

An Assessment of the Value of Individual Events in Forensics Competition From Students' Perspectives

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Public speaking is one of the oldest academic subjects taught in higher education. In fact, it has been taught continuously since its origin in 465 B.C. (Klopf & Lahman, 1973). Since that time, twenty-four centuries have elapsed and millions of people have received, in some form, instruction in public speaking. During the 20th century, forensics has become an important curricular and extracurricular public speaking and learning activity at most community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities in this country. Approximately 92 community colleges and 357 institutions have forensics programs (Rieke, 1974).

Owing to the prominence of forensics, one would have thought that the activity would have been thoroughly researched and validated. In actuality, such research is lacking. While debate has been thoroughly investigated (Colbert & Briggers, 1985; Crocker, 1938; Matlon & Keele, 1984), very little research has been conducted on individual events. Studies on debate, from the perceptions of coaches and educators (Church, 1975; Crocker, 1938; Edney, 1953; McGlone, 1974; Pearce, 1974), parents (Drum & Drum, 1955), and students (Hill, 1972; Matlon & Keele, 1984) indicate that participants benefit from the activity. Some perceived benefits include improved critical and analytical thinking, communication, argumentation, research, and organizational skills. Knowledge of these perceived benefits has aided in the recruitment of debate participants and improvement of programs.

As with debate programs, knowledge of the perceived benefits (or disadvantages) of individual events could be used in making programmatic improvements and gaining additional financial and institutional support for individual events programs.

The forensics community has for a long time been aware of the need to obtain this information. It was, for instance, proposed during the 1974 National Developmental Conference on Forensics (McBath, 1975), and subsequently endorsed by participants in The Second National Conference on Forensics (Parson, 1984), that research be undertaken to meet the following objectives.

**National Forensic Journal*, IX (Spring, 1991), pp. 1-17.

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1. Research should be conducted to determine why certain persons are drawn to forensics activities.

2. Research should be conducted to determine how forensics experiences can be varied to increase rewards for desired behaviors.

3. Research should be conducted to discover the intended and unintended effects of forensics experience on personality development, cognitive skills, critical thinking, aesthetic sensitivity, and communication skills.

Inasmuch as the above recommendations hold no less value today than they did 15 years ago and, since with the notable exception of Holloway, Keefe, and Cowles (1989), very little effort has been made to act on these recommendations as they apply specifically to individual events programs, the present investigation was undertaken. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions.

Research Questions

1. Who or what acquaints students with individual events activities?

Project Delphi (a special task force in conjunction with the National Developmental Conference on Forensics) recommends that forensics should make an active effort to involve large and diversified segments of the general student population in its activities (McBath, 1975). Knowledge of how students become aware of forensics would be helpful to those individuals administering recruiting programs.

2. For what reasons do students become involved in this activity?

Knowledge of students' motivations and reasons for becoming involved with individual events should help us determine whether their intents are adequately compatible with the goals of individual events programs. This information would in turn help us determine whether existing programs are adequately serving participants' needs.

3. What are the competitors' perceptions of the advantages and/or disadvantages of participating in individual events?

McBath (1975) reports that we still know very little about the outcomes of forensics training. Answering this research question will help us to determine why individual events programs continue to be popular and understand from participants' perspectives the positive and negative outcomes of their involvement. To some extent, this and the previous question have already been explored by Holloway, et al. (1989). However, inasmuch as their research was confined to a survey of Pi Delta Kappa participants located in the midwest, it is not known whether their results are generalizable to other regions of the country, such as the western region from which the present study's sample was drawn.

4. Are there differences between more and less experienced competitors' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages stemming from their involvement in individual events activities?

It is possible that one's needs change as one becomes more familiar with individual events activities. Learning of differences in the perceptions of more versus less experienced participants may suggest needed changes in the administration of these programs.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire Format

The questionnaire was designed using closed-ended questions so that, as Borg and Gall (1983) explain, quantification and analysis of results could be carried out efficiently. All close-ended questions were numbered and accompanied by response boxes for the respondent to check. The first section of the questionnaire included demographic and preliminary questions. The second section instructed the respondent to use Likert scales in responding to a series of substantive questions. Three open-ended questions were included as well, which allowed respondents opportunity to provide prose responses. The purpose of the study was described at the beginning of the questionnaire and then followed by instructions. Additional instructions were given in the second section explaining how to use the Likert scale.

