MONASH DEBATING
Review

the gender gap in competitive debate
emma pierson

dispatches from cameroon
lilia kilburn

'disinformation slide'?
steve llano vs shengwu li

abolish the speaker tab
james kilcup & maria english

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to volume 11 of the Monash Debating Review! After months of reviewing, writing and editing we are pleased to bring you a collection of articles that we think offer interesting and important perspectives on the activity of debating.

The articles vary greatly in the perspective, scope and method – from a statistical analysis of over 35,000 speaker scores, to an ethnographic discussion based on experiences in Cameroon, and with many things in between. However, they all offer important reflection on the activity, offering insight about how we engage in debating, and asking vital questions about what broader aims we should be striving towards.

Perhaps in light of events and discussion in the debating community over the past year, there is a special emphasis in our first set of the articles on biases, gender, and discrimination. These articles pose incredibly important questions for us all to be considering, and thus I hope the contents of this issue are widely read, shared, discussed and acted upon. In pointing to a significant and consistent gender gap in speaker scores, widespread experiences of language and racial discrimination, insight into the gendered dynamics of our activity, and evidence of geographical biases in adjudications, these articles all offer pause for thought for anyone with even a passing interest in the activity of competitive debate. I am very hopeful that they will serve to constructively further the discussions in our community surrounding these difficult and important questions.

In a similar vein, we have a collection of articles that attempt to better understand and articulate the challenges that are facing many debaters around the world as the global community grows, and people try – and sometimes struggle – to join. With discussion of experiences from South Africa, Cameroon, China and Australia we hear an illuminating range of perspective. We hope they will serve to offer greater understanding of the challenges facing some of our newer debating friends, but also demonstrate the incredible advantages that a truly global and richly varied community offers.

Finally, we have three articles that offer discussion of reform to the format of the activity. We have an exchange over the question of 'Information Slides' – do they create the type of debates we should be aiming for? Finally, we see another call to critical re-evaluation, with the bold proposal that speaker tabs should be abolished.

I hope reading this volume is as enjoyable as editing it has been. In particular it has been such a pleasure thanks to my fellow Editors; it was a privilege to work with such intelligent and generous people, and they were heroic in tolerating my endless emails and spreadsheets.

Best Wishes,
Mary Nugent

GENDER AND DISCRIMINATION

MONASH DEBATING review

MEN OUTSPEAK WOMEN: ANALYSING THE GENDER GAP IN COMPETITIVE DEBATE

Based on analysis of over 35,000 speeches spanning more than a decade, this article discusses the consistent gender gap in speaker scores, and looks at some of its features and possible explanations.

Emma Pierson*

Debate is a male-dominated activity, and reports of sexism are common and occasionally high-profile (as evidenced by the widely discussed Glasgow debating scandal[1]). Such anecdotes become more powerful when supplemented by statistical analysis, which can offer a broader view of the effects of sexism, the factors at play, and the changes over time.

Here we offer a systematic statistical analysis of how females actually perform in competitive debate. We analyze data from 2,225 teams with 35,062 speaker scores spanning more than a decade. We analyze 14 tournaments: the European University Debating Championships (EUDC) 2001-2013, and the World University Debating Championships (WUDC) 2013[2]. The central result of our analysis is simple and incontrovertible: across all tournaments, male speaker scores are higher than female speaker scores by an average of 1.2 points per round, a highly statistically significant discrepancy ($p<10^{-11}$, t-test[3]). We first describe a number of interesting characteristics of this "gender gap"; we then present analysis as to its causes; we conclude by discussing potential solutions. To facilitate future analysis, we are making the datasets used in this paper available in CSV format[4]. All data was parsed from online records or, in the case of detailed judging data, solicited from tab directors. (We are not making the latter available due to privacy concerns.)

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*With thanks to Stephen Boyle, Jens Fisher, Tommy Peto, and especially Shengwu Li for insights and data.

1. Utton C. "Who said misogyny's dead? Female students receive sexist heckles at Glasgow Ancients debating competition". *The Independent,* 5 March 2013.

2. Machine-readable data is more readily available for EUDCs than for WUDCs, but we saw no large statistical differences between the two tournaments.

3. Throughout this paper, we use "p" or "p-value" to refer to the probability (between 0 and 1) that a result would be seen by chance (if there was no pattern and the data was purely random). p-values below .05 are usually considered "significant".

4. Available online: http://cs.stanford.edu/people/emmap1/math.html, "Statistical Evidence of Sexism in Competitions".

Characteristics of the gender gap

We discuss three factors that affect the size of the gender gap.

1. **Females on female-female teams speak lower than females on gender-mixed teams, and males on male-male teams speak higher than males on gender-mixed teams.** While the scores of males on gender-mixed teams are slightly higher than their female partners' (.2 points per round; p=.007, t-test), this gap is much smaller than the difference for males and females overall (Figure 1). Mixed teams are also rarer than one would expect if males and females were equally likely to partner with both genders: across all years, 40% of teams are mixed, as compared to the 45% one would expect from uniform mixing (p<10^{-10}, χ^2). This may indicate that males prefer to partner with males, and females with females, but there may also be other causal explanations--people tend to pair with partners of equal experience, for example, and males tend to have more experience, as we discuss below.

Figure 1: The gender gap is larger for single-gender teams.
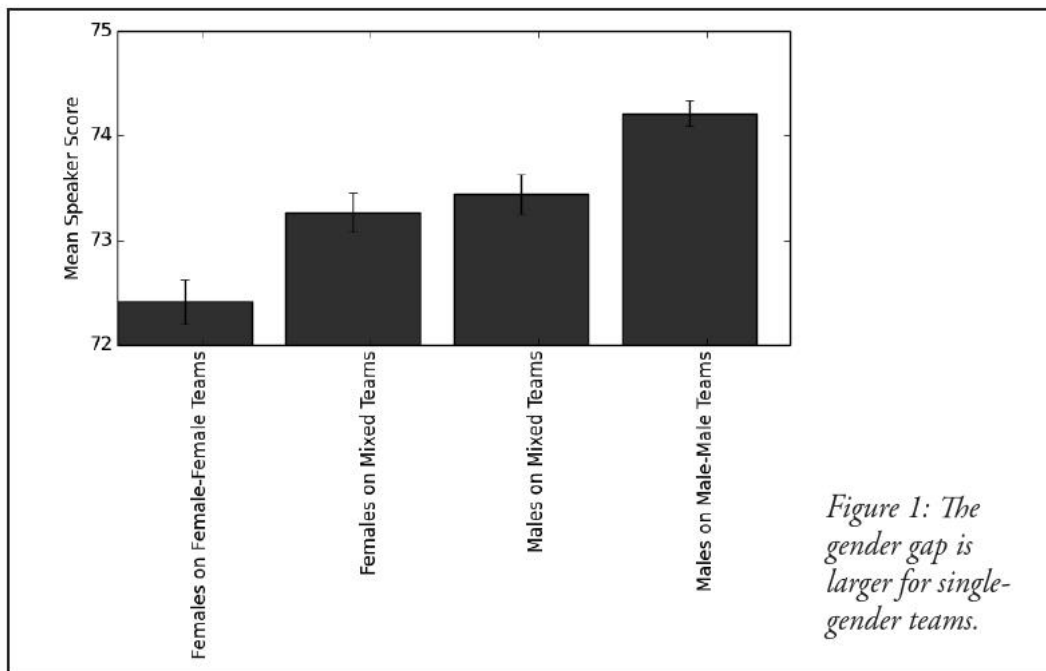
2. The size of the gender gap varies from year to year. In EUDCs 2002 and 2003, females actually outspoke males. It would be worth considering whether these tournaments had policies that reduced the size of the male-female discrepancy.

3. Females earned higher speaker scores on topics related to gender. We analyzed scores in 9 gender-related topics including, for example, "This house believes that women should have equal rights and equal obligations in the Army" (EUDC 2002) or "This house believes that custody hearings should not take a child's biological parentage into

account" (EUDC 2009). Females spoke better in every single round than they had in the tournament as a whole, by an average of .6 speaker points ($p<10^{-7}$, t-test). Males spoke slightly worse, by an average of .1 speaker points, but this difference was not statistically significant.

What Causes the Gender Gap?

We examined the statistical plausibility of two hypotheses: that the gender gap is caused by differences in experience levels, and that it is caused by sexism in judging. We first note that inferring causation from speaker score statistics alone is a perilous process. It is possible, for example, that females earn higher speaker scores in rounds about gender because they tend to be better informed on these topics and give better speeches; it is also possible that judges are simply sexist, and give females more credit for making identical arguments. One cannot on the basis of the speaker score data discriminate between these hypotheses. More broadly, the mere presence of a gender gap in speaker scores does not inherently imply sexism in judging, any more than the presence of a gender gap in ovarian cancer diagnosis rates implies sexism in doctors: males don't have ovaries, and females may be giving worse speeches[5]. Statistical analyses must thus be supplemented by the more subjective ones published elsewhere in this journal, and ideally also by controlled experiments (in which, for example, the gender of the speaker is manipulated but the speech is otherwise identical).

Is the gender gap attributable to differences in experience?

Males do indeed have more experience than females, as measured by the number of previous Euros attended, and this gap has widened in recent years.

Unsurprisingly, speakers with more experience tend to earn higher speaker scores, with each additional year of experience corresponding to about 1.8 speaker points per round. The combination of these two facts helps explain the negative correlation (Figure 2, bottom) between the proportion of tournament participants who are female and how well females do relative to males: more females means more new females, which means lower speaker scores. (This correlation, due to the small number of tournaments, flirts with significance; $p=.06$, linear regression).

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5. It is worth considering what the latter hypothesis would even *mean*: while we would probably all agree that better debate speeches are more persuasive, and that the persuasiveness of a speech increases with objective measures like factual accuracy, persuasiveness also probably increases with qualities like a speaker's confidence and height, characteristics which may have strong correlations with gender. At what point do gendered standards of good speaking devolve into sexist ones?
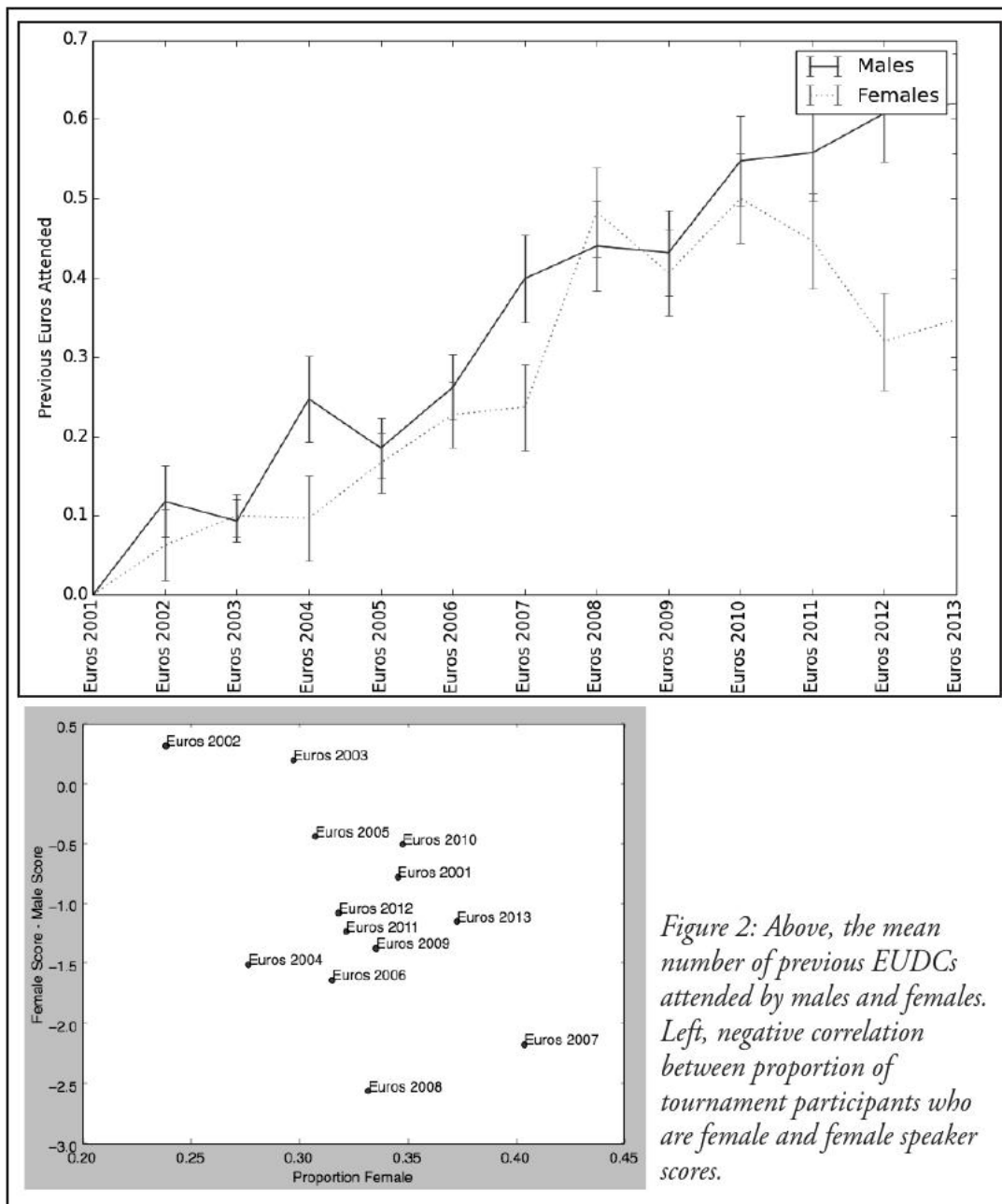
Figure 2: Above, the mean number of previous EUDCs attended by males and females. Left, negative correlation between proportion of tournament participants who are female and female speaker scores.

It thus seems likely that the experience gap is a partial explanation for the gender gap. But it is probably not a full one. One way to estimate the effect of the experience gap is to multiply each year's experience gap by the estimated effect of experience: for example, if males had on average two years' more experience than females, and each year of

experience added on average three points to a speaker's score, we would expect males to speak on average six points higher than females. When we do this, however, a great deal of the gender gap remains to be explained[6]
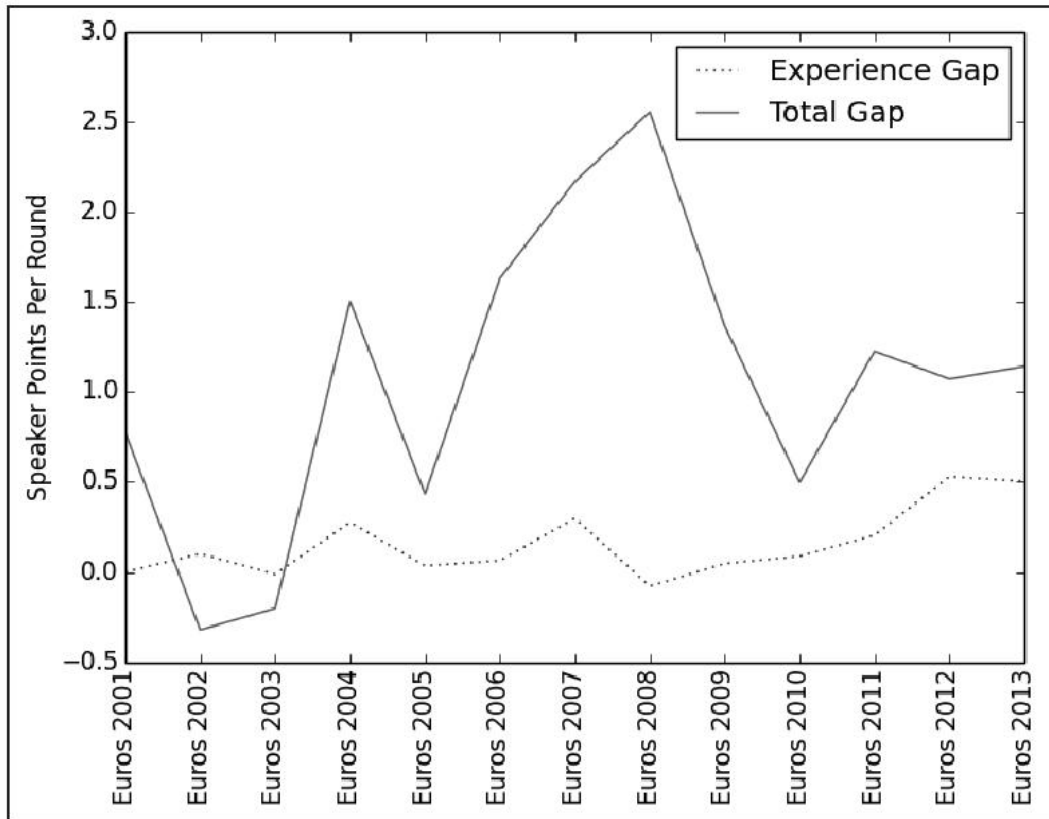
Figure 3: The experience gap does not fully explain the gender gap.

It is nonetheless worth considering ways to reduce the experience gap. Part of the gap is probably unavoidable if (as one would hope) the proportion of female debaters continues to increase, since this will increase the number of novices; however, one might try to improve female retention. Males are 17% more likely than females to return to future Euros (p=.01, t-test). A female is more likely to return if a higher fraction of her delegation is female, however: a 50% increase in the delegation female fraction increases

6. It is worth noting, however, that even if the gender gap were entirely attributable to differences in experience, the lack of perfect data might lead us to underestimate the effects of experience.

the probability of return by 40% (p=.04, logistic regression)[7]. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that one way of reducing the gender score gap is to increase the fraction of females in delegations, which will increase retention, thereby experience, and thereby speaker scores.

Is the gender gap attributable to sexism in judging?

We first note that this hypothesis could be both true and statistically unprovable. The difficulty of testing the hypothesis is compounded by lack of data: while speaker scores are widely available, we had judging data only for WUDC 2013 and EUDC 2013. One strategy is to search for evidence of sexism in individual judges: for example, a judge who consistently gives lower scores to females than do other judges, and does not give lower scores to males, may be called sexist. This strategy, however, is both somewhat cruel to individual judges and statistically fruitless due to the small amount of data for each judge. We tested each individual judge j for sexism as follows: for each female f that j had judged, we computed the difference between the score j had given f and the score that f had received from other judges, did the same for the males m, and computed the probability that the means of the two lists were the same using a t-test. This would identify judges who consistently gave higher scores than did other judges to males than females, or vice versa. After we adjusted significance thresholds to account for the number of judges examined[8], no judge showed statistically significant signs of sexism, regardless of whether we examined only chair judges or all judges. (When considering non-chair judges, we examined all rooms in which a judge participated, regardless of whether they were chair.)

A more fruitful strategy might be to consider properties of the judges in aggregate, but this again yielded few results. We looked for correlations between the judge's gender bias and three variables: judge skill (as determined by the tournament organizers on a scale of 1-9), judge gender, and the gender inequality index in the judge's home country: none were significant.

We did, however, find evidence that judges are not "gender blind": they display consistent preferences for one gender or the other, implying that these preferences play a role how speaker scores are assigned. When we examined the seventeen judges who attended both

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7. This number should not be taken too literally, given the hazards of regression and the curious fact that, when one regresses probability of return on both the number of males in the delegation and the number of females in the delegation, only the *former* is significant (p=.03) with each additional male reducing the probability of return by 8%. The conclusion, perhaps, is that women don't want more women: they just dislike men.

8. Using a Bonferroni correction: for example, if we test 500 judges for sexism, each judge must be significant at the .05/500 level, rather than at the usual .05 threshold.

Euros and Worlds 2013, we found a significant correlation ($p=.03$) between the gap in scores they gave to males and females at Euros, and the gap in scores they gave to males and females at Worlds. This implies that judges are consistent in whether they prefer males to females or vice versa: they are not simply objective observers of arguments who are utterly oblivious to gender. A second piece of evidence for this hypothesis is that, when we conducted the t-tests for judge sexism described above and examined the significance scores for all judges in aggregate, more judges were significant at the .05 level--20% for Euros, 17% for Worlds--than one would expect from random chance[9]. This implies that judges as a whole tended to display preferences for one gender or the other.

Thus, while we cannot conclusively demonstrate that *individual* judges prefer one gender to the other, we do find it likely that the source of the gender gap is not simply that females are worse at debate. If that were the case, and individual judges showed no gender preferences, we would not expect to see consistency in judge gender gaps across Euros and Worlds, and we would not expect to see the disproportion of significant gender preferences. Given that judges do appear to display gender preferences, and that a gender gap in speaker scores exists, it seems plausible to conclude that this gender gap may be partially attributable to judge gender preferences. We emphasize, however, that the statistical evidence that the gender gap is due in part to judge gender preferences is *far* less strong that the evidence that the gender gap exists: the latter is incontrovertible, but non-statistical methods may be best suited to demonstrate the former.

Conclusion

We have shown a large and statistically significant gender gap in the speaker scores given to male and female debaters. This gap varies across time, is particularly pronounced for single-gender teams, and is reduced for topics related to gender. It is partially, though probably not completely, attributable to the fact that male debaters have more experience. Judges tend to be consistent in their preferences for one gender or the other, suggesting that sexism may also play a role.

The gender gap has implications beyond debate. To the extent that public speaking is required in more consequential arenas--in corporate boardrooms, academic conferences, or chambers of parliament--one might plausibly expect the forces producing a gender gap in debate to produce gender gaps there as well. Indeed, previous research has shown that women *do* speak less than men in mixed-gender deliberations, and that their suggestions receive more criticism, although this discrepancy can be mitigated if efforts are made to

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9. We confirmed this by performing a bootstrap and randomly shuffling the sexes of all competitors.

include all participants (for example, through a unanimous decision rule).[10] [11]

We conclude by discussing two positive trends and suggestions for accelerating them. First, of late, "elite females" at the high end of the female score distribution have been outspeaking "elite males" at the high end of the male score distribution: in the past Worlds and the past 3 EUDCs, females at the 99th percentile have outspoken males at the 99th percentile. (This is a striking result: in other male-dominated competitions, such as Math Olympiads, the gender skew becomes *larger* at the very high end.[12]) Due to the small number of debaters, the statistical significance of our finding is dubious, but it nonetheless suggests ways to reduce the gender gap: high-speaking females could serve as role models or teachers for new females as well as counterexamples to sexist judges (if they exist). Second, the proportion of females in debate has increased in recent years, although there is some evidence that this has actually increased the gender gap by bringing in novices (and, potentially, by reaching farther down the bell curve).

We suggest several means of reducing the gender gap. First, increasing female debaters' experience (both by getting them to more tournaments and by improving retention to male levels) will improve speaker scores. (We note, however, that simply "getting more girls to tournaments" is an incomplete solution: previous research has shown that in some deliberative settings, the more women are present, the more silenced the women become[13]). Second, increasing the number of male-female partnerships might reduce the gender gap: male-female partnerships tend to feature more equal speaking scores, although this may simply be a selection effect. Still, it seems worth trying, particularly given that males and females tend to segregate. Third, one might study tournaments in which the gender gap is smaller: EUDCs 2002-2003, for example[14]. Finally, although this is controversial, we might suggest statistically monitoring judges for signs of sexism: although, as our analysis suggests, such evidence would be difficult to find given the small sample size, the mere awareness by judges that they were being monitored might in itself reduce sexism (it also, of course, might bias judges in the *other* direction). We hope that some combination of these measures, along with continued study through statistical, experimental, and subjective methods, will continue our progress towards a more equal world.

