaking are self-evident and parallel to the learning outcomes of basic public speaking courses. A look at the American Forensic Association (AFA) Event Descriptions (2010) shows that a competitor in persuasive speaking should be familiar enough with persuasion theory to successfully “inspire, reinforce, or change the beliefs, attitudes, values or actions of the audience.” Students competing in After Dinner Speaking should be able to “exhibit sound speech composition, thematic, coherence, direct communicative public speaking skills, and good taste,” a pretty impressive pedagogical stew. Finally, Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, and Loudon (1999) assert that participation in competitive forensics augments a student’s critical thinking skills.

Few of these benefits to forensic participation should be too surprising to coaches in the activity. At the risk of sounding self-congratulatory, forensic participation demands a wide-reaching breadth of knowledge few teachers and students outside the activity attain (Boileau, 1990). Even relatively new directors, such as myself, become quickly aware that to effectively coach (or, more importantly, compete in) all the genres of competition, one must have an eye for good literary writing, a solid foundation of literary and rhetorical theory, a working knowledge of current events, a keen grasp of structure and outlining, and a broad base of pop culture and historical knowledge.

Humanistic Outcomes of Forensic Participation

There is, however, another set of outcomes students claim to glean from the activity, a set that I will call *humanistic outcomes*. Hinck (2003), drawing similarities between athletic and forensic participation, describes these outcomes as a result of sustained involvement in a competitive activity:

Competing can give a student identity as a member of a team since joining a team, becoming assimilated as a member, and preparing for a season of tournament activity can challenge students to develop social skills that are essential to success beyond the college classroom. . . . A competitive season simulates life situations requiring adaptation to changing circumstances, recommitment to achieving one’s goals, coming back from a disappointing experience, and hard work without the guarantee of success. (p. 62)

In addition to intrapersonal communication outcomes, like reacting professionally to victory and setback, Carmack and Holm (2005) elucidate the education forensic students experience through interaction with their teammates:

Members also learn that forensics is not an easy activity in which to be involved. They learn about practice schedules, the amount of practice "required," who to go to for coaching in which events, and which events to compete in, through their interactions with coaches and varsity competitors. Sometimes these role behaviors are consciously communicated to the new members with the expressed intent of getting them to conform. (p. 35)

It becomes clear that forensic students, due only to their participation in a competitive activity, receive a profound education in intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication.

Furthermore, Paine and Stanley (2003) studied which factors of forensic competition a forensic student perceives as most "fun." The second most popular group of responses involved "the value of an education," and included such benefits as enhanced critical thinking skills and increased performance ability; however, the most popular set of factors in the study were those related to "the value of people and relationships." Students reported that meeting new people, sharing time with like-minded students, and having a "sense of community with other schools" were the most fun aspects of forensic involvement (p. 44).

I would hope these findings are not terribly surprising; if we did not all value the interpersonal and humanistic education that students in competitive forensics receive, we would simply be instructors of communication and not forensic coaches.

Working with Administrations

Sellnow (1994), in addition to offering a formidable review of literature on how to justify programs to administrators, offers an additional viewpoint: framing forensic education as "experiential education." Forensics, in this particular mode of thinking about the activity, offers a unique connection to theory and practice that few other co-curricular activities can provide. Forensic participation also teaches students to value a wide array of "ways of knowing," that will ultimately lead them to become lifelong learners.

Paine and Stanley's (2003) study has special relevance for the community when examining how to justify forensic programs to administrators. Littlefield (1991) conducted a study of college and university administrators nation-wide, searching for attitudes about debate and IE programs. Administrators responded that the primary benefits to having a forensic program on-campus was enhanced education for the students and enhanced *retention* of students (emphasis author's). College presidents, provosts, chancellors, and deans are, unsurprisingly, interested in ways to keep enrollment in the university high. Paine and Stanley's findings about the "fun factor" of forensics bear an even greater importance when considering that these are the very factors that keep the students in forensics and, ultimately, in school.

The forensics-as-family concept may be difficult to articulate to administrators, but it keeps students coming back, which is music to any administration's ears.

Future Directions

Littlefield's (1991) study is nearly twenty years old; perhaps it is time to re-investigate what administrators view as the primary benefits to having a debate or IE program on-campus. If programs are increasingly having to justify their existence in higher education, it is time to ask the administration itself what it is looking for.

