

The scenario promises to play itself out again with the players being parliamentary debate and policy debate. This assertion is not meant to accuse members of either CEDA or NDT of wrongdoing, but to establish the argument that much of what parliamentary debate is now doing is what CEDA debate was about 10-15 years ago. Indeed, these comments are a communication tool attempting to help explain and clarify misconceptions about parliamentary debate and hopefully bridge the gap between CEDA and parliamentary debate. (p. 5)

An early justification for parliamentary debate from Sheckels and Warfield (1990) included arguments for argumentation skills, public speaking skills, thinking skills, and learning skills. They argue that parliamentary debate goes beyond logos to include pathos and ethos. In addition, they suggest parliamentary debate stresses the skills associated with good delivery, including movement in contrast with truncated syntax of policy debate. Further, the ability to prepare arguments without prep time and to speak with the heckling found in parliamentary debate is posited as useful career preparation. Finally, they argue the work of learning to be prepared for the rounds puts the responsibility of preparation on the shoulders of the student participants rather than research teams or graduate students. Early concerns were voiced by Epstein (1993) in criticizing parliamentary debaters for using examples rather than evidence, thereby making style superior to substance. NPDA began as an extension of other parliamentary debate groups in 1993 or 1994 (personal communication, e-mail from parli listserve, April 7, 1999). According to its constitution, NPDA will "promote competitive practices which ensure the long term growth and survival of intercollegiate, academic, and public debate by promoting a form of limited preparation debate which combines an emphasis on both content and delivery and which remains consistent with international styles of parliamentary debate." NPDA's members demonstrated their devotion to these ideals in meetings during the late 1990's by rejecting all amendments submitted to their by-laws that would have made them look more like CEDA. Criticisms like those of Backus (1998) sounded to warn NPDA members of a similar drift. This, however, does not mean the two are incompatible. Critics of parliamentary debate have focused on its lack of use of evidence, strange conventions, and non-timely topics. In CEDA and NDT circles, critics of parliamentary debate label it as non-research debate with expressions such as "I will never do parli debate -- it is lazy debate." The immediate reaction by many critics of this type of debate is that it contains no evidence; therefore, it is not worthy of direct comparison. Furthermore, Trapp (1999) recognizes the policy nature of parliamentary debate, but refuses to recognize the validity of using policy language (e.g. disadvantages, plans, or counterplans) in the NPDA format. In contrast, the tension between parliamentary and policy debate seems to be minimal compared to what it was in the 1990s. By 2000, we find arguments for structural changes in resolutions (Stroud, 2000). While Stroud's general objections are focused on

the role of the House in resolutions, the notation that resolutions should include value, fact, or policy is well taken. Early reports of student preferences for policy verses parliamentary debate suggested that students focused on the unique characteristics of each activity (Kuper, 2000). Kuper cautions that some resistance might emerge to the addition of policy fixtures, such as cross-examination and rebuttals, though it would bridge the gap between the types of debate.

Jensen (1998) notes concerns about topics in parliamentary debate. Specifically, he notes the differences in focus points between policy and parliamentary judges whose evaluations are disposed towards content or content and style respectively. This observation followed Jensen's (1996) call to improve parliamentary debate "as a viable exercise in educational debate" (p. 1) by changing topic writing in addition to adopting more policy debate-oriented practices such as allowing research in rounds, adding criteria for judging substance beyond style, and adding cross-examination.

Topics in NPDA have also been a cause for disagreement. Many parliamentary tournaments still use metaphors or vague topics, allowing their debates to be filled with endless possibilities for the debaters. While this is exciting for the proposition team, the opposition team is in a no-win situation.

The educational value of parliamentary debate continued to be examined by Venette (2003). Venette suggests resolutions must be written to support substantive debate with debaters working through a quasi-logical lens to argue based on context and to avoid topics perceived as silly. This vagueness in topic wording produces what some call a fragmentation in the activity. While there are clearer standards about debate theory in plain debate, the topic wording and interpretation in the debates have been problematic and a continual pedagogical concern for NPDA debaters, judges and proponents (Swift, 2008).

This fragmentation in NPDA has frustrated and has inspired many NPDA tournament directors to restructure their approach to developing topics. Many tournaments now embrace a more specific, clearly worded topic for debate. The institution of the "USFG" phrase in the topic and doing away with the phrase "This House..." are steps in that direction. Indeed, the University of Wyoming under Matt Stannard has tested the use of announced topics before the tournament begins. This direction by one western coach is a sign that NPDA truly wants more a specific line of discussion with a greater expectation by judges of debates that are characterized as prepared, well-structured arguments on the issue before the round begins.

Indeed, with the proliferation of policy topics in rounds, one might say parliamentary debate has been co-opted. Many programs now debate in both policy and parliamentary styles, using policy debate to complement the parliamentary framework.

