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Forensics and the Basic Communication Course: A New Path to Satisfying Learning Outcomes

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Forensics and the Basic Communication Course:

A New Path to Satisfying Learning Outcomes

By

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Abstract

Forensic scholars have long written about the educational benefits of forensics, but very few have attempted to tie the activity to learning objectives from the curriculum. This thesis seeks to determine if collegiate forensics can offer the same learning opportunities as one of the most common and fundamental communication classes in the discipline: the basic communication course. This research uses experiential learning as a pedagogical framework for forensics in attempting to answer if forensics can offer the same learning opportunities of the basic communication course, and if so, how the activity does this and what the students actually learn. Likert scale items are used to collect data, as well as open-ended survey prompts. Results are presented and then conclusions are drawn for both forensics and the basic communication course.

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Chapter One

Introduction

"It is the role and responsibility of each generation of directors of forensics to preserve the integrity of the activity as a unique learning environment and intensive teaching space" *(Richardson & Kelly, 2008, p. 116).*

If I were to ask my 1st grade self what he wanted to be when he grew up, he would undoubtedly answer that he wanted to be a teacher. As far back as I can remember, teaching has been a personal career path. When I selected an undergraduate university at which to study, I (perhaps unwisely) chose a small state school merely on reputation alone, believing education is what you make of it and a teaching license is useable no matter what school validates it. While everything worked out well during my undergraduate education, I found myself being pushed away from teaching high school English and being drawn to the field of competitive forensic speaking.

My competition years were nothing to brag about, and because of the lack of competitive success I began to wonder if there was more to forensics than winning. I spent so much time trying to figure out how to win that I never stopped to consider that I might actually be learning something useful from the activity. I remember sitting on the bus ride home from NFA disappointed and exhausted from a senior year filled with high expectations and futile attempts at competitive achievement; I felt like a failure. However, as I sat on that bus and thought about the closing of my career, I realized my time in forensics was not a waste. Upon reflection after competing in my last tournament I found that I had learned a great deal from my experience. In my four years participating in forensics, I had grown from a bright-eyed freshman who was disappointed and confused when he did not win every time, into a senior leader who coached and

looked after his teammates, managed travel and team expenses, and was truly grateful for the opportunity to compete and learn with friends. After my senior year, I was stunned to realize that I could teach someone how to write a speech, glean an argument from a short story, and manage much more team and interpersonal conflict than I had been able to before joining the team my freshman year. During my competition years I did not realize how much I was learning; after I was done, however, I saw just how much I had learned. My revelation did not come as too big of a surprise as I had heard many discussions on the educational value of forensics. I was merely surprised that after being driven by competition for so long, education had "happened" to me.

After competition I wanted to be a forensic coach to help students understand what I did not during my competitive years. As Shaw (1995) noted, "forensics can change lives more dramatically than any subject we teach" (p. 53). I wanted to coach students and change their lives. I knew I would join in the lively discussions of the activity, relish in the debate of how to best "forensicate", and teach my students the secrets of forensics. I knew I wanted to teach students how to be better speakers and have a fantastic experience through forensics; I just didn't know how to go about doing that. As part of a peer-coached team, I was unaware how professionals coach or run their teams. Without a mentor to turn to, I went to a place where I knew I would receive mentoring: graduate school. When I began to read more about what scholars wrote about education in forensics I discovered there were more unique voices involved in the activity than I had originally thought; every coach seemed to have a different approach to best educate his/her students. As I searched through the catalogs of forensic research there appeared to be no specific things that students should be learning from forensics upon which everyone could agree. Discussions between people in the community offered opinions that varied greatly on a number of topics. As a novice coach without an agreed upon written down forensic

"curriculum", I did not know where to turn for answers on what my students should be learning. Forensics is about more than teaching our students to win, but defining what exactly they should be learning is something that seemed elusive.

I think my frustration has been shared by many coaches, novice and veteran alike. Forensics as more than competition has been explored in depth (e.g., Hinck, 2003; Jensen, 2008; Jensen & Jensen, 2006; Littlefield, 2006; Ribarsky, 2005). The problem is not that there are different opinions being expressed about forensics and education (that there are a great many opinions speaks volumes about the ongoing discussions in which the forensic community engages) but rather, the problem is there is no singular place that helps define overarching learning objectives for the activity. If forensics is to be compared to academics in terms of education, learning objectives should be available to help determine if the students are learning. A basic set of skills students should learn through their participation in forensics would enhance a coach's ability to teach. As any pedagogically trained teacher can tell you, without clearly defined learning objectives, what you teach becomes disconnected from any original learning intent. The result often leads to scattered learning; without knowing where to lead students, educators lead students to a variety of random places and we cannot determine what they are learning from their experiences.

While we have not figured out what students learn for certain in forensics, the experience of forensic activity is happening and we cannot ignore that learning occurs. Any student learning is directly related to what they experience, both in forensics and in the classroom. Scholars have cited this phenomenon as experiential education or experiential learning, with theory explaining the process of an experience and how a student learns from it. Carver (1996) noted experiential education is "education…that makes conscious application of the students' experiences by

integrating them into the curriculum" (p. 9). At the core of experiential learning is the idea that we experience something and learn from it. Kolb (1984) posited that experiential learning consists of a continuous spiral of events, starting with direct experience, followed by periods of reflection where hypothesis are generated about immediate and future meaning, and then tested through subsequent experiences and actions.

This happens in forensics, as most forensic professionals can attest to current and former students who have learned much from prolonged experience in the activity. Walker (in press) and Sellnow (1994) argued that participation in forensics can indeed be perceived through the lens of experiential learning. Even though the idea that students learn from experience is nothing new to most people involved in forensics, few scholars have supported, with evidence, the claim of forensics as co-curricular. Perhaps the problem lies with a lack of communication studies driven, field tested learning objectives. After all, West (2008) questioned the forensic community's understanding of the end goal of the activity, arguing the current culture does not clearly reflect a pursuit of pedagogical learning objectives. One of my teaching mentors once told me, "students will learn something from you; whether you intended them to learn it or not"; without learning objectives to use as a benchmark, we know students will learn something but we cannot know for sure what they are learning.

Still, most forensic professionals claim the activity to be highly educational. Even though coaches continue to praise the activity for its learning opportunities, scholars have yet to be specific when it comes to determining if students are learning anything through their experience in forensics. The 2010 NFA Pedagogy Report is an excellent start but there is a significant problem: not only does the NFA Pedagogy Report fail to offer assessment techniques to determine if students are indeed learning what we want them to learn, but the expressed learning

objectives are not determined by actual classroom pedagogy but instead by a pedagogical code of conduct that offers little specific guidance or link to academic assignments that are practiced in the field. Without a connection to observable competence measures we use in our classrooms, the NFA Pedagogy Report only supports theory and not praxis. In other words, there still are no clear pedagogically tested learning outcomes to participating on a forensic team. My thesis will attempt to fill this obvious research gap.