The field of organizational psychology also provides a possible window into better understanding group dynamics and social outcomes of forensic participation. McMillan and Chavis (1986) posit four facets of community construction that can be used to evaluate the sense of community generated by a particular group of people: membership, influence, shared emotional connection, and needs fulfillment. Many of the humanistic outcomes of forensic participation are born out of the notion of "team as community." This concept obligates forensic students to place the needs of the team above their own individual goals, and demands an accelerated level of maturity from participants. Applying McMillan and Chavis' tool to a forensic squad could yield fruitful insights into the social workings of a team, as well as produce hard, quantitative evidence of the positive group interactions that keep students coming back to forensics (and consequently, the institution) year after year.

This article is only the start of an important conversation. By all means, we need to take a look at the pedagogical outcomes of the activity. The pressure to keep our activity a viable presence at a college or university demands that we do so. The National Forensic Association's (NFA) Committee on Pedagogy has created an invaluable document that will serve directors of forensics well all across the country, and its importance and usefulness cannot be overstated. Just as the document claims to move discourse about the sustainability of forensic programs beyond a competition vs. education dichotomy, I would encourage us to take the conversation one step further to embrace the humanistic outcomes of forensic participation, as well. We are certainly teaching our students (or at least, allegedly so) a vast body of knowledge – how to argue, how to persuade, how to deliver a composed speech, how to analyze literature, how to step into the skin of a fictional creation – but we are also teaching a different and complementary set of skills: how to graciously accept both goals met and hopes dashed, how to be a good teammate, how to place the needs of the group before those of the individual, how to take constructive criticism, how to be a good person. We must value and codify the educational outcomes of the activity, but so much of our time as forensic coaches is devoted to these intangible values that we cannot ignore them either.

I recognize that these values are not unique to forensics. Participation

in any competitive team activity ostensibly confers these same ideals. This does not (nor should not) detract from their importance. As Hinck (2003) notes:

Although it might be possible for some of our forensic team members to participate in college or intramural sports for the purpose of gaining the common benefits of striving toward competitive excellence, it seems unreasonable to expect all of our students to seek the common benefits of competition there. They are drawn to forensic activities because forensics is a collection of speech activities, of which they are interested in, and because they are not interested enough (or possibly talented enough) in basketball, football, field hockey, chess, tennis, bridge, or any other game to forgo participating in forensics activities to pursue those other interests exclusively. (p. 63)

Hopefully, some of the research cited in this article will prove useful to directors seeking to defend their programs to administrations. Moreover, what I am offering is a different way for us to think about "outcomes." I have heard several coaches say, "You know what? Educational objectives aside, my goal is for this student to become a better person." I believe students *can* become better people through forensics. Some administrators will be swayed by this assertion. Others will not. For those administrators, focusing on the diverse rhetorical, theoretical, and literary benefits of forensic participation will have to do. But if we are going to start to formalize our discussion of forensic outcomes, we need to pay attention to the more intangible benefits of participation in the activity.

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...And the Lord Spoke Unto Me: A Competitor's Perspective on Motivation and Forensics

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Abstract: *In the course of administering forensic teams, many issues arise, both for the students as well as the faculty. This article looks at how one team handled the communication aspects of team problems with motivation and team cohesion. The article surveys literature that addresses motivational concerns, and then explains the process this team followed to work through their problems and create a more cohesive team.*

A couple of winters ago, the speech team at a mid-sized Midwestern university experienced a crisis. We students were unmotivated and unproductive, and our coaches were frustrated and passive-aggressive. The less the students did, the more negative the coaches became, and the more negative the coaches became, the less the students were motivated to do. The cyclical nature of this conflict meant that without drastic measures, the standoff would continue indefinitely. When our head coach wrote the phrase "Tabula Rasa" (or "blank slate") on the chalkboard in the team room, implying his intent to start over with an entirely new team, the existing team finally took action. The team president sent out an email requesting a student-only meeting, and the team responded immediately, planning a meeting for that very evening. We met to air our grievances, discuss our transgressions, and come up with a plan to fix our problems. This meeting culminated in stronger team bonds, a team-wide work weekend, and a second meeting with the coaches, where we tried to communicate our dissatisfaction with both our and the coaches' past behavior. The second meeting was not as productive due to poor planning, a lack of dialogue, and an unfortunate students-versus-coaches mentality. These two meetings signified a turning point in the team's performance, but it was the first, student-led meeting that truly affected the team's motivation.

