

opponent. Communicating ambivalence rather than authority in metamessages, allowing the opposing team to "teach" her throughout the debate risks the appearance of indecisiveness. Because Infante's research on women's argumentativeness suggests that "a woman's credibility during an argument is enhanced when her argumentativeness is increased" (42), it follows that the act of arguing is not a problem for women's credibility. Thus, these behaviors do not need to be adopted in order to appear more "feminine".

Practice makes perfect. In order to become proficient at defending their ideas in public, women need to practice this skill. Tannen claims that women could benefit from learning men's ways in some areas (294), and practice of this skill is one of those areas. She also argues that women experts lack experience defending themselves against challenges, which they misinterpret as personal attacks on their credibility, but also, adults become skilled at what they practice (127-129, 135-136). Debate provides practice in this very skill—the skill of maintaining one's position in the midst of heated criticism, without seeing the criticism as a personal affront.

Argument for consensus

Coaches can teach debate in the context of consensus. While women will argue, the purpose of argument is agreement or consensus (Tannen 167; Gilligan, et al., 148-149). This goal is not inconsistent with the classical purpose of debate. Patterson and Zarefsky argue that the true purpose of debate is to help decision makers arrive at the best possible decision for a given situation (4). Additionally, Branham asserts, "debate is thus a matter not only of declamation, in which conflicting opinions are aired, but of resolution in which these conflicting opinions are compared and tested against each other in the process of decision making" (2). This is closely related to the female drive to gain consensus and agreement through talk.

The solution here seems to be the context in which the coach places debate. If debate is seen as only adversarial, a game to be played for the sake of winning over others, women will be less attracted to the activity than if it is seen as a competitive means to understanding and eventual consensus on how to deal with a real problem in the real world.⁵ If women's perspectives focus on the goal of eventual consensus growing from the debate, they might be more comfortable in the process even though it changes little.

Women avoid certain failure. Women do not like to take risks which might cause them to fail or lose (Gilligan et al., Ong 62). If recruitment has attracted articulate women who are not frightened by assertiveness, perhaps working closely with the team's coach might help reduce the risk of losing. This would also serve the critical need women feel to have their ideas confirmed by others and increase the level of relationship attained by the debater (Belenky et al. 196). Any coaching insights which level the playing field for women should improve recruitment and retention as it reduces the certainty of failure.

Women develop identity through dialogue. Confrontation with the ideas, or voices, of others is a way for one to develop her own voice. "Defined in this context of relationships, identity is formed through the gaining of voice or perspective, and self is known through the experience of engagement with different voices or points of view" (Gilligan et al. 153). Intercollegiate debate is an excellent training tool for assisting a young woman in developing her identity, or voice. If she is receiving sufficient support and confirmation from her coach, the process of debate can contribute to a woman's personal development.

An additional issue which affects the success of women debaters is the cross-examination period. Cross-examination could become a strong block of the debate for women. Most judges will describe the four question-and-answer periods as a friendly exchange of ideas, but often the reality is much different. During the questioning, both debaters often stare at the judge rather than looking at each other, often turning the time into a verbal wrestling match for dominance with the judge acting as referee. If a woman becomes too aggressive, she is seen as snippy and mean-spirited. If she strives to control her time against an aggressive male opponent, she will be hard-pressed to succeed in both controlling the time and favorably impressing the judge. Also, the impersonal nature of the questioning can be unsettling. However, if the woman is taught to connect with the judge rather than the other speaker, she will be striving for the same positive effect with the judge that the male debater is attempting with the stare down. It is only possible, and necessary, to connect with one person in the room, and that person is the judge. Developing a conversational style while remaining professional would better suit a woman speaker than the brusque dominance she often tries to imitate (Gilligan et al. 267; *Pearson Gender and Communication* 136). If experimentation in cross-examination periods does show this time to be conducive to a woman debater's style, CEDA could then promote female participation by simply making cross-examination binding and factoring the effectiveness of the teams in cross-examination into the final decision.