Participants

Respondents were drawn from the western region of the country. This region was chosen because California has the greatest number of forensics programs in the United States followed by Oregon and Washington (Rieke, 1974).

The sampling frame consisted of a list of schools and competitors obtained from the Governor's Cup State Invitational Tournament, the largest tournament west of the Rocky Mountains, held January 17-29, 1989. The participants surveyed represented 44 intercollegiate forensics teams from public and private community colleges and universities in six states: California, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Oregon, and Nevada. Of the 44 schools polled, 19 were two-year colleges, 23 were four-year colleges and universities, and 3 were unidentified. The number of participants from each school ranged from 5 to 20. Those students currently participating in novice (inexperienced), junior (moderately experienced), or open (advanced) divisions of individual events were asked by their directors to complete the questionnaires. All three divisions were chosen in order to determine whether amount of experience has an impact on the perceived value of participating in individual events.

Data Collection and Timetable

Questionnaires were mailed on March 7, 1989, to the directors of the 44 represented schools. The letter explained the purpose of the research and requested the director's participation in distributing and returning completed questionnaires. Directors were asked to distribute as many questionnaires as possible to every active forensics participant. Since it is not known how many participants were active at each school, it is not possible to calculate what percent of each team responded to the questionnaire. An effort was simply made to obtain as many responses as possible from each of the 44 schools surveyed. Ultimately, completed questionnaires were obtained from 26 (60%) of the original 44 schools contacted. Since Babbie (1986) argues that, for surveys of this type, a response rate of 60% is adequately representative, it would appear that the data obtained is sufficient to allow for meaningful data analysis and interpretation.

A self-addressed, stamped envelope was provided for the director's convenience. As questionnaires were returned, the zip code and city postmark were noted and the corresponding schools were then checked off the master list. By March 27, 18% (eight) of the questionnaires had been returned to the researcher. A post card follow-up was mailed on March 24, again encouraging the director to participate and reminding him/her to return the questionnaires. Several of the directors were also contacted by telephone. On April 3, a final follow-up request, this time a letter and another copy of the questionnaire, was sent to all remaining non-respondents.

Statistical Analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version nine, was used to construct the raw data file and statistically analyze the data. The data were analyzed using three types of statistical methods—frequencies, analysis of variance, and Scheffe t-tests.

RESULTS

In all, 164 questionnaires were obtained from the 26 participating institutions. Among the respondents, 73 (44.5%) were female and 91 (55.5%) were male. The majority (94%) were between the ages of 17 and 21. A plurality (55; 35.7%) were communication/rhetoric majors. The second largest group of respondents consisted of political science/prelaw majors (20; 13%). Among the remaining participants, 50 (32.4%) were majoring in one of the humanities, 19 (12.3%) were business or social science majors, and 10 (6.3%) were from the physical sciences. Approximately half of the respondents (41.9%) were relatively experienced (had participated for three or more semesters), while

slightly more than half (58.1%) were relatively inexperienced (had participated for less than two semesters) individual events participants.

Research Question One

Who or what acquaints students with forensics? One hundred and eight (46%) reported having become involved with forensics through the solicitations of a college instructor/coach, 58 (25%) by a high school instructor/coach, 46 (19%) became involved through a friend, 20 (8%) responded to the "other" category, and four (2%) became aware of individual events through an advertisement.

Research Question Two

For what reasons do students become involved in forensics? Some respondents reported as many as five different reasons for becoming involved in individual events, while a few simply did not respond to this question. A total of 209 interpretable responses were obtained and categorized. These results are listed in Table 1.

Table 1
Frequencies of Reasons for Participating in Individual Events

Reasons	Frequency
Personal Motivational Factors	
Participated because of an enjoyment of speaking and interpretation as an extracurricular activity	52 (25.0%)
Participated because of a desire to become more competent in oral communication and to improve other skills such as organization, acting, eye contact, and research skills.	61 (29.2%)
Participated because he/she enjoys competition, challenges, and desires to win awards.	16 (7.6%)
Participated because of a desire to travel.	7 (3.3%)
Participated because of social aspects.	14 (6.6%)
Participated because of previous forensics experience	15 (7.2%)
Participated in order to place the experience in a resume, and gain experience to aid in future jobs and careers	<u>11 (5.2%)</u>
Total:	176 (84.1%)
Outside Motivational Factors	
Recruited or persuaded to participate	12 (5.7%)
Participated in order to meet team, course, or degree requirements	15 (7.2%)
Participated in order to avoid boredom at tournaments (Note: debaters tend to have spare time between debate rounds)	4 (2.0%)
Received a scholarship to participate	<u>2 (1.0%)</u>
Total:	33(15.9%)