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10. Karpowitz C, Mendelberg T, Shaker L. "Gender Inequality in Deliberative Participation". *American Political Science Review*, 106(3):533-547 (2012).

11. Kathlene L. "Power and influence in state legislative policymaking: The interaction of gender and position in committee hearing debates". *The American Political Science Review*, 88(3):560-576 (1994).

12. Ellison G, Swanson A. "The Gender Gap in Secondary School Mathematics at High Achievement Levels: Evidence from the American Mathematics Competitions". Working paper, MIT and NBER (2009).

13. Kathlene L. "Power and influence in state legislative policymaking: The interaction of gender and position in committee hearing debates". *The American Political Science Review*, 88(3):560-576 (1994).

14. As well as American tournaments, which often do *not* have statistically significant gender gaps--thanks to Stephen Boyle for this insight.

DEBATE MODE: A NEW EXPLORATION OF GENDER IN BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY DEBATING

Through the use of qualitative interviews and feminist theory and research, this article sheds light on the gender dynamics of British Parliamentary debate circuits.

CLARA SPERA, NIAMH NÍ MHAOILEOIN
AND MUIREANN O'DWYER*

Introduction

In discussions of sexism in debating, the broader realities of gender inequality are often neglected. The debating circuit seems to view itself as an island, physically, culturally and socially adrift from the patriarchal mainland. While waves of sexism may brush the shore, surely they don't threaten to engulf the island itself? Therefore, proponents of change are too often expected to prove sexism in a vacuum, with the support of statistical data.

The figures show that women participate in British Parliamentary debating competitions in significantly smaller numbers than men and also suggest that, even adjusting for participation rates, women enjoy less success than men in competition.[1] However, as a debating community we have failed to identify the structures and norms that preclude women from full participation in national and international circuits and this has prevented us from seriously addressing the imbalance.

Our approach is grounded on the qualitative and subjective experience of female speakers operating within a patriarchal world and, by clear extension, a patriarchal debating circuit. We accept Fraser's argument that "Every arena and level of social life is shot through with gender hierarchy and gender struggle. Each therefore requires feminist theorization."[2]

Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that the debating circuit is an uncomfortable and

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1. http://idebate.org/news-articles/female-participation-within-uk-debating-circuit

2. Fraser, Nancy. "Pragmatism, feminism, and the linguistic turn." *Feminist contentions: A philosophical exchange* (1995): 157-71.

unwelcoming space for many women. Existing investigations indicate that the debating community is characterised by subtle, and occasionally extreme and overt, sexism.[3] Rather than assessing the performance of women on the circuit, this paper is concerned with the poor performance of the debating circuit itself. We believe that, both competitively and non-competitively, the debating circuit does not fully empower (and perhaps even disempowers) women. This applies "in the room", but also encompasses socials, training environments, internal society events, online platforms and any other situation in which debaters qua debaters interact with one another.

The goal of this paper is to instigate the feminist theorisation of the BP debating circuit. It will be grounded in existing theories of gender, with particular reference to constructionism and performativity, and in the experiences and perceptions of women on the circuit, drawn from a series of semi-structured interviews. This study will complement existing quantitative research and provide deeper understanding of the systems and circumstances that make the debating circuit unwelcoming to female speakers. Furthermore, we hope to create a space for broader and richer examination of women's experience on the circuit and to provide a feminist framework for future studies. Of course, we also hope to illuminate potential corrective measures and to contribute to the debating community's efforts to become more equitable and inclusive of female participants.

Beyond the prima facie benefits to present and future female speakers, BP debating as a whole will benefit from greater gender equality. In a previous edition of this journal, Doug Cochran regretted the predominance of liberal discourse on the debate circuit, arguing that "if all teams readily agree (implicitly or explicitly) to adopt a liberal perspective, debates risk some of their potential richness and complexity."[4] The same holds true when debating is dominated by male or masculine perspectives (or indeed white, cis, straight, or middle class perspectives).

A Feminist Approach to Evaluating the Debating Circuit

This section will outline the feminist grounding of our study, though it is not an exhaustive overview of the extensive feminist literature. We aim to construct a feminist framework which is essential to understanding the data presented in this article and in others which

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3. For example, see the two reports: https://www.dropbox.com/s/gj19ntt4uxaju1p/Experiences%20of%20Irish%20Debating.pdf (Experiences of Irish Debating) and https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1GLZ3-8G4gTdUU2S1lQaEM5OXc/view?sle=true (Survey on Experiences of Misogyny and Sexism within Debating)

4. Douglas Cochran," Liberal Argument and its Discontents," Monash Debating Review, 2008, Vol 8

discuss inequality in debating. It is important for us to set out the philosophical positions that inform this paper. Through clear elaboration we can honestly acknowledge potential bias. We hope that by being forthright about our stance, we can encourage productive and equally honest discussion about our research. This section will examine some of the basic ideas of feminist theory, before offering some examples of how this oppression has been shown to play out in other fields.

Gender as a Powerful Construct

We understand gender as a social construction. That is to say that gender, and particularly concepts of "man" and "women" are created by society. They do not hold any meaning outside their usage in social contexts - their meaning can change across culture and time. However, their fundamental aspect as created (and consistently recreated) by society is universal. These gender roles are both created and learned through a social process. This is a generally accepted view of gender, used throughout feminist theory[5] and by governments and international organisations[6]. A second characteristic, which is universally applicable to constructions of gender, is that they are socially enforced. The construction of gender controls how people see themselves and the opportunities available to them, and influences their interactions with others. As a result, these constructions are inherently limiting. Society creates a hierarchy between the two created genders, valuing "man" over "woman", and this hierarchy permeates every facet of a society[7]. Other constructs interact with gender, and are often categorised along the same scheme – Male/Strong is better than Female/Weak or Male/Rational is better than Female/Emotional, for example – in a way that further entrenches the power which gender roles hold. We follow Butler in understanding gender as performative - it is created by acts that make up a supposed gender identity. This performativity is "not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual which achieves its effects through its naturalisation in the context of a body…"[8]. This ritual of performativity is culturally sustained in our colloquial society.

To Butler, everything we do plays into this idea of performativity. Gender is a practice; there is no innate gender identity. Through this performance, one is "made a woman" (to use de Beauvoir's terms) by certain practices. This performativity is a constantly reinforced phenomenon, it is a compulsory repetition of behaviour. This behaviour is

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5. See for example: Charlesworth, Hilary, Christine Chinkin, and Shelley Wright. "Feminist approaches to international law." *Am. J. int'l l.* 85 (1991): 613 and West, Candace, and Don H. Zimmerman. "Doing gender." *Gender & society* 1.2 (1987): 125-151.

6. See for example: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet2.pdf and http://www.who.int/gender/whatisgender/en/

7. MacKinnon, Catherine A. *Toward a feminist theory of the state.* Harvard University Press, 1989.

8. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble.* Routledge, 1999.

far-reaching, from the stylisation of the body through speech to informal practices such as pressure, or even bullying, to keep us in our 'gendered' place.

Importantly, we cannot cast off gender in one instant, precisely because our gendered identity is a product of multiple and repeating acts. Butler contends that the only way to realise a positive, transformative politics – casting off the callous and erroneous binaries of gender – is by exposing failed attempts to "become" one's gender. We must constantly challenge, mock and subvert gender identities.

Gender is not the only factor which has such a power over people's lives. It interacts with other identities, such as race, sexuality, class, disability and/or age. Feminist theory cannot simply speak to the experiences of a select group of women, as these interactions create many different contexts and experience of oppression[9]. In understanding that, we aim to be intersectional in our feminism. We endeavour to appreciate how these multiple variables interact with each other, and to be cognisant of the heterogeneity of women. Intersectionality calls for the focus of research to be on the structures which create the categories of gender, class, etc.[10] This is present in our research, as we seek to scrutinise the debating community itself and the various power structures that are replicated within it. This also informs our belief that it is not possible to articulate an objective account of women's experience in debating.

Other studies in analogous fields

Many researchers have investigated the role that gender plays in social interactions in different fields. This paper considers research on the evaluation of performances, in the areas of student evaluation of teachers and in the evaluation of management. We chose these two areas because they involve an element of public speaking, authority and persuasion. The wider literature has found a wide ranging and enduring pattern of gender-based discrimination across many different organisation types[11].

Johnson et al examine the differences in evaluation of male and female leaders in management[12]. They found that expected gender roles play a key role in determining whether or not a manager is judged to have performed well or not. What is most interesting is their discussion of role congruity theory. This highlights that it is not

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9. Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color." *Stanford Law Review* (1991): 1241-1299.

10. MacKinnon, Catharine A. "Intersectionality as Method: A Note." *Signs* 38.4 (2013): 1019-1030.

11. Halford, Susan, and Pauline Leonard. Gender, power and organisations. Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.

12. Johnson, Stefanie K., et al. "The strong, sensitive type: Effects of gender stereotypes and leadership prototypes on the evaluation of male and female leaders." Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes 106.1 (2008): 39-60.

simply a case of women being likely to perform differently to men, and therefore being judged differently. It is not a case of a simple bias against all women managers. Rather the expectation of gender roles creates the framework through which people evaluate managers. Roughly described, women are expected to be sensitive and caring, while men are expected to be domineering and strong. Performance is judged negatively when people do not fulfil their expected role. However, the constructs of gender also infiltrate the accepted understanding of a good manager, entwining it with male characteristics. A women will be judged negatively if she does not also fulfil some of those characteristics. This study highlights how our understanding of gender infiltrates our understanding of good performance, and it is clear that a similar dynamic may be at play in debate judging.

In examining how gender and age impact on student evaluations of university teaching[13], Arbuckle and Williams presented students with a stick figure with a neutral voice presenting a lecture. When asked to evaluate they were given a form indicating the age and gender of the lecturer. Students rated the young male lecturer highest. In the discussion of the impact of gender, the authors highlight the wide literature in education studies which states that dynamism and enthusiasm in presentation of lecturing materials is closely associated with the male stereotype. Due to this interaction between the socially understood male role and certain positive attributes, students are less likely to reward female lecturers for qualities like dynamism. This effect is likely to be present even when dealing with issues typically associated with the female stereotype. However, other factors of evaluation did not show such a gendered split in evaluation – structure of the presentation, and use of appropriate terminology. This study highlights that the effects of gender stereotypes on the evaluation of spoken presentations can be subtle, and while it does not influence evaluation of every factor of the presentation, gender stereotypes have a clear impact on certain aspects, and thus on the overall evaluation. Arbuckle and Williams draw on studies performed with different methods, group sizes and so on by other researchers, and may offer insight into how debate judging is influenced by gender.

While we do not aim to extrapolate entire findings from either of these studies, we hope that they point to the significant potential for gender to become a factor in evaluations. Such findings should inform discussions of research conducted within debating, including the interviews presented here, as well as more quantitative evaluations of the relative performance of men and women.

Methodology

Much of the evidence presented in discussion of the question of sexism in debate is

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13. Arbuckle, Julianne, and Benne D. Williams. "Students' perceptions of expressiveness: Age and gender effects on teacher evaluations." *Sex Roles* 49.9-10 (2003): 507-516.

quantitative in nature[14]. While there is clearly substantial merit in such evidence, it does have two key deficiencies. Firstly, it is often presented without reference to wider studies of gender inequality and gender discrimination. This leads to questions of causation that are simply unanswerable in such a vacuum. Secondly, it is generally limited to the examination of the relative performance of women and men in debating competitions, neglecting important social and psychological factors. Both of these problems can be addressed by bringing qualitative work into the centre of these debates. While we have focused in this paper on the BP debating circuit, we feel that our approach could be adapted for use in other circuits.

This paper will present and discuss the results from a series of semi-structured interviews.[15] The semi-structured interview is a highly useful methodology for feminist analysis in general and for this paper in particular. Firstly, it offers a deeper and more "fine grained" data set for us to work with, by allowing the interviewees to respond to questions in their own words. Secondly, it permits the discussion of issues beyond those selected by us as authors. We strongly defend an intersectional approach to feminist theory; the semi-structured interview allows interviewees to talk freely about their experiences of gender in relation to other aspects of their lives.

The flexibility of the methodology helps to reduce the influence that we, as researchers have over data collection. Mindful of bias, in particular due to our own experiences of debating, we wished to allow the interviewees to express themselves on their own terms, and did not wish to limit the scope of our exploration prior to the data gathering process, which would clearly have been required to some extent with most other methodological approaches.

Although we have chosen a method of data collection that limits the risk of bias, analysis of action research and similar methods has illustrated that, with adequate awareness and care, involvement and engagement by the researchers in the subject does not necessarily create bias.[16]

We conducted five interviews, each lasting between 30 and 50 minutes. We also carried out a pilot interview with an experienced female debater to test our questions and get an external opinion on their usefulness. Our interviews were conducted over Skype; two of the authors were always present for interviews. One author led the interview, while

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14. For example, see Emma's article in this edition: Emma Pierson, "Men Outspeak Women: AnalySing the Gender Gap in Competitive Debate Men Outspeak Women: Analysing the Gender Gap in Competitive Debate" Monash Debating Review, 2013, Vol 11, p8 or http://idebate.org/news-articles/female-participation-within-uk-debating-circuit

15. Wengraf, Tom. Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods. Sage, 2001.

16. King, Gary, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba. *Designing social inquiry: Scientific inference in qualitative research*. Princeton University Press, 1994.

the other was primarily an observer, but did occasionally interject with questions or comments. If we believed that one author had a close friendship with an interviewee, that author opted-out of acting as the primary interviewer to ameliorate bias. All of our interviews were recorded (with articulated permission of the interviewees), transcribed and reviewed by all three authors before analysis commenced.

Our selection of interviewees was done with a careful consideration of another type of bias. We specifically selected interviewees from across the spectrum of experience levels, nationality and language in debating. This was done in order to improve the variety of experience that was captured by the study, and to allow for the discussion to be highly relevant to more than one group and circuit. Initially, we intended to interview only female speakers but having completed those interviews we felt that it would be valuable to interview a male debater for comparative purposes. We recognise that generalisations cannot be made with a sample size of one, and the comments of the male participant will primarily be used as a point of reference.

We have designed a methodology that is appropriate to the question we are exploring, suited to our epistemological approach and of a high scientific standard. Although we are aware of its limitations, we think this paper makes a significant contribution to an important debate.

Presentation of Results

Our semi-structured interviews relied on three anchor questions:

- Do women enjoy debating, and what motivates them to debate?
- What do women perceive to be a good speech, or good speaker?
- How and why do women moderate their behaviour on the debating circuit?

We focused on these three anchor questions in our semi-structured interviews, each question carefully selected to highlight different aspects of the holistic debating experience.

Q. 1 Why do you debate?

Identifying why someone engages with an activity can help to explain patterns of behaviours that are formed over time.

1.1 Why did you start debating?

Four of the five participants began debating at schools level, with just one beginning in university. Three participants mentioned their argumentative nature as a motivation for getting involved. Two cited an early interest in politics as motivation. Two welcomed the opportunity for engagement with issues outside of a classroom setting.

1.2 Why did you continue debating after your initial experiences?

Four of the five participants stated that improving at the activity and/or garnering more competitive success was a key factor in continuing to debate. Just one interviewee – the only male participant – stated that he continued because he fundamentally "enjoyed the activity itself". Three respondents pointed to the social nature of the debating circuit as a primary motivator for continuing to debate.

1.3 Do you enjoy debating competitions?

Only two interviewees unequivocally stated that they enjoyed debating competitions, two others were ambivalent and one interviewee explained that she used to enjoy debating competitions but that she "enjoyed them much less the longer [she] stayed on the circuit at university."

Every interviewee finds debating competitions stressful and exhausting. While one interviewee focused on the social stress of competitions (the demanding nature of "building up your persona"), our four other interviewees discussed the stress that debating itself induces. Two of those interviewees pointed to their self-perceived lack of knowledge as a cause of intense stress and worry, while another interviewee discussed the stress that comes with varied levels of competitive success.

Three interviewees said that, despite the high levels of stress, they enjoyed the social side of competitions. One interviewee said: "The [competitions] I enjoyed most basically were the ones where I had good friends that were attending or I made good friends at them. Especially when I didn't know many people there, I tended not to enjoy them that much."

Q2. Could you describe a "good speech"?

This question aimed to determine whether consensus exists on what patterns of behaviour or specific debate skills comprise successful debate speeches. We also pushed our interviewees to highlight aspects of style that contributed to what they perceived as high-quality speeches.

All five interviewees first identified sophistication of content – analysis in particular – as an important factor, or the most important factor, of a good speech. This kind of analysis leaves "no stone unturned in the logical chain" and does not make "logical or conceptual errors". Three interviewees explicitly recognised style as an important factor, but their perceptions of good style varied.

2.1 What are the qualities of good speakers?

Not every interviewee was asked this question. Of the three that were asked, the responses varied substantially. One respondent answered very specifically that she thinks a good speaker is able to confidently employ a large vocabulary, "manages to make people laugh", and gives strong and compelling introductions and conclusions. Another interviewee was more abstract in her descriptions: she sees a strong grasp of general knowledge (which she feels she lacks) as a prerequisite for being a strong speaker. She perceives top debaters to be "quite good at a lot of things," observing that they often seem successful outside the debating world - professionally/academically and socially. Another participant echoed this view, suggesting that a good speaker is "independently of debating, quite superior".

2.2 What differentiates a good speech from a really excellent speech?

We asked four of our five interviewees this question. Two interviewees were very clear: content and the quality of argumentation are the defining factors. The two other interviewees focused more on style and emotiveness. One interviewee mentioned a speaker's "charisma" and felt that excellent speeches are often "fun to watch". That same interviewee also mentioned the quality of content as important, but suggested that the "strength and panache" of the speaker is more important. Our fourth interviewee finds that an excellent speech "can sometimes be quite personal", in that it dramatically changes the perspective of judges and audience, by tapping into their emotions and perceptions of the world.

Q3: Since you began debating have you learned particular behaviours that you rely on at debating competitions?

This anchor question directly relates to individual behaviour and gender performance. It serves as a logical synthesis of the preceding two: do the interviewee's own behaviours reflect those that she or he has observed? Does he/she moderate his/her behaviour based on the motivations described in his/her earlier responses? We were particularly interested in identifying whether there were differences between individuals' behaviour at debating competitions and outside the debating context and, if so, the reasons for this behavioural shift. We understand this behaviour as inextricably linked to ideas of gender performance. We wanted to explore the possibility that certain adopted or developed behaviours were

a direct result of expectations of gender performance or, alternatively, a casting off of conventional gender norms in the hopes of becoming more successful, more popular, or realising any number of other goals.

All five interviewees identified a shift in their respective behaviours when at debating competitions. Some identified this different presentation of the self as their "debate mode", as distinct from a more natural mode of behaviour. All interviewees, albeit in slightly different ways, believe that this shift in behaviour is governed by a subconscious influence.

Three of the female respondents identified their 'debater selves' as more aggressive, louder and/or more "shouty" than their usual selves. All female participants described performing more confidently in debating than in normal interactions. That said, two of the four female participants displayed serious lack of confidence overall, especially in terms of their general knowledge.

Three participants suggested that social agreeability has a positive impact on competitive success and that they might act differently in a debate-related social context than in another social context, particularly given that speakers and judges socialise at competitions. One participant focussed on the tendency of judges to favour "who's popular at a certain time". An individual could plausibly moderate his/her behaviour in order to fit in with the wider debating circle, become more popular and achieve greater success.

3.1 Were these behaviours learned by example or through formal feedback/training?

Imitation and learning by example were identified as the predominant methods of developing these behaviours. Some of that learning is subconscious. One participant said: "...it's not entirely sort of your choice, it's just like this alter ego that's created by virtue of being in that space."

Some of the learning is more active and deliberate. One respondent talked about her overt efforts to change her speaking style, after multiple judges told her to "calm down". Another speaker made the same effort, partially prompted by an older teammate's observation that she was "skittish". Another respondent spoke of the lack of women to learn directly from because of the limited participation of women in her debating society.

3.2 Are you happy with your debate persona? Would you do the same again?

Two of the participants took a strategic approach to this question. The first expressed disappointment that coercive dynamics in her society had caused her to restrict her social and sexual behaviour in order to achieve success. However, she believed she had made the correct strategic choice. The second was much more positive about her debate persona, identifying that she was more confident in debates than elsewhere and expressing a wish

to integrate her two modes to become more confident overall. One participant said she believed her debate persona gave other debaters the wrong impression of her true character – she is worried about being too aggressive in debates. She noted that she tries to "talk to people afterwards to make sure that [they know she is] very, very different to the person that they see in the debate."

Discussion

Confidence

Several female participants demonstrated a severe lack of confidence in their debating ability, general knowledge, likeability and/or intelligence relative to other debaters, as well as describing themselves as "terrified", "skittish", and "constantly insecure" in debating contexts. All four female participants highlighted that when in debate mode they present themselves more confidently.

This discovery is significant as several interviewees described confidence as an important quality of good speakers and speeches, suggesting that those who "are confident about their ability to improve in fact improve a lot faster." The combination of women's insecurity and the perceived value of a confident manner may have significant implications for women's participation in debate.

Modelling/Learning by Example

Four of our participants specified that many of their debate behaviours were modelled on the behaviour of other, usually older and more successful speakers, and this was broadly seen as being a more important to one's development as a speaker than formal training or feedback. One participant explicitly stated that she was more likely to look up to and try to imitate other female speakers. The male participant spoke about his "absorption" of the mannerisms and phrases of more successful debaters on the circuit. Assuming that men can more easily absorb the stylistic habits of other men, and vice versa, these observations suggest that the underrepresentation of women at the highest levels of debating may be a barrier to development for young female speakers.

Interestingly, in four interviews specific speakers were named either as influences or as illustrations of positive qualities. One female participant mentioned exclusively women, another mentioned three women and one man and another mentioned just one man. The male participant mentioned exclusively male speakers. The question of role modelling may warrant further exploration in future studies.

Performance

The term "debater mode" came up organically, and was openly suggested by our first interviewee. When delving into this identified stratification of the self, we find that social influence is the main reason for this behavioural shift. Some participants were more explicit in acknowledging this as the case, but all alluded to social pressure as a moderator of behaviour.

One participant pointed to the "hierarchal" nature of the debating world. We observed iterations of this idea across the interviews. Some of the participants acknowledged that there are some people within debating who have more influence than others, and importantly, that influence may often be garnered from popularity, rather than intellect or even respect. Moreover, this kind of influence often translates into debating success, though that success might not always be deserved. One participant wondered if some friendships were "purely instrumental."

This link between popularity and success is inherently built into an activity in which your peers act as your judges. But there are more factors at play: popularity is an amorphous concept and no single behaviour can ensure popularity. Our interviews consistently revealed that considerations of gender do come into play in the social circles of the debating circuit. While our male participant did not feel particularly compelled or drawn into the social spheres, our female participants struggled much more with how to socially engage with debate.

One participant discussed sexual behaviour in debating. She determined early on that it was not a good idea to "sleep around on the circuit" when she noticed that her female counterparts who did do so were often socially excluded and ignored by their peers. If social capital does indeed affect competitive success, surely the female debater who is ignored or shunned by her peers for her sexual activity is less likely to come out ahead competitively.