The higher attrition of women from debate is significant, because, as the studies cited indicate, with debate experience professional success becomes more likely. Seldom will a person spend large amounts of time pursuing an activity in which she does not believe she has an equal chance for success or which is not relevant to her world view. Thus, while competitive success has no proven relevance to professional success, it seems only natural that a woman debater will not continue in the activity if she sees the chance of success as less than equal or if she must build cases which do not satisfy her moral perspective. If she does not continue in the activity past the novice level, she greatly reduces her level of experience. It is continued experience which becomes important to success in competition with other former debaters in later life, and to be motivated to continue one must realize some progress in the activity. If women hope to compete in adversarial professions, they must be trained to package their important skills in relationships and in caring, so that argument is used to promote their more important concerns.

As coaches, we have the opportunity to train our women students in a way which, first, benefits them as they learn in ways consistent with stages of moral development. Women also gain skill in competitive behavior which is of professional benefit. Second, the activity of intercollegiate debate benefits from an injection of innovative coaching and competing. This "grass roots level" approach increases enthusiasm for the activity and increases the pressure on those reluctant to change. And changes can be made with a moderate amount of upheaval. As the field of competitive debate adapts to new challenges which accompany diversity, its increasing flexibility will insure its vibrancy in the coming years.

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While women have been represented in the top twenty speakers and have competed in the final rounds of the CEDA national tournament since this time, it remains true that women continue to be underrepresented at the higher levels of CEDA competition. Reason would lead one to conclude that if bright, articulate women are competing in CEDA, a proportionate number should be winning top honors. Murphy's comment concerning public address individual events applies here as well:

Some outstanding women will undoubtedly have success, but most, if they rely on the strategies outlined above, will likely be defeated and grow discouraged about the activity. On the other hand, the more popular solution is adaptation. In recent years, particularly in persuasion, women have had outstanding success. Yet I would still maintain that the conspicuous achievement of some women should not be taken as the norm (122).

see also Suzanne Larson and Amy Vreeland, "Gender Issues in Cross Examination Periods of C.E.D.A. Debate." *The National Forensic Journal* III (Spring, 1985): 13-27.

Educators maintain that intercollegiate debate is an excellent training tool for critical thinking skills and democratic decision making (e.g., Branham 1-4; Ehninger and Brockriede 3-11; Freeley 1). Semlak and Shields document that students with debate experience more successfully employed the communication skills of analysis, delivery, and organization than students with no debate experience (194-196).

To its credit, Stepp, Simerly and Logue report that in Spring, 1994, the CEDA community adopted a sexual harassment policy "which includes guidelines and a sexual harassment officer to investigate complaints" (39). This addresses what has been recognized as a serious problem in the debate community. However, the problem of underrepresentation at higher levels of competition still exists.

Both women and the activity of competitive debate can benefit from this emphasis: a) striving for consensus is the way those not in power—or at the top of the hierarchy—often try to achieve their goals; b) most real life decisions in a free society are consensual; c) at present, debate competition often comes to this in rebuttals anyway—"you can give them that, but give us this point". All debaters receive the practice of arguing to the best decision possible, and more women might be encouraged to try debating and then to stick with it.

“GENDER ISSUES RE-VISITED— THE STATUS OF GENDER BIAS RESEARCH IN ACADEMIC DEBATE”

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Gender and gender bias have become increasingly prominent issues in American society. The Hill-Thomas controversy, the Packwood diary scandal, and the escalation of lawsuits concerning sexual harassment are illustrative of the attention which gender related issues receive in our society. Such issues have prompted criminal investigations, scholarly research, and considerable discussion. Some of that discussion has taken place in the academic debate community. Both NDT and CEDA have conducted meetings concerned with gender issues, research and anecdotal evidence on the subject have proliferated in recent years, and gender equality has become one of the central themes of those concerned with contemporary debate practice.

Bjork and Trapp (1994) have, for example, recently introduced a series of papers examining gender bias in the academic debate community. Stepp, Simerly, and Logue (1994) have presented the findings of survey research that points to sexual harassment in CEDA. Szwapa (1994) also presented a preliminary study that suggests sexual harassment and other forms of gender bias can also be found in the NDT community. Crenshaw (1993) has offered a significant discussion of the role of feminism in academic debate. And, most recently, Jarzabek (1996) has offered a lively discussion of gender stereotyping in the debate community.