To gain a better understanding of what we intend students to learn in forensics, scholars should look to the Basic Communication Course (BCC) to model learning objectives. In the field of communication studies at many institutions of higher education across the country, the BCC teaches the essentials of the field. The BCC is required or recommended for a large portion of undergraduate students; it acts as a primary way of educating students about Communication Studies (Morreale, et al., 1999). The BCC can be found mostly in Public Speaking only or a hybrid format, which includes studying both public speaking and a variety of communication studies areas such as interpersonal and small group communication (Morreale, et al., 2010). This means public speaking is taught in the vast majority of BCCs, making the course ideal from which to pull learning outcomes in a study about forensics. Beyond that, however, forensics has its roots in the communication studies field and covers many different areas of the discipline. Due to the strong link between forensics and the BCC, attempting to identify learning objectives for forensic competition by borrowing work already done in this area from BCC planning is an obvious choice. Since forensics is intended to be educational and has a strong tie to academics, this study will explore if student experience in forensic activity meets BCC learning objectives.

We are unable to determine what students learn in forensics if we are forced to rely on traditional classroom evaluation; therefore, I want to turn to the students and ask if they think

they have learned something from their experience in forensics. Specifically, I am interested in determining if they feel like they *have had the opportunity* to learn what the basic course attempts to teach students, hence making their experience in forensics a BCC equivalency. In other words, I want to know if forensics offers the same opportunities to learn the essentials of communication studies as the BCC. If we can determine that students *can* learn in forensics, than we can ask *how* students learn through their forensic experience and *what* competency level they reach. Thus, my thesis will attempt to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: Do students perceive the experience gained on an intercollegiate forensic team can meet Basic Communication Course learning objectives?

RQ2: How do students learn from the experience gained on an intercollegiate forensic team?

RQ3: What competency level do students reach from the experience gained on an intercollegiate forensic team?

This area of research is significant within the communication discipline for two reasons. First, as has been articulated, there is a gap in the research base and this study could begin to fill in that gap. Many scholars have called for a better understanding of forensic learning outcomes or come close to it but have never actually applied academic learning objectives to forensics (Church, 1975; Holloway, Keefe, & Cowles, 1989; McMillan & Todd-Mancillas, 1991).

Kelly and Richardson (2010) most recently called for evidence of obtained learning objectives in forensics but we still do not have actual assessment tools. Forensic educators must ask: "What are our learning objectives and where do we get them from?" Not only would this help new coaches who are looking for answers, but this would clarify for those who have been in the activity for a long time what we seek to accomplish as forensic professionals. Why most

people get into coaching is to help students learn, grow, and improve their chances to move on to better things; in this capacity, forensics acts a means to an end. Since that end can mean different things to different students, a coach must teach students as individuals. This study seeks to find what exactly forensics can offer to students in relation to a curriculum linked to an actual academic course.

The second reason this research is significant is that it could have many cross disciplinary implications by adding to BCC research as well as potentially revitalizing the way experiential learning can be viewed in the field of communication studies. Any research done on the BCC tends to be focused on teaching in the BCC. In fact, very little crossover has occurred in forensic and BCC literature, with Dean and Lavasseur (1989) and Zizik (1993) being the rare exceptions. Expanding the way the BCC can be viewed, studied, and applied could make a significant impact in the BCC community in a time where the BCC is being threatened across the country with pushes for cross-curriculum communication training and redefinitions of general education courses. By linking the BCC to more than itself, this research could help preserve the BCC as a valuable course to have on campus. Perhaps by pairing up with each other, the BCC and forensics can establish greater significance on college campuses where often the programs for both struggle to maintain support.

Likewise, this research impacts experiential learning and forensics. Since experiential learning is more commonly associated with the field of education and not communication studies, it is rarely seen being studied by communication scholars. Viewing forensics as a form of experiential learning can provide demonstration of skill application from students, further helping to justify forensic programs (Sellnow, 1994). In turn, forensics can offer knowledge about experiential learning. For example, because forensics acts as experiential learning,

communication pedagogy scholars may be more open to studying forensics, increasing research in both forensics and experiential communication pedagogy. Essentially, this research could open the doors for several areas of research to expand and it could assist in maintaining programs that may struggle to survive in their current state.

The more we know about education in forensics the better we can serve our students. As an educator I want to make sure that every one of my students not only has the opportunity to learn, but that they recognize that opportunity and seize it. My fate as an undergraduate forensic competitor has driven me to ensure my students' experience does not mirror my own. This research project asks if forensics can be justifiably compared to an academic course and if students are actually learning anything. With education so near and dear to my heart, as well as that of many forensic professionals, this project strikes at the core of why this activity exists and why we put so much effort into teaching 18 year old novices such things as different organizational structures of speeches, recognizing universality in literature selections, or how to create an effective argument. I have dedicated my career to helping students better their communicative skills through forensics. Education in this activity is important and any attempt to better our efforts in that area is an investment in the future of our students' learning—which is something we can all support.

In Chapter Two of this study I review literature relevant to the issues of learning outcomes, forensics as pedagogy, and experiential learning. Chapter Three provides and elaborates on the methodology chosen for this particular study, specifically the use of content analysis, surveys, and grounded theory. Chapter Four contains the results of my study, while Chapter Five presents a discussion of the results, offering perspectives for forensics, experiential learning, and the basic communication course.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Most coaches can attest that forensic students learn through their experience in the activity. Many scholars have weighed in on the educational benefits of forensics, but only a handful have explored learning outcomes from the activity and even fewer have linked it to a pedagogy that centers on the experiences of the student. Before analyzing any data, I address the previous body of research in the essential areas of this study. Initially, I explore literature on forensic pedagogy, focusing on forensic learning outcomes and forensic learning methods. Next, I look at literature on experiential learning, showing how forensics fits into this non-traditional educational model. Finally, I examine assessment of learning outcomes in higher education and forensics.

Forensics as Pedagogy

Ehninger (1952) wrote while forensics does involve competition, it is a co-curricular activity that is grounded in communication studies curriculum. Echoing Ehninger was McBath (1975) who, in his oft quoted article, stated "forensics is an educational activity primarily concerned with using an argumentative perspective in examining problems and communicating with people" (p. 11). Forensic professionals teach students how to use a variety of communicative skills that are also taught in the classroom. This belief that forensics has educational value is supported by many forensic scholars (e.g.: Bartanen, 1998; Beasley, 1979; Brownlee, 1979; Gartell, 1973; Jensen, 2008; Millsap, 1998; Schroeder & Schroeder, 1995; Stenger, 1999; Yaremchuk, 1979), but has also been contested many times, most notably by Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) who argued that forensics is only competitive with education used as a crutch to uphold the activity in the eyes of schools. The vast majority of the forensic

community cried that the claims made by Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) were clearly inaccurate and that any doubters needing proof should merely spend time working with students to learn that experience on a forensic team is educational.

Even though education is often harkened as the reason why the activity is of merit, the forensic community focuses more on the product rather than the process (Friedley, 1992), which places more emphasis on competition than all the other things students can learn through their experience in forensics. This is the difficult place into which forensic professionals are put. Managing to teach students while making them competitively successful can be quite difficult. Friedley (1989) acknowledges this struggle, and noted both education and competition to be important in forensics. Beyond that, education and competition are both integral parts of the activity and cannot be separated from each other. In his response to the debate, Hinck (2003) went against Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003), arguing competition and education hold a dialectical tension with each other and are both essential to the activity. This educational aspect of forensics is critical to how we view competitive collegiate speech. Knowing what students learn from forensics and how they learn it can help coaches provide the best learning opportunities for their students.

Learning outcomes

The educational benefits of forensics are many and can be debated, however Bartanen (1994a) highlighted four important benefits that forensics provides for students: forensics gives students unique insights into public policy and civic concerns; forensics builds courage and a sense of personal growth and satisfaction; forensics is important for career preparation; forensics is a valuable educational supplement. Bartanen's (1994a) benefits can act as a framework for

understanding the general academic discussion surrounding student education in collegiate forensics.