Policy in Parliamentary Debate

Both authors were able to secure recent ballots from NPDA tournaments during the 2008-2009 debate calendar year. These ballots were written at the following tournaments: the 2008 University of Central Missouri (UCM) tournament and the 2008 Louisiana State University at Shreveport (LSU-S) tournament. The sampling data was as follows: UCM ballots: N=184 and LSU-S ballots: N=102. This makes close to 300 NPDA ballots and provides a strong indication of a wide variety of judging styles from different schools represented. These ballots represent tournaments from two different regions. Only three schools attended both tournaments, allowing for an even broader base of judging styles and practices.

The ballots reveal the similarity in judges' decision making to that of policy debate. The central issue we looked at was ballots containing one or more "policy words." We defined policy words as any word not intrinsic to value- or fact-laden debate. As the results show, four out of five ballots included policy language. This figure provides strong support that parliamentary judges are hearing and judging rounds based on policy issues.

In addition, the authors identified five categories of policy debate language that were clearly manifested in those decisions. Some ballots had more than one of these categories mentioned. The largest category of policy language was that of disadvantages or value objections with a third of the ballots containing this language. Over twenty percent of the ballots referred to topicality or semantics. Of special interest is the percentage of ballots using criteria, counter-criteria, counter-case, counter-plan or critique based terms. These pillars of policy-debate technique were thought to originally have little place in parliamentary debate. Finally, just over ten percent of the ballots had stock issues or plans mentioned. In summary, the results are below:

Percentage of Ballots Containing One or More Policy Words	80%
Percentage of Ballots Using Stock Issues	12%
Percentage of Ballots Referring to a Plan or Call to Action	12%
Percentage of Ballots Referring to Topicality or Semantics	22%
Percentage of Ballots Referring to Criteria, Counter-Criteria, Counter-Case, Counter-plan, or critique	19%
Percentage of Ballots Containing Disads or Value Objections	33%

Conclusion

It seems as though current practice in parliamentary debate closely resembles CEDA at its inception more so than CEDA does currently. With tournaments using prepared topics and demands of judges to incorporate policy-like argumentation into the round, NPDA debates are now quasi-policy. Yet, with its similarities to policy debate, NPDA

debate still is quite distinct and has a character of its own. The arguments are the same as those found looking back in the history of the involvement of collegiate debate. Trapp (1999) recognizes that parliamentary debate embraces issues of fact, value, and policy. The central differences of evidence, speed in delivery, and use of jargon do not invalidate any of these formats. Both approaches are needed. Schools across the country are embracing both forms of debate. Many of the traditional policy programs in the south either have switched totally to NPDA debate, or offer the style as a complement to their existing forensic programs.

Parliamentary debate in recent times has been the single largest collegiate debate style in the United States. The 2009 NPDA championships boasted almost 200 debate teams from more than 40 states. These numbers are indicative of a growing trend in NPDA and parliamentary debate. Parliamentary debate is continually reshaping and borrowing policy language, rules, parameters, ideas, and styles to the activity. The position of the co-authors here is that this shift to a more policy-like platform will be even more pronounced in the next few years to come.

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FORUM PIECE

The Romantic Visions of a First Year Coach, or “When what I thought and what is reality collide”

DAVID NELSON

Editor’s Note: This Article asks the readers to think about a few specific issues. It is the author’s intent to open up a discussion among forensic educators about the status quo of forensic participation. He asks the readers to decide on whether or not we need to continue on our age-old trajectory, or whether novelty might just be called for in our forensic events. Follow up responses are sought and welcomed.

Abstract: There are certain things people are not told when they obtain their first jobs after graduate school. The author is unsure if that is a part of the process, if it is overlooked, or graduate schools do not want to crush the innocence of young professionals. The author’s involvement with forensics had been as a graduate assistant or participant, making him familiar with the events. Little things such as budgets, creating a team, dealing with seniors, and all the paperwork was that with which he was not familiar. Having a grand idea of what the job is going to be is one thing, but how it turns out is another. The author envisioned that there would be some difficulties, but the real difficulties for him are with the attitudes and beliefs imbedded within teams, coaches, and the overall activity.

There are certain things that they do not tell you when you get your first job out of graduate school. I do not know if that is part of the process, if it is overlooked, or that they do not want to crush the innocence out of you. My involvement with forensics had been as a graduate assistant or participant, so I felt familiar with the events. Little things such as budgets, creating a team, dealing with seniors, and all the paperwork was what I was not familiar with. Having a grand idea of what a job is going to be is one thing, but how it turns out is quite another. I had envisioned that there would be some difficulties, but those were just being a new coach with a veteran team. Troubles that I had not foreseen were the attitudes and beliefs imbedded within teams, coaches, and the activity.

Forensics is an activity that is close to my heart for many reasons, and I expect that is why I keep coming back to it professionally and why I take issues with it so personally. In my first year as a director of

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forensics, my experiences were probably no different from those of many in the activity, but as the year went on it created questions, concerns, and excitement. The issues discussed in this paper are not new, but they need to be discussed with the forensic community. The point of this article is to ask tough, critical questions and to explore the questions posed and their implications. This article examines whether forensics is about education or competition.