One participant described her "debate mode" as being especially divorced from her usual persona. She explained that she felt a need to behave more aggressively in debates in order to be more convincing, but also felt she needed to compensate for her aggression afterwards. If this debater did not feel the need to have other debaters think highly of her personality, she might not make as much as effort to self-correct after a debate. Her "debate mode" is then two-pronged: on the one hand, she must become increasingly aggressive in a debate round in order to win, on the other, she must convey a different, more welcoming personality when socialising so as to become more socially prominent.

The expectations of gender performance in the debating world are complex. There appear to be incongruent expectations and performances within a debating round and outside the round (in the social context) – the behaviours identified in our interviews are at

times completely oppositional to one another. In a debate a female debater is meant to become "more aggressive"; in a social setting she should be warmer and more accepting. In a debate she is meant to be confident and assertive; in a social setting she should be confident, but not confident enough to assert her sexuality. One participant spoke of the confidence she felt while making a speech, followed by the almost immediate sense of insecurity that followed the round.

The paradoxical behaviours identified are consistent with the literature identified earlier.[17] Women are expected – and expect themselves – to adopt typically "masculine" characteristics in debates. But once the round is over, women are meant to re-adopt those "feminine" characteristics with which they are commonly associated: sensitive, caring, sexually passive, etc. It is perhaps because of these continuously shifting and contradictory expectations that the debaters we spoke to relied heavily on public perceptions of their character and popularity. When expectations are subtle and confusing, it might be necessary to lean on others to assert or to confirm your place within a community. This especially applies when the same individuals contribute to those behavioural expectations, and could be your judges.

Conclusion

Perhaps there is something more to "debate mode". If the debate self, who often engages in otherwise unjustifiable behaviours in the name of success, can be shut down when the final round ends, we might argue that it is more of a deliberate choice than our participants were willing to acknowledge. "Debate mode" may be something we construct to avoid deep engagement with the things we say or the ways we behave at debating tournaments, in or out of rounds. This would limit our capacity to conduct honest discussions of gender performance and expectations.

In general, our participants expressed a lingering sense of disappointment with their moderated debate behaviours. However, their justification was that the disappointing behaviours are only actualised in a debating context. If we see our debate selves as extraneous selves, who only exist in and for the game, it becomes much easier to deny oppressive gendered expectations as important or as carrying any real world implications.

This paper is intended to begin a fresh process of reflection and discussion on gender in debating, newly grounded in wider feminist literature. We look forward to the continuing debate.

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17. Johnson, Stefanie K., et al. "The strong, sensitive type: Effects of gender stereotypes and leadership prototypes on the evaluation of male and female leaders." Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes 106.1 (2008): 39-60.

LANGUAGE, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION IN DEBATING: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

Following a large scale survey of debaters from around the world, in a discussion of the findings as well as the author's own observations, this article explores the question of bias and discrimination towards debaters from different national, language and racial backgrounds.

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I was incredibly excited to debate at my first Australasian championships in 2009, hosted by Monash University. After successfully making it into a team for the first time - with Meredith Prior and Melanie Tedja (an exchange student from the University of Indonesia) - I was ready to work hard and do well. The fact that many members of my club presumed that Melanie's ESL status would hold her and us back simply inspired my team to try even harder. With a positive outlook and feeling confident about our preparedness, we entered round 1. This was the first of many rounds that tournament where Melanie's ESL status was mentioned explicitly in either the judgement or personal feedback we received, with many adjudicators saying that they simply "couldn't understand anything" she had said, and so found it "difficult" to give us a decisive win, or a win at all.

English is Melanie's second language, and certainly at times she may have spoken with imprecise language or a noticeable accent, but never did those things make the quality of her analysis impossible or even difficult to decipher. At the time Melanie was on an AusAid scholarship to Monash and was entrusted by the university to teach undergraduate students (like myself) with no concern for her language capabilities. Neither my teammate nor many of our fellow debaters had ever experienced difficulty in understanding her. It disturbed me to see that judges would use occasional mistakes as a justification for ignoring perfectly sensible argumentation.

Events such as these underscore the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes towards non-native English speakers. Increasingly attuned to these biases, I began to see the same pattern repeat itself at subsequent tournaments I attended. I was finally compelled to

write this article as, many years later, I saw the very same justifications used against ESL speakers at this year's Australasian debating championships.

What follows is a culmination of my experiences on the international debating circuit over the past five years, as well as those of many others who were kind enough to take part in an online survey. It is my hope that it will inspire you to reflect on your own experiences and do something.

What do I know?

Throughout September and October I undertook a survey of the international debating community relating to the question of discrimination in debating. Statistical results and anecdotes provided in free text responses are featured throughout this article (statistics are represented as rounded percentages). In order for you to appropriately contextualise the results I have undertaken to provide an overview of the demographics of respondents, however if you wish to find additional information, a full list of the survey questions and results can be found here: www.monashdebaters.com/mdr-survey.php

Thanks to the power of Facebook and the hard work of many friends the world over in sharing the link to my survey - entitled "Experiences of discrimination in debating" - we had 1022 respondents. Of those respondents 61 percent identified as male and 38 per cent as female. 55 per cent of respondents identified as native English speakers, whilst for English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) it was 31 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. There was a wide variety of nationalities represented (35 to be exact), with significant regional diversity. 38 per cent of respondents were from Asia, 31 per cent from Oceania, 17 per cent from Europe (Incl. Israel and Turkey), 10 per cent from North America and 4 per cent from Africa. Unfortunately there were no respondents from the Middle East or South America. It should also be noted that most of the survey questions were optional so the number of respondents who answered each question differed.

What is the problem?

I began this process with a feeling of discomfort at many of the things I had witnessed over my years in international debating, but with a lack of clarity about exactly what it was that made it far easier for some to win than others, in spite of their actual performance. As a result, the scope of the survey was broad, asking respondents to consider issues of race, religion, ethnicity, nationality and language status (the survey explicitly instructed

individuals to avoid considering issues of gender and sexuality[2]). Cumulatively the survey results seemed to provide an answer – survey respondents generally believed that all of those characteristics appeared to in some way correlate to your chances of success, some more than others. The most prominent explanations were positive discrimination in favour of individuals from generally Western and internationally successful institutions, and negative discrimination against those from non-Western and/or smaller or less successful institutions. The stereotypes regarding 'successful' and 'unsuccessful' were closely linked to actual or perceived ESL and/or EFL status. Survey respondents in general believed that ethnicity, nationality and/or race were less likely traits to attract discrimination than language status, however there was a significant minority of individuals who expressed concern over the treatment of religious, particularly but not exclusively Islamic, debaters.

How bad is it?

33 per cent of survey respondents said they had personally been the victim of discrimination based on the characteristics outlined above, which increased to 40 per cent when looking specifically at ESL respondents.

When expanded to 'witnessing discrimination', the number reached 46 percent of respondents. The most commonly described examples were:

- Racist language and/or jokes in debates or at socials.

- Judges giving unfair or poorly explained decisions, explicitly or perceived to be, on the basis of immutable characteristics.

- Adjudicators complaining about the quality of their debates, conflating 'ESL debates' with 'bad debates'.

- Teams dismissing outright, or giving insufficient response to, teams of an ESL or EFL background.

Over 65 per cent of those surveyed stated that they heard about instances of discrimination as described above. There appears to be little doubt that this is a widespread problem. Indeed 71 per cent of respondents agreed that tackling issues of language, race, ethnicity, and religious based discrimination should be a high priority for the debating community. Both ESL and EFL respondents largely agreed that this form of discrimination ranked as a primary concern for the debating community. Indeed it was ranked as the highest of a number of priorities, including gender and sexuality based discrimination, by 45 per cent

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2. Whilst it is obvious that these are concerns, I felt that there was sufficient publicity around them and others who had taken on the task of investigating these issues – as seen in other contributions in this edition of the Monash Debating Review.

of ESL respondents and 73 per cent of EFL respondents.[3]

Interestingly, for native English speakers the number one concern was gender based discrimination, with 33 per cent ranking it first over the 24 per cent who ranked language based discrimination as the top priority. This difference in priorities may have a number of explanations, including that discrimination against women is worse or more noticeable on native English speaking circuits, that native English speakers are more conscious of gender discrimination, or that native speakers are simply less likely to prioritise tackling language based discrimination given it does not harm them personally. Regardless of the explanation for this disparity, it highlights the importance of educating the broader debating community about the severity of this problem, through continued research and dialogue.

What does it mean?

The first, and by far most undesirable, outcome of discrimination in debating is that it skews the results of debates. As this survey and the anecdotal evidence provided within suggest, even the most well intentioned judges can be guilty of letting teams get away with glib responses to the material of ESL/EFL speakers, or making insufficient efforts to look beyond insubstantial language errors when making an assessment of the logic of arguments. In an activity that is based on rationality and logic, and intends to reward merit, it is unacceptable that irrational factors may ultimately determine the winner. As debaters, we spend a lot of time talking about equality and critiquing 'broader society' and 'government' for discriminatory policies, but it seems we struggle to recognise those same problems when they plague our own house. In society your gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status and culture (including your language abilities) all determine how easily your voice is heard, but for debating to remain an activity worth dedicating significant time and emotional and physical resources to, it should aim to rise above those things – to be better, to be fairer.

This type of discrimination also changes the way that individuals debate; it makes people more wary of taking a stance that, for example, positively depicts religion or uses non-Western examples.[4] Recently myself and another Monash debater were lucky enough to do some training for university debaters in Uganda. In the course of discussion she said something that stuck with me: the amazing thing about debate and the way it forces you to take two hard-line and oppositional stances, is that it ensures that all possible opinions are countenanced and nothing is taken as a given. Only through participating in such a discussion could we then truly reach a well-informed and meaningful opinion.

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3. A full list can be found at www.monashdebaters.com/mdr-survey.php

4. This will be discussed in more detail later in the article.

Perhaps that view is overly optimistic, but I believe that the power of debate is certainly in the diversity of opinion that it promotes and the way it forces people to engage with arguments and concepts and examples they may never have otherwise. That power can only be fully realised when individuals are not afraid to speak up and make arguments that fall outside the current 'conventional wisdom', wisdom that is often incredibly Western-centric. Unfortunately discrimination against people of particular religious or cultural backgrounds and the persistent focus on 'Western liberal democracies' serves to narrow the scope of debate and in doing so fundamentally undermine its aims.

Finally, there is an insidious social division that is created by the kinds of discrimination previously described. Over 50 per cent of ESL and EFL survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements about feeling intimidated by and looked down on by native speakers and claimed to find it difficult or embarrassing to socialise with individuals from different cultural or language backgrounds. Again these statistics are supported by anecdotal evidence, with many respondents telling stories of being asked to leave 'white' room parties or being told that as an ESL speaker they "didn't belong" there. As long as this continues it is unlikely that most participants will get to take advantage of the unique opportunity debating offers of getting to know and become friends with people from all over the world.

How do we solve it?

There is no doubt that the international debating community must take some action in response to language, religious and race based discrimination. Tougher than reaching agreement on the need for action is determining what should be done and by whom. I am of the opinion that every person involved in the debating community has an important role to play.

For the purposes of discussion I will divide relevant actors into three broad groups: authority figures (tournament organisers, equity teams, adjudication cores and peak bodies), those directly affected (anyone who is the victim of discriminatory behaviour) and bystanders (everyone else). I will look first at how we can attempt to prevent this behaviour in the long term and then at how we should respond in instances where discrimination does occur.

Prevention

Few of the survey results shocked me; one major exception was a set of comments repeated by a number of respondents in response to the question about whether being

white makes it easier to win a debate. An argument that was consistently made was that language status or perceived language status was a significant factor in the likelihood of a team's success, a non-controversial contention on its own. However, most went on to suggest that that was reasonable given debating is a public speaking exercise and command of the English language is important to persuasion. It is that sentiment that I think is reflective of the very mentality that underpins the discrimination discussed earlier - the idea that by simple virtue of you being an ESL or EFL speaker/team (often equated with geographical origin/race rather than an accurate assessment of language capabilities) you are less capable than a native English speaker/team.

In response to the same question, many respondents also identified positive bias based on the reputation of the institution a speaker originates from, suggesting that it was far easier to win if you came from Sydney, Oxford or Harvard etc., regardless of your actual performance in the debate. In my experience that is certainly the case. At the Australasian championships last year my team was awarded a decisive victory over a team from a small Asian institution which I can only assume was based on the preconceived expectations of the judge, given it certainly was not reflective of the debate that actually took place.

There are two serious problems here. Firstly the fact that debates are being essentially prejudged, and the secondly the conflation of strength of vocabulary and quality of analysis and logic. Should these issues remain unresolved ESL/EFL teams will never do as well as they deserve to and the fairness of debating will remain in question. The good news is that this can be changed.

Firstly, through the leadership of authority figures, especially adjudication teams. It is essential that briefings address these issues. Of course it will take some time to convince biased judges that an ESL/EFL team can be competitive with a team from a leading Western institution, but providing some guidance on how to assess language difficulties would be a good place to start. Right now the usual instruction is that you have to "try your best" to understand what is being said by a speaker with language difficulties. Often that instruction is not followed by teams or adjudicators, who continue to dismiss the contribution of non-native speakers with a simple "I didn't understand anything they said". More problematically, I believe the instruction misses the point. The aim should not simply be to understand the words being said by a speaker, but rather to evaluate the underpinning logic of their argument and the evidence they provide. So long as quality of argumentation is seen as synonymous with having the most three syllable words in a speech, then it will remain a competition of language proficiency rather than a debate, and it will remain a competition that systematically excludes ESL and EFL speakers.

Telling people to think differently about debating is one thing, but actually showing them how to is much more important. As such, an increased focus on teaching adjudication is necessary to resolve this problem. This is something that individual societies and circuits can certainly improve, but something that tournaments also have an extremely central

role in. In recent years there have been many laudable initiatives, such as adjudicator seminars leading up to a tournament and compulsory one-to-one training for trainee adjudicators at tournaments, and it is critical that those things are institutionalised as the norm. However, in my experience the biggest issue lies with mid-tier adjudicators, who are often less experienced individuals from successful debating societies and right now are the ones entrusted with watching debates that most often include ESL/EFL teams and speakers. It is much more likely that someone in that position will make the mistake of equating proficiency of language with good argumentation than somebody who is older and more experienced. For that reason it is incredibly important that those individuals are given the chance to receive feedback on their judgements from senior adjudicators (on panels) and concurrently that the best judges are more actively rotated through the tab.

I know there is some controversy surrounding that last suggestion - I have heard people say that getting the right results in the open break is "more important" more often than I care to count. That sentiment is inadvertently created and propagated by the treatment of ESL and EFL finals as some sort of sideshow to the main event, something that tournament organisers can and should change. Simple actions like giving the finals of each equal billing and not publicly describing ESL finals as the chance for everyone to "go and get some food before the next final" would be a good place to start. The reality is that the achievements of ESL and EFL teams are equally impressive, regardless of the fact they end the rounds on fewer points than the main break teams. The common view that that suggests and inferiority of those competitions ignores the incredible difficulty involved in debating in a non-native language. I think it is useful for all native speakers to consider how competent they would be at participating in such a quick thinking and speaking activity in a language other than English and then ask themselves again how 'inferior' the ESL and EFL breaks really are. Many modest changes to the way tournaments are run could go a long way to changing the mindsets of individuals, and ensuring that in the future more than a handful of native speakers show up to support those talented individuals who represent the best ESL and/or EFL speakers in their region or the world.

Further, in order to make the outcomes of debates more fair, adjudication teams should consider setting fewer Western-centric topics. 50 per cent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that judges tended to prioritise Western examples and material in their assessment of debates, which speaks to either a problem of their own bias or an issue with the Western focus of topics (or more likely, a combination of both). The trend of teams choosing to contextualise debates in 'Western Liberal Democracies' is one that inadvertently serves to punish speakers from non-Western backgrounds, and thus should be curtailed. It needs to be considered more accepted that motions may get set in the developing world. In the same way that non-Westerners are expected to be experts on America and Europe, so too should Western speakers be expected to be able to debate about the rest of the world. To the extent that individuals have insufficient knowledge,

topic setting should help to prompt individuals to educate themselves appropriately.

Whilst those in positions of authority have significant power to prevent discrimination that certainly does not mean everyone else is powerless or guilt free. A consistent theme of survey responses, and something that I have witnessed for years, is the social division between the members of prominent successful native speaking institutions and those from smaller, less well known and often ESL/EFL institutions that characterises international tournaments. Many non-native speaking respondents expressed their discomfort or feeling of exclusion in social situations. Debating already suffers from a degree of exclusivity and this continues to be exacerbated by prominent individuals and societies choosing to simply opt out of socialising with anyone outside their clique, by, for example, skipping all tournament social events in favour of room parties with their own.

This kind of behaviour not only makes people feel unwelcome and often prevents them from returning, but it also means individuals from different backgrounds do not meet and become friends and learn to respect each other's talent in the same way as they do with individuals from their own circuit. As Kate Falkenstien's article in this volume demonstrates, regional biases seem to regularly be at play in adjudication decisions, and thus more interaction between different circuits would not only be enjoyable but could also help to ensure fairer decisions.

Moreover, it is the responsibility of every person to make efforts to end the pervasive norm that equates ESL and EFL with 'bad'. That includes intervening when people make derogatory comments about watching an 'ESL debate' or other statements that degrade and devalue ESL and EFL speakers. 32 per cent of survey respondents admitted to having, intentionally or not, behaved in a discriminatory way. Acknowledgement, as they say, is the first step to recovery, but it is important that this is followed up by consistent effort to stamp out this behaviour in others and in ourselves.

Further, participants need to avoid falling into to the trap of presuming that once someone is 'good' they are no longer an ESL/EFL speaker. When Melanie represented Monash she was asked by members of our club not to register as an ESL speaker as it would 'reflect badly' on us. The implication of this request was that the ESL category was reserved for people who could not possibly go to Monash University. Similar comments were made to me about a number of ESL and EFL speaker award winners over the past few years. The fact that you are impressive enough to be great in spite of the barriers you face does not mean you are any less deserving of the recognition of the existence of those barriers. The continued presumption that you are less deserving or there is cap on how good you can be before you are no longer 'really ESL' will make it incredibly difficult to fight the association between non native status and inferiority.

Finally, it is critical for the ongoing prevention of this type of discrimination that those who are the victims of it come forward and talk about their experiences, along with those who witness it. It became clear in the process of doing this survey that many, particularly native speakers, did not believe language/race based discrimination was a problem in the international debating circuit. It is incredibly difficult to garner public support for measures like those outlined above if there is widespread ignorance of the existence and severity of the problem. The best way to rectify that is for people to talk about what they see or experience, as difficult as it may be. In the final section below, I will suggest a number of things that could serve to make this process easier.

Response

All the undertakings to prevent discrimination against non-Western speakers, whilst being necessary and useful, will not change the minds of all biased individuals. As such, it is important that tournaments and the debating community as a whole respond decisively to discriminatory behaviour when it occurs.

Of those who reported that they had been a victim of discrimination, a mere 13 per cent reported seeking help from tournament equity officers or adjudication core members. Those who chose not to come forward cited reasons such as:

- Believing those individuals had more important things to worry about/it did not warrant reporting.

- Being afraid of the embarrassment or potential repercussions of coming forward (many explained that the 'perpetrators' had been on, or closely associated with members of, the adjudication core).

- Having concerns about their capacity to 'prove' what happened.

This is a startling statistic and suggests that current measures are insufficient. It is clear that tournament authority figures need to make an active effort to create an environment where people are comfortable coming forward and action is taken. Over 50 per cent of respondents who did seek out official assistance reported being unhappy with the outcome, suggesting that penalties were rarely applied. It was widely felt that perpetrators of discrimination 'got off scot free'. One survey respondent praised the actions of a particular Australs adjudication core member who, upon being asked by a judge to "stop watching ESL rooms", told that adjudicator that such a request was unacceptable. The judge was demoted from a chair to a trainee for subsequent rounds, and the respondent reported being amazed that such an action was taken. Rather than being an anomaly, it is important that this kind of response become the norm. There is nothing more demoralising for a victim of discrimination than to see the person go on to watch top rooms and break with seemingly no consequence for their bad behaviour.

This perceived (and actual) lack of recourse ensures people do not come forward when they face discrimination, thus continuing the cycle of underreporting that obscures the severity of the problem.

Another critical change that equity teams in particular need to make relates to their immediate response to complaints. A significant number of respondents agreed or strongly agreed (32 per cent of ESL and 48 per cent of EFL respondents) with the statement "you were told that discrimination was being used as an excuse for your/someone else's poor performance". The default presumption must change from a mindset that says non-native speakers are worse at debating and use discrimination as justification for their poor performance. The presumption should instead be that there may be legitimate grounds for a complaint, and as such all complaints warrant follow up.

Conclusion

As I near the end of my competitive debating career, I cannot help but reflect of what an amazing set of experiences and opportunities this activity has given me. None of what I have written above should be taken to mean that I regret my participation, or that debating is unfixable. However, I do believe it is incumbent upon every individual who feels lucky and privileged as I do to make an effort to extend that feeling to as many people as possible. There is no doubt that as it stands, individuals from a non-native English speaking, minority cultural, or religious background do not have the same chance to achieve and feel the sense of accomplishment they deserve. This is a state of affairs that we should all regret and commit to change.

ROOTING FOR THE HOME TEAM: ADJUDICATOR'S BIAS FOR COMPETITORS FROM THEIR OWN GEOGRAPHICAL REGION

By analysing the composition of judging panels and outcomes of rounds, this article demonstrates and discusses an bias toward teams from one's nation.

KATE FALKENSTIEN

I've heard people say that the World Universities Debate Championships is "the Olympics of debating." I know I, for one, have never felt as patriotic watching archery or curling as I have pounding on a desk in an auditorium at some faraway university. Each year, I pack up my grandfather's enormous flag and fly across the world, chanting patriotically on break night, waving my flag in the final round. And while there is nothing wrong with allowing a thousand nerds a week of patriotic honour, I began to wonder whether we are fully capable of turning off that patriotic allegiance when we enter a round as a judge. Can we ever be truly impartial? Or, subconsciously or not, are we always rooting for the home team?

Judge Nationality Affects the Outcomes of Outrounds

For the purposes of this analysis, I examined three regions: North America, Europe, and Australasia. I defined a team's home region by which continental championship it would attend (NorthAms, Euros, or Australs), and judges' home regions by the teams for which they most frequently competed in British Parliamentary debate[1]. I looked for whether the regional composition of panels correlated with the outcomes of rounds, and found that in early outrounds, a team has a better chance of advancing if there is a judge from its home region on the panel. Three major patterns emerged.

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1. Although these regions are fairly broad, there are substantial trends even based on these broad groupings. Furthermore, breaking regions down into subgroups (separating continental Europe from IONA and Asia from Oceania) did not lead to a different result in any measure reported in this article.

First, a team is particularly advantaged by the presence of an independent adjudicator[2] from its region on its panel. While most judges in outrounds were selected through the independent adjudicator process, institutional adjudicators were brought by teams or the host university. For example, in partials, octos, and quarters at Berlin[3], 23% of judges were institutional adjudicators. There are a number of reasons why these judges provide less of an advantage than an independent adjudicator: they may be afraid to challenge the views of more established judges, and other judges on the panel may be less likely to listen to them. Whatever the explanation, the data shows that the presence of a regional independent adjudicator ("regional representation") is especially advantageous: only 21% of teams with no regional independent adjudicator on their panels advanced, compared to 52% of teams with one regional independent adjudicator and 60% of teams with two or more, $X^2 (2, \text{N=80}) = 6$, $p = .05$[4].