One could glean much about gender bias from any of the scholarly efforts that have been undertaken by figures in the debate community. This particular paper will attempt to illustrate the current status of scholarship regarding gender bias in academic debate by providing a critical focus on one particular piece of research. That research is the investigation of gender bias in NDT debate by Bruschke and Johnson (1994). There are a number of factors that warrant attention on this particular work. Bruschke and Johnson have conducted the most extensive empirical investigation of gender bias in debate in recent years. Their work is also illustrative of the tone in much of the debate community that expresses a concern that that community is replete with gender bias. Analysis of Bruschke and Johnson's work also serves as a starting point for a general discussion regarding research on the gender bias issue. It points to typical research techniques that may be employed by investigators, it opens an important body of previous literature for examination, and it helps to illuminate the type of open discourse in the debate community that all such research should stimulate.

Bruschke and Johnson (1994) have contributed significantly to the discussion of gender issues in the academic debate community. They have reviewed a number of previous studies, conducted substantial research of their

own, and offered many interesting conclusions to the debate community. Much is very good and valuable about Bruschke and Johnson's efforts. They have produced a new set of data for examination and analysis. They have provided an extensive and technical description of the statistical procedures employed in their research. They have provided as well, a valuable heuristic product, which is likely to spur discussion and research.

More specifically, Bruschke and Johnson (1994) examine a few previous gender related debate studies and then develop a research program of their own. Their research design is centrally concerned with the examination of tournament results for a period of years. They conclude from this research program that gender bias, largely against females, exists in NDT debate and that the community must undertake actions to resolve this discrimination.

Despite the valuable contributions which Bruschke and Johnson's research has produced, there are a number of problems associated with their work. There are serious shortcomings in their review and treatment of previous literature. There are also a number of concerns about the research methods which they employ. Finally, there are also a number of questions and concerns prompted by some of the conclusions which these researchers draw. This essay will examine each of these problems in turn.

Problems with the Literature Review

The literature review offered by Bruschke and Johnson suffers from a number of shortcomings. For example, they cite a few pieces of research from such areas as persuasion, gendered communication styles, and gendered reaction to evidence. This research material helps to establish a framework for discussion and investigation, yet Bruschke and Johnson neither comprehensively explain or evaluate this prior work. They do not explain why this particular gender-related research was selected for inclusion in the literature review. There is no discussion of the net findings of this research, or any suggestion of implications for gender-related issues in the context of academic debate.

Without a clear rationale for the inclusion of some non-debate specific literature, one wonders why other information of this type was not included. This is particularly true for information which has conditions contrary to the position taken by Bruschke and Johnson. Kohn (1986), for example, has found that women are becoming as competitive as men in order to survive in our "cut throat" society. And, Rothwell (1992) has concluded: "In business, sports, entertainment, medicine, law—virtually all facets of our society—women are emulating the previously male fascination with competition" (p. 90). The increasingly competitive nature of women would seem to have clear implications for an activity like debate which is defined by its competitive nature. Discussions of this sort is not included by Bruschke and Johnson.

Bruschke and Johnson offer a rather superficial review of debate specific research on the subject of gender and gender bias. These issues have been prominent themes in debate literature for a good many years. Freidley and Manchester (1985) explain:

The gender difference in forensic participation has long been a concern in the forensic community; as early as the 1930's women were addressing the issue. By 1957, the concern was once again expressed and the issue was clearly stated at the National Developmental

Conference on Forensics jointly sponsored by the American Forensic Association and the Speech Communication Association in 1974...ten years later, the 1984 National Development Conference at Northwestern University endorsed a resolution "to increase and strengthen forensic participation by identifying ethnic, racial, gender, and handicap barriers which may currently inhibit student participation as well as disseminate findings concerning such barriers throughout the forensic community. (pp. 1-2)

This suggests that gender-related issues have not only been important research themes, but have also produced proactive measures in the forensic community for nearly half a century. Bruschke and Johnson select very little of this research for their review. No literature review can include all available material on a subject of this nature, but one must question the limitation of Bruschke and Johnson's review to only three studies.