If forensics is about both education and competition, is there a healthy balance between the two? If so, how does one strike that balance and will it be a popular movement? The discussion of forensics as education or competition is a Pandora's Box of issues that has been discussed by several scholars (Dean, 1990; Burnett, Brand, & Meister 2001; Ehninger, 1952; Mcbath, 1975; Williams, 1996). There are several questions that arise in that discussion, and many that I am sure we have all questioned at one time or another. Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) argue that education is the smokescreen used to justify the activity and the competitive elements that arise. It is a common argument that is used by directors to justify their budgets to their administrations. The little white lie perpetuated by the forensics community is that "it is about education." If it were truly about education, why are there swing tournaments, judges penalizing students for creativity, conformity rewarded, and unwritten rules popular? Do these issues crop up because we say education is an important value of forensics, but then we value competition more and as a part of the changing aspects of the activity? The activity needs to be more honest about the fact that competition is more valued than the education of the students.

The swing tournament has become more common and the common excuse for holding swing tournaments used is, "Well, it offers more for your money when budgets are becoming tighter." Just like the education argument, are we being honest with ourselves or is it something we say with a "wink and a nod"? The swing tournament adds to the education and competition debate. What is the swing tournament really about? Do students benefit from the swing tournament, and does it add to the education or competition elements or both? The swing tournament appears to be a faster way for directors to get legs in qualifying students for national tournaments which have no educational value to them. Many Directors of Forensics have been asked to send students to a tournament so that it can get its minimal number of schools to allow the results to count towards nationals. Is this the only reason to go to a tournament? It appears that the swing takes away from the educational value, because winning trumps everything within the activity.

Competition creates conformity in order to get qualified. When winning formulas are replicated, it decreases the incentive to be creative because it is not as lucrative on the ballot. The key to success is following a strict formula that judges want, and if a competitor steps outside of the recipe for success, they are penalized. Judges have a

level of expectation and students should not challenge the blueprint. For example, impromptu speeches must have an introduction that has a story that leads to three main points that have two examples each and then a conclusion. From what I have observed, this is the current winning trend. The examples usually sound "canned" and do not relate to one another, but this is the format that judges want to see. The examples are forced to fit the quote and the student gives little to no analysis of the quote, but they sound "pretty" when they talk and they have the parts that are expected. There was a short-lived discussion of format versus topic selection in January 2009 on an electronic forensics list-serv, and although the discussion ended as soon as it started, it is viewed as a significant issue that some people encounter at tournaments. This discussion of format vs. topic selection started me thinking about my interest and why more people do not question traditional conventions and the pedagogy of college forensics.

Competitors are penalized for creativity, because creativity does not fit into what has been taught as the way it should be done and has been done as long as they have been in forensics. If a student attempts something different within an event, it is viewed as a wrong way and the student is then penalized. For example, in impromptu speaking the judge's comments may state "To improve you need more examples." There might be no comments on whether the student's interpretation was good, just that the participant had (or had not) followed the *modus operandi* with which the judge is most familiar.

Research has examined some aspects of judges' perceptions, such as topic selection and how they relate to the event and how it is perceived by the judge (Leiboff, 1991; Compton, 2004). Compton (2004) focuses is on how novelty is awarded: it is mainly in the topic selection and not in organization or in delivery. The articles agree that judges have expectations of topics, and those expectations are that they are to be novel or new and not rehashing old topics. Ribarsky (2005) argues that forensics limits itself with its unwritten rules. Change needs to occur within the forensic judging community in order to bring educational and competitive values into more of a balance (2005). Judges need to ask themselves if their paradigms are good for the activity, or if it is just what they want to see, or is it within their comfort zones of acceptance. Gaer (2002) makes the argument that judges and coaches limit students' creativity. Other articles by coaches argue that coaches and judges should not limit student creativity and a change is needed.

For an attitudinal change to occur that would allow experimentation, the alteration needs to be started by leaders within the forensic community (Ribarsky, 2005; Brown, 2008). Coaches and graduate assistants need to allow for the activity to evolve and grow. The biggest limitations to the activity are from the coaches. The coach is the individual who sets the tone for the assistant coaches, graduate assistants, and students. Philosophies are influential; they get adopted and

passed on to other people within the forensic community, thus creating a cycle of unwritten rules that continue to be perpetuated.

What can be done to create the change to create more of a balance between education and competition? Instead of waiting for someone to create the change, as suggested by Ribarsky (2005) and Brown (2008), and following their lead, why not just take individual responsibility and create change on our own? This can be done by questioning our own unwritten rules and self-imposed standards. Are those rules really needed and is there room to expand our own expectations? As a community we need to not be so rigid when something is done differently. Students need to be allowed to explore organization, presentation, and style more. There are several arguments that can be made about what needs to be done, but the greater question is: "Does the activity want to change?" Those are the rhetorical questions that everyone involved with the forensics needs to ask.

Editor's Note: Responses to Professor Nelson's ideas and questions are welcomed for future issues of *THE FORENSIC*. Please submit to editor: moorenj@appstate.edu

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