Second, there is a particular advantage to having *disproportionate* regional representation on a panel. That is, teams are most likely to advance when the panel has judges from their home region but not from their opponents' region(s). Some rounds, especially when all the teams are from the same region, are judged exclusively by judges from outside that region; that practice doesn't uniquely disadvantage any team. However, when teams come from different regions and the judges on the panel are disproportionately from one of those regions, their chances of breaking differ drastically. Across Berlin and Manila partials, octos, and quarters, in rooms with at least two judges from one team's home region and no judges from another team's region, the "well-represented" team advanced 64% of the time and the "unrepresented" team only 20% of the time, $X^2 (2, \text{N=50}) = 9.93$, $p = .002$. This discrepancy is even more extreme when there are two *independent adjudicators* from one team's home region on the panel. In that situation in Berlin, the "well-represented team" advanced 72% of the time, while the "unrepresented team" advanced only 16% of the time, $X^2 (2, \text{N=50}) = 15.91$, $p < .0001$.

Third, underdogs benefit particularly from being judged by adjudicators from their region. The odds of upsetting a higher-seeded team are better with regional judges present on the panel, especially regional independent adjudicators. Analysing all outrounds through quarters in Berlin and Manila together, a team not seeded to advance did so 40% of the time when there was at least one judge from its region on the panel, but only 25% of the time when there were none, $p = .55$ using Fischer's exact test. This effect becomes marginally significant when examining the presence of *independent adjudicators* (and

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2. Independent adjudicators are judges selected for subsidisation by the adjudication team based on their experience speaking and adjudicating. In contrast, institutional adjudicators are judges brought by the competing univiersities.

3. When analysing the effect of independent adjudicators, I included only data from Berlin, because Manila did not publish a list of the independent adjudicators it selected.

4. A p-value reflects the probability of obtaining a result in a sample even if it were not true in the greater population, considering the size of the sample and the extremity of the result.

thus, only in Berlin, since Manila did not publish a list of independent adjudicators). A team not seeded to advance did so 45% of the time when there was at least one regional independent adjudicator on the panel, but in no cases where there was no regional independent adjudicator, $p = .09$ using Fischer's exact test.

Chances of Advancing for Teams with 2+ Regional Independent Adjudicators in Berlin Outrounds, by Opponent Representation
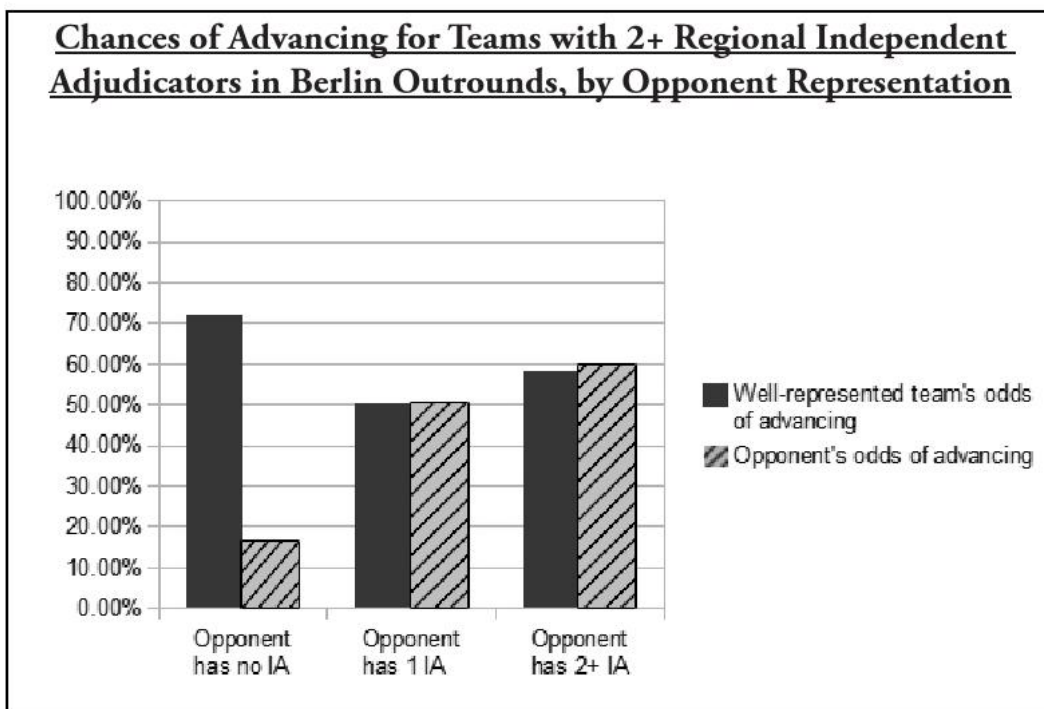
This Bias Primarily Benefits European Teams and Handicaps North Americans.

The benefits of overrepresentation are not evenly shared by teams from all regions. Some regions consistently have many regional judges on panels, and some very few. In total, across all partials, octos, and quarters in Manila and Berlin, the teams were 40% European, 39% Australasian, and 21% North American. In the same period, the judges were 48% European, 35% Australasian, and 17% North American. Although this overall representation is roughly proportional, the allocation of judges benefits teams from certain regions in two important ways.

First, teams from certain regions are much less likely than teams from other regions to be in a room with no regional judge. Across all partials, octos, and quarters in Manila and Berlin, only 5% of European teams were in a room with no European judge; but 18% of

Australasians and 31% of North Americans had no regional judge. Judges from certain regions are often allocated to rooms with no teams from that region. This trend was particularly pronounced in Manila: that year, North American independent adjudicators judged just four times in octos and quarters combined, but there was a North American team in the room only once.[5] Yet both North American teams in quarters, and four of the six North American teams in octos, lacked a single North American judge on their panel (let alone a North American independent adjudicator). All told, 75% of North American teams in outrounds in Manila had no regional judge on their panel, as did 45% of Australasians but just 13% of Europeans. Similarly, the one South African team to break in the last two years (in Berlin) lacked a regional judge on its panel even though African judges were judging other rounds. Thus, even when judges from underrepresented regions are breaking in proportion with teams from those regions, those teams are often not judged by those judges.

Second, the problem of *disproportionate* representation on panels tends to affect some regions much more than others. As discussed above, the effect on the result of the round is most drastic in a room where one team has two or more regional judges and one has none. Of course, this might be less alarming if regions were evenly advantaged and disadvantaged, but they are not. Of the rounds in Berlin and Manila at Berlin that followed this pattern, 57% of the overrepresented teams were European and 43% Australasian – not a single one was North American. Of teams benefiting from two *independent adjudicators* in Berlin, 78% were European. In contrast, 55% of the teams with no regional judges in these rooms were North American, 9% African, 27% Australasian, and 9% European.[6] A Fischer's exact probability test of this distribution shows that it is extraordinarily unlikely that such a pattern is due to chance ($p = .0001$). Thus, although the overall proportion of judges from each region is not egregiously out of line with the proportion of teams, the allocation of these judges works to the benefit and detriment of certain regions much more than others. When European teams lacked a judge from their region, it tended to be when they were in an entirely European room – they were not comparatively worse off than their opponents. But when North American teams lacked a judge from their region, it was never when they were in an entirely North American room, and they were unusually likely to be facing a team that did have substantial representation on the panel. Thus, even if the overall judge break was proportional, the distribution of judges between rounds put the brunt of the impact of disproportionate representation on teams from just a few countries, primarily in North America.

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5. Notably, the one North American independent adjudicator who did judge an American team was also the only one who had previously debated in a community outside North America, before moving to the United States for his undergraduate studies; the country where he grew up also had a team in the room.

6. It's worth noting that the few European and Australasian teams that fell into this category were generally not from the most historically successful countries of the region – the one European team was Turkish, and one of the Australasian teams was Singaporean.

Possible explanations

The data leads to two overall conclusions: first, that teams are more likely to advance when they are judged by people from their home region, and second, that teams from certain places are more likely than others to be judged by people from their home region. What might explain these conclusions?

One possibility is outright bias – that judges consciously try to get a team from their home region through to the next round. This explanation, however, is not fully supported by the data. If judges were voting based on allegiance and not their honest opinion, it would presumably be a significant advantage to have two judges on a panel when an opponent only had one; after all, the two judges could simply outvote the lone judge no matter what was said during adjudication. But this is not what happens. While it is a tremendous advantage to have two independent adjudicators when an opponent has none, it is no advantage at all to have two in comparison to one. In the 26 matchups in Berlin outrounds where one team had two independent adjudicators and the other had just one, each set of teams advanced exactly half the time.

On the opposite extreme, it's possible that this correlation has nothing to do with bias: perhaps certain regions tend to produce more and/or better debaters, and thus also more judges. By this explanation, there are simply more talented European and Australasian judges and teams in the break, and so it is unsurprising that they tend to encounter each other more often and that their teams justifiably advance more often. However, it seems unlikely on face that debating talent is disproportionately distributed across the world; when examining a group of countries which all have top-notch universities with well-funded debating programs, it seems unlikely that some of these countries are consistently producing better debaters than others. Indeed, the data does not support this explanation. First, this account does not explain why upsets are more likely when judges judge teams from their home regions. If the effect were driven by the disproportionate debating talent in the region, it would presumably not hold for the less talented teams from that region who break as low seeds; those wins cannot be explained by a mere correlation between talent and nationality. Second, it does not explain the greater impact of regional judging when an opponent lacks a regional judge.

Rather, it seems most likely that the truth is somewhere in the middle: judges are neither consciously cheating nor perfectly neutral, and their unconscious preferences may bias them for teams from their home regions. Judges may feel obligated to at least make a case for a team from their own region (especially if they know the debaters personally), even if they are willing to be persuaded during adjudication. Or they may be subconsciously more persuaded by teams from their own regions: they might be more familiar with the arguments, speaking style, and strategic choices of such teams. When there is at least one "representative" for every team, this subtle bias is not too powerful; even if judges initially give more credit to the style they are familiar with, they are forced to

think about unfamiliar teams and listen to another judge's generous construction of their contributions. It is only when there is no advocate for one team that the bias becomes powerful – no longer just an initial intuition, but an intuition that is taken for granted as a team quickly falls out of the discussion as no one champions their cause. This explanation is less overtly sinister but just as dangerous and potentially harder for judges to correct.

Possible solutions

So what can be done to eliminate or reduce this bias? The most obvious answer is to have more judges from underrepresented regions, so that no teams face panels without a single regional adjudicator. The percentage of breaking teams from each region is fairly consistent; it would not be difficult to take representation into account when choosing independent adjudicators, just as adjudication teams typically do with other types of representation (like gender).

Of course, historically successful regions might argue that such a policy unfairly caps their numbers of independent adjudicators, by selecting less "qualified" adjudicators from less represented regions over their more "qualified" adjudicators. But this line of argumentation ignores the cyclical power of unrepresentative judging. A more "qualified" British adjudicator was more likely to have had the benefit of panels with European judges, who were in turn more likely to have had friendly faces on their panels when they won their own accolades. When the data proves that teams are more likely to succeed when judges are from their region, it's hardly fair to conclude that those successes perfectly reflect the underlying talent of the competitors.

Even if a sort of affirmative action is not warranted, the power of regional representation certainly suggests that adjudication teams should be conscious of it as they pick independent adjudicators. They should be careful to count accomplishments from different regions comparably. And they should not allow the location of the tournament (and differential travel costs) to lead to overrepresentation of the nearest judges.

Even with the same regional distribution of judges, there are other tactics an adjudication team could use to allocate panels most fairly. First, when there are a limited number of judges from a particular region, those judges should be allocated to judge teams from that region. North American judges should not be used as mere tiebreakers between two Australians and two Brits on a five-person panel, at the expense of North American teams in other rooms. It's much less harmful to have a panel with three judges from one country and two from another than it is to have a panel in another room with no judges from one of the team's regions.

Second, judges from underrepresented regions should be allocated for multiple rounds in a row if necessary. Many adjudication teams try to give judges rounds off during outrounds, but those breaks should be a lower priority than regional representation. After all, judges handle multiple rounds a day during inrounds. And the use of back-to-back rounds to facilitate representation is nothing radical; in fact, the majority of female independent adjudicators in Berlin judged two (or even three) rounds consecutively, presumably in order to foster representation on the panels. The same policy could easily be applied to judges from underrepresented regions.

Finally, if some teams must be judged by a panel with no judge from their region, the adjudication team should be careful not to put two judges from any *other* team's region in the same room. That two-to-none dynamic appears to create an echo chamber, leading to the most biased results. Avoiding that situation should be a priority; if it's not possible to remedy it by adding a judge from the unrepresented team's region, at the very least a judge with no ties to the teams' regions should be used in place of a second judge from one team's region.

In all of these strategies, adjudication teams should be careful not to rely on "token" representation from less experienced judges. A common strategy is to put one institutional judge from the region on the panel. These judges are frequently inexperienced, and understandably intimidated when they break and are placed on a panel with much more accomplished judges. Whatever the explanation, their presence leaves a team hardly better off than with no regional judge at all. If one team has two or more independent adjudicators from its region on the panel while its opponent has no representation, the addition of an institutional adjudicator raises the underrepresented team's odds of advancing only slightly, from 20% to 31%. In contrast, the addition of an independent adjudicator raises the odds to a balanced 50%. It's not enough to break judges for the purpose of "representing" teams on a panel when those judges aren't qualified – only the addition of a qualified, experienced judge creates a fair chance at advancing.

CULTURE AND ORGANISATION

MONASH DEBATING review

REALITIES OF DEBATE AS DEVELOPMENT: DISPATCHES FROM CAMEROON

An ethnographic approach to understanding extant barriers to the integration of debating societies from developing countries into the global debating community.

LILIA KILBURN

On November 6th, 2012, I picked up a copy of one of Cameroon's leading Anglophone newspapers and spotted the following headline: "As Americans Reelect Obama, Cameroonians Celeberate [sic] Thirty Years of Paul Biya." When I asked the newspaper vendor whether the publishers were making a joke about the government in the guise of a typo, he laughed conspiratorially and said "I don't know anything about that."

Following the death of Muammar al Qaddafi in 2011, Paul Biya became the longest-ruling leader on the African continent, celebrating his three decades in power on the same day Americans cast their verdict on whether or not Barack Obama deserved four more years in the presidency. The longevity of Biya's regime is partially the result of his tight controls on political speech, which are nowhere stronger than in Cameroon's two Anglophone provinces. Fearing the provinces' geographical and linguistic proximity to more-democratic and wealthier Nigeria, the government systematically refuses to repair roads near the border,[1] keeps power tightly centralized, and fills most posts with French-speakers.[2]

As James Scott illustrates in his classic works on resistance,[3] even in the most repressive societies, there is space for subtle acts of subterfuge. The insertion of an extra vowel into a headline, and with it the suggestion that citizens might berate rather than celebrate their government, is but one maneuver in the dance of Cameroon's political landscape, which alternates forays into boldness with retreats into plausible deniability.

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1. Jua, Nantang and Piet Konings. 2004. Occupation de l'espace public: Le nationalisme anglophone au Cameroun. *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* , Vol. 44, Cahier 175 (2004), pp. 609-633

2. Konings, Piet, and Francis B. Nyamnjoh. 1997. The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon *The Journal of Modern African Studies* , Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 207-229

3. Scott, James C. 1985. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1990 Domination and the Arts of Resistance. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

In step with this broader dance, debating is taking root in Cameroon, thanks to the concerted efforts of students in Dschang, Bamenda, and other university towns. In this article, I seek to illustrate how Cameroon's political and economic situation bears upon the future of debating within its borders, in ways both predictable and unexpected.

Learning to Inhabit New Moral Frameworks

I lived in Cameroon between August and November 2012, supported by a grant from the Thomas J. Watson Foundation. During that time, I partnered with the Cameroon Debate Association to hold trainings in the World Schools and British Parliamentary formats, largely in French, but occasionally in English as well. It has become *de rigueur*, among teachers, to claim that one learns from one's students as much as one teaches them, but when teaching in the developing world, this is invariably true. As I encountered the same frustrations as my Cameroonian collaborators in attempting to set up workshops (frustrations mitigated by my race, but partially reinstated by my gender) I gained profound appreciation of the structural impediments to debating in Cameroon, some of which I will attempt to catalogue here.

What I catalogue, of course, is subject to some limits of the philosophical and temporal variety that I feel obligated to mention at the outset. In *Writing Culture,* the book that heralded anthropology's postmodern turn, James Clifford notes:

"Even the best ethnographic texts—serious, true fictions—are systems, or economies of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control. Ethnographic truths are thus inherently *partial*—committed and incomplete.[4]"

Anthropological fieldwork, the discipline's "rite of passage,"[5] usually consists of a minimum of eighteen months of immersion in one's research site. Nonetheless, as an outsider who has spent substantial time among Cameroon's debaters, it seems productive to share my understanding of the context, limited though it is, as a basis for collective future engagement – with Cameroonians, but also with debaters from other less-developed countries whose perspectives and opportunities may be similarly shaped.

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4. Clifford, James. 1986. Introduction: Partial Truths." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press. p 7

5. Godina, Vesna V. 2003. Anthropological Fieldwork at the Beginning of the 21st Century. Crisis and Location of Knowledge. *Anthropos* Vol. 98, No. 2., pp. 473-487

Debate as Development

My aim here is to provide a picture, albeit an incomplete one, of the context in which Cameroonian debating inheres. In doing so, I seek to cultivate an understanding of the genuine impediments to debating that exist in some corners of the world, and spark conversation about how debaters from the global North can better engage with their counterparts from less-privileged contexts to the end of shaping those contexts--and debating itself--positively. Amartya Sen tells us that "to broaden the limited lives into which the majority of human beings are willy-nilly imprisoned by force of circumstances is the major challenge of human development in the contemporary world;" by committing ourselves to this task, our less-limited lives are invariably made broader as well.[6] In a recent Monash Debating Review article, Tim Lees submits that it would be salutary "for debaters to learn to inhabit new moral frameworks" (those he proposes include various theological perspectives as well as "the Chinese Communist Party, Bedouin tribes, or the FARC rebels in Columbia"); debate outreach provides the cultural learning on which such extensions of the form (and, though maudlin to add: of our empathy) could be based.[7]

Cameroon is ranked 150th of 187 countries assessed by the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report, in terms of the health, education, and living standards of its residents.[8] Life expectancy is on the rise, at 52 years, as is schooling, of which the average adult receives just shy of 6 years at present. An oft-cited fact by my Cameroonian friends was that Cameroon used to outrank China in terms of its development. This statistic is borne out by the data, and speaks equally to China's rapid rise and Cameroon's stagnation: China's GDP per capita grew seventeen-fold over the past 30 years, to $11,918,[9] while Cameroon's shrank marginally, from $2,046 in 1980 to $2,018 in 2012.[10] The causes of this stagnation are manifold, from Cameroon's high dependence on oil revenues to the deterioration of infrastructure on which the extraction of oil, as well as mining, forestry, and plantation cultivation depend. Exacerbating most aspects of Cameroon's economic condition, however, is its aforementioned political standstill.

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6. Sen A. 2003. Development as Capability Expansion. In: Fukuda-Parr S, et al., Readings in Human Development. New Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press. p 55

7. Lees, Tim. 2012. Theology and the Average Reasonable Person of British Parliamentary Debating. Monash Debating Review.

8. United Nations Human Development Report; Cameroon Profile: http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CMR.html

9. Weisbrot, Mark, and Rebecca Ray. 2011. The Scorecard on Development, 1960-2010: Closing the Gap? United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Working Paper No. 106

10. http://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Cameroon/indicator-NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.KD/

Most debaters are familiar with the development indices cited above, and some may possess a brief gloss of Cameroon's political history. The numbers and factoids, though, are distilled from a reality that is harder to grasp. This is where ethnographic data can prove useful. Anthropology, which is assembled through what Clifford Geertz called "deep hanging out"[11] (otherwise termed participant-observation) brings its practitioners and readers in contact with the everyday struggles of others, and draws them into the logic of their lives. Tapping into that logic, I will argue, is key to making the global debating community even nominally inclusive.

Crossing Borders

"It was so much more than I thought it would be. It gave me a sense of what my country could be. To think that we were on the same continent. Wow!"

In 2010, Emmanuel,[12] a debater from Cameroon, attended the World Universities Debating Championships in Botswana with three of his fellow students. When I met him nearly three years later, he still spoke in the most effusive of terms about the experience. For Emmanuel, Botswana provided "a sense of what [his] country could be," not only in terms of its hospitality to debating, but in terms of its general development.

Cameroon's first debating club was founded at the University of Dschang, a French-speaking university in the west of the country, in 2009. The Cameroon Debate Association, the national umbrella organization, was founded shortly thereafter. Cameroon and Rwanda were the first francophone African nations to attend the WUDC, and Cameroon the first from Central Africa. Prior to Botswana, debating in Cameroon was a vague construct, its details known only through a handful of students and professors who had seen it practiced abroad. In Botswana, the Cameroonian delegation came to understand that the activity has a complex structure and set of rules. They marveled at Victor Finkel's performance in the final as well as at the non-native English speakers from Asia who managed to express themselves in English. One such speaker told Emmanuel, "I learned English through my debate club," solidifying Emmanuel's conviction that debating could counterbalance the poor quality of English-language education in Cameroon.

When in Botswana, Emmanuel heard rumors that some teams from Australia had vacated the dormitories in favor of hotels. He didn't know if the rumors were true; if so, he found them puzzling. To Emmanuel, the notion that the university would maintain

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11. Geertz, Clifford. 2001 *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. p 107

12. In keeping with anthropological convention, and in light of Cameroon's political environment, all names in this piece have been changed.

dormitories for their students, let alone dormitories with electricity and running water, was "remarkable." Other remarkable things on the list of things he was introduced to in Botswana included traffic laws and cheese.

Toward Substantive Democracy

The strongest speaker from Cameroon received a speaker rank of 444th, and the group returned to their home country with renewed enthusiasm for the activity. Upon their re-entry, though, they were frustrated by their inability to replicate what they had seen. Debate rounds they had been advised to watch on Youtube invariably would not load in the local cyber cafes. Objective news sources remained difficult to access. Concepts they had encountered abroad, like the social contract or sanctions, often proved hard to research.

This reflects a broader reality in Cameroon: for reasons both environmental and political, information is sparse. The mildew that blankets the country during the rainy season has the tendency to destroy books, while public libraries are near-nonexistent. I joined the local private library for 2,500 Central African Francs, or around $5 USD; this was prohibitively expensive for most local students. (Many expats were members, often for decidedly non-intellectual reasons: the library was one of the only locations in the town center with a flushing toilet.) This information vacuum often begets fascinating strains of autodidacticism: One Cameroonian student I met could recite Shakespeare at great length, because Shakespeare's plays were some of the only books available in the small village in which he grew up. Alternately, it leads to a field of speech in which certain voices are artificially amplified; the in-flight literature on Cameroon Airlines is not a glossy magazine but a bilingual packet of Biya speeches.