Initially, Bartanen (1994a) mentioned forensics gives students unique insights into public policy and civic concerns. What forensics does is develop critical thinking in our students' minds which is often applied to civil discourse (Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, & Louden, 1997; Carroll, 2007; Colbert & Biggers, 1987). Forensics helps create citizen-leaders (Bartanen, 1998). McMillan and Todd-Mancillas (1991) found forensic students to have increased their critical thinking skills and broadened their understanding of subjects and people. Crawford (2003) argued "competitive speech, far from being expendable, is central to…preparing students to be functional participants in a democratic society" (p. 19). Students learn how to be civically engaged when they research to speak on current events and advocate for changes in the world. Re (2002) noted forensics makes "young people aware that they are empowered members of a community that extends…into the real world" (p 4). Warriner (1998) outlined an effort to bring forensics to a correctional institution. This type of civic engagement and opportunity is what Bartanen (1994a) is referring to. Being an active critical thinker encourages students to examine what is going on around them, which in turn allows students to learn about public concerns and be civically engaged.

Bartanen (1994a) also mentioned forensics builds courage and a sense of personal growth and satisfaction. Through experience in forensics, students learn about themselves. Students like awards, but also define success in forensics through personal growth and satisfaction (Brennan, 2011). Forensic students find ways to deal with anxiety that are hard to learn in the traditional classroom (Thompson, 2003) and increase their self-assurance (Hunt & Inch, 1993) through experience. When students participate in forensics they grow beyond what they were before.

Klopf (1990) noted the value of this in forensics, pointing out how many former forensic students cited their experience as the most valuable and satisfactory in the undergraduate career. Students can take this new found personal satisfaction and use it to help them succeed in all aspects of their life.

This is where helping with careers can come into play. Bartanen (1994a) argued forensics is important for career preparation. Clearly being confident in one's self can be a benefit in a career, as well as being civically minded. However, being active on a speech team provides excellent pre-professional development in general (Colbert & Biggers, 1987; Nadolski, 2005). Minch (2006) pointed out how forensics can help in future occupations: "today's marketplace values a well-rounded education, critical thinking skills, communication skills and the ability to interact with people effectively" (p. 12) and forensics provides these things to students. McCrady (2004) argued that students who probe deeply into literature are developing higher order thinking skills and extemporaneous and persuasive speaking help understand logic. Employers want students with good communication and critical thinking skills and forensics can help students build those skills. Stenger (1998) even noted forensics serves to prepare students for a career in academic presentations, which would help students continue with their studies into graduate work as many of them do. Just like that, we are back to students learning more.

The last benefit Bartanen (1994a) highlighted is forensics is a valuable educational supplement. This is where the core of forensics starts: the classroom. Traditionally, students learn what teachers tell them to learn. However, even with fairly clear (if not totally agreed upon) learning objectives, forensic students learn a variety of things often without coaches knowing what their students are learning. The 2010 NFA Pedagogy Report highlights the need for understanding what we want students to learn. In the past and present however, students continue

to learn from an activity that is grounded in communicative theory but ultimately competitive. Bartanen (1994a) explained forensics involves competition but went to great lengths to point out the educational philosophy of different aspects of forensics, arguing what many forensic scholars have tried to say over the years: students can learn a great deal in forensics and most of it stems from the communication studies curriculum.

Bartanen (1994a) is addressing the co-curricular aspect of forensics, specifically that forensics helps students do better in school; studies have shown that participation in forensics helps students do better on standardized tests (Peters, 2009), which is no surprise since forensics is a co-curricular activity with strong links to what we teach in our communication studies courses (Ehninger, 1952; McBath, 1975; Hinck, 2003). Further, Millsap (1998) found the skills forensics teaches (oral presentation and debate) are used across the curriculum, but instructors do not instruct students in the necessary skills required for these teaching methods to be successful. This means forensics is vital as a co-curricular activity to act as an educational supplement to the classroom, enhancing student learning across the curriculum. As Klopf (1990) noted, forensics "should be a counterpart of curricular instruction in speech; it is not a mere adjunct to formal speech-class instruction. The [forensic] program should seek the same general goals that guide class instruction in public speaking, debate, and discussion courses" (p. 5).

Further, during the time students spend interacting with each other as team mates, they learn about interpersonal communication (Friedley, 1992; Schnoor & Green, 1989) as well as small group communication (Zeuschner, 1992) and organizational communication (Swanson, 1992), not to mention learning about public speaking and oral interpretation when they focus on their competitive presentations. Forensics apparently serves to enhance the communication studies curriculum so students can bolster their learning gains. However, without a direct link to

specific curriculum-based learning outcomes, any learning that takes place in forensics can only be supported on the theoretical level, thus making the claim that forensics is co-curricular a difficult one.

While not everyone can agree with all the conclusions forensic scholars have made, everyone can agree that the students learn something from their experience in forensics. What is more agreed upon, however, is how forensic students learn. Even though identifying what students always learn from forensics is hard, we do know that they learn through their experiences in the activity.

Learning methods

Making the claim that students learn something, anything, from forensics, equates to there being an aspect of forensics that makes learning possible. However, it is not just learning, it is active learning in that our students learn through their holistic forensic experience. Coaches should not be forgotten in this discussion, since they act as the gateway to the forensics community; namely, coaches show students the way to personal success. White (2005) explored the role of a coach as a mentor, noting that a coach helps with more than just events, but also helps students cope with life issues. White (2010) also noted coaches can help students achieve personal success by having the students set personal goals instead of the coach. However, White (2010) does advocate for coach monitoring of student decision making.

This is the same approach that should be taken for a sound pedagogical forensic experience; students should express goals for what they want to learn and do and coaches should provide guidance to allow for the best opportunities through which students can achieve those goals. Instead of being a top-down education, forensics needs a student-centered approach. This is where many get confused when trying to label forensics as educational; they attempt to equate

forensics with traditional modes of schooling. One of the challenges of approaching forensics as educational is comparing coaches to traditional classroom teachers. Blaming scholars for this is hardly fair since so much of the educational research is based off the mainstream educational paradigm of "a teacher teaches and a student learns", or what Butin (2010) noted as the banking method where students are forced to simply retain information that is given to them. Forensics does not occur in the traditional classroom and forensic student learning does not happen through lectures and multiple choice tests. Examining forensics with the lens of traditional classroom is a mistake because the classroom is not a feasible facsimile due to the more interactive and complex nature of the activity. As Klopf (1990) noted, forensics should "provide a student with a diversified speech-educational experience" (p. 6). Rather than simply telling students what to do, a more suitable approach to examining forensics as educational is to view forensics as an experience in which students can explore themselves and the communicative theories that ground the activity.

Certain scholars have embraced a like-concept, advocating viewing forensics as a laboratory. The laboratory outlook fits forensics better than the traditional classroom mindset, and the approach has been taken before from a variety of perspectives (Dreibelbis & Gullifor, 1992; Friedley, 1992; Swanson, 1992; Zeuschner, 1992). Essentially, an academic laboratory can serve two functions: to educate and to discover knowledge (Burnett et al, 2001). Forensics can fill both education and knowledge generation; forensic educators teach students the skills of the activity (along with many other communication skills) and also, by coaching, learn new ways to approach forensic and communication issues. In this approach, students get to discover knowledge through doing forensics. The laboratory concept sounds ideal if it teaches students and helps advance communication knowledge. Even if teaching communication concepts (an

essential aspect of the laboratory approach) is successful in such a setting, there is some question if forensic programs even use the laboratory approach at all. Even though Kay (1990) felt "the laboratory must teach students about communication" (p. 64), Kay also argued that there is a lack of practice of the laboratory in forensics.