The majority of responses (176; 84.1%) indicate that respondents first became involved in individual events for personal reasons. Sixty-one (29.2%) became involved in order to become more competent communicators and improve various skills. Fifty-two (25.0%) reported becoming involved simply because they enjoy public speaking activities. Other reasons for having become involved in individual events included: enjoying challenges and competition (7.6%), traveling (3.3%), meeting new people and socializing with others (6.6%), having previous positive experiences when participating in high school forensics (7.2%), and the desire to obtain career-enhancing experience (5.2%).

Fewer participants (33; 15.9%) became involved as a result of having been influenced by an outside motivational factor. Twelve (5.7%) reported having been recruited or coerced into participating, while 15 (7.2%) reported participating as a means of meeting team, course, or degree requirements. Even fewer (4; 2.0%) participated to alleviate boredom at tournaments during spare time between debate rounds, and only two (1%) became involved as a result of receiving forensics scholarships.

From the above requirements, it is obvious that most participants (84.1%) become involved in individual events as a result of personal motivation, while considerably fewer (15.9%) become involved as a result of an outside motivational factor.

Research Question Three

What are the advantages/disadvantages of participating in individual events? Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with 17 different statements, 12 of which referred to potential advantages and five of which referred to potential disadvantages of participating in individual events. These questions derived from consultation with experienced forensics coaches and participants, as well as from consulting relevant literature (Matlon & Keele, 1984; Pearce, 1974; Rieke, 1974). Moreover, the instrument was pretested prior to its use in this study. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Advantages. Twelve of the 17 statements concern possible advantages of participating in individual events. These statements fall into three subcategories—self-esteem, education, and skills.

The self-esteem category contains two statements. The abbreviated statements, indicated as D and O in Table 2, pertain to personal accomplishment and self-confidence. Of the respondents, 93% and 95% either agreed or strongly agreed with these statements. These results indicate that personal accomplishment and enhanced self-

Table 2
Percentages and Frequencies of Respondents for
Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages

Subject of Statement	SA	A	DK	D	SD*
A. Events too competitive	7 4%	20 13%	16 10%	90 57%	26 16%
B. Gain knowledge and skills for "real world"	92 57%	59 37%	3 2%	6 4%	1 0%
C. Programmed delivery style	18 11%	53 33%	15 10%	44 28%	29 18%
D. Personal accomplishment	81 50%	69 43%	6 4%	3 2%	2 1%
E. Too much traveling	6 4%	12 7%	12 7%	82 51%	49 31%
F. Interferes with doing regular course work	12 7%	62 39%	9 6%	55 35%	21 13%
G. Too time consuming	6 4%	30 19%	16 10%	85 53%	23 14%
H. Individualized instruction	60 37%	52 32%	17 11%	20 12%	12 8%
I. Oral communication	119 74%	40 25%	2 1%	1 0%	0 0%
J. Critical thinking	77 48%	67 42%	2 1%	14 9%	1 0%
K. Organization	79 49%	63 39%	4 3%	13 8%	1 1%
L. Research	61 38%	59 36%	13 8%	21 13%	8 5%
M. Writing	59 36%	73 45%	11 7%	17 11%	2 1%
N. Learn about subjects	84 52%	65 40%	4 3%	7 4%	1 1%
O. Self-confidence	101 62%	53 33%	2 1%	6 4%	0 0%
P. Think Quickly	86 54%	60 37%	7 4%	5 3%	3 2%
Q. Develop ethics	44 27%	65 41%	17 11%	20 12%	14 9%

*Note: Strongly agree is abbreviated (SA), Agree (A), Do not know (DK), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

confidence are perceived as advantages derived from participating in individual events.

Statements B, H, N, P, and Q are all assigned to the education category, as they all concern some type of learning: gaining knowledge and skills which can be implemented in the "real world," receiving individual instruction, learning about people and subjects, learning to think quickly, and developing ethics. The majority of respondents, 94%, 70%, 93%, 91%, and 68%, respectively, agreed or strongly agreed with all of these statements. The two statements with lower percentages (70% and 68%) indicate that the perceptions of having received individual instruction and having developed ethics are not as prevalent as the perceptions of other types of learning and suggest areas for needed improvement.