Biya's dominance over the public sphere is replicated in miniature by the dominance of individual teachers over their classrooms. Most of Cameroon inherited an education system from French colonizers, and the French system is known for being especially hierarchical;[13] if the British coined the phrase "children should be seen but not heard," it is the French who most enthusiastically put it into practice in their schools. Occasionally, francophone Cameroonian schools decide to permit their students to speak, with uneven results. I had the opportunity to witness one such public speaking event firsthand, when I was invited to come coach debate on a twice-weekly basis at a local school. I was told that the students would be preparing a debate on the merits of traditional versus Western medicine for the school's holiday party. The result was closer to theater: teachers had written scripts for the students. As one administrator earnestly explained to me, "we

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13. Osborn, Emily Lynn. 2003. 'Circle of Iron': African Colonial Employees and the Interpretation of Colonial Rule in French West Africa. *The Journal of African History* , Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 29-50

want modern medicine to win, but not so much that it looks fake." Debate practices consisted of teachers overseeing memorization and recitation of the script, and sternly correcting students who deviated from it. One student who was to serve as an adjudicator ventured some creativity as she read from her script: "It was very very very interesting." Instantly, the teacher called from the back of the room, "No! It was *extremely* interesting!" As is often the case in nascent systems of all stripes, Cameroonians experiment with the trappings of democracy and individualistic education while remaining unfamiliar with their substantive aspects.

Members of the Cameroon Debate Association are cognizant of how distant a goal substantive democracy remains. Serge told me, "I used to want to be president of Cameroon. Then I realized I would need to throw away all of my principles to participate in politics here." Like many citizens, they have largely resigned themselves to waiting until Biya's death, which may not be long from now. Until then, they seek to cultivate in themselves a sense of what substantive democracy might entail in the region. Flaunting an official prohibition by university administrators, who are appointed by the Biya regime, on debating political topics, Cameroonian debaters hold debates on whatever they can. Topics tend toward the local: currency policy with the neighboring CEMAC (Communauté Économique des États de l'Afrique Centrale*)* countries, or the private schooling of the children of government ministers, or the salaries of national football players. The fact that debating allots equal time to practitioners, prohibits them from interrupting each other (but allows direct confrontation in the form of POIs), and remains agnostic as to the round's victor until its conclusion (rather than presupposing victors based on their status) are but a few ways in which it represents a form of speech that is genuinely different from, and more genuinely democratic than, what is ordinarily heard in the region.

Balancing Structure and Agency

Too often, as William Carlos Williams put it, "History that should be a left hand to us, as of a violinist, we bind up with prejudice."[14] When we fail to name the impediments to debating that exist elsewhere, we risk rendering them illegible, and allow those spaces to instead fill with a vague sense that debaters from less-developed contexts have been so shaped by deprivation that their lack of qualification is irremediable and to strive for their inclusion would be futile. The best outreach efforts, then, are precise about the impact of history on educational attainment, while remaining optimistic about the capacity of students to chart a different course. Such outreach may take the form of in-person trainings or outreach-from-afar, like writing or sending materials for learning key skills and running tournaments, but all should seek to acknowledge the ways in which

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14. Williams, William Carlos. 1956. In the American Grain. New Directions Publishing. p.189

both structure and agency bear on a speaker's progress.

As already noted, communications technology in Cameroon is lacking. As such, resources tailored to Cameroonian students need to be paper-based or non-bandwidth intensive. IDEA is a leading provider of free debate resources, but the complexity of their website renders those resources inaccessible in Cameroon. (The Cameroon Debate Association's vice president's effort, over several afternoons in the cyber cafe, to copy and paste some training exercises into a Word Document to make them easier to distribute, ultimately failed.) Recent efforts by the Monash University-based NGO African Voice to pen First Principles training guides geared toward the continent are commendable in this regard, both for their line-by-line breakdown of canonical debating ideas and for their simple text-based format.

Given the difficulty in accessing information from afar, in-person trainings are crucial. To date, Professor Alfred Snider and a rotating cast of characters including Joe Damiba, Kenneth Newby, Paul Gross, Patricia Johnson Castle, and Mariel Golden have held two workshops in Bamenda, Cameroon's largest Anglophone city. Grainy cell phone video taken at said workshops has become a cherished and oft-shared resource among the country's debaters. Their hunger for information sometimes manifests quite endearingly: On more than one occasion, I've heard Cameroonian debaters answer their phones with a "Snider!"—a contemporary equivalent to French Revolution-era comrades calling each other Jacques. Cameroonian students have also benefited from scholarships to attend the WUDC, not only in Botswana but also in Berlin, where they added high-speed trains and stoplights to the list of innovations they hoped Cameroon would someday implement.

Granting Access

Outreach of the more active variety is crucial because the structures that have been devised to help debaters help themselves, through competition for funding, for example, often unwittingly exclude those they are meant to assist. Cultural context impacts not only the approaches that debaters take to crafting arguments and rhetoric, but the approaches they take to structuring their local organizations and to acquiring funding. This was made clear to me as I began editing grant applications for the CDA. Asked to review an application for funding to hold the national secondary schools debating championships, which had been rejected by a major international funding source, I quickly identified the problem. Their budget would have been a generous one by American standards; when adjusted to reflect purchasing power in Cameroon, it was downright opulent.

I asked the grant-writers how they had devised the budget. "Well," one told me, "when you go to the market to sell something, you have to start with a high price, or you won't

end up with what you need. And the buyer needs to feel like they got a good price, too." They had, in short, crafted their budget in anticipation that those doling out the grants would want to haggle; it was inflation as a protective measure.

Bargaining is commonplace in Cameroon, where very few fixed prices exist. Of bargaining, anthropologists have written that it serves key social functions.[15] Willingness to negotiate with one's fellows signals that one is part of the community, and is an important sign of respect. Moreover, in a setting where the government is dysfunctional, price discrimination at the individual level is one of the only ways to achieve income redistribution. This certainly holds true in Cameroon: Paul Biya's regime has been known to levy taxes preferentially, while citizens complain that the benefits of a 19.25% VAT do not trickle down to them.

When I explained that budgets are ordinarily drawn up to reflect precise expenses in the West, my interlocutors were alarmed. They quickly saw the implications: that they may have been perceived as corrupt. Cameroon is broadly seen as a corrupt country; on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, it is ranked 144th, just behind Pakistan (139th) and only somewhat above Zimbabwe (163rd) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (160th).[16] In order to live in Cameroon, citizens must become accustomed to the possibility of greasing palms. These students spoke often of their hope that, should they reach positions of power, they would not become so hardened to Cameroon's corruption that they would simply perpetuate it.

The pragmatism of the Cameroonian approach to corruption dovetails with the Cameroonian approach to time. Visitors to the African continent often throw around the phrase "African time" to explain delays, as if those delays are somehow integral to the African mentality or landscape. In fact, the lack of timeliness in a place like Cameroon is a direct reflection of the country's lack of infrastructure. For example, public transportation, which consists of cramming as many people (and occasionally livestock) as possible into dilapidated vans (the smallest passenger, called the "petit chauffeur," ordinarily shares the driver's seat), does not run on fixed schedules. In the face of these structural impediments, it becomes a rational choice not to show up to places on time, even if one happens to have the capacity: chances are, no one else will be on time either.

During colonial rule, the struggle of the colonized to keep appointments was often cited as evidence of their moral deficiency; today, many members of the African upper crust have adopted the same stance, with Ivoirian dictator Laurent Gbagbo, for example, holding a national "Punctuality Night" at which he rewards citizens known for their timeliness

15. Uchendu, Victor C. 1967. Some Principles of Haggling in Peasant Markets. Economic Development and Cultural Change , Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 37-50

16. Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index: http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2012/results/

with lavish prizes.[17] In doing so, he deflects attention from the structural impediments to timeliness, and shifts attention back onto the individual.

Some months after concluding my stay in Cameroon, I found myself sharing a meal with an administrator of the same organization that my Cameroonian friends had approached for funding. The administrator shared a perspective on African debating organizations I soon learned was not unique: "The problem with these organizations is that they're just one guy. We can't work with them." I can attest that the Cameroon Debate Association is not "one guy," though there are good reasons why it might appear as such. For better or for worse, many Cameroonian organizations have inherited the charismatic leadership structure of their government (which may in turn be a warped version of the country's dwindling chiefdoms) and even those governed more complexly often delegate the task of communicating to the outer world to a single member, someone with better-than-average Internet access. This, coupled with their limited web presence, makes them seem suspect from the perspective of Westerners for whom everything is Googleable.

When I conveyed these comments to the Cameroon Debate Association's then-secretary, he shook with laughter. "I am impressed that I have been having all of these debate workshops by myself," he said. "I must be ready for the WUDC if I can fill all speaker positions simultaneously!" He then began signing inquiries with the names of multiple board members, and saw the rate of response increase dramatically.

New Narratives, New Pedagogies

As with so many things, the world of debate has "outrun the pedagogies in which [we] were trained."[18] Debate today requires not only new modes of argumentation, but new modes of engagement, for it to be an activity that reflects—and positively contributes to—the state of the world. At present, everything from the global debating community's words to its websites may presuppose a certain genre of eager student, one who is schooled in Western philosophical traditions and a beneficiary of the resources of a politically democratic and economically developed society. While debate's focus on liberalism may be unavoidable, for it narrows the activity's scope in such a way that clash can be achieved in a limited timespan, the fact that that is a decision and not an inevitability should be presented transparently.

More important than any single reform, I posit, would be the creation of spaces in which to examine the challenges faced by incipient debating communities. I suspect that every

17. http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/10/08/us-ivorycoast-punctuality-idUSL0762200020071008

18. Fischer, Michael M.J. 2003 Emergent Forms of Life and the Anthropological Voice. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

trainer who has worked in such communities possesses a wealth of hard-won knowledge about how to navigate them, pedagogically and practically. Students who live in them day in and day out undoubtedly have far more. Countering the current amortization of this knowledge seems central to the project of devising truly effective training programs and materials. And, on an affective level, the public acknowledgment that debaters from developing countries do not start on equal footing would be an important gesture in a community where those at the bottom of the speaker tab tend to receive very little attention, let alone appreciation. Experienced debaters' focus on narratives of success signals to their less-experienced counterparts that, until they have triumphant narratives of their own, they are better off remaining silent, or focusing only on the positive aspects of debating in their home countries. (Once, when I floated the possibility of delivering a paper on Cameroon at a conference I did not ultimately attend, one of my Cameroonian friends sent me a possible abstract that was unwaveringly rosy in its portrayal of the activity's reception and growth.) Sharing stories of failure is crucial to establishing the conditions, through well tailored education and outreach, under which such new narratives of success could genuinely grow. Otherwise, we risk emulating leaders like Biya and Gbagbo, who abrogate their responsibility for structural change by insisting on the myth of pure meritocracy.

<u>Contingency, Meritocracy, and Solidarity</u>

If Richard Rorty counsels us to take an "ironic" stance toward our moral vocabulary, reminding us that it is highly contingent and could have been radically different, we would do well to adopt the same approach to our modes of debating.[19] It is only by laying bare the forms our speech takes in this intellectual game that we can facilitate a discussion about the ends those forms of speech serve outside of the game—and the contexts which call for something different. Western countries, to some small degree, reward political speech that is lucid and forthright, whereas evasion, irony, and satire are coveted skills in Cameroon's fraught political landscape.[20] Attending to the reasons behind these differences facilitates our thinking more expansively about what speech is for : not to mimic 'perfect justice' in the detached and delimited context of a debate, but to further the laborious process of political change.

The now-infamous course of events at last year's Glasgow University Union's Ancients Debate and their aftermath are testament to the fact that debaters, who pride themselves on thoughtful and ethical argumentation, may possess collective blind spots. If GUU-Gate shed light on a blind spot pertaining to the debating community's prior and continued examination of gender issues, I would suggest that the information cited

19. Rorty, Richard. 1989. Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity. Cambridge University Press.

20. Mbembe, Achille. 2001. On the Postcolony. University of California Press.

above points to the presence of another blind spot, one created at the nexus of culture, geography, language, and class which disadvantages participation by students from places like Cameroon. Since the exhortation to check one's privilege can be just as unreflexive as the utterances of privilege that precede it, I hope I have illustrated some concrete ways in which established debaters can work to mitigate, or at least to make visible, their stronghold over the activity. If we as a community are dedicated to debate as a tool of development, this paper cautions that we should be mindful to make our resources, and through them our mindsets, accessible to all, not just to the audience we have historically assumed.

In this competitive context, there will always be friction between the meritocracy on which speaker points and breaks depend and the understanding that those who win are shaped less by what they choose than what they did not. In suspending the rhetoric of our own exceptionalism, we may come to have faith in something far more remarkable: the milieus where debate thrives against all odds. Places like Cameroon, where what is at stake in the activity's growth is especially clear, provide ample reasons to speak to, and speak through, the growing pains.

TREADING CAREFULLY: DEBATE TOPIC SELECTION IN CHINA

This article explores the tricky question of how one navigates debate topic selection within the People's Republic of China.

DAVID WEEKS
AND ZHANG CHENGMING*

Introduction

High school debate topic selection is a challenging balancing act; debate topics must generate interesting, academically-centred debates, without crossing political red lines or prodding emotional scars. This article contends that, in countries with closed political systems such as China, some topics of a political nature are either banned or exceptionally ill-advised, whereas topics pertaining to social issues often deemed too inflammatory, particularly in the United States, are acceptable.

The political and social context of any debate event must influence topic selection. This article will focus on topic selection in high school debating circuits in the People's Republic of China, highlighting the major differences in topic selection outcomes in China and the United States. The article will first discuss generalised criteria in selecting a debate topic. It will then analyse the limitations imposed by China's socio-political context, followed by a discussion of the areas in which topic selection is less constrained in the Chinese context.

It is important to note that this article does not purport to be a comprehensive review of the status of debate or topic selection in any particular country, but instead is grounded in the experiences of the authors as high school debate league officials in mainland China.

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Factors for Consideration in Topic Selection

It is generally accepted that good debate topics possess a handful of attributes. They must be academic, relevant, balanced, and palatable to observers and members of the general public.

First, debate topics must be distinctly academic and reward preparation work and strong background knowledge about world affairs. Debate topics must relate to some academic discipline, because debate teams and tournaments are often affiliated with academic departments high schools or universities. It is difficult to justify using departmental resources for something not obviously academic in nature.

Moreover, topics need to be relevant, both to the current events of the day and to the lives of the participants. Topics that are reducible to descriptive or historical statements feel overly semantic at best and trivial at worst. Topics that directly connect to the daily lives of participants or their families usually inspire passion and assist recruitment. If one wants to see impassioned debates, rather than chess games played with words, participants need to feel that there is something at stake in the debate.

Topics must also be balanced; there must be some measure of reciprocity between the affirmative and negative sides. Topics that favour one side skew the results of the tournament, often creating an unnatural concentration of participants in the middle of the pool rather than a more natural bell curve. Topics must be reciprocal, both in terms of the burden structure and the quality and quantity of substantive arguments. The burden of proof for each side should be roughly equivalent; all things being equal, if the affirmative must prove three statements and the negative only one, then the topic is likely to be structurally unfair. Time constraints and the burden of rebuttal will generate an unnaturally high number of negative wins. Topics must also have a measure of reciprocity in terms of substantive ground: the quality of arguments on each side should be comparable. It is particularly difficult to write topics with this kind of reciprocity in mind, because it is difficult to measure the quality of an argument without taking for granted a particular set of beliefs or assumptions.

Finally, topics need to be accessible and palatable to observers and members of the general public. Debate programs and tournaments depend on givers of various kinds: corporations, academic departments, student activities committees, parents, and alumni. Many of these donors do not possess technical debating knowledge or skills, and they may not be familiar with esoteric debates inside particular academic or legal fields.

Red Lines and Grey Areas: Political Limitations on Debate Topics in China

In countries with closed political systems (such as China), organisers and league officials must develop topics with an awareness of the political context in which they operate. In China, debate flourishes when it is cast as a mechanism for global cultural and academic exchange, as an opportunity for students to flourish as creative, self-expressive learners. On the other hand, debate organisations, particularly foreign-based ones, face difficulties when they cast themselves as vehicles or proselytisers of particular political or religious ideologies.[2]

In order to be seen as an avenue for genuine educational exchange rather than proselytisation, debate organisations must recognize two categories of sensitive issues: "red lines" that very few actors in China can openly cross and "grey area" topics that are uncomfortable to debate in China. Both lead to awkward or unsatisfying debate experiences. Both may trigger the cancellation of sponsorships or venues in more conservative institutions, and will almost certainly prevent any televised or national-level media coverage.

"Red lines" include the Tiananmen Square Incident of 1989[3], the independence of Taiwan, Xinjiang, or Tibet[4], a banned religious group called the Falun Gong[5], or a

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2. Deyong Yin, "China's Attitude Toward Foreign NGOs," *Washington University Global Studies Law Review* 8 (2009): 521, http://law.wustl.edu/WUGSLR/Issues/Volume8_3/Yin.pdf; Regulations on Foundation Administration (adopted by the St. Council, Feb. 4, 2004, effective June 1, 2004), art. 2, translated in LAWINFOCHINA (last visited Feb. 4, 2009) (P.R.C.). ; Liqing Zhao, Ru he kan dai zai Zhongguo de wai guo fei zheng fu zu zhi [How to Deal with Foreign NGOs in China], XUE XI SHI BAO [STUDY TIMES], http://www.chinaelections.org/NewsInfo.asp?NewsID=94532.

3. A powerful example is that, on the eve of the 24th anniversary of Tiananmen, even the words "today" and "tomorrow" were banned from Sina Weibo searches, See Jonathan Kaiman, "Tiananmen Square Online Searches Censored by Chinese Authorities," *The Guardian,* June 4, 2013, accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/04/tiananmen-square-online-search-censored

4. Sarah Cook, "The Long Shadow of Chinese Censorship,*" Report to the Center for International Media Assistance*, October 22, 2013, accessed November 15, 2013, http://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/CIMA-China_Sarah%20Cook_10_22_13.pdf; Minami Funakoshi, "In Face of Mainland Censorship, Taiwanese Revisit Reunification Question," *The Atlantic Monthly*, February 22, 2013, accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/02/in-face-of-mainland-censorship-taiwanese-revisit-reunification-question/273415/

5. Falun Gong and China's Continuing War on Human Rights: Joint Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations and the Subcomm. on Oversight and Investigations of the H. Comm. on Int'l Relations, 109th Cong. 49–50 (July 21, 2005) (Statement of Mr. Yonglin Chen, First Secretary and Consul for Political Affairs, Former Chinese Consulate, Sydney, Australia, Appendix 2) http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-109hhrg22579/pdf/CHRG-109hhrg22579.pdf

direct call for revolution or the fall of the Communist Party[6]. Although these topics are sometimes discussed quietly in academic circles or among student debaters in closed lecture halls, such discussions certainly do not appear publicly and quickly "disappear" online on outlets such as Sina Weibo, the Chinese equivalent of Twitter. "Grey areas" include the Cultural Revolution or a negative evaluation of the historical legacy of Mao Zedong[7], high-level corruption[8], maritime disputes in the East China Sea[9], and the expansion of Japan's military capabilities[10].

In the China, it is important to note that there are few official written rules concerning the content of political discussions. Rules are unwritten and dependent upon institutional and situational context. In particular, universities such as Peking University, Tsinghua University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Fudan University, and a handful of institutions in Liaoning, Fujian, and Guangdong Province tend to be relatively progressive and more permissive of sensitive motions at the tournaments that they host or attend, whereas

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6. See note 4; committee to Protect Journalists, "China Detains, Censors Bloggers on 'Jasmine Revolution', February 24, 2011, accessed November 15, 2013 http://www.cpj.org/2011/02/china-detains-censors-bloggers-on-jasmine-revoluti.php; Andrew Jacobs, "Catching Scent of Revolution, China Moves to Snip Jasmine," *The New York Times*, May 10, 2011, accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/11/world/asia/11jasmine.html

7. Tania Branigan and Ed Pilkington, "Ping Fu's childhood tales of China's cultural revolution spark controversy," *The Guardian*, February 13, 2013, Accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/feb/13/ping-fu-controversy-china-cultural-revolution; Tom Hancock, "China's Political Past Displayed under Political Shadow", *AFP*, November 3, 2013, accessed November 15, 2013 http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gsvcIrgRlslg0NqDqRh_jvQsxdpA?docId=CNG.8551f146b2f19c5aa70434d4b6f22864.ca1

8. Although discussing corruption, particularly at lower and middle levels of government is quite common, publicly discussing high-level corruption is not wise. The New York Times and Bloomberg News have faced complete blockage in China for reporting on the wealth of China's outbound Premier, Wen Jiabao and its new President, Xi Jinping. See Tania Branigan, "Wen Jiabao's £1.68bn family wealth: China furious at US exposé," *The Guardian*, October 26, 2012, accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/26/china-wen-jiabao-family-wealth-revealed; "Bloomberg sites blocked in China days after Xi family wealth story," *Reuters*, July 4, 2012, accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/04/us-china-censorship-bloomberg-idUSBRE86306820120704

9. This subject is particularly uncomfortable to debate because of the persistence of an anti-Japanese nationalism in China, which makes having a real two-sided debate very uncomfortable. It is difficult to find serious works in support of Japan's claims in the East China Sea. See for example, Japan Times, "All Chinese journalists ordered to censor supportive stances toward Japan," October 20, 2013, accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/20/national/all-chinese-journalists-ordered-to-censor-supportive-stances-toward-japan/#.UoohWGT-KLs .

10. See note 9. Also see "This House Believes," *The Economist*, September 12, 2013, accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.economist.com/news/china/21586319-some-schools-are-teaching-children-how-think-themselves-house-believes

institutions in the west and far northeast of the country tend to be more conservative.[11] The language of the debate is also immensely important: debates taking place in English enjoy much more leeway in topic and argument selection, whereas debates taking place in Chinese often use very vague or abstract topics that are not of a directly political nature.[12]

The involvement of the government in the tournament is also relevant: tournaments co-hosted by the Ministry of Education or co-sponsored by state-controlled media tend to be more conservative[13], whereas tournaments that are not televised or closely observed enjoy more freedom. The Communist Party also plays a role, since the Communist Youth League controls the approval process for student activities in all public education institutions.[14] For students without connections inside the Party, the Communist Youth League is immensely important if they hope to rise to power in China's political system or in its vast galaxy of state-owned enterprises.[15]

While some officials inside high schools and universities can override these dynamics, doing so requires considerable power and carries distinct risks.

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11. This generally mirrors geographic and historic factors: The special economic zones in Guangdong and Fujian were among the first cities in China to allow foreign people and investment in the post-Mao era. Peking University, and, to a lesser extent, Tsinghua University have generally been decidedly more liberal than the average Chinese university, with several professors expressing openly calls for multiparty elections.

12. This is perhaps self-reinforcing: debaters and observers with English skills strong enough to listen or participate in English-language debate are more likely to have travelled abroad and more likely to consume Western or foreign news and media. On the other hand, topics in Chinese language debate are often very abstract and aphoristic. For example, topics have included, "It is not acceptable to tell lies," "It is best to never jump on the bandwagon," and "It is more important to do rather than say." See http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/283347350.html

13. Generally, CCTV and the People's Daily are far more restricted than local TV stations or publications. Debates hosted on CCTV eschew all of the above-listed topics and tend towards "softer" social topics. If the Communist Youth League or Ministry of Education is involved, they often insist on approving all potential topics for the tournament or outright selecting the topic without consulting league officials.