Many other forensic scholars are confident that the laboratory concept is merely a lens in which to view the activity and not a specific approach. For example, Dreibelbis and Gullifor (1992) cited how forensics can be seen as a laboratory to teach students about electronic mass media, noting limited preparation event training, audience analysis skills, and the practice of using imagery in writing to appeal to the ear. Dreibelbis and Gullifor believed forensics acts as an excellent tool to teach students, writing "forensics can be one of many aspects of a liberal education that teach students to be responsible communicators" (p. 82). Another example includes Zeuschner (1992), who argued small group dynamics are found in a forensic team. Zeuschner (1992), who clearly argued forensics *does* function as a laboratory as opposed to that it *can* function that way, went on to write "forensics programs are laboratories for small group processes, whether they are explicitly recognized or not by either the participants or their teachers" (p. 64). Essentially, Zeuschner (1992) claimed students learn about communication even though they may not realize it, despite Kay's (1990) claim that a laboratory approach would require knowledge of the learning.

The answer to these conflicting ideas can be found somewhere in the middle, and start with the general criticisms of the laboratory approach. Kuyper (2009) argued that this laboratory metaphor represented an ontological belief that there is one correct way to view an experience in forensics. Aden (2002) also argued "laboratories are places where scientific experimentation occurs…The type of results produced by science are generally agreed upon within the academic

community" (p 98-99), whereas any learning that students have cannot be generalized to the whole because of the unique individual experiences they each have. This assumption about the laboratory approach perpetuates the belief that there is one "right" way to learn in forensics or that students should all learn the same thing, which is an obvious misconception.

At its core the laboratory metaphor does not prescribe what the students should learn. Rather, forensics as a laboratory offers the perspective of students experiencing a variety of different communicative practices and allowing them to learn what they will. What Zeuschner (1992) strikes upon is the idea that through experience in forensics, students learn something; in fact, scholars predict students learn about a variety of communication studies topics including small group communication (Zeuschner) and mass media communication (Dreibelbis & Gullifor, 1992), as well as interpersonal communication (Freidley, 1992; Walker, 2011) and organizational communication (Swanson, 1992), not to mention the obvious areas of public speaking and oral interpretation. The study of communication can be attributed to almost any area, which is one of the discipline's greatest strengths. For an activity so deeply rooted in communication studies, in both history and practice, as forensics, the educational opportunities offered about communication studies are bountiful so long as a student partakes in the experience of the activity.

So what we take from this laboratory debate is that students learn by doing, by being active participants in the activity. What forensic professionals should avoid, however, is the thought that there is a singular way teach. After all, even if specific learning outcomes for students were established, each student would need different ways of reaching those outcomes. Therefore, focusing on individualized learning necessitates a focusing on individual student

experiences. Competency does not need to occur the same way for all students. Rather, teachers should be working with students to determine what they're learning through their experience.

Forensics offers the opportunity to learn through experience, that much is clear. The activity acts like a laboratory, giving chances for students to explore a variety of different learning possibilities but, as Kay (1990) pointed out, there is no ultimately correct lesson or way to learn. Sellnow (1994) argued for a forensics pedagogical framework that focuses on what O'Keefe (1986) called "communicative decentering" instead of "the self-centered communication which often results from the passive learning which takes place in many classrooms" (p. 2). Sellnow advocated for an approach to forensics that emphasized the experience of the student, using experiential learning to support her claims. This approach to forensics allows for individualized student learning through their personal experiences in the activity.

Experiential Learning

Definitions

Most forensic students are fortunate enough to have a coach to guide them in their forensic endeavors. Coaches typically teach their students the nuances of forensics and along with it various communication studies topics. The teaching of forensics does not often happen in a formalized lecture, but instead by immersing the student in what they wish to accomplish and learn during their time in forensics. Similarly, during college, traditional undergraduate students attempt to figure out what they will do with their lives. Students explore their interests in a variety of ways and should be provided plenty of opportunities to do so, including studying abroad, service learning, and internships (Shaller, 2005). Unfortunately, many students become

victims to what Huba and Freed (2000) found: most college faculty teach extensively with lectures, with students learning passively instead of actively exploring their interests.

This traditional approach to education, as Dewey (1938) described it, sounds all too familiar:

> [T]he attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity, and obedience. Books, especially textbooks, are the chief representatives of the lore and wisdom of the past, while teachers are the organs through which pupils are brought into effective connection with the material… Learning here means acquisition of what already is incorporated in books and in the heads of the elders. (p. 18-19)

Unfortunately, too often college students are forced to learn this way; the lecture-recitation model is still the primary mode of instruction in many classrooms (Bronwell & Eison, 1997; Wolfe, 2001). Students are often asked to sit and be quiet by instructors who believe control is the best way to teach (Jensen, 2000).

In an effort to avoid traditional, passive learning many educators have turned to experiential education, which is "a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills and clarify values" (Association for Experiential Education, 2011). Itin (1999) described it as the process of making meaning from direct experience. The foundation of experiential education can be traced back to the writings of Plato (Hunt, 1995; Wurdinger, 1994), but more recently educators have been more open to the approach. This pedagogical shift makes sense. As Ullah and Wilson (2007) argued, when students take an active role in their education there is a positive impact on their academic achievement. Experiential education includes a variety of different approaches, including outdoor education, field work, internships, classroom

activities and service learning. The shift then is away from rote memorization and toward

performance based learning where according to Berman (2008) students learn skills and concepts

by doing tasks or performances. In a performance based activity such as forensics, the student

"demonstrates proficiency by doing the skill, first in familiar settings and ultimately in new

situations" (Berman, 2008, p. 1), making an experiential approach ideal because students learn

and make sense of communication theories through their experience.

Sellnow (1994) looked at forensics through the lens of experiential education to help

justify forensic programs to administrators. Citing three major tenets of experiential education,

Sellnow argued that forensic students learn in this fashion and pointed out an experiential

approach values and fosters a diverse "way of knowing" and forensics does this by allowing

students to choose what events they want to compete in, what topics they choose to speak on,

and through oral interpretation introductions. An experiential schema also values life-long

learning, and Sellnow argued that forensics does this through the development of speaking and

listening skills as well as through involvement in the community. Walker (in press) saw a link to

service as well, arguing for an experiential-service learning approach to forensics to truly

capitalize on service learning. Sellnow also noted a final link between experiential education and

forensics: connecting theoretical knowledge to real-life experiences. Just as it is important in the

classroom to both learn from experience and know the reason behind the meaning (theory), it is

important in forensics for students to do the same. Sellnow argued that forensic students learn

through experience and learn the "why" through speech writing, limited preparation, audience

analysis, and both verbal and nonverbal communication dealing with delivery. Falvey (2000)

contended storytelling can act as an effective way to teach communication in an experiential

fashion. This does not begin to consider the many other communication studies topics students

potentially learn about through their experience in forensics (e.g.: Dreibelbis & Gullifor, 1992; Friedley, 1992; Sellnow, Littlefield, & Sellnow, 1992; Swanson, 1992; Zeuschner, 1992).