Bruschke and Johnson appear to be quick to dismiss the results of the research which they incorporate into their review. The Rosen, Dean and Willis (1978) study is indicted because it examined high school debaters. A focus on high school debaters is not sufficient reason to dismiss a research project of this nature. Indeed, examination of high school students is an important component of gender-related research in debate. Griffin and Raider (1992) have noted: "Because most college debaters were first exposed to the activity in high school, examining participation at the high school level is a necessary first step. It is unlikely that a female who has not experienced some competition and success in the activity while in high school will remain, much less begin, debating in college" (p. 8). In other words, the nature of competition and success at the high school level clearly has implications for participation and performance at the collegiate level.

The Hayes and McAdoo (1972) data is discounted by Bruschke and Johnson largely because it uses speaker ranks, rather than speaker points, for evaluation. They note: "Ranks, when considered at all, are usually only the fourth or fifth tie-breaker for speakers awards" (p. 163). This does not, however, explain why examination of speaker ranks could not provide insightful information in regard to gender and gender bias. If males and females receive equal ranks, for example, that would suggest an absence of bias, regardless of how those same ranks impact the selection of debaters for speaker awards.

Later in their discussion, Bruschke and Johnson attempt to treat in summary manner all previous research as inadequate. They write:

The failure of previous studies to establish significance for the results could be due to a failure to co-vary the effects of prior tournament success or winning or losing the round, a greater overall variance in the speaker point total received, failure to consider the gender of the judge, or a difference in tournament format such as power matching or a larger number of rounds per tournament. (p. 169)

There is no specific application of these charges. None of the research which Bruschke and Johnson include for review is demonstrated to be lacking in all of these areas, nor is there any proof that all of the other fifty years of gender-related literature in debate suffers from these shortcomings.

Bruschke and Johnson's indictment of all previous gender-related research in debate also fails to allow any consideration of the benefits or superiority of any of that research in comparison to their own. Rosen, Dean, and Willis, for example, provide substantial insight into the role that gender plays in combination with the variables of side and position. Other works not included for review by Bruschke and Johnson also offer valuable results. Hill (1973), for example, controlled for the proximity of judge school to participant school, as well as gender in his research. It is unfair to dismiss all prior gender-related research in debate without a more extensive examination of that research material.

Bruschke and Johnson also have serious concerns regarding the recency of empirical data on the subject of gender and gender bias in debate. They rightly note that a number of societal and debate specific changes have occurred since the 1978 Rosen, Dean, and Willis investigation. Unfortunately, Bruschke and Johnson ignore all of the evidence on the subject produced since 1978.

There has been a great deal of discussion of gender and gender bias in the contemporary debate world. As noted, both National Developmental Conferences on Forensics have addressed the gender issue. Bruschke and Johnson acknowledge that the Women's Caucus has held a number of meetings on the subject. Anecdotal literature (e.g., Griffen & Raisder, 1992) has also been produced in this area. Such anecdotal evidence does not carry the quasi-scientific weight of statistical investigation, but it can reflect current perceptions and attitudes which could have implications for empirical research.

There have been a number of empirical investigations on the subject of gender and gender bias in debate produced since the late 1970s. Shelton (1983) examined tournament participants at the Northwestern University debate tournament and found no significant effect on speaker points or win-loss due to gender. Logue (1987) produced substantial data regarding gender-related participation in CEDA debate. Martin (1988) compared female participation rates in NDT and CEDA debate, and found that more women tend to participate in CEDA debate than NDT debate. Most recently, Shelton and Shelton (1993) found gender to play no role in determining debate success. They note: "The results indicate that there is no effect due to gender upon the success of the team beyond that which is simply related to chance" (p. 24).