14. Xi'an Jiaotong University, one of China's best universities, explicitly says so. Xi'an Jiaotong University, "Student Organizations," 2010, accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.xjtu.edu.cn/en/CampusLife/en19.html; See also Jonathan Kaiman, "China Keeps a Close Eye on University Students," Los Angeles Times, December 9, 2012, http://articles.latimes.com/2012/dec/09/world/la-fg-china-students-20121209

15. Former Youth League members include former CPC Chairman Hu Yaobang, former President Hu Jintao, and current premier Li Keqiang. See Cheng Li, "One Party, Two Factions," Paper Presented at the Conference on "Chinese Leadership, Politics, and Policy," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 2, 2005, accessed November 18, 2013, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/li.pdf; Cheng Li, "Rule of the Princelings," Brookings Institute Press, February 10, 2013, Accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2013/02/china-xi-jinping-li

Up for Debate: Social Issues in China

Given China's reputation for scrutiny and censorship of cyberspace and the media, few may be surprised that there are political limitations on debate topic selection. On the other hand, some social issues that sometimes are too sensitive to discuss in the United States are more acceptable in China.

First, debates about abortion and euthanasia in China are acceptable and civil, whereas these debates in the United States tend to be emotionally charged and acrimonious. In the United States, high school leagues tend to avoid the abortion debate altogether.[16] It is an issue that sharply divides Americans: debates about the subject often invoke deeply-held religious convictions and core beliefs about privacy and the relationship between individuals and the state. The debate, when it happens at all, tends to be especially bitter, even compared to other divisive social issues.[17] Yet debates about abortion and euthanasia are far more civil in China: debaters maintain mutual respect and focus on substantive arguments made. This can be attributed to different beliefs and expectations about privacy, the absence of a large, politically active "religious right" in China[18], and the One Child Policy.

Second, debates about race relations and affirmative action policies are more palatable in China, particularly when compared to the United States. The Chinese government maintains affirmative action policies for the 55 officially recognised minority groups. These minorities are exempt from the One Child Policy and receive bonuses in applications for domestic university admission and employment at state-owned enterprises.[19] Debate and discussion about the virtues and drawbacks of the system are acceptable and civil, whereas such debates in the United States can be quite uncomfortable and often involves

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16. The National Forensics League eschews the topic. See National Forensics League, "Past Public Forum Topics," 2013 http://www.nationalforensicleague.org/aspx/nav.aspx?navid=144&pnavid=227; National Forensics League, "Past Policy Topics," 2013, http://www.nationalforensicleague.org/aspx/nav.aspx?navid=143&pnavid=227; National Forensics League, "Past Lincoln-Douglas Topics," 2013, http://www.nationalforensicleague.org/aspx/nav.aspx?navid=142&pnavid=227

17. Various debates in the Kansas, Texas, and Wisconsin State Senates have been especially bitter and mean-spirited. See Dion Lefler, "Senate passes anti-abortion bill after bitter debate touching on Taliban and slavery," The Wichita Eagle, April 5, 2013, Accessed November 15, 2013, http://blogs.kansas.com/gov/2013/04/05/senate-passes-anti-abortion-bill-after-bitter-debate-touching-on-taliban-and-slavery/; Josh Rubin, "After divisive debate, Texas Senate approves restrictive abortion measure," CNN, July 13, 2013, Accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/13/politics/texas-abortion-measure/; Josh Howerton, "'Sit Down Right Now!': Wisconsin Senate Descends into Chaos During Debate Over Abortion Bill," The Blaze, June 12, 2013, Accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2013/06/12/debate-over-anti-abortion-bill-erupts-into-intense-shouting-match-on-wisconsin-senate-floor-youre-out-of-order/

18. Of course, this absence probably owes as much to official restrictions on religious organizations as it does to a lack of religiosity.

19. Barry Sautman, "Affirmative Action, Ethnic Minorities and China's Universities," *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal* 7 (1998), 77.

personal attacks.[20] These debates tend to be more bitter in the US, perhaps because the legacy of slavery and segregation complicate debates about racial politics, and because the ethnic composition of the US is rapidly changing, whereas China's has been relatively constant over the past 20 years.

Conclusion

Debate topic selection is always challenging, since topics must combine depth, relevance, balance, and accessibility. In China, leagues and tournament organisers must think carefully about China's discursive terrain. There are political red lines that one should not cross and grey areas that generally make for awkward or poor debates. On the other hand, social issues relating to abortion or racial politics are up for debate and tend to produce debates that are more reasoned and civil. China's vibrant university debate circuit and it rapidly growing high school debate circuit, the National High School Debate League of China, demonstrate very clearly that debate flourishes when it adapts to cultural and political context.

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20. Dan Froomkin, "Affirmative Action Under Attack," The Washington Post, October 1998, Accessed November 15, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/affirm/affirm.htm; Daniel Farber, "The Outmoded Debate Over Affirmative Action," *California Law Review* 82 (1993) 4; William Gibson, "The Great Affiramtive Action Debate," *The Sun Sentinel*, November 16, 1997, http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1997-11-16/news/9711150808_1_affirmative-action-preference-programs-florida-ballot

REFLECTIONS ON DEBATE DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF DEBATING SOCIETIES

Drawing on the experience of South African debate growth, this article seeks to expand upon best practices for establishing debating societies in a sustainable manner.

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1. Introduction

Since its formal inception in 1996, competitive debating in the Southern African region has grown in relative leaps and bounds.[2] Whereas initially only a small amount of universities were involved in debate events, the past few years have seen a proliferation of debating unions in South Africa and the surrounding countries. Notwithstanding this growth, as can be seen from the global rankings and performance at international tournaments,[3] Southern Africa still has a long way to go in comparison to more established debating circuits in terms of development of sustainable capacity and depth.

Adopting best practices represents one of the best ways to attain the above goals, not just in training speakers and adjudicators, but also when organising debating unions and tournaments. By institutionalising these best practices, one is able to create a platform for organic growth and development. However, accomplishing this is not necessarily as simple as adopting a one-size-fits-all approach or the models and best practices of other regions. This is, in part, due to the financial and logistical constraints that Southern Africa faces, not only for the region in general, but also at times within an institution itself. Another aspect which is intrinsically linked to this is a lack of institutional memory,

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2. It should be noted that there was competitive debating in South Africa prior to 1996, but the date has significance due to it being the year in which the first South African National Universities Debating Championships were hosted, and where the founding constitution of the South African Universities Debate Council was drafted and adopted.

3. Of the current University debating rankings, only three South African Universities appear in the Top 100, specifically the universities of the Witwatersrand (23), Cape Town (61) and Pretoria (96). Information available at http://idebate.org/wudc/rankings - Last accessed 2 November 2013

which often forces unions to repeat the mistakes of the past.

This contribution seeks to expand upon the types of best practices for establishing debating societies in a sustainable manner within the Southern African region. This submission is mostly based on observation, which are derived both from the personal experience of the author in running and establishing debating societies, as well as conversations and contributions garnered from current and former debaters in the region. I discuss aspects related to society structure, organic growth, retaining institutional memory, building support structures, improving competitive debating and fundraising and conclude with practical suggestions related to these components of debate. Throughout the course of the contribution I argue that debate societies should adopt fluid structures and that inter-societal participation should be supported as it contributes to the holistic experience of debaters and leads to a dissemination of knowledge regarding training and developmental practices. This, in turn, allows for greater growth within a local region, which allows for greater competition, ultimately leading to a higher potential for capacity development within and throughout societies.

2. Society Structure

When setting up a debating society, I argue that societies should prioritize function over form to best avoid situations in which a society becomes bogged down by its own inner workings. Accordingly, the first thing to be mindful of is the reality facing a particular university and its students. At some universities, student societies are given vast funding and institutional support, whereas at others there is practically none to speak of; some lend themselves out to a more flexible extra-curricular schedule, whereas others have to deal with the fact that their students will mostly only be on campus between the hours of 08:00 and 17:00. As a result, when laying the foundations for a society, it is not always the best idea to attempt to slavishly reproduce the methods or workings of other societies. This section expands upon best practices which seek to promote relevance and adaptability within societies.

2.1 Starting a society

When starting a society, there is no point in having an overly rigid management structure with various committees or officeholders which may create situations in which every active member is required yet potentially unwilling to hold an executive position. A more dynamic approach would be to assess how many people will be necessary for regular activities given the size and stated goals of the society. At first, all that is really needed is two or three people to communicate with and recruit members, carry out

general and financial administration, and be in charge of competitive debating aspects such as internal leagues and setting motions for practice rounds. As membership grows, it becomes more possible to have people specifically tasked with marketing, strategic development, training, and value-added aspects such as schools debating and exhibition events. Later on, there may even be a need to form sub-committees to assist in some of these aspects.

I believe that an inclusive yet critical ideology is best suited for growing a society. Due to the fact that debating seeks to promote different points of view, a debating society should accordingly seek to be apolitical in the broader sense of the word. In other words, the society should seek to take an unbiased position with regard to party-political and religious matters, and I would argue that a the founding documentation of a society should state this expressly. Any affiliation to political and/or religious societies or overt stances on such subjects will also have a direct effect of alienating potential members.[4] Bear in mind that being apolitical does not mean that structures within a society should not be democratic, or that the society should discipline or discourage members who publicly profess a particular point of view.

2.2 Formalising a society

The administration of societies differs from university to university. Accordingly, it may be necessary to draft a constitution from the start, whereas for others initially operating on a loose set of principles and best practices will be best. However, at some point in time, it does become necessary to put pen to paper. In this regard, it is important to bear certain principles in mind:

i. Determining membership, meetings, and management

The most important aspects to cover in a constitution relates to these three things. Prior to drafting a constitution, I believe that there should therefore be consensus on the guiding principles relating to these aspects. When drafting, keep in mind the following:

   i.   Who are allowed to be members? How do they become members? What are the rights and/or duties of members? Is there a cost implication for membership?

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4. Student party politics create massive ideological rifts between students who are similar for all other intents and purposes, and often conflict occurs at universities between these various parties. Recent examples include "DA Youth opens case against SASCO" (22 August 2013) and "Insults hurled ahead of Malema speech"26 September 2013 (Respectively available at http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/Politics/DA-Youth-opens-case-against-Sasco-20130822 and http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Insults-hurled-ahead-of-Malema-speech-20130926 – Last accessed on 28 November 2013)

ii. How long does membership last? Can or should membership be terminated?

iii. How often should all members of the society formally meet? What should be discussed and/or done at formal meetings? What about when a member requests a formal meeting?

iv. Who should manage the society? How should they do so? How are they appointed?

v. What should be the duties of various office holders in the society?

vi. How do we hold office holders accountable?

I find that the answers to these questions often generate further questions. With regard to meetings, I believe that frequency (insofar as it is practicable) should be strived for, as it helps in both generating interest and maintaining relationships within a society. If frequency is unattainable, strive for consistency, so that members at least know how, when, where and what to expect.[5] Covering these general aspects lays the foundation for a holistic, fluid and relevant constitution.

ii. When drafting use plain, clear language

The best practice is to clearly set out the vision, principles, practices and proposed structures using plain, unambiguous language. Keep things straight and simple and be mindful that future iterations of the society must be able to easily interpret the constitution. Forgetting this may create confusion or a situation in which a society is bound by nonsensical provisions, creating a situation in which redrafting or (even worse) a side-lining of the constitution occurs. If societies are struggling, or want to make sure there aren't any obvious loopholes in the document, it is rarely a bad idea to seek advice from a law student. If your institution does not offer law, or there are members who are law students, outside assistance should be asked for; many debaters are more than willing to provide precedents or advice for a good cause.

3. Society Growth

When attempting to grow a society, it is important to note that a focus should not simply be on size, but also on depth. In order to achieve organic and sustainable growth, it is submitted that it is much better to focus on improving the number of active members and on member retention rather than spending time and money on broad marketing which

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5. This is also expanded on below.

may not be successful. In addition, broad marketing campaigns are not always possible when a society is in its starting phases, as the manpower required for such endeavours will probably not be available yet.

3.1 Member recruitment

When attempting to recruit new members, targeted marketing tends to work substantially better in getting people who are interested in debating. People are inundated with in-your-face marketing on all fronts, and unless one has the money to drown out the others, posters have very little impact, while emails and social media invitations are often ignored unless the individual has some kind of interest or context already.[6] A cost-effective tactic is to talk to lecturers or heads of department in various fields and to ask them to assist you by giving 5 minutes of a lecture to talk about debating. Many debaters have some kind of background or interest in law, philosophy, politics, economics or history; these are the types of groups where society founders could easily convince academics to part with some time, while also being able to pique the interest of some students, emphasising both the value of and experiences gained through debating.

One of the ways in growing an interested potential membership base for the future is by marketing to schools in the university's catchment area. More established societies tend to forgo this practice, as they will presumably be involved with (or be outright running) some kind of school debating league. I would argue that constant and relevant exposure to local schools is key to promoting long-term sustainable growth in size and depth. Some schools have open content periods where they invite guest speakers or have enrichment sessions, and talking to a school to find out about running an exhibition debate to show learners the value of debating is always a great idea. Have a fun debate, not an overly serious one, and get audience members to both laugh and think. Afterwards invite questions from the floor and talk to senior learners about what their plans for university are. This exposes people to the fun and different styles of debating, and will also assist in branding the society to school debaters (who might have been considering going somewhere else or simply quitting debate after school). You can even encourage and assist these students with setting up debate societies in their schools.

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6. This phenomenon is known as "communication fatigue," and is becoming more of a problem when trying to market to and communicate with potential members. See Healy, "Communication fatigue disrupts marketing messages" (The Globe and Mail, 10 July 2012) – Available at http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/small-business/sb-marketing/advertising/communication-fatigue-disrupts-marketing-messages/article4402374/ (Last accessed 19 November 2013)

3.2 Member retention

Once a society has a steady stream of members, it is valuable to ensure that they stay involved. Constant communication with members about events, successes, and member can work very well, for instance through the use of weekly newsletters via email.[7] Beyond this, not all people who join a debating society may be interested (or at least not initially) in competitive debating and by broadening the range of activities membership retention can also be encouraged. Things such as inviting guest speakers and arranging public speaking contests, forum discussions, or philosophical groups will get people interested and help them stay involved. Hosting specialist debating events such as law, science or historical debates, is also a good way to intrigue, retain and develop members knowledgeable in particular fields of study while also serving as a gateway to expose new individuals interested in those fields to the art of debating.

When determining what to do, it's best to talk to members, to find out what they'd like to participate in and who would be able to help organise such events. Lastly, bear in mind that social interaction outside of normal activities can help build friendships and networks. Accordingly, the odd social gathering, be it formal or informal, after a debating meeting should be encouraged.

4. Accessible Competitive Debating

Whereas it is not (nor should be) the only focus of a debating society, competitive debating will most likely be the primary one. In order to run a successful league, only a handful of very basic things are needed, namely:

- Someone to arrange a venue: The more central the better. Normally it's a good idea to keep it at the same time and same place in order to be consistent and make scheduling easier

- Someone to set motions: This can either be done by a Chief Adjudicator, by a committee, or (at first) by simply randomly selecting motions from a range of online databases.[8]

- Someone to keep track and communicate: It's a good idea to draft a list of speakers and adjudicators in order to know who tends to come to debates and to even (if possible) confirm their attendance. Over and above this, it's also important to keep track of any feedback and results so as to track speaker and adjudicator development.

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7. A good example of free software to make eye-catching newsletters can be found at http://mailchimp.com/

8. A good starting point would be something like IDEA's list of Top 100 Debates (Available at http://idebate.org/view/top_100_debates) – Last Accessed 28 November 2013

Always be mindful of the realities of your campus. For some, league sessions are weekly occurrences happening at night or over lunch, whereas for others it consists of a concentrated session of multiple rounds over set weekends. Ask members about their schedules and plan and communicate well in advance. It is important to note that being structured does not equate with being rigid: some universities will have different league structures at different points in the year to accommodate the logistic constraints that a variety of students may face due to the academic calendar and other challenges. This variety makes it possible for individuals who would normally not be able to be actively involved to in fact do so.

5. Fundraising

Without funding even the best intentions and plans can never come to their full fruition. Whereas some societies are fortunate to receive direct funding and assistance from their university, for many this is either unavailable entirely or not enough to do everything necessary to run a debating society. One of the easiest and most direct ways of establishing a cash flow is to charge a membership fee. For most societies, this is standard practice, though others tend to shy away from it, presumably for fear of deterring potential members from joining. I would argue that a fee should be charged, but be set in such a manner that it both relates to the realities of a particular campus, as well as with regard to how many members a society wants or is traditionally able to recruit. I have found that charging a membership fee, however small, serves to create some form of bond and incentive for a person to be involved in order to ensure that they get what they paid for. However, given that some societies shy away from this approach, or still not raise enough, it is important to have access to and knowledge of a variety of alternate fundraising methods.

A method of fundraising that is particularly popular with more established societies is to set up an old members' network (of former debaters who have since started working) as a method to ask for donations. Whereas some individuals are able to give relatively large donations, I argue that a far more sustainable model is to ask for small amounts, which then add up to quite a sizable contribution as time goes by and the number of old members increase. Setting up such a funding model is relatively easy, as it only requires a database of members to be established for purposes of communication, and to arrange functions periodically where former members are invited to address the society, network, and reminisce. Communication in this manner also has ancillary benefits, such as the ability to retain institutional memory, as some of those members may come back for other events, and be able to provide their expertise and advice. Should a group of debaters wish to start such a programme but don't have a database of old members, most universities normally have alumni relations programmes which could be of use. In this regard, it is as simple as making an appointment, explaining what the founders wish to

do, and asking to send a message to former students should they wish to donate or get involved.

Last but not least, societies can approach companies for sponsorship. When doing so, keep in mind the following:

i. Do the research: By looking at a company's corporate profile on its website, one can glean whether it will be likely to assist projects, and how best to contact the company. If this is problematic, give the company a courtesy call, and explain to them the nature, goals and needs of the society. This type of initial engagement may help in opening doors and ensure that proposals are sent to the right individuals, rather than to a general email account. Talking to friends and former members who may know individuals at companies could also help to get a foot in the door. Furthermore, always ensure to engage and follow up in a proper and relevant manner. Some firms require all relevant information upfront, whereas others simply want to know the bare essentials at first. Also, public funding and corporate funding often have different ways of being applied for, and they have different things they want to know about. By contacting individuals beforehand, one is able to find out what is required, and provide them with the information that is most pertinent.

ii. Be specific rather than general: Most companies like to know exactly what a society wants and how they plan to spend it. In this regard, it is best to approach a company and ask for money for a specific event or project rather than with a general request. For larger projects, such as tournaments, requests can be compartmentalised by asking that a specific day/function/aspect be funded. Often companies have specific mandates when it comes to providing sponsorship, and it helps if you are able to show a company how a particular project relates to their goals.

iii. Show what the benefits are: Potential sponsors often need to show what value can be derived from their social investments.[9] It is therefore important to highlight both the potential direct and indirect benefits. Direct benefits tend to include access/exposure to students for the purposes of marketing and recruitment and tax-deductibility if one is able to affiliate with the university or register as a Non-Profit Organisation.[10] Indirect benefits normally relate to the fact that involvement with debating can be reflected as positive Corporate

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9. The new Companies Act 71 of 2008 along with the Companies Regulations, 2011 provide for the formation of Social and Ethics Committees to assess activities such as sponsorship and social investment.

10. In terms of Section 18A of the Income Tax Act 58 of 1962, most university donations are seen to be charitable and therefore deductible. For more information on registering as a Non-Profit Organisation, visit http://www.dsd.gov.za/npo/ - Last accessed 28 November 2013.

Social Investment.[11] A further potential benefit, especially with regard to certain projects such as schools or township debating projects[12] is that investment could be reflected as socio-economic development expenditure in terms of Black Economic Empowerment legislation.[13]Similarly, if a society is situated at a formerly disadvantaged university, this benefit could apply directly to the society itself. When affiliating with a particular university, be mindful of the financial oversight and administrative procedures that may be applicable as a result.

iv. Maintain a relationship: Once funding has been secured, make sure to stay in touch. Report back on the successes of the project was funded. Keep sponsors informed about upcoming or proposed projects which they may be interested in. This information will often be put to good use by the sponsor, and will help ensure that they are willing and able to assist again.

v. Don't take things for granted: From time to time, societies will receive large amounts of funding from willing companies. Firstly, it is important to note that these types of sponsorships are the exception rather than the rule, and they are often influenced by a myriad of factors, including changes in the economy, legislation, company policy, and corporate governance codes, to name a few. Even in the instance where a large sponsor is successfully secured it is still best to maintain the relationship, while also carrying on looking for alternate funding in the event where situations change.

vi. Don't get disillusioned: It is not uncommon to spend time and money on a sponsorship proposal, only to get rejected. This is a reality of life. The more one asks, the higher the likelihood that one will receive.

6. Building support structures

As a society grows and becomes more involved in competitive debating, it should seek to expand and improve its competitive edge. It is at this stage that it becomes important to put in place support structures in order to facilitate these aspects. With regards to debate development, adopting training programmes and discussion groups in order to improve speakers and adjudicators is both valuable and crucial. Fortunately, a variety of training

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11. This has become even more pertinent due to new corporate governance principles in the form of the third King Code on Corporate Governance in SA 2009 (Institute of Directors, available at http://www.iodsa. co.za/?page=kingIII).

12. Such as the TDL Project run by Ubunye at the University of Cape Town (http://ubunye.org.za/about/ - Last accessed 6 November 2013)

13. As regulated by the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003, read along with Series 500 of the most recent Code of Good Practice (GN1019/2013)

materials are available online,[14] and there are many individuals who will gladly devote their time (often for free) in order to assist with training. It is also possible to address any logistical constraints by asking individuals to videotape training sessions or to ask someone to lead an online workshop (where all that is needed is a venue, a microphone and a webcam).

An additional way of expanding both the pool of experience and potential membership is to either get involved with or set up a schools programme. As already noted, this exposes learners to competitive debating at an early age, and is a way to identify and develop talent before even getting to university, while also actively marketing to individuals who would, in all likelihood, be willing to join the society when reaching university. The best way to start off with schools debating is to contact local schools in the area to find out whether they would be interested in assistance, and whether they are already part of any endeavours to promote competitive debating at schools level. Yet again, here one should not be afraid to ask for the assistance of members from other societies for advice or insight.

One of the best ways to expand the reach of the above endeavours and cement them is to build and maintain intra-institutional relationships with various departments, units or management structures by advocating for the ways in which debating can help assist with particular stated goals of the university. Doing so could provide administrative and/or financial assistance, and most importantly will serve to generate and promote goodwill, continuity, and consistency.

Institutional memory serves as a way to identify what strategies work, and it is important to learn from past societal endeavours to ensure that mistakes are not repeated. The preservation of documentation such as training manuals, preparation materials, constitutions, committee decisions and strategic policies is very important. As mentioned above, a database of old members can also reap massive rewards. Ideally it should be the specific duty of a member of the society to start and maintain these databases. With online tools such as Google Docs and Dropbox, it has become increasingly easy to set up, convert and maintain such resources in a manner that is simple to track and transfer.

7. Inter-societal participation

One of the best ways of expanding influence is to forge strategic alliances and engage in inter-societal participation. In this regard, one should distinguish between the benefits and methods of participation with other entities within a university (intra-institutional),

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14. Available from sites such as http://idebate.org/ and, more locally http://www.youtube.com/user/TuksNationals2011/

and participating with debating societies at other universities (inter-institutional).