It is important to note not all experiential frameworks are the same. Some scholars have highlighted a difference between experiential education and experiential learning. Experiential education is often differentiated by its focus on the relationship between the educator and the learner (Itin, 1999), while experiential learning focuses on the learning process in itself. As Skime (2002) noted, experiential education focuses on what the educator can do to provide the learning opportunities for students and experiential learning is the genuine experience itself that is provided to the student by the teacher to facilitate integrated learning from the curriculum. Joplin (1981) presented a model that is often used to help explain experiential education. While Joplin clearly argued experiential education is "student based rather than teacher based" (p. 19), she also noted that her model "presents the general actions and responsibilities that a teacher maintains through experiential education" (p.18). Joplin's model emphasizes the student, but includes the teacher. Experiential learning, on the other hand, tends to downplay the role of the teacher. For example, Wurdinger (2005) wrote about his daughter struggling to have interest in math worksheets from school, but being extremely interested in percentages of sales and how much the sale item costs when she was shopping; the focus is on how she learns and not on the classroom. While closely related, there is a difference between experiential education and experiential learning. For the purposes of this study, with the emphasis on forensic students learning through their entire experience in forensics and not just through their coach-student interaction, experiential learning is the most appropriate choice to use to examine forensics.

Pattern of inquiry

Wurdinger (2005) highlighted three prevalent ways of viewing experiential learning: field based experiences, classroom based activities, and a pattern of inquiry. Field based experiences for undergraduate students can include internships, being involved with faculty research, community service, and training groups (Svincki & McKeachie, 2011). This approach focuses on experiences outside of the classroom in which the student is interested. Classroom based activities (such as project-based or problem based learning) are often touted as excellent places for teachers to incorporate experiential learning into their classroom without going too far away from tradition. Teachers often fall into the trap of "direct instruction" (Cohen, 1986), by telling students what and how to do something, which makes it a tricky balance to strike for teachers wishing to integrate experiential learning into the classroom. Attempting to allow students to explore for themselves and adhere to a pattern of inquiry would greatly decrease the chances of "direct instruction".

The pattern of inquiry that Wurdiner (2005) mentioned was described by Dewey (1938), who spent much of his career exploring experience in the learning process. His pattern of inquiry looks like this:

1) Inquiry happens when there is a problem the student cannot figure out

2) The student observes the variables of the problem

3) The student develops a plan to solve the problem

4) The student tests the plan

5) The student reflects on the results of the test

Experiential learning at its core is merely a way for students to learn through experiences. Dewey's pattern of inquiry is the essential problem solving technique that we teach to our

students only specifically applied to a student's educational experience, which makes it ideal for applying to a variety of learning situations. A similar model is Kolb's (1984) description of the experiential learning cycle. There are four stages to Kolb's cycle: concrete experience, observation and reflection, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Strikingly similar to Dewey's (1938) pattern of inquiry, Kolb argued that students experience something, reflect upon it, and then determine how to best go about their life afterwards. Instead of being told what to think, the student uses reflection to determine what he/she thinks they've learned. Dewey's pattern of inquiry (and Kolb's theory) is particularly applicable to activities such as forensics where students often are by themselves in situations where they are learning.

Fortunately, this is nothing new to forensic scholars. Experiential education/learning as a framework to view forensics has been discussed before (Sellnow, 1994; Walker, in press). Just like in the classroom where more traditional methods of education are recommended to be used alongside experiential learning (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010), forensic coaches can approach their students by instructing them in some areas and letting them explore and learn on their own in other areas. Dewey's (1938) pattern of inquiry is an ideal approach to experiential learning, but unless forensic students are aware of the process they might not learn much from their experience in forensics. It is with this in mind that I argue coaches are an important aspect of the learning experience because coaches need to teach their students how to learn. If the educational goal of forensics is grounded in communication theory, students should be able to articulate and apply communication theory during their forensic experience. Unfortunately, this is not always the case (Gernant, 1991). For forensic students to reach a complete understanding of the communication concepts in forensics, coaches must guide them to the theoretical knowledge as well. Granted, this appears to be a clear departure from traditional experiential learning and on

the surface could be viewed as stepping into experiential education, but there is a distinct difference between teaching students about their interests and telling them what they should be learning. Coaches must also help students process what they experience to make meaning, something both Dewey and Kolb (1984) emphasized. How coaches do this is through engaging in reflection periods, an important aspect of experiential learning.

Reflection

Awareness of learning is essential, but it does not necessarily have to be immediate. Zeuschner (1992) and Kay (1990) had contrasting viewpoints on if learning outcomes needed to be explicit. Forensics as experiential learning is exactly a combination of the two stances: students often experience the activity and then learn from those experiences. While the learning outcomes are not readily apparent at the start, "self reflection and self criticism are important for change and growth" (Klein, 1998, p. 24). Through guided reflection from forensic educators students can piece together meaning from their experiences.

Dewey's (1938) last step of the pattern of inquiry is that the student reflects on the experience that just occurred. Students experience something and then reflect upon it. However, there are different kinds of experience (Wurdinger, 2005). The primary experience is the direct experience which requires hands-on involvement. Wurdinger listed examples such as field experiences, internships, and extra-curricular activities. The secondary experience is the reflection that occurs after the primary experience. Essentially, students do something and then self-assess their learning. Jarvis (2001) explained this differently as reflective learning where students "plan, monitor, and reflect" (p. 52) upon experiences. This reflection is at the core of experiential learning and makes student learning possible.

Boud, Keogh, and Walker's (1985, 1996) model of experiential learning reflection had three stages: returning to and replaying the experience, attending to the feelings that the experience provoked, and reevaluating the experience. The authors argued that by eventually reflecting and reevaluating the experience, students can get ready for new experiences, and thus new learning. Emotions play a significant role in learning too. Many experiential learning scholars embrace the emotional connection to learning (Beard & Wilson, 2002; Dirkx, 2001). Boud (1995) argued that students who deny or bury their feelings are less likely to make personal connections to the experience, and thus less likely to learn. As Beard and Wilson (2002) pointed out, understanding and reflecting upon our emotion after experiences "can be seen to provide the underlying foundation for all learning" (p. 119). Emotions, then, need to be taken into consideration when learning. Student reflection is something that is often done on snap judgments in forensics. Van rides are often great places to allow for students to process their learning. Coaching appointments can also serve this function (White, 2005). Walking students through their forensic experience allows them to self-assess their learning. Coaches act as a guide to this reflection. This reflection is essential to let the students determine what they have learned for themselves, rather than having a coach tell them what an experience meant. As Wurdinger (2005) noted, "It seems reasonable to include students in the assessment process, for who better knows what they have learned than the students themselves" (p.70)? In forensics, coaches simply need to talk to students about how they feel.

All this reflection, however, comes with a caveat. One of the biggest criticisms teachers have to student self-assessment is that students are unable to properly assess themselves due to their lack of pedagogical training. Forensic coaches see this all the time. Students often get frustrated with judging responses (Ross, 1984) and many other issues, and then lash out because

of their frustration, often not being pedagogically productive. Coaches need to help students work through these feelings from their experience. While students do know themselves better than their teachers, the critics are mostly correct in noting that in the classroom students may not be ready to evaluate themselves right away. Reddy and Andrade (2010) concluded students need to be taught about assessment techniques for them to be effective, and this must be done when reflecting. Bartanen (1998) suggests forensics teaches students how to critically reflect effectively. As Chouinard (2010) noted however, student processing is often done hastily and it is in need of guidance and reframing.