The last category is made up of statements concerning various skills. The content of statements I through M pertains to the improvement of the following skills: oral communication, critical thinking, organization, research, and writing skills. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents reported that participating in individual events has helped them better their oral communication skills, while 89 percent reported improvement in critical thinking skills. Respondents also reported improved organizational, research, and writing skills (89%, 74%, and 82% respectively).

Disadvantages. In addition to the advantages reported above, respondents identified two disadvantages of participating in forensics: the learning of programmed ("robotic") delivery styles (45% agreement with Statement C) and interference with regular course work (46% agreement with Statement F).

In addition to responding to closed-ended questions concerning perceived advantages and disadvantages, 64 of the 164 respondents completed an open-ended question in which respondents recorded perceived advantages and disadvantages. As can be seen by contrasting Tables 3 and 4, respondents reported nearly twice as many advantages as disadvantages to participating in individual events. Further, a disproportionate number of the advantages concerned improved opportunities for social interaction and self-improvement, while nearly all of the reported disadvantages concerned criticisms of the nature of individual events activities.

Another open-ended question asked respondents to identify ways in which individual events programs can be improved. The 109 responses to this question were divided into four subcategories: judging, tournaments, events, and education. A total of 54 different recommendations were made (Table 5).

Table 3
Frequencies of Open-ended Responses
Regarding Advantages

Perceived Advantages	Frequency
<i>Improved Relationships</i>	
Enhanced interpersonal communication	4
Gain personal & business contacts	2
Meet new people & make new friends	14
Parties & drinking	2
Team unity	3
Interaction with debaters	1
Competitors root for one another	1
Increases tolerance of others	_1
Subtotal	8 (64%)
<i>Self Improvement</i>	
Improves presence (credibility)	1
Opportunity for travel	3
Healthy competition	2
Keeps one busy & out of trouble	1
Fun	_1
Subtotal	8 (19%)
<i>Education</i>	
Learning how to prepare a speech	1
Improved delivery in debate	1
Speeches turn into term papers	1
Learn various coaching styles	_1
Subtotal	4 (10%)
<i>Assorted Responses</i>	
Scholarships	2
Educational opportunities	_1
Subtotal	3 (7%)

Table 4
Frequencies of Open-ended Responses
Regarding Disadvantages

Perceived Advantages	Frequency	
<i>Relationships</i>		
Competition among team members	1	
Subtotal	1	(6%)
<i>Self</i>		
Stress/exhaustion	1	
Subtotal	1	(6%)
<i>Education</i>		
Not able to hear competitors from other districts	2	
An end rather than a means in the educational process	1	
Not always given credit	1	
Subtotal	4	(22%)
<i>Tournament Structure</i>		
Strong junior college and four-year division	1	
Attending too many tournaments per semester	1	
Subtotal	2	(11%)
<i>Events</i>		
Rigid format in interpretation	1	
Existence of a certain formula for success	1	
Cheating and falsifying sources in a speech	1	
Too much emphasis on competing in events	1	
Subtotal	4	(22%)
<i>Judging</i>		
Unqualified judges	3	
Speeches judged on reasons other than quality	1	
Subjective judging	2	
Subtotal	6	(33%)

Table 5
Frequencies of Open-ended Responses
For Recommendations

Suggested Improvements	frequency
<i>Judging</i>	
A. Training	
A.1 Improve the quality of judges	10
A.2 Train judges	3
A. 3 Decrease subjectivity	3
B. Have two judges in preliminary rounds	1
C. Introduce judges in the round	1
D. Have new judges each semester to prevent biases	2
E. Judging Behaviors	
E.1 Comments should be constructive and comprehensive	3
E.2 Acceptance of a wider variety of styles	1
Total	24 (23.0%)
<i>Tournament Administration</i>	
F. Scheduling	
F.1 Hold more tournaments	1
F.2 Keep panels from over-lapping	2
F.3 Better organization	2
F.4 Schedule pattern rounds closer together	1
F.5 More time/breaks for eating & resting	3
F.6 Provide healthy food	1
F.7 Increase panel size (number of participants per round) to provide a larger audience	2
F.8 Reduce number of competitors per pattern	1
F.9 Allow no double entries (allowing one to enter more than one event during the same time slot)	1
G. Division Modifications	
G.1 Remove junior division	1
G.2 Do not collapse divisions	1
G.3 Junior colleges should only compete against other Junior colleges	1
G.4 Keep open & junior division competitors out of novice rounds	1
H. Expanding Tournaments	
H.1 Increase number of participants, events, and schools	2
H.2 Establish more high school tournaments	1
I. Other Responses	
1.1 Have a set number of legs rather than basing them on the number of participants in each event.	1
1.2 Improve efficiency of tabulation room	1
1.3 Stricter enforcement of event guidelines and tournament regulations	_ 1
Total	24 (23.0%)
<i>Self-improvement and Relationships</i>	
J. Award personal and competitive successes	1
K. More team spirit at tournaments	1
L. Have casual social gatherings	1
M. Decrease division between individual events and debate	1
N. Encourage people to try new events	3
Total	7 (7%)