The biggest problem with the 2009-2010 forensic team at this institution was a lack of motivation. We felt we were not receiving effective motivation from one another, or from the coaches. Rubin, Palmgreen, and Sypher (1994) define motivation as "a temporary condition in which individuals direct high levels of concentration

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and attention toward the competent completion of a task" (as cited in Croucher, Thorton & Ecstein, 2006, p.4). Last January, our concentration and our attention were elsewhere, and the negative attitude of the coaches was not helping us get back our focus. It is important to study the motivation of forensics competitors because knowing why students choose to participate in this activity allows us to determine whether existing programs are compatible with student goals and meeting student needs (McMillan & Todd-Mancillas, 1991). When students continue to participate in forensics (or any activity), they are demonstrating motivation (Croucher, Thorton & Ecstein, 2006), but that motivation comes at a price. As one team member put it, "It is too easy for people to see spending all of their extra time as not worth it. Giving up weekends and personal lives is a lot to ask" (email correspondence, 12 November 2010).

This was a very difficult article for me to write, because the research process involved sifting through unpleasant emails and reliving memories that I would rather forget. At the same time, I understand the necessity to re-examine this experience through a critical lens—to analyze the interaction and delve into it for helpful information. To supplement my own viewpoint, I had an informal discussion via email with eleven of the sixteen or so competitors involved in this situation, some who are still on the team, and some who are not. (Those who answered prefer to remain anonymous). My teammates provided useful feedback concerning the two meetings and their personal motivation preferences.

Derryberry (1991) claims that feedback provided by active forensic competitors can provide important information about why students are motivated to compete in forensics, which is what I hope to do by presenting my perspective on the complicated subject of forensic team motivation. The overwhelming attitude of this forensic team was that although the second meeting, the coach-led meeting, was necessary, it was the initial, student-led meeting that truly changed our path and allowed us to change our team mindset and become successful by the end of the year.

Literature Review

Team Culture

One of the most important aspects of team motivation is the establishment of team culture. Deal and Kennedy (1982) assert that an organization's culture is made up of "relevant constructs, facts, practices, vocabulary, metaphors, stories, and rites and rituals" (in Swanson, 1992, p. 71), and Swanson (1992) argues that an active, functioning forensic team has all of these features (p.70). All teams—and especially speech teams, where most of the competition is individual—need something gluing them together, and allowing them to function as one unit. According to Johnson and Watson (2004), as well as Mankowski and Thomas (2000), forensic programs wherein the students feel they "fit with the culture" show high rates of reten-

tion (as cited in Croucher, Thorton & Ecstein, 2006, p.5). In order to retain students, coaches must make students feel like they can be part of the established team culture, and not an outsider. Furthermore, a competitor's motivation is positively correlated with his or her understanding of the team culture (Croucher, Thorton & Ecstein, 2006). A strong team culture is essential to the survival of a speech team, because students are motivated by both comprehending and becoming a part of a team culture. If team culture is weak, both retention rates and motivation will probably be low.

One important aspect of team culture is team narratives. These stories, told by coaches and competitors alike, center on the history of the team or the speech circuit. Team narratives bring team members together, and, according to Burke, create a "dramatic sense of community" (as cited in Croucher, Thorton & Ecstein, 2006, p.2).

Another aspect of team culture is the team room. The team room should be more than just a storage area; it should be a meeting place, a place where team members can "come together and build community," thereby establishing and reinforcing the prevailing culture. (Carmack & Holm, 2005, 42). The culture of a team goes a long way towards determining the performance of that team. By participating in forensics, competitors become part of the team narrative, part of a community. This chance to be a part of something bigger than themselves provides motivation to both join and continue participation in forensics.

Team Cohesion

Motivation is not just about team culture. It is also about team cohesion, how well the students can function together as a group to achieve a single goal (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). In the case of forensics, the competitors need to support and assist one another while continually improving their own events, in order to win a team sweepstakes trophy. It is important for forensic competitors on the same team to get along and work together—because, as Zeuschner (1992) explains: "While it is possible for a contestant to prepare individually, practice with just an instructor, travel to and from a contest site alone, and interact with no one during a tournament, such a person is virtually unheard of on any forensic team..." (p.58). Forensic teams are just that—teams—and as such they must put aside their individual differences and preferences and function as a collective group, but a team does not just come together. It is unrealistic to expect a group of diverse individuals with distinct personalities to just put aside their differences and become a team—the coaches and the senior members must encourage and reinforce team-like behavior (Hatfield, 2004). The forensic circuit is highly competitive, which could damage the interaction of team members—it is important to minimize intra-team competition. If competitors from the same team are always competing with one another, they will not support one another in the way that is necessary for true team cohesion.