Even with coach guidance, it often takes awhile for students to properly assess their learning from an experience. Students new to reflection processes often do not demonstrate significant growth in critical thinking or a deeper understanding of the curriculum (Molee, Henry, Sessa, & McKinney, 2010; Wessel & Larin, 2006). Grossman (2009) noted that students often need years to refine their reflection skills to make them an effective learning tool. Again, without training and guidance, reflection may not serve students educationally.

Coaches know this problem. Generally, freshmen have trouble processing their experiences, whereas seniors tend to need less hand-holding. Often students need to see how it is done. This is why Joplin (1995) argued that reflection "needs to be made public… The public nature of debrief…ensures that the learner's conclusions are verified and mirrored against a greater body of perception than his alone" (p. 19). Students should discuss their experiences with other students and a coach to maximize learning effectiveness, particularly at the start of the reflection process. Guiding questions might help make sense of what the student experienced, helping to maximize the pedagogical benefits of reflection. This is why van talks in forensics are

so transformative: students learn how to reflect upon their day and make meaning from what they've experienced.

Reflecting on experiences is something that forensic scholars have rarely asked students to do, so there is not much to go off for this study. In one of the rare studies that did focus on asking what the students felt like they were learning, Quenette, Larson-Casstelton and Littlefield (2007) found that students self-reported the top advantages of forensics to be "Enhanced positive sense of self", "Enhanced competitive success", and "Enhanced academic achievement", which are all similar to what the previous literature suggests for forensic learning outcomes.

So it seems that forensic students learn a variety of things through their experience in and reflection on the activity, but how does what they are learning tie to anything in the classroom? After all, a link to communication theory is preferred, but so too is a link to pedagogical practice. Since forensics lacks a direct link to learning outcomes that are used in the classroom, turning to classroom learning outcomes makes the most sense to order to establish a connection to the curriculum and what our students actually learn. By showing that the activity reflects classroom learning outcomes, forensic professionals can finally portray forensics as co-curricular without reservation, supporting the claim through both theory and praxis.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Assessment in higher education

In 1989 the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools issued a statement that if schools of higher education were to adequately serve students, they would need to be student centered (Lopez, 2004). The statement argued effective student assessment is a telling sign of the overall functionality of an educational, institutional body. This bold call for better understanding of how schools

determined student learning jump started the Assessment Movement. The Assessment Movement can be defined as pressure "on higher education to quantify the impact that their programs have on student learning" (Hunt, 1990, p. 5). As Baker (2004) noted, "Higher education's stakeholders now expect claims of educational quality and institutional effectiveness to be supported by evidence in the form of analytic data-driven assessments of achievement of intended outcomes" (p. 3). Essentially, higher education is under significant pressure to show that students are indeed learning.

The field of communication studies was certainly not immune to this push across universities and colleges. In the early nineties Higgerson (1993) claimed assessment was the "fastest growing nation-wide initiative" (p. 1). Particularly, the assessment and evaluation of public speaking skill mastery and learning has been a growing concern for educators at all levels (Helsel & Hogg, 2006). Now, assessment is institutionalized on the majority of campuses across the country (Ewell, 2009), making sure teachers are doing their jobs. However, that is where the similarities end between communication studies and other fields when it comes to assessment. In the classroom, communication assessment is different compared to other disciplines. Morreale et al. (2011) outlined three distinctions that make assessment difficult for communication educators. First, achievement tests or tests of objective or subjective content work well in other disciplines, but not communication. Since communication is generally assessed through performance measures, only communication knowledge is measured through traditional methods such as paper tests and essays. Second, communication assessment is often culturally subjective due to its performative and interactive nature. In determining communication competency, there may be more than one right answer or approach making objective evaluation of student outcomes more difficult. Third, any skills students learn can only be measured in the moment. Due to the

permeating aspect of communication, educators cannot fully know if students will be competent in the future. As Morreale et al. noted, "the determination of competence in communication will be affected by numerous factors impinging on any interaction at any given time" (p. 260). Labeling students as competent in a communicative skill acts a temporary assessment under certain conditions that are sure to change in a student's daily interactions.

These concerns with communication assessment are why experiential learning is so appealing for a performance based activity such as forensics and communication studies in general. Teachers must show that their students are learning. Traditional methods of student assessment include multiple choice and essay tests, papers, and formal presentations. While still useful in some instances, these traditional methods failed to produce sufficient student achievement assessment. As the Assessment Movement pushed forward, more ways to find out what students have learned began to become more mainstream and accepted across the curriculum. These other forms of assessment coincide with a more reflective and collaborative learning approach. Reflective, collaborative self-assessment is where education seems to be moving in colleges and universities. A growing body of evidence suggests self-assessment reflection to have a positive influence on student learning (Agne, 2010; Andrade & Boulay, 2003; Petkov & Petkova, 2006; Reitmeier, Svendsen, & Vrchota, 2004; Ross, Hogaboam-Gray, & Rolheiser, 2002). Assessments for self-assessment can be many things. In the classroom, Serow (1998) suggested self-assessment tools such as learning contracts, student interviews, and reflection papers. Stiggins (2002) suggested other strategies, including student-involved record keeping (such as a portfolio) and student-involved communication (such as student led exhibitions or conferences). Suskie (2009) noted that "An important difference between contemporary and traditional thinking about assessment is that under contemporary approaches,

assessment is viewed as part of an integrated, collaborative learning experience" (p. 4).

Successful colleges emphasize collaboration and related course work (Graff, 2008). These

assessment trends are moving student learning in the right direction.

As mentioned previously, in experiential learning the learning assessment occurs with the

student self-reflection. Mallard and Quintanilla (2007) noted, "As the push in higher education

for accountability of what is taught at the university level increases, there has been more focus

on student self-assessment as an integral part of learning and critical thinking" (p. 3). This allays

any fear that the assessment standards might not fit the learning: with self-reflection each set of

standards are automatically tuned to each student individually because the student is doing the

critical thinking, reflection, and assessment. Morreale et al. (2011) were concerned that

communication student assessment sometimes suffers because of inapt measurement. However,

with students subjectively examining their experiences all inappropriate assessment is eliminated

because students inherently select a reflective method that works best for their learning.

Self-reflection falls under this form of evaluation and can indeed be an effective method

of assessment. After all, some studies suggest that involving students in the assessment process

can increase academic performance (Petkov & Petkova, 2006; Reitmeier, Svendsen, & Vrchota,

2004). Boud (1995) noted "For effective learning of any kind to take place, learners –whoever

they may be- must develop the capability of monitoring what they do" (p. 14). Boud argued that

"It is important for all learners to develop the ability to be realistic judges of their own

performance and to effectively monitor their own learning" (p. 13). Another of the concerns of

communication assessment that Morreale et al. (2011) explained is the learning assessment is

culturally subject. For an activity such as forensics, this is actually ideal. Forensics itself is its

own culture and teams are subcultures inside of that (Kuyper, 2009). What a student finds

important to focus on learning in that culture can vary from team to team. This sometimes makes competition results scattered, but the students can focus on their culture of learning if they are the evaluators of their own learning. The same concept applies to any student in a particular course: every student knows themselves better than their teacher.