Table 5 (continued)

Suggested Improvements	Frequency
<i>Altering Tournament Events</i>	
0. Interpretation	
0.1 Divide interpretation into humorous and dramatic	1
0.2 Decrease interpretation events	5
0.3 Define difference between acting and interpretation	1
0.4 Less strict timing in interpretation events	1
P. Limited Preparation	
P.1 Improve/limit subject matter in limited preparation events	1
P.2 Require one limited preparation event to increase number of people involved	1
P.3 No previously memorized blocks of information in limited preparation	7
O. New Events	
Q.1 Create new events (no interpretation)	2
Q.2 Create impromptu "prepared" speeches by providing scripts	1
Q.3 Create impromptu storytelling events	1
R. Other	
R.1 Increase rotation of memorized speeches (how long one speech may be used)	1
R.2 Define events more specifically	1
R.3 Extend allotted speaking time for events	1
Total	24 (23%)
<i>Facilitating Learning</i>	
S. More emphasis on learning; less on winning	4
X. Provide novices with oral critiques in the round	1
U. Establish more workshops	1
V. Coaching	
V.1 More help/attention from coaches	4
V.2 Consistent coaching	1
W. Practices	
W.1 More practices	1
W.2 Have group practices before a tournament	1
Total	13 (12.4%)
<i>Assorted Responses</i>	
X. More publicity to get more people involved	1
Y. More public awareness of the activity	1
Z. More support for less successful participants	1
AA. Learn how to be a good audience	1
BB. More funding	6
Total	11 (10.5%)
<i>Uninterpretable Responses</i>	
CC. Less emphasis on analysis than on pathos	1
DD. Decrease politics	1
Total	2 (1.1%)

The results indicate that the majority of participants believe that the individual events program needs modifications in various areas. Eight suggestions were made for improved judging at tournaments. Eighteen called for tournament structure alterations, thirteen recom-

mendations were made for altering or increasing individual event types, seven for ways in which learning can be enhanced, five for ways in which relationships among competitors and their coaches can be improved, five recommendations on a variety of other issues, and two of which were uninterpretable.

Research Question Four

Is there a difference between more experienced and less experienced competitors' perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of participating in individual events? While no significant differences were obtained when contrasting more versus less experienced respondents, significant and interesting differences were obtained when contrasting respondents with differing individual events experience. Specifically, respondents who had participated exclusively in limited preparation events were significantly less likely to report having gained a sense of "personal accomplishment" (Table 6) than were the respondents who had participated in all three events (limited preparation, prepared, and interpretation events).

Table 6
Analysis of Variance of
Personal Accomplishment

Source of Variance	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Value
Between	6	10.533	1.755	3.824*
Within	153	70.242	.459	
Total	159	90.775		

*($p < .05$)

Respondents also differed significantly in the extent to which they reported having improved their research skills. As might be expected, respondents having participated exclusively in limited preparation events perceived themselves significantly less likely to have developed research skills than did respondents having participated in either or both interpretation or preparation events. This is perhaps an obvious finding, since the intent of limited preparation events is to facilitate the development of extemporaneous, on-your-feet thinking and speaking, with participants allowed no more than a few minutes to prepare presentations.

Table 7
Analysis of Variance for
Research

Source of Variance	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Value
Between	6	33.414	5.569	4.436*
Within	154	193.343	1.255	-
Total	160	226.758	—	-

*($p < .05$)

The above two findings indicate that individual events participants are at a perceived disadvantage if they participate exclusively in limited preparation events. It is therefore interesting to note that additional analysis indicates that respondents who participated exclusively in preparation events were significantly less likely to report having attained "quick thinking" abilities than were respondents who had participated in limited preparation events (Table 8).