The benefits of intra-institutional participation include instantly expanding the potential membership pool by exposure to the members of other societies and saving limited funds by combining resources for projects. When choosing societies to pair with, it is important to abide by the principle of political, religious and ideological neutrality, as already noted. Neutral and obvious choices include societies which also have critical outlooks or try to stimulate dialogue, such as law/moot societies, language societies, and historical and philosophical societies. When approaching such societies, identify common goals and projects, and show where there might be scope for cooperation and how particular skills of members may be of assistance (even if it's just running an exhibition debate for their members about a particular topic). Be careful to overly formalise things though, it is important that one does not land up in a situation which is no longer mutually beneficial which one cannot get out of.

Inter-institutional participation helps in building relationships and a reputation within the greater debating community. It helps gauge the strength of members in a competitive environment, and can also expose them to new methods of preparation and argumentation. Organising events such as mini-tournaments against local universities can be done quickly and with little to no cost involved. It also leads to greater communication between societies, which may enable one to run joint programmes for mutual benefit. Often societies will have ideas for projects that they are not able to run on their own due to a lack of funds or manpower, and partnerships can help overcome these obstacles.

8. Conclusion

For many, competitive debate is a pervasive aspect of life. Debating enables its participants to travel the world, encounter new cultures, and to contribute to the marketplace of ideas on various levels. The South African debating context, while having its own nuanced complexities and particular constraints, is not wholly unique in the challenges it faces. While some readers of this contribution may feel it is nothing more than a restatement of common sense, I would argue that formal publication creates the foundation for retaining institutional memory which can be truly useful to new societies, or could help other societies to reflect on, and possibly even change, components which may be redundant or function poorly. I reiterate that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, nor is there a guarantee for successful sustainability. However, bearing in mind that contexts may differ, I would still argue that through applying and testing the mettle of guidelines such as those found in this article, one can expand on the knowledge base of societies, in the strive for holistic improvement.

'YOU DON'T BELONG HERE': THE CHALLENGES OF THE SMALL SOCIETY ON THE GLOBAL DEBATING CIRCUIT

Based on the experience of turning a new, unknown debating society into one that breaks a team at WUDC, this article looks at the challenges facing small societies, offering some suggested strategies to aid success.

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Succeeding as a small society in established territories

It is a time of unprecedented growth within the global debating community. In part, this has ridden on growth of university institutions, particularly within the western world. The result of this is that two tiers of institutions exist on the international stage – large, established institutions, and smaller, developing institutions. This article will consider the challenges facing small institutions in more developed communities, though one might expects similar (with greatly added) challenges to be facing debating communities in less developed circuits

It will do so by looking firstly at the specific disadvantages small institutions face, and then secondly by considering possible methods for combating these disadvantages. The aim of this article is to both draw attention to systemic challenges for the global community of smaller societies, and specifically assist small societies in their development.

A Background: The Griffith Story

In providing this critique, I will draw heavily on my personal experiences being involved with the Griffith Organised Debating Society (GODS).

When I first became involved, our society had existed since about 2000, and had 'died' twice. It 'died' again in my first year, leaving a small bunch of us to restart it from scratch.

In the first two years, we did not attend any debating tournaments outside of our own and the occasional University of Queensland Debating Society (UQDS) internals, as getting to tournaments in Australia is quite expensive and difficult. It was not until our third year post resurrection that we attended Easters, the Australian Championships – a Pro-Am tournament. At that tournament, we had four out of our six teams (including my own) finish in the bottom ten.

Not perturbed by this, we then sent two teams to the Australasian championships, where we lit approximately nobody's world on fire (my team was zero from five until swine flu turned up and took out my teammates). In the following five years, we have steadfastly improved, culminating in our membership growing from seven members in 2007 to over 80 members, and breaking at a range of tournaments - most notably our quarter-final appearance at the WUDC 2013. We have further been successful hosting Easters, and plan on hosting Australia's first Harry Potter IV next year. During this journey we have had (and continue to make) many mistakes and often try things that do not work. My below commentary largely reflects lessons from this development.

A small institution – some systemic disadvantages

Training

Firstly, and most obviously, small institutions struggle with simply receiving consistently good feedback. This occurs both through misinformation, or partial information, being given to small societies, and the lack of regular feedback to develop and learn.

This being said, these sort of issues are being addressed quite aggressively on the debating circuit. Videos of high quality debates are now readily accessible on Youtube, university websites, and debatevideoblog.blogspot.com. Debating should be applauded for the commitment is has taken to the free sharing of information, and small societies most definitely should use it. That said, having people who have succeeded who can interpret and prioritise that information for teaching is invaluable, and missed by smaller institutions.

Internal Culture

However, the real issues with small societies are, I think, far more subtle. The first of these is the challenge of building a successful culture. Young societies often find it very difficult to establish, week in week out, a product that people want to participate in. This is partially due to a difference in standards within the society – a small group of more advanced debaters end up spending all their time and resources simply running the club and training, rather than debating. This is juxtaposed with often brand new novices

who have never debated before. When a society is young, there are often only one or two rooms per night, meaning that these debaters hit each other. Usually, this is good for nobody. The newbies feel as though they will never improve because they are getting crushed every week, and the more experienced debaters feel as though they are getting nothing out of debating. This leads to people turning up actively not wanting to debate, and the better debaters burning out, rather than developing for personal success.

External Culture (Circuit Culture)

For those experiencing university debating for the first time, the debating culture can be lonely, aggressive and intimidating. To a large extent, this is to be expected and consistent with any activity. Debaters have their own language, customs and history, and understanding and becoming a part of this discourse is obviously difficult and takes time. Small institutions in particular are vulnerable to exclusion in this regard. Larger societies then have a big advantage in that they simply feel comfortable when travelling, and often have more people at events to facilitate that culture.

High School Development

A further issue is the quality of debates that newer, younger debaters get. Perhaps the most undiscussed barrier to the success of smaller societies are the skill levels of individuals who do join. Larger societies have breeding grounds within high schools. They run schools programs, coach the best teams and are usually the more prestigious universities to begin with. This means that overwhelmingly, the quality of young talent coming into these universities is much higher. The University of Queensland, our neighbours, for instance, have complete control over the High School Debating circuit - coaching the most successful High School teams, running the High School tournaments and holding all executive offices in the organisational arm. This is a credit to that institution, which has developed debating in Queensland to a high level. The natural result of this is, however, that with their prestige already an advantage, the debaters that turn up to UQ are ready to go experienced debaters. Contrariwise, Griffith usually has people trying debating for the first time. As one former president said, "we spend most of our free time trying to make brand new debaters moderately better". This means that it is far harder for smaller institutions to find success on the circuit. New debaters see that they are competing with debaters who, while also in their first year of university, have four years of debating experience behind them, and realise they will likely never achieve that sort of success in the three year degree they committed to. And they are probably right: those that do commit to debating are often never able to really catch up to the development of debaters coming out of these high school channels.

Retention

For a young society, the retention of any member is like striking gold. When you have 20 active members, not having one of them at a meeting is felt quite aggressively. As such, it becomes very difficult trying to provide a custom experience for every member that walks through your door – you can't afford to have an attitude of 'if you don't like it, leave' – because you do not have a large enough critical mass to sustain losses.

Retention is also difficult in circumstances where young debaters begin to attend tournaments, and find themselves horribly outclassed. Occasionally, this will drive a debater to become better. Often, it just leads them to give up.

Funding

Lastly, small societies generally have to pay for everything themselves. This makes sending people to tournaments and developing them difficult, as well simply being competitive on the circuit.

Developing a Society – Some Hints

Given the challenges outlined above, the next section is designed to provide some hints for overcoming these challenges. It will furthermore consider the decisions that small societies often have to face, and mistakes that I have seen and made before in my own societies' development.

Development vs. Events

In their early years, societies find themselves facing a choice when attempting to construct their own identity. The balance between trying to develop stronger debaters, and trying to find acceptance through other means – usually hosting events - is a tough calculus to get right. Often, small societies err too much on the side of facilitating events, at the expense of developing their speakers' talents. This is often justified as trying to bring in members, or trying to gain community acceptance.

At Griffith, we had two years where we put on over 8 events per year – comedy debates, show debates, charity fundraisers – you name it. Most of these were quite small and moderately successful at best, but we genuinely believed that this was the metric of success of a debating institution. At the same time, our results went definitely backwards, as our

more successful speakers spent their time organising events rather then actually debating. If you want to be a show society, then that's great! But do not forget to develop speakers.

Developing Speakers

More than anything, small societies simply need dedicated speakers. It is important to remember that you cannot simply 'coach' someone into being a good speaker – they have to want it, and they have to work hard at it.

Good speakers have three essential qualities – (1) they have developed a manner that allows them to carry the floor (2) they have practiced the skill of being able to think through arguments in their head – that is to say, they can link arguments without the need for a large amounts of notes (3) they have a 'store' of arguments in their heads that they apply to debates.

Here is the secret – few to zero people are born with the understanding of feminist, war, consumerist, economic, government etc. theories, all rationalised in their heads. The best debaters are simply very well-read for a start, and secondly have a 'store' of debates in their head.

To get this requires work. It requires working your way through persuasive arguments you have heard, analysing how great debaters have gone about their arguments. What were the logical arguments that were made? How did they characterise a certain issue or stakeholder?

Getting good at debating goes through phases: (1) know nothing (2) begin parroting better speakers – using "template" arguments to explain your ideas (3) get comfortable with those templates to the point where you can add ingenuity into them without compromising the underlying structure. Make sure that speakers are constantly working through these phases, and your society will build with them.

Developing a Culture of Success

Internally

Given that speakers only improve when they are dedicated, a culture that supports that needs to be developed. As flagged above, some societies really struggle with the varying expectations of speakers, given they have so few.

My suggestion is to work hard to take your internal practices seriously. When you are

debating the same group every week, it is easy to go through the motions week in, week out. In the long term, this is a very damaging practice. It stops people working to get better, and it stops people who are keen from getting really involved.

This often starts from the attitude of the leaders and more experienced debaters. If the top debaters in the room look like they want to win, others in the room develop the same attitude. Other initiatives that may help are having a 'top room' which people can work towards, or bringing in high ranking adjudicators to judge - because no-one wants to mess around when reputable people from other institutions are around.

Your culture of success starts with a club dedicated to actually wanting to work at getting better. Obviously, not everyone in your society wants to turn debating into a real pursuit- and that is fine. But without a nucleus of people taking it seriously, the society cannot hope to succeed.

Externally

In addressing the issues with fitting into the wider culture of university debating, it is important to find security within the broader culture of debating. First and foremost, where possible try to travel in a contingent. This allows you to have some security and to be able to relay experiences with each other.

Secondly, find at least one other contingent to be friends with. Small institutions should stick together – it is amazing how much easier a tournament is when you have at least one other group of people to share it with.

Using Resources around You

Smaller societies have large societies around them. It is important to use them for a number of reasons:

a. Allows your stronger debaters to get better.

If you are struggling to strike a divide between training novices and building your stronger debaters, sending a contingent to another society allows these debaters to work together to build on their skills, while taking on more facilitative roles within their own institutions.

b. Builds culture

This in turn allows you to keep driving people to get better. When you are debating in a larger society, you are more driven to succeed because you are debating unknown people in unfamiliar rooms.

c. Contacts

It is lastly beneficial because it helps you to meet people outside of your own institution, and to be able to gain access to the training and resources of that institution. It is most important then to develop relationships, first and foremost, with the institution closest to you.

Break Into Feeder Systems

It may be that for small societies to grow, they require forethought in how they create development programs in high schools. This may require some give and take with established institutions, as well as looking at schools that are not coached or fall outside of the established system, offering to coach these schools. Your university's success can be partially defined by the quality of novices, so work hard at that level.

It's All About the Money

Small societies are usually reliant on funding from their University. This is a precious resource, and there is a finite amount of goodwill that can be tapped. As such, it is important for money to not be spent recklessly. Conventional wisdom is that money gets put into sending people to tournaments, and this largely holds true. Some believe that funding the larger tournaments is better – instead of wasting your money on novices who often never come back. I believe a mix is good. You can never tell who your next core members are going to be, and so enticing people with the opportunity to see a tournament is the society's best bet of keeping them.

Importantly, tell the University of your successes – build them up. Tell them about how many members you were able to send, build up the importance of debating as an activity, and definitely trumpet when people make finals. Show the University that your society is a sound investment. We were able negotiate higher funding by offering to do events for the university such as holding show debates. In short, building trust with your institution, and constantly building up your successes make your institution more likely to fund necessary activities.

Conclusions for Small Societies

It is important to be focused on growing the society. This requires a lot of dedication and hard work, and to not be distracted from the primary goal of the society – to get good at debating. Use the structures in place and develop from the inside, and your society will likely establish itself into the longer term.

Conclusions for the Debating Community

Small societies struggle to gain a footing for a number of reasons. But for debating to continue to be a valuable product and worthwhile endeavour, we need to see these societies develop. Larger institutions will need to share the resources they have developed, and understand the difficulties both on the circuit and in speaker development if small societies are to thrive.

COMPETITION AND REFORM

MONASH
DEBATING
review

ABOLISH SPEAKER TABS

A bold case is made that speaker tabs ought to be abolished, as they are both a poor metric and create a bad incentive structure.

MARIA ENGLISH AND JAMES KILCUP

At the end of a tournament on the British debate circuit several years ago, fortuitous interior architecture at the finals venue made it possible for the Chief Adjudicators to drop printed speaker tabs from a balcony onto debaters waiting below. Like manna from heaven, the tabs fell into the outstretched arms of speakers who eagerly pored over the sheets.

Many debaters invest a lot of importance in the individual speaker tab; so much so that its importance rivals team outcomes for some. It is therefore important to question the actual value and utility of the speaker tab to debating.

Reward systems in competitive activities should aim to improve the activity's quality and fairly reward excellence. Speaker tabs are particularly bad at both of those things and so we would not regret their passing. First, we argue that speaker tabs are a deeply and irretrievably flawed metric. Second, we argue that speaker tabs create the wrong mix of incentives, which detracts from the quality and enjoyment of competitive debating as an activity. Finally, we will consider some possible objections to our proposal.

Bad Metric

The primary goal of giving awards at competitive debate competitions is to weigh the relative merits of the competitors and reward their excellence. Because we participate in an activity that is (correctly, we think) viewed as a signal of one's ability to perform in various professional activities (academia, business, law, activism, etc.) these awards can also be important for individual debaters in their professional aspirations. Competition also requires a basic sense of meritocratic fairness. The integrity of competition is weakened when participants perceive the competition and its awards to be based on arbitrary or unfair methods.

For many reasons, the method by which speaker awards are assigned is pretty hard to

describe as fair. There are two forms of criticisms we will advance, those flaws that are essential to awarding speaker points, and those that are incidental (i.e. possibly resolved in particular instances) but common enough to warrant concern.

First we need to ask: what is a conscientious judge looking for when allocating speaker points? A judge might try to abstract from the content of the debate and ask simply: who spoke best? This is tremendously flawed. Evaluating speaking as an activity distinct from the content of the arguments advanced turns the attention of the judge away from the most important aspect of debating: the exchange of ideas. Such an approach also will tend to focus on highly subjective aspects of performance—the quality of someone's vocabulary, the origin of their accent—markers of perceived sophistication and presence that are substantively unrelated to the quality of their arguments. The focus on these aspects of speaking need not be biased against already disadvantaged speakers, but likely retrenches those subconscious preferences nonetheless.

Let's suppose instead that our conscientious judge asks: which speaker most persuasively advanced their case? This too becomes complicated, as it requires weighing other nebulous factors such as role-fulfillment, the quality of rebuttal, and the weight of new material. Is it more persuasive to effectively summarise a round as a whole or to introduce and effectively make the best argument for your bench? Probably the latter, but if that is the case the judge privileges member speeches in principle over whip speeches. Additionally, there is always the danger of misplacing credit based on *when* a strong argument emerges. Judges have no way of knowing which partner on a debate team formulated the argument, only which debater delivered it first. Frequently, so long as the initial formulation of the argument is not markedly deficient, the first speaker to advance a key argument is associated with that argument. Speaker points allocated on this basis favor first speakers without being able to discern genuine responsibility for argument creation.

The reliability of speaker scales is also undermined by the frequent absence of a direct comparison of speakers. At large tournaments with a limited number of preliminary rounds (such as Oxford, Cambridge, Yale, Hart House, etc.), speakers in the top-10 frequently have not had a single round competing directly against one another in the tournament. This means the comparative between these speakers is based on performances against different opponents in front of different judges.

These reflections suggest that, because of the nature of WUDC format debating, its roles and manner of preparation, as well as the ambiguity of what a speaker is to be rewarded for, the task of accurately assigning speaker points to individuals is almost impossible to do, even by the most insightful and well-intentioned of judges. These issues are problematic regardless of practical matters such as the quality of judges and community practices surrounding speaker points. Now we'll turn to the way in which these scores are assigned in practice. The first is the problem of standardization, the second, of time constraints.

The tool used to solve the standardization problem, speaker scales, has been ineffective. The truth is, judges from different regions and from different eras have different conceptions of what an 80 is, and getting all of these individuals to consistently apply a single standard is nigh impossible. In the U.S. for instance, we've noticed that judges are extremely reluctant to give speaker scores above 80, while in the Canadian BP circuit, in response to speaker point inflation, there is a decided effort (at least present in the recent North American BP Championships held at Hart House) to bring speaker scores down. The consequence of such differences is that debaters' speaker scores—relative to the rest of the field—are inflated or deflated based on the random allocation of judges to their rooms.

Secondly, and perhaps more damningly, precious few moments are actually spent discussing speaker points by adjudication panels, and to the extent that there is a conversation, it rarely touches on the topics that would be necessary for determining who deserves credit. The vast majority of the time spent in an adjudication is rightly focused on the placement of the teams in the debate, and only at the very last moment does the adjudication turn to speaker points. Even then, the conversation is constrained by the fact that each speaker's individual points must add up to a number that corresponds to their team's placement in the debate. A discussion of the team's respective ranking is, by its nature, distinct from an examination of each respective speech. In reality, that discussion rarely happens. Speaker points are assigned within seconds after the panel vaguely agrees on which of the two speakers was better. To assign more time for speaker points would mean either less time focused on a comparative discussion of teams (an obviously unacceptable outcome) or more time allocated for adjudications. The latter option might be acceptable were in not for the cascading problems tournament organizers would face by adding an additional 5-10 minutes to adjudications for speaker point deliberation.

If these were the only problems with the fairness of speaker points, and if they could plausibly be resolved through a reform, then perhaps we would advocate for reform of speaker points rather than abolishment. Neither of the types of issues mentioned above, however, appear likely to go away.

Bad Behaviour

As well as fairly rewarding excellence, reward systems should aim to improve the quality of the activity in question. So how do we measure quality? Presumably, 'good debating' is that behaviour which best enables participants to achieve the purpose of the activity in which they are engaged. Though there are many reasons why people debate, it seems safe to say that the main purpose of competitive debating is to win debates. Performing well

as an individual speaker is also important, but subsidiary to the main task; in the 'game' of debating, it is teams rather than individuals who win. This is clearly reflected in the fact that, as previously mentioned, judges rightly spend far more time deciding who won a debate than choosing which speaker was best.

Thus, a good regulatory system should align the incentives of debaters towards this kind of behaviour. By the same token, a bad regulatory system would be one that incentivizes debaters to behave in ways that hinder effective team performance. So what role does the speaker tab play? It is not essential to the effective functioning of the activity of debating; speaker marks are not used to determine the outcome of debates, and they are not necessary to resolve tabbing issues. The only necessary function they play is in breaking ties between teams on the same number of points. For this reason, we second Doug Cochran's recommendation at the 2013 World Debate Forum of assigning team "speaker points" that assess the overall quality of the team's effort on a 50-100 scale. Unlike assigning individual speaker points, this decision by the adjudicators would flow naturally from their discussion of the quality of the teams in the debate.

What the speaker tab does, in theory, provide is useful information for individuals about their own speaking performance and reward for speakers who perform well. This should in turn encourage individuals to become better debaters, and give them signals to guide that improvement, thus enhancing overall team performances.

But in practice, this doesn't happen.

1. It encourages excessive individualism at the expense of the team activity.

Debaters have very scarce time, both during preparation time and in their speeches, and a limited range of strategic options. Operating from 'win the debate' logic, the incentive is to share your best ideas with your partner and to allocate scarce time to building the strongest possible team case, even if that requires giving your partner the best material.

What happens when you introduce the speaker tab into the mix? The speaker tab is an exhaustive system; it directly compares every speaker in the tournament. Because it allocates an explicit ranking to every speaker supported by numerical data, it gives the false appearance of creating fine differentiations in performance. So long as one considers speaker scores a somewhat accurate measure, a speaker's specific location on the tab signifies something important about their performance relative to the rest of the field. The effect of this is to place all speakers in competition with each other, including their own teammates.

The speaker tab creates perverse incentives and distorts 'win the debate' logic, because

the tab will not give you credit for anything that is not in your own speech. In the worst cases, that means keeping good points for yourself rather than sharing them and stealing arguments your partner was supposed to deliver. More subtly, the speaker tab incentivizes the wrong 'at the margin' decisions. To do well on tab, it makes sense to allocate scarce preparation time to developing your own material, and use your speech to strategically build your own arguments rather than to either lay groundwork for your partner, or make the arguments they have already given look stronger. Because this effect is subtle, it is difficult for speakers to self-monitor or to identify when their partner is not being a fully effective team member.

Despite debaters' best efforts, the speaker tab ensures the spectre of competition always remains between teammates. Amongst the higher-ranked teams, it is competition to be shown by the tab to have been responsible for a greater part of the team's success than your partner. Amongst teams that look unlikely to break, beating a partner on tab becomes something of a consolation prize that is still within reach even when a break round is not. This competition is poisonous to the team dynamic, and counter-productive to the main purpose of debating, which is to work effectively as a team to win. Even if speaker scores were fairly objective, well standardized, and decided after some reasonable discussion of each person's speech, this would be something to worry about. Given the scores are none of those things, there is even less justification for actively making it harder for teams to work together.

2. It actively deters some people from debating.

Our experience suggests there is a point somewhere down the tab where rankings begin to be a deterrent rather than an incentive to try harder.

The nature of the tab is such that for every person who does well, someone else has to do poorly. In particular, the more accolades given to those who come out on top, the worse the defeat is for those who end up on the bottom. If you have finished a tournament on only a handful of team points you will be feeling bad enough. Seeing numerical confirmation that you, personally, were the worst speaker in the whole competition takes the signal of failure to a whole new level; it is an individualized, specific and supposedly objective evaluation.

This harm would be somewhat mitigated if it were the case that younger and less experienced debaters advanced up the tab over time as they became better debaters, creating a motivational feedback loop. But that requires speaking improvements to be reflected in improved speaker tab performance. Because speaker marks are a dodgy measure, they often fail to track such improvements, particularly gradual ones, at least over the short term. There is a reasonable likelihood that people who end up near the

bottom of the tab at their first tournament will not be able to get out of the bottom quartile for their next few tournaments. Unfortunately, it is in these first tournament experiences that most people decide whether they want to dedicate a substantial amount of their free time to debating rather than something else. There is also a path dependency problem because positions on the individual speaker tab are to a significant extent predetermined by prior performance. The speaker tab creates an assessment bias whereby judges tend to give higher marks to speakers who have finished highly on tab at previous tournaments, both because they are more likely to perceive that speaker favourably going into the debate, and because if they give a previously successful speaker a lower than expected score they may well be challenged about it, whereas hitting an unknown fresher with a 67 will ruffle few feathers.