The final unique communication assessment factor is the lack of the instructors knowing if the learning sticks long term. In an experiential approach, the student is the assessor instead of the instructor; the student is able to monitor if s/he learned and if what s/he experienced provided a satisfactory learning opportunity enough for s/he to sufficiently learn. The instructor is present and helps guide the student through the reflection process after this experience, but ultimately the student must determine what is learned. Not only is the instructor unable to measure the personal learning of the student against the instructor's standards (thus making the depth of competency hard to measure), but once the student leaves, the instructor cannot determine if the learning was situational or applicable to other areas because they have little access to the assessed learning.

Using an experiential approach can solve many assessment issues in communication studies. With forensics, coaches should also embrace this type of assessment. Even though in forensics the formal evaluation of student performance is typically done through the form of a judge's comments on a competition ballot, forensic professionals mostly help students assess learning through informal reflection periods on vans and during practice sessions. There is a significant difference between these two forms of assessment in forensics.

Formal and informal forensic assessment

As previously mentioned, forensic scholars have attempted to implement some sort of formal learning assessment to determine what students are learning (Bartanen, 1994b; Kelly &

Richardson, 2010; Richardson & Kelly, 2008). While coaches can only teach their own students, the 2010 NFA Pedagogy Report seeks to define exactly what the student learning outcomes of the activity should be in relation to the competition events. How we assess student performance is through the judge's comments students receive on ballots.

Typically, assessment can be either formal or informal and may assign a grade or provide feedback. Different forms of student assessment in the classroom appear, but in forensics the formal and informal are evident when it comes to student learning: the informal education occurs through experiential reflection, whereas the formal education is supposed to be delivered through the ballot comments students receive.

Formal assessment in forensics is something greatly discussed by forensic scholars (Cronn-Mills & Croucher, 2001; Edwards & Thompson, 2001; Gaskill, 1998; Klosa & DuBois, 2001; Kuster, 1998; Morris, 2005; Paine, 2005; Pelias, 1984; Pratt, 1998). The most formal assessment in forensics is the competition ballot. As Mills (1983) pointed out, "One of the educational benefits to be derived from intercollegiate forensic activities is the ability to receive, adjust to, and learn from criticism" (p.19). While not much attention has been paid to the formal-grading assessment on forensic ballots (the rankings and ratings), forensic scholars have agreed that a good ballot should provide good formal-feedback to teach and instruct (Jones, 1998), but rarely does that happen. Mills lamented that "Comments on ballots are often unclear and incomplete" (p. 19). Wakefield (2008) further noted that ballots are often positive or neutral in nature, not providing enough critical feedback for students to learn from. This forms a problem: how are students supposed to formally learn from judges' feedback if the comments are not critically constructive or educationally helpful? As Bangert-Drowns et al. (1991) found, the type

of feedback in assessment can greatly impact the gain or loss of student achievement. These inconsistencies are why forensic coaches rely on informal assessment of student learning.

Informal assessment has been addressed so far in this thesis and can act as the answer to learning outcome measurement issues in forensics. While informal-feedback is an important role a coach fills for students in helping them properly reflect and make sense of their experiences during van rides and coaching appointments, informal-grading assessment rarely occurs. In these situations, students can feel safe about being wrong or confused, which is an important aspect of having a safe learning environment (Herrenkohl, & Mertl, 2010). When reflecting, students can take guesses and be wrong without dire, formal consequences. The added benefit of the informal assessment is that it can occur at any time. The more frequent the assessment, the greater student achievement (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, & Kulik, 1991). Rowe and Cronn-Mills (2005) addressed informal-feedback, noting team traditions often welcome reflection periods where the group and coach can help make sense of experiences. Since forensics does not assign grades informally (formal grades occur through ranking and ratings on ballots) this aspect of assessment is void.

Boud (1995) stated a list which defined the parameters for which student self-assessment can be a valid form of measurement of course outcomes in the class. Boud's list can be applied to informal student assessment in forensics, where self-reflection as assessment can be a valid form of measurement of learning outcomes when:

1. There is a high-trust, high-integrity learning environment
2. A major goal is the achievement of effective self assessment and students have had ample opportunity to practice and develop their skills
3. The criteria against which achievement is to be judged have been sufficiently unambiguously defined for there to be little scope for misinterpretation of assessment

If there is a high-trust, high integrity learning environment, the student is probably involved with an excellent coach who helps them make sense of their forensic experience. In this situation, the student and the coach trust each other to do what is ethically right and the experience is about learning, growing, and making the student a better-rounded individual. Since the scenario is focused on a student and coach who focus more on learning and less on competition, and there is no competitive fair play issue involved, the student can evaluate their learning experience purely on their own conclusions. If the major goal is to be an effective self-assessor, a student can learn just by reflection. In this scenario, the student is not focused on the skills learned in his/her forensic experience; rather, the student is focused on becoming a better evaluator of self to help with future self-assessments.

The final situation is what should give forensic professionals pause. As stated throughout this literature review, specifically defined forensic learning outcomes tied to a curriculum in praxis have not been published before. If a student is unsure about what the learning achievement is supposed to be in their experience, they cannot have a focus to their reflection. Another way of putting it is without knowing what students seek to learn, how can we know if they have learned it? It is because of this lack of specific learning outcomes tied to a curriculum that student learning assessment in forensics is being held back. If forensic students experience learning opportunities similar to the basic communication course, their reflection from their experience may act as effective assessment for their learning. BCC learning objectives can offer sufficiently defined and academically sound criteria upon which forensic students can base their goals.

Chapter Three

Methodology

My research project seeks to know more about a topic that is important to me, which some have argued could be detrimental to the study. However, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) argued that research is always influenced by the researcher's values. I would agree with Tashakkori and Teddlie; I have a personal connection with the content of my research project which most likely influences how I go about collecting and interpreting data. Education in forensics is important to me, thus my capstone research project focuses on the learning opportunities students have in forensics. Throughout this research project, I have attempted to maintain what Guba (1990) called a reasonable closeness of neutrality, meaning I am personally connected to the research but maintain an appropriate distance in order to uncover the most accurate answer to the research question as possible.

For my research project I surveyed various current forensic competitors regarding exposure to learning objectives in forensics with questions developed from a review of an assortment of Basic Communication Course (BCC) syllabi in order to answer three research questions. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) noted qualitative researchers "seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning" (p. 14), while quantitative researchers "emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes" (p. 14). My methods included both a quantitative approach (Likert scale measurement) and qualitative approach (open ended prompts/questions) to determine if students do have the opportunity to learn in forensics and if so, what those opportunities are.

In seeking the best way to answer the research questions, I found there was no one way to do it. I then turned to the postpositivist concept of triangulation, which is "the use of multiple,

inherently error-filled methods to study phenomena of interests" (Query et al., 2009, p. 83).

Multiple method approaches are better positioned to address the complex issues that

communication scholars face than singular methodological approaches because of the increased

flexibility of perspective (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). My

research project combines two communities (collegiate forensics and the Basic Communication

Course) so the use of triangulated methods seemed to be in order because as Lindlof and Taylor

(2002) pointed out, two methods can "converge on a common explanation" (p. 240) and simply

enhance the results. In this chapter, I will outline why I choose each method and how those

methods link to each other. I will start with the collection and analysis of the BCC syllabi, move

to the creation of the survey, before finally addressing how I collected and analyzed the data

from the survey.