Table 8 Analysis of
Variance for Quick
Thinking

Source of Variance	D.F.	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F-Value
Between	6	18.384	3.064	4.742*
Within	153	98.860	.646	
Total	159	117.244		

*($P < .05$)

These findings lead us to conclude that individual events participants are significantly more likely to report having increased feelings of personal accomplishment and improved research skills if they had participated in interpretation and preparation events in lieu of exclusive participation in limited preparation events. Conversely, respondents are also significantly more likely to report improved quick thinking skills if they had participated in limited preparation versus prepared (unlimited preparation) events. One can thus conclude that it is advantageous to participate in some combination of limited preparation and prepared events to realize the distinct advantages of each.

DISCUSSION

These results are based on survey responses from a quasi-representative, though nonrandom, sample of individual events participants representing 26 Western Region intercollegiate forensics programs. The findings indicate that individual events participants are more likely to be majoring in the humanities or liberal arts—with a disproportionately high percentage majoring in speech, communication, or political science—than in the natural sciences or technologies. Further, participants report becoming involved in individual events because they enjoy public speaking, and because they seek to improve skills associated with forensics. Seldom, it appears, are participants coerced into participating, although often they are encouraged to do so by peers, coaches, and teachers.

Thus, by word-of-mouth publicity seems to be not only the primary—but perhaps the only—mechanism by which students learn of forensics as a valuable extracurricular activity. This, however, need not be so. There is nothing inherently wrong with advertising as a device to promote this excellent activity among a wide range of possible participants. This possibility holds special promise for aiding in the recruitment of students from underrepresented populations and students majoring in disciplines less likely to learn of forensics through peer and by-word-of-mouth contacts. Both Holloway, et al. (1989) and the present investigators document the dearth of forensic participants majoring in the natural sciences; yet, owing to the rigorous logic needed to successfully pursue course work in these fields, it is apparent that such students would benefit from and at the same time make meaningful contributions to forensics programs. Perhaps, then, forensic advertising is something that should be given serious consideration.

Respondents identified several positive individual events outcomes: increased self-confidence and feeling of personal accomplishment, improved public speaking, research, and critical thinking skills and broad-based learning about subjects and people. They also report, however, two problems, warranting serious attention: the learning of programmed (canned) delivery styles and the tendency of individual events activities to interfere with one's course work and other academic responsibilities. Both of these phenomena have, of course, been noted by forensics experts for years, the latter recently documented as well in the Holloway, et al. (1989) study. Yet they seem to persist as noisome consequences, perhaps more so among participants and programs more intent upon winning than learning. As such, these findings point to the importance of promoting forensics programs that reserve center stage, as it were, for mastering oral communication skills

that are at once clear, interesting, and relevant, while at the same time not detracting excessively from pursuit of other of one's academic responsibilities.

While no significant differences were observed for less versus more experienced participants, results indicated significant differences as a result of type of individual events activity. Specifically, limited preparation events participants are less likely to report the development of feelings of personal accomplishment or research competencies than are prepared or interpretation events participants. Perhaps the limited preparation events participants, since they devote less time to the preparation of their events, also have less opportunity to develop enthusiasm and interest in their topic; *ergo*, less feeling of satisfaction with the limited amount of research associated therewith. Conversely, limited preparation events participants are more likely to report the development of quick thinking skills than are prepared or interpretation events participants, which seems logical given the nature of the differences in their activities. Accordingly, given the comparative advantages and disadvantages of participating in one or another of these various individual events, it seems preferable that participants participate in both limited and prepared (or interpretation) events in order to develop optimally a broader range of competencies.

However, while plausible, this interpretation and recommendation is tempered by the fact that only 9.2% (15) of the respondents had participated exclusively in limited preparation events. Since this comparison group was relatively small in contrast with the numbers of participants engaged in two or more different events (78%), it may be that the reported comparative advantages and disadvantages were more a function of unequal comparison groups than of real experiential differences. For this reason alone, it is important that this study be replicated, preferably with a representative and robust sample drawn from all regions of the country.

In summary, this study has provided information of possible interest to educators seeking to enhance recruiting and coaching programs, and also suggests ways in which tournaments might be more effectively managed. In addition, this study provides research on individual events similar to that which has been conducted on debate, and provides the forensics community with empirical data useful in substantiating the importance of individual events programs.

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