Collaborative activities, like peer coaching and team work sessions will create an atmosphere of cooperation where the needs of the team are more important than the needs of the individual (Hatfield, 2004). These activities are crucial for fostering team cohesion, which is necessary for effective motivation.

Team Goals

A third aspect of team motivation involves finding out what students hope to get out of their time in forensics, and utilizing that information to create comprehensive, realistic team goals. Several studies have been done questioning why students are interested in participating in competitive speech activities. Derryberry (1991) found that students are not just concerned with competition—the majority of competitors indicated that they found the educational value of forensics and the interpersonal relationships it produces to be more important than winning. Croucher, Thorton and Eckstein (2006) confirm this assertion, claiming that students participate in forensic programs mostly for educational and social opportunities, and not just to win trophies. At the same time, winning is an important aspect of forensics. Winning inspires confidence, confidence in the coaches and confidence in the program as a whole. When setting goals, coaches must strike a balance struck between the three aspects of forensics: education, competition, and camaraderie. They must “link individual and team goals in order to strengthen squad unity and enhance member satisfaction” (Derryberry 1991, p.28).

Forensics itself is a blend of individual performance and collective success. This blend necessitates a unique approach to setting goals, because both the individuals and the team as a whole need to be taken into account. Goal-setting in forensics is further complicated because coaches must set realistic goals for their students. As Hatfield (2004) reminds us, “High expectations don’t automatically result in higher student aspirations and greater student achievement” (p.30). In order to be truly motivated, students and coaches have to set goals in conjunction with one another, and thereby establish realistic and achievable objectives.

Application

Team Culture

One problem the forensic team I began this article discussing was its lack of a consistent team culture. The current director of forensics was only in his second year at this institution, the majority of the team consisted of novices, and the team had lost almost all contact with its forensic alumni. Because the team was young, there was no strongly established culture of which new team members could become a part. There was nothing to glue the novices and the varsity together and define us as a team. The best thing to come out of the first meeting was a sense of team camaraderie, which allowed us to gain a basic sense of team identity and the first glimmer of a unified

team culture. "We talked about...how we could grow together as a team," recalled one student (email correspondence, 12 November 2010). There were many different issues to address in terms of nurturing team culture.

At the time, there were only two kinds of team narratives. The first were stories told by our coach, gleaned from the other teams that he had coached previously. Some of his stories were inspiring, but it was tough to feel a real connection to the subjects of the stories. Furthermore, sometimes it felt like these stories were used to shame rather than to motivate us. Many team members expressed irritation at the narratives of hard work and sacrifice that our coach would bring up when speaking about his previous teams, especially when he was comparing those teams to us. Understanding how analogies can have the potential to create fallacious reasoning, we felt that the culture of other schools did not apply and should not be applied to us. The other kind of narratives were stories from the varsity members' first years on the team. These stories proved detrimental to team culture because they ended up functioning as inside jokes, which alienated the novices and created a gap between the two groups. At least one of the team members explicitly addressed that gap, saying, "I always felt a divide between the upperclassmen and the underclassmen" (personal communication, 12 November 2010). We have since created our own narratives, stories about tournament triumphs and crazy van rides. These stories are told and retold to all the members of the team, helping to maintain a sense of culture. We have also re-established contact with many team alumni, and we are slowly building up a narrative context, to give historical depth to our team culture.

The novice-varsity divide was widened by the information disparity between the two groups. At the time of the first meeting, one or two of the novices had not even noticed the trouble brewing between the competitors and the coaches. One novice admitted, "I was unsure as to what the whole problem actually was ... I was curious as to the level of issues I was not seeing" (email correspondence, 12 November 2010). Because they were entirely new to the team, and the world of collegiate forensics, the first-year students were unable to understand all the nuances of coach-competitor interaction. The novices' understandable obliviousness impaired their reaction to the negative atmosphere, which further undermined the fragile team culture. This is one of the reasons that first meeting was so crucial—according to one team member, "This meeting was about fixing the asymmetrical information" (email correspondence, 12 November 2010). The interaction increased the novices' awareness of the coaches' dissatisfaction with team performance, so that they could become a part of the solution.

There was also an issue with the team room, which is supposed to be a gathering place for forensic competitors, a place for them to develop and reinforce team culture. Most team members were not spending a substantial amount of time in the team room; they just