The existence of post-1978 empirical research on gender and gender bias in debate raises a number of questions regarding Bruschke and Johnson's literature review. Why would all post-1978 data be ignored by these researchers? Was the selection of studies for inclusion in the review determined by the ability to measure them as flawed in some manner? Is it more difficult to explain away the findings of this other research? Can any of the methodological indictments summarized by Bruschke and Johnson be applied to these studies? Only Bruschke and Johnson know the answers to such questions, but the ability to raise them casts serious doubt on the credibility of their literature review.

One final note must be injected regarding the previous research concerned with gender and gender bias in debate. There appears to be a near consensus among prior researchers which suggests that gender plays little or no role in relation to debate success. It is very difficult to dismiss twenty years of data which comes down against the findings of the Bruschke and Johnson study.

Problems with the Research Method

Bruschke and Johnson begin their explanation of the research methods employed for their investigation by noting: "Data were collected from results sheets from several large intercollegiate NDT debate tournaments which were held during the 1988 through 1992 debate seasons" (p. 163). This statement of method raises a number of questions and concerns regarding the investigatory process employed in the study. For example, what is a "large" tournament? There is no standard for inclusion or exclusion of tournaments offered by the researchers. There is also no operational definition provided for the "large" or "national" tournament concept. Other researchers (e.g., Plutchik, 1968) have suggested that the provision of operational definitions for terms which may be ambiguous in some way is an essential step in any form of empirical investigation. The potential for ambiguity does exist in this context. The Heart of America tournament was both "large" and "national" in 1989, but by 1994 it did not offer an NDT division at all. "Large" and "national" are not well established concepts.

Bruschke and Johnson suggest that "large national" tournaments were predominately used in order to provide a sufficient sample size (p. 163). This does not seem to be sufficient reason for the exclusion of regional tournaments from the study. If any gender bias that exists is being slowly reduced in debate, it might well be that female debaters would be more widely represented at regional tournaments where costs are generally lower, thus facilitating the inclusion of less experienced and less traveled teams.

Bruschke and Johnson note that they have controlled for speaker sex, partner sex, judge sex, and topic side (p. 164). Neither the review of previous research, nor their own introductory remarks, explicitly demonstrates that these are the most important variables for which controls must exist. Indeed, Bruschke and Johnson acknowledge that "many other factors" come into play in the process of determining who wins or loses a debate (p. 162). Many "other factors" have been identified by debate investigators. Burgeon and Montgomery (1976) have found that social and task competency, as well as assertiveness can play a role in debate success. Burgeon (1976) also found that evidence, delivery, and other standardized criteria for evaluation can impact performance. Vasilus and DeStephen (1979) found success to be influenced by speaking rate, jargon, and the amount of evidence which a debater uses. Even some studies which were principally concerned with gender effects (Hill, 1973; Shelton, 1983) have found that geographical proximity of judge school to debater school can influence success. All of this suggests that a more explicit explanation for inclusion of specific controlled variables is necessary, and that a number of these other factors may be at play in the Bruschke and Johnson research, skewing their results.

Problems with the Conclusions

There are problems associated with the "conclusions" section of Bruschke and Johnson's work. Initially, it should be noted that most researchers incorporate a description of the limitations of their own study and suggestions for future investigation at this juncture. Bruschke and Johnson do neither. A reading of their conclusions could be interpreted as to lead one to believe that their research is flawless and that there is absolutely no need for future research. Many of the flaws associated with Bruschke and Johnson's research have been discussed in this essay, and the need for further investigation in this area is clear. Shelton and Shelton (1993) recently concluded: "Another area that might be useful would be to examine other variables that may effect

performance such as attractiveness, dress, color of skin, proximity of competitor's school to the judge's school, the prestige of the team's school, amount of evidence read, and so forth. Investigation of numerous other factors might provide constructive information" (p. 24).

Bruschke and Johnson conclude that "females might out-perform males to receive equivalent scores" (p. 169). There is no rationale present for such a conclusion. Even if their data definitively proves that males out score females, that does not explain why this is the case. It certainly does not prove that females who are receiving "equivalent" scores are somehow "out-performing" their male counterparts. There is nothing in the Bruschke and Johnson research to warrant conclusions as to the comparative efforts males and females express in debate performance.