The end result is that new and inexperienced debaters who tab poorly are unnecessarily discouraged. This makes it harder for them to persevere and improve, two things which are vital to improving the overall quality of debating. This seems a high price to pay for the further affirmation of those near the top of the tab, who are likely to be winning many debates and getting positive judge feedback anyway.

3. It damages the credibility of judges.

As discussed above, the integrity of debating competitions depends on the rewards system being perceived as fair. But there is a major mismatch between the credibility of the speaker tab as a measure of debating ability, and the value attributed to that measure as a signal of status both within and outside the debating community.

It is clear that the speaker tab is not an accurate measure and that it cannot possibly yield results accurate enough to support the degree of differentiation suggested by the exhaustive list of rankings. How big, really, is the difference between the tenth and twentieth placed speaker on tab in a given tournament? There is no way of knowing, and most likely the answer would differ widely between tournaments of comparable size based on the particular speakers involved and the debates that happened. Debaters are well aware of this fact- and for any who are not, it only takes a few experiences allocating speaker marks on a judging panel to become aware that one rogue generous chair judge or a last minute decision to add on a few points here and there to 'make the scores add up' can send speakers whizzing up and down the tab rankings.

Yet it remains the case that many speakers continue to view the ranking of themselves and others on tab as highly significant, and in some cases more significant than the actual outcome of their debates. Perhaps part of the reason is that, if there is a list, it is human nature to want to be on top of it, even if the list is compiled in a way that bears little resemblance to performance. This is especially the case among the typically quite

competitive and intellectually motivated individuals university debating attracts. The boost high tab rankings give to a CV further reinforces this impulse.

A common and totally understandable response to this mismatch is exasperation. It is not clear what you need to do to get from thirteenth to fifteenth; the criteria for doing so are either ambiguous or indiscernible. Many debaters find themselves disappointed either with their overall ranking at the end of tournaments, or with their scores in particular rounds.

As well as causing much frustration, this damages the credibility of judges. Anecdotal evidence suggests that when speakers do not get the marks they feel they deserved, they more often attribute it to the bad judgment of their judges rather than the semi-arbitrary nature of the mark allocation process. It is not uncommon to hear speakers claiming that a certain judge 'just doesn't like me' or 'was too liberal/conservative/ignorant to buy my argument', whereas quite rare to hear a speaker say 'if only the judges had been able to spend more than one minute discussing my speech, they might have recognized X good thing I did' (in fact, we have never heard anyone say that). This makes sense; once you have decided you want to succeed within the ranking system, it is self-defeating to dismiss scores as something less than a valuable metric. Frustration with speaker marks can make debaters doubt that they are being judged fairly not just as individuals, but in the debate overall, and thus undermines the adjudication that really matters. It makes debates much less fun for both speakers and for judges.

A radical suggestion

The above concerns lead us to the conclusion that the speaker tab should be abolished, and replaced by a system where an alternative 'team score' system is used to resolve tab issues but not used as a basis for awards . This is not to deny the possibility that certain individuals may excel at tournaments, or that such excellence should be recognized. It is simply that speaker scores are a very poor way of identifying excellence, and they actively encourage people to debate worse, give up debating and doubt the fairness of their judges.

Possible Objections

1. People don't care that much about how they do on tab, because they are aware of its constraints

If this is the case, then abolishing it would be unproblematic. Moreover, people do seem to care a lot. Especially for teams that go into tournaments with little chance of breaking,

the speaker tab takes on a lot of importance as an indication of success. In competitive or budget-stretched societies it may also be the case that failing to perform well on tab means not being selected for future tournaments.

2. Speaker points help speakers mark their improvement.

If the tab is not accurate, then it's not accurate feedback. You're much better off thinking of your progress as a team effort that will show up in your team ranking, and you can certainly get individual feedback from judges. Abolishing the tab might even encourage speakers to seek more feedback from judges as an alternative gauge of individual performance, and this is a far superior source of information. As discussed above, the tab can discourage new debaters from trying to improve.

3. Speaker scores are useful information for debate societies in the aggregate when making decisions on how to allocate limited resources to debaters.

If debate societies are currently making resource allocation decisions based on speaker points, the foregoing analysis suggests that they should stop, and instead use other metrics such as team success and external evaluations and feedback. The fact that such decisions are being made on the basis of speaker points also underscores the likelihood of our concerns that teammates have incentives to our-rank each other.

4. The natural incentive to win and be someone others want to speak with prevents the perverse incentive we talk about (i.e.competing against your teammate)

The fact that it is possible for people to ignore the speaker tab in favour of other, better objectives is not an argument for keeping the speaker tab, particularly because the logic of a rewards system is that people should want the rewards it distributes. As long as people want to do well on tab as well as win debate (which we contend they do), perverse incentives towards selfishness will make it more difficult to be an effective team member. The more importance is lent to the speaker tab, the harder it is for other incentives to win out.

5. Individual excellence should be rewarded.

We are not opposed to individuals getting recognition in principle. If a system could be devised for doing so that would be accurate, would not distract from the purpose of adjudications, and would not incentivize the wrong sorts of behavior, we would be in favor of it. That being said, debate is a *team* activity. Furthermore, we suspect that even if all awards are focused on teams, the individual egos of excellent debaters will likely survive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the speaker tab should be abolished. It exists to measure performance and reward excellence, but the nature of the individual scoring system and the practical reality of competitions render it a deeply inaccurate measure. It should help debaters strive for improvement, but instead it skews incentives away from good teamwork, perseverance, and credible adjudication.

Rewards based on bad maths are neither meaningful nor fair, and systems that incentivise bad behaviour are counter-productive. Far from heavenly manna, the speaker tab actively moves us away from fair, high quality debating. So let's stop dropping it from the balcony and reach for more meaningful metrics.

THE DISINFORMATION SLIDE

This article makes the case that use of Information Slides subverts the activity of debating in ways that we should be wary of.

STEPHEN M. LLANO, PH.D.

Information slides have become ubiquitous in recent BP competitions. It is becoming more and more rare, if not already impossible, to attend a BP competition that does not have at least one information or context slide. Offered by well-meaning adjudication teams, these slides intend to improve debate by expanding the range of potential motions, and improving the quality of arguments by educating debaters about where the debate lies. Both of these intents are harmful to debating.

Information slides arose to solve problems. They were created and are used by people who want nothing but the best for debate tournaments. These people are driven by a desire to have good debates. Information slides are used in cases where the motion might be unfamiliar to the debaters, or in cases where the potential scope of the debate is so broad that the adjudication core believes some context will help. It is my thesis that in both cases, debate is harmed. Information slides restrict the potential good that can come from debating, as well as harm the already good structure of BP – for one of BP's best advantages is that it provides space for debaters to experiment in argumentation and rhetoric.

Specifically, there are several reasons to reject information slides. First, they are symptomatic of a poor theory of game design. Information slides appear to be contributing in a positive way to the design of the competition, but upon closer examination they restrict the debaters, which is where the benefits of the competition arise. Secondly, they violate established rules of debating – they are not something a reasonable person would accept as a part of a debate. Finally, they harm one of the goals of offering information slides, which is to expand the attention of the participants in debating to issues they might not be aware of, and are insulting to the capacity of the participants.

We must accept that at some level, debating is considered a "game." This is because it is a competitive, structured event where those restrictions enable there to be a winner. It is not dissimilar to bridge, chess, or any other game in that respect. The important thing

here is that the rules of games are set up in order to allow for play. Play, in this case, is assembly of various strategies that attempt to achieve a desired result.

Information slides are introduced as a contribution to this strategy, but are in fact, an addition to the rules of the game. Those who offer information slides believe that the debate will be improved by the addition of elements that will focus the debate on what it 'should be about.' This desire for focus is a restriction on other possible interpretations of the motion. The players are not allowed to play on their own terms, but must follow the terms set forth in the information slide.

Information slides fit well within the theory of game design known as proceduralism. This is the philosophy that a game's value to the players is achieved only through the rules of the game. "Games, procedurally understood, convey messages and create aesthetic and cultural experiences by making players think and reflect about the very nature of the rules, in the way the rules allow them to."[1] This approach to game design sees the players as a mere 'acting out' of those restrictions:

"In essence, procedural rhetoric argues that it is in the formal properties of the rules where the meaning of a game can be found. And what players do is actively complete the meaning suggested and guided by the rules. For proceduralists, which are after all a class of formalists, the game is the rules, both in terms of its ontological definition (the what in what is a game), and in its function as an object that creates meaning in the contexts in which specific users use it."[2]

To put this into a debate context, the information slide is advanced by those who believe the value of any given debate is getting that debate "right" - it must identify and circulate around the correct clash. The information slide is warranted when the game designers – the adjudication core – feel that the benefits of debating a particular motion would be lost due to a lack of proper structure. Seen this way, information slides are a rule that must be followed in order for the game to have value.

In proceduralism, "players are important, but only as activators of the process that sets the meanings contained in the game in motion. The rules constitute the procedural argumentation of the game, and play is just an actualization of that process."[3] Once the information slide is set, the adjudication team breathes a sigh of relief. All that remains is for the debaters to act out the debate within the terms set for them on the information slide. The risk of a player playing the game wrong is minimized. The debaters wonder if they are getting the debate right by the suggested contours of the slide, not by their own means. They are secondary to this process. Like prophecy, the debaters work to try to

1. Miguel Sicart, "Against Procedurality," *Game Studies* 11, no. 3 (December 2011): online.

2. Sicart, "Against Procedurality."

3. Sicart, "Against Procedurality."

make the information slide's pronouncement of the debate 'come true.'

The problem here is that the debaters are now restricted in their ability to play. Play is where the value of the game resides, as such:

The proceduralist discourse can be said to deny the player as an individual, rather considering it as another formal element in the meaning-production system of the game. The player is instrumentally rational, engaging with play with the idea of, by being exposed to procedural rhetoric, become educated or persuaded. But play is not that simple, as play is not exclusively a child of reason. Play is activity between rite and reason, between rationality and emotion - and as such, it cannot, and ought not to be instrumentalized.[4]

All games, by definition, must have rules. The function of those rules is to permit play. Play is where the value of the game-as-action resides. When designers attempt to add rules to create value instead of a place of value, this reduces the ability of the game to generate value. In BP, information slides are an addition to to the rule that the debate must be about the motion. They attempt to correct a possible error in the derivation of value in the game by adding in more rules to an extant rule. This restricts the field of play, instrumentalizing the debate around what appears on the slide more than what appears in the minds of the debaters. Instrumentalizing the debate around the one clash suggested by the information slide eliminates the play between feeling and reason. It is here that debaters will find value in debating, it is here where we find debate to be most memorable, challenging, and fun. The rush one gets from the intellectual panic that results from engaging the unfamiliar is stamped out by the information slide. This denies the value of playing around with 'what one knows' within the confines of 'what one does not know.'

Also important is the idea that information slides violate one of BP's most cherished rules. Judging debates should be done from the perspective of the reasonable person – someone who is interested, and knowledgeable about events in the world, but holds back their own opinion about the issue until the arguments have all been heard. A reasonable person would not accept a few lines on a Power Point slide as information that must be included in a debate. Without a source, and without the normal contours that information arrives with (context, reference points, author, etc.) would a reasonable person accept this as proper information?

This would be far more questionable to such an audience than the introduction of said information by a speaker. The speaker would, as a part of normal deliberative discourse, provide context for the information such as where it was from, how we know it to be believable, and how and why it matters for this controversy. These elements are missing

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4. Sicart, "Against Procedurality."

from information slides, yet we are to use them as if they arrived in a believable manner. No reasonable person would accept information without context. It is much more reasonable to leave it up to the speakers to provide the context and importance of why the debate is happening. Information slides deny them this important strategic element to their speeches. In addition, it threatens the orientation of BP itself toward speaking and reasoning with the reasonable person.

Given that we are meant to be persuading a reasonable audience, the information slide's acceptance puts the entire event in serious question. Either we are engaging the reasonable person and leaving the specialist issues out of debate, or we are not. If we want to have specialized debates that require more information than a reasonable person would have access to, then we need to alter the parameters of judging. The reasonable person standard is important because it opens debate to a large field of participants. When CAs start to choose issues that they think are important, or issues that they believe should matter more than what is in circulation among the reasonable public, that is when BP begins to close to general audiences and participants. Debating BP should not be about arguing about specialist issues. It should be about arguing issues that reasonable people would have been exposed to, and how to speak to, with, and about those audiences.

Furthermore, who is to say that someone knows or does not know about a particular topic? The information slide is insulting to debaters as it is based on the idea that their thoughts and their engagement with controversial issues is not as valuable as the interpretation of the issue that comes from the designers. Just because the debaters are not as experienced as the adjudication team in debating, it doesn't mean that they will be unable to speak on these issues convincingly. The information slide ruins the variance of play in debate with an interpretation from on high of what the debate *is* about. This is especially true with slides that present an indisputable fact or a definition. Although these appear very useful, the idea of a fact being indisputable or a term having a definition are places of play set out by the motion already. Restricting it further is the CA (read: designer) arguing that this indisputable fact is the only way this game can have value. It is a strange sort of superiority to think that on an issue of foreign relations, international finance, religion, or culture that identification of a controversy comes with it the ability to identify the very heart, soul, and center of that controversy at the same time.

There are many reasons for wanting an information slide. Two of the most common are to advance an important issue in the minds of others, or to innovate in debate with a motion that will push the limits of the form. I have talked to CAs that feel a motion is of utmost importance for the debaters, but worry the debaters will improperly address it. Often, the motion setters feel that their topic is of great social importance. Other times, motion setters smile with great satisfaction that they have crafted a very unique and clever motion. When you ask them what the debate is about, their eyes light up, and they can barely contain their excitement about the possibilities present in the debate about this motion. Here we have two different theories behind motion writing: One is excited

about expanding the social attention around an issue, the other by the possibilities the topic affords to the game of debate. Both could be satisfied by this alternative: distribute literature about the controversy to the attendees before the competition, and have a public debate on the motion. This accomplishes both the goal of showmanship and activism, allows the CA to possibly debate the motion he or she invented, and also sows the seeds for this issue becoming a motion for everyone at a later tournament. This "plenary" debate could be worked in as a public debate the evening before or the night in between tournament competition as well.

An information slide is not going to expand discussion or knowledge on an important issue, or contribute to some innovative technique of debating. What it does is shut down interest and discussion, as the debaters take the slide at face-value, then have a debate based on that very limited amount of data. Without a spirit of inquiry underpinning the introduction of an unfamiliar controversy, debaters are very likely to stick close to the most empirical thing they have available. Under a rubric of competition, the attention to the issue in the motion will be ignored in favor of discerning strategies to win debates. Under a rubric of a public debate, the motives change. Attention to the complexities of the controversy are foregrounded. These debates also provide the pedagogical benefit of letting less experienced teams see a variety of complex argumentation. The information slide is a poor substitute.

Getting the debate right is a desire of all players, not just the adjudication team. It is noble to try to provide a valuable experience that is rich and full to debaters. But the best way to do this is for tournament administration to get out of the way of the debaters. Getting a debate right is up to the debaters. The value that those who now serve as CAs and DCAs got from debate was not because of the information slide. It was because they were free to engage motions in a multiplicity of possibilities. Debate's value comes from empowering the participants to strategize and speak how they wish, even if that speech might be considered "terrible" by those setting the motion. If we want to keep debate for debaters and centered around the idea of reasonable people, we should forego the information slide.

SOMETIMES THE FACTS MATTER: A CASE FOR INFORMATION SLIDES IN BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY DEBATING

In response to Steve Llano's article, this piece advocates in favour of Information Slides and their use at tournaments.

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Debate-land is the most boring country on Earth. It is a generic Western Liberal Democracy, where everything exists in moderation - from taxation, to social services, to ethnic divides. The only facts in Debate-land are those known by undergraduates, typically from liberal arts degrees.

If we want debating to be about real issues, and not purely set in Debate-land, then adjudication teams should sometimes provide information slides. They should do so in moderation, taking care to be concise. In particular, they should avoid heavy-handed information slides that suggest the use of particular arguments.

One virtue of parliamentary debating is that it affords opportunities to address important real-world issues. That is not to say that every debate should be about the real world, or that motions should be constrained by what mainstream parties would regard as politically feasible. But we are not indifferent between a World Universities Debating Championships set in the real world, and an equivalent Championships set in the world of Aaron Sorkin's *The West Wing* - even if debaters exhibit great familiarity with the latter.

Because debates should often address real-world issues, sometimes the facts matter. Debating is not a pure process of creative play, where debaters freely invent arguments without any reference to the facts. For instance, in a debate about UN involvement in nuclear disarmament, it is not persuasive to argue that nuclear weapons do not exist, or that the UN is a conspiracy controlled by space aliens. We exclude these claims by asking judges to apply the standard of knowledge available to a well-informed layperson. A concise and well-written information slide simply extends this precedent. It adds, to the vast list of common-sense facts that judges already use to assess the plausibility of claims, just one more fact: the contents of the information slide.

Some debates can be argued well without requiring knowledge beyond that of most intelligent undergraduates - for instance, This House Would Make Voting Compulsory. Other debates require more knowledge than can be conveyed in an information slide - for instance, This House Believes That Central Banks Should Not Use Dynamic Stochastic General Equilibrium Models. But there exists a substantial category of debates that could be argued well, if all the participants were made aware of a small number of additional basic facts.

For instance, it would have been difficult in 2003 to have an intelligent debate about drone warfare, unless participants were informed that combat drones are typically remote-controlled military aircraft equipped with air-to-ground weapons. Similarly, to effectively discuss the merits of expanding NATO membership in Eastern Europe, participants need to be aware of NATO's 'Article 5' treaty obligations, which invoke a duty to collective self-defence. There are a large number of topics where a little bit of information makes it possible for non-specialists to have an interesting debate that is grounded in reality. These debates are improved by the judicious use of information slides.

Furthermore, in some debates information slides serve to establish a few non-disputed facts that are preconditions for reasonable argument. Two people who do not agree about *any* of the facts simply cannot have a reasoned discussion. Suppose we had a debate about legalising the sale of human kidneys. One side asserts that kidney transplants are almost risk-free for the donor, while the other side asserts that they are both dangerous and extremely debilitating. Since the relevant medical studies are not common knowledge, the debate revolves around made-up statistics and arguments from authority. How is the judge meant to weigh the arguments and make her decision? Far better to have an information slide laying out the basic facts; *viz.* that kidney donors face a .03% mortality risk during surgery, but their life expectancies and average quality of life are no worse than those of non-donors.[1] [2]

One reason why mainstream political debate in the USA is dysfunctional is that there are virtually no news sources that are regarded as reliable by both sides. One side believes that climate change is scientifically proven and caused by human beings, while the other side believes that scientists are charlatans and climate change is a foreign conspiracy. Information slides are one way to prevent this dysfunction in British Parliamentary debating; when dealing with an unfamiliar topic, they establish a small number of empirical facts, enabling debaters to focus on making arguments. They create common knowledge; so that there will be some facts about the situation that we know, that the other side knows, that the other side knows that we know, and so on, enabling us to argue

1. Fehrman-Ekholm, Ingela 2,3; Transplantation, 64(7): 976-978, October 15, 1997

2. Ibrahim, Hassan N., et al. "Long-term consequences of kidney donation." New England Journal of Medicine 360.5 (2009): 459-469.

with each other rather than *past* each other. Short of allowing debaters to submit written evidence, there is sometimes no way to establish common ground besides an information slide.

When an adjudication team releases an information slide, they are assuring debaters that they have researched the facts carefully, and found these to be uncontroversially true. They are specifying that, for the purposes of this debate, these facts are to be added to the pantheon of ordinary common knowledge that enables us to have a discussion. This, incidentally, is why it is no objection to say that reasonable people would not believe what is on a Power Point slide. Reasonable people do not select the sides they argue for using random number generators. The entire rigmarole of assigning teams to rooms and sides, choosing a motion, and possibly displaying an information slide are part of the administrative procedure that enables a debate to happen. They are not part of the *debate*, and not subject to the plausibility requirements that we apply to debate speeches.

British Parliamentary debates are not typically made better by arguing about brute empirical facts. Since neither side can introduce corroborating evidence, it is better for there to be a base of mutually accepted knowledge from which arguments can begin. Rather than constraining debaters' freedom, a well-written information slide increases it: It increases their freedom to think in detail about the situation, to make extended normative arguments or causal chains, confident that there are some background facts that their opponents and the judge know to be true. For instance, it is not advisable to make extended arguments about voting reform in the IMF unless all parties know (at least in outline) the existing voting procedures. The risk that the other team will simply claim that you are lying makes the argument difficult to defend and impossible to adjudicate.

Information slides can sometimes create a better discussion by coordinating debaters' expectations about the subject of the debate. They typically do this by including one or two paradigmatic examples to illustrate a difficult concept. For instance, in a debate about providing comprehensive sex education in schools, one might consider giving a few examples of what constitutes "comprehensive sex education". This phrase's meaning may vary from country to country, and Opening Government teams may set up better debates if they know that their definitions must encompass at least the cases in the information slide. All teams may be able to use their preparation time more effectively, and produce better arguments, if they have coordinated expectations about the kinds of cases they are arguing about.

Finally, information slides can improve the experience of a debate for all parties involved. Suppose a debate involves a key fact, X, that we cannot count on the teams and judges knowing. Frequently, this makes everyone worse off. Teams that do not know X are obviously at a disadvantage. But even teams that know X are worse off, because they cannot count on the judges to believe them, and the result may be erratic and arbitrary.

And judges will have to endure a debate mired in falsehoods and half-truths. (It bears remembering that judges are people too). Thus, the use of an information slide can make everyone better off.

Information slides allow us to discuss real-world issues, create the preconditions for reasonable argument, and frequently make everyone better off. There are some motions that are so specialised that they are not appropriate for general debating competitions. But there are some motions that intelligent college students could argue well, if only they knew a limited number of key facts. We could set these motions without information slides, in which case many debaters and judges would have a thoroughly miserable time. We could only ever set motions that required little knowledge to debate well, in which case we should all apply for citizenship in Debate-land. Or we could, carefully and in moderation, provide information slides. That seems the best alternative.

MONASH ASSOCIATION OF DEBATERS

www.monashdebaters.com

Founded in 1962, the Monash Association of Debaters (MAD) is one of the oldest clubs at Monash University and, with over 500 members, one the largest debating societies in the Southern Hemisphere.

The club has a rich history of success in tournaments across the world. In January 2011, 2012, and again in 2013, MAD won the World University Debating Championships, the only club to win in three consecutive years. MAD have also been champions of the Australasian Debating Championships (Australs) six times in the last fifteen years.

The Association has a strong commitment to promoting debating education and innovation throughout the world. MAD is very proud to have founded the only academic journal to cover the art of debating and is a leader in the production of online training resources for the global debating community. Monash was the first club to implement equity policies which ensure diverse participation at national and international tournaments and was a driving force behind the creation of the Australasian Women's Debating Championships.

MONASH ASSOCIATION OF DEBATERS
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