After discussing the importance of success as a reinforcement mechanism, Bruschke and Johnson conclude that "If one agrees that success encourages participation females are less-likely to compete in NDT due to sex bias" (p. 169). This is pure conjecture on their part. Their research data does not prove that a single female has "dropped out" of NDT debate or elected to avoid the activity altogether due to gender bias. The inference is made based upon success rates, but other scholars (e.g. Griffin & Rowder, 1992) have suggested that social pressures and numerous variables influence participation rates. No causal connection between sex bias and participation rates in NDT debate has been proven by the Bruschke and Johnson research.

Bruschke and Johnson close their discussion by stating: "Finally, we believe that the most important and immediate course of action is for all debate participants to be self-reflective" (p. 171). This is a hyperbolic plea for behavioral change based entirely upon a single interpretation of statistical data. This call for self-reflection ignores decades of previous debate research, it may well be based upon faulty or biased interpretations of data, and it is an outgrowth of other conclusions which are lacking in support. There is simply no reason for the debate community to make any behavioral change based upon this research alone.

In summary, Bruschke and Johnson have offered a superficial review of previous debate research, ignoring a large body of data which is contrary to their own findings. They fail to operationalize important research concepts, and ignore numerous variables which might skew their results. They offer no explanation of the limitations of their research, nor do they offer any insight into other areas for future investigation. Finally, they make hyperbolic claims which are not warranted by their research findings.

Discussion

Several implications regarding the status of gender bias research in academic debate can be drawn from this examination of Bruschke and Johnson's (1994) work. Prior to consideration of such implications, however, a few words are in order regarding earlier research efforts by these authors. In 1993 Johnson and Bruschke presented additional gender bias research at the Alta Argumentation Conference. That effort provided a rather extensive literature review of gender issues in the broader communication discipline, some preliminary findings from data derived from NDT tournaments, and discussion of a research agenda. There are striking similarities and differences between Bruschke and Johnson's 1993 effort and the 1994 research examined at length here.

Bruschke and Johnson's 1993 effort offers essentially no discussion of previous debate specific gender bias research. Further, they also do little in that effort to explain or evaluate the inclusion of specific communication research. The research designs employed in the two investigations were very similar, employing data from NDT tournaments. In their 1993 work, Bruschke and Johnson offer very limited conclusions and implications. Their 1994 research is more heavily loaded with demands for reform measures and generalization regarding gender bias.

The examination offered here of Bruschke and Johnson's (1994) research suggests several implications regarding gender bias research in academic debate. First, future researchers should be careful to fully justify the inclusion of gender bias research from the broader communication discipline or other fields. Such justifications should make the connections between the various others clear and direct. Researchers should demonstrate the importance or value of data derived from other disciplines before readers are expected to accept the connection.

Secondly, future gender bias research in academic debate should be careful to account for previous commentary and investigation in the area. Debate scholars have been discussing gender bias for half a century and a good number of empirical investigations have been conducted on the subject. A more complete account of this previous literature would go a long way toward establishing a context for investigation and examination.

Third, researchers should also go to great lengths to demonstrate that they are actually examining variables that are significant to gender bias and that such examinations are carefully designed. Researchers may wish to undertake more large scale research efforts such as comparing data from NDT and CEDA over a period of years. It may also be fruitful to employ multiple research methods—examination of tournament results sheets, surveys, and so forth—to demonstrate the validity of findings.

Fourth, gender bias researchers in the debate community should be honest and cautious with their findings. Limitations associated with research efforts should be reported so that future investigators can work to avoid those shortcomings, claims should also be limited to those actually inferred by the data generated in research efforts. Further, critiques of research should become more common place as a means to fully examine and evaluate research projects.

Bruschke and Johnson's research project can be faulted in a number of ways, as noted above. However, they do make an unquestionably valuable claim regarding gender issues in debate. They suggest that "it is important to extend the discussion and debate on the multiplicity of concerns in order to comprehend the subject more fully" (p. 162). Perhaps this work will also extend the discussion and debate, so that we can better comprehend gender issues in debate.

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