Syllabus Collection and Analysis

  Collection

    The survey I used to collect the data for my thesis was derived from a content analysis

performed on a variety of BCC syllabi. This survey and thesis operates under a definition of the

BCC that includes both Public Speaking only and hybrid formats (studying both public speaking

and a variety of communication studies areas). I placed a call for BCC syllabi out on the BCC

list-serv, asking for BCC directors to send in their current syllabi to assist with a project;

seventeen instructors sent syllabi.

    Next, I performed a content analysis on the seventeen syllabi that I received. For my

project, the content analysis of syllabi meant taking course objectives without bias from the

syllabi and placing them into a category to determine which types of objectives were most

common (see Table 1). Based on my coding, sixteen learning objectives appeared more

Table 1
BCC Syllabi Learning Outcome Frequency

Learning outcomes	Frequency
Proficient in basic public speaking and human communication theory	17
Effectively apply persuasive techniques	9
Effective speech delivery	9
Effectively outline and organize a speech	9
Effectively write a speech	8
Effectively prepare and deliver a variety of speeches	8
Effective speech research	8
Effectively evaluate verbal and nonverbal communication in self	8
Effective audience analysis for a speech	7
Proficient in interpersonal communication	6
Properly evaluate other speeches	6
Proficient in listening skills	5
Proficient in critical thinking	5
Proficient in small group communication	5
Effective oral communication	5
Proficient in ethical communication	4
Effectively link communication to democratic citizenship	2
Effectively use visual aids in a presentation	2
Effectively cope with communication apprehension	2
Proficiently evaluate own speeches	2
Effectively learn by participation, discussion, reflection	1
Develop workforce skills	1
Understand interactive model of communication	1
Understand validity of Internet sources	1
Effectively link service learning with communication	1
Effectively analyze rhetorical situations	1

frequently, thus making them statistically more significant than any of the remaining learning objectives, allowing for a clean break. Specifically, all of the sixteen learning objectives showed up four or more times, with the next closest objective trailing by two occurrences (see Table 1). There was a cluster of these objectives and the significant break of two occurrences seemed to best represent the most critical learning goals of the BCC. Due to the fact that the learning objectives collected were not all phrased the same way, I had to organize them into categories that emerged, thus making the process a content analysis and not merely a frequency marker of clearly stated objectives.

Justification

Using BCC syllabi from across the country was an obvious choice for this research project. Since the research question specifically addresses the BCC learning objectives, the survey would naturally need to be derived from those learning objectives. I needed a wide range of responses from around the country. My need stemmed from wanting a diverse set of course objectives for the Basic Course, since the focus of the course varies from school to school. Having a sampling of syllabi from all regions of the country helped to increase the diversity of responses and thus, the diversity of objectives. Since a sufficient number of the Directors from a variety of regions sent back useable syllabi for the project, the method of syllabus collection for this research project can be deemed successful.

Using a content analysis for the sorting of the learning objectives was a simple choice. Leslie (2010) noted "Communication researchers consider content analysis one of their most basic, bread-and-butter methods because it makes intuitive sense: communication creates content which we then gather, categorize in some way, and study" (p.136). Content analysis is so popular that it was employed in 30% of all major communication studies journals from 1980 to 1999,

making it the second most popular method of that stretch of time (Kamhawi & Weaver, 2003). It

is also extremely popular in forensic research (e.g., Bartanen, 1987; Carey and Rodier, 1987;

Cronn-Mills & Schnoor, 2003; Mills, 1991; Pratt, 1987). While there is some subjectivity in

coding via content analysis, the approach attempts to be objective. Wimmer and Dominick

(2006) argued that being objective as possible in this aspect of a content analysis is important;

this is the case with my research project particularly because categorizing is the main aspect of

this step. Since I was seeking the most common learning objectives in the BCC, getting the

learning objectives into accurate categories is important because the analysis only requires seeing

the most frequent responses from the syllabi.

Survey

Creation

The next step in the research process was to create a survey to collect the data to help

answer my research questions. The survey for my research project was created using the sixteen

learning objectives and the general themes of the BCC gleaned from the content analysis of the

BCC syllabi. The survey opens with two questions that ask the number of years the respondent

has competed in collegiate forensics and what they study in school; this was done to cross

reference responses during analysis to see any potential differences or trends due to experience in

the activity or focus in education.

The sixteen learning objectives were then crafted into Likert scale prompts to help

answer RQ1 (Do students perceive the experience gained on an intercollegiate forensic team can

meet Basic Communication Course learning objectives?). The prompts were divided into sets of

five, five, and six. Each prompt in a set was written in the same formula, with each set having a

new format so as to keep the respondents engaged in the survey. The Likert scale I used was

created from the traditional five point scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree). Each Likert scale prompt was followed by another prompt that asked the respondents to "Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response". These add-ons to each Likert scale prompt were designed to help answer RQ2 (How do students learn from the experience gained on an intercollegiate forensics team?).

Finally, three open ended prompts were created to determine the answer to RQ3 (What competency level do students reach from the experience gained on an intercollegiate forensics team?). Each of these prompts attempted to determine the respondents' level of competency, or what they learned in forensics, in the three main areas of the BCC: public speaking, interpersonal communication, and small group communication.

Justification

My research uses a survey to gather data, which worked well. Survey research seeks to understand the beliefs, attitudes, values, or behaviors of a population by asking a small group of that population; results are then generalized as representative of the entire group (Query et al., 2009). This type of research is nothing new to the forensic community as surveys have been used in forensic research many times, with qualitative studies utilizing content analysis being ranked the third most published style in the *National Forensic Journal*, behind qualitative essays and quantitative research respectively (Kerber & Cronn-Mills, 2005). Many forensic research survey questions, however, are generated merely through what the author hopes to find and often do not include a pedagogical justification beyond the authorial intent of the survey. While my research project is born from a personal interest in the topic (as are most research projects), the questions were generated from the previously performed content analysis of learning objectives, effectively

grounding the survey questions in a pedagogical framework. Without the content analysis of the BCC syllabi, my survey questions would have been generated without direction or purpose, which would have jeopardized the validity of the survey as well as the research project as a whole.

Surveys abound in communication studies research, making it at one time the most popular method used in published communication research (Anderson, 1996; Potter, Cooper, & Dupagne, 1993). Just because surveys are popular, however, does not inherently make them a good fit for any research project. Despite not being a cure-all, the use of a survey is ideal for this particular research project because it addresses impressions of a certain population. This research project specifically focuses on the learning opportunities forensics can provide for students. Fortunately, surveys have already been found to be effective when examining the topics of satisfaction (Ford, 2001) and community involvement (Rothenbuhler, 1991). Since surveys are excellent tools to determine opinions and thoughts, the choice of a survey for this project is ideal because students are being asked their opinion about the educational opportunities of forensics. Students will be able to respond with their opinions in a variety of ways in the survey

Additionally, Walliman (2005) and Rubin et al. (2010) both noted that surveys are ideal when attempting to gather data from a large group of people. The forensic community is spread across the country, so an accurate representation of the community will best be measured through a research method such as the one I have chosen. Leslie (2010) argued that sampling (finding people to take your survey) is flawed. However, for my research project it is the ideal way to answer the research question due to the size and location of the entire collegiate forensic population. Leslie pointed out the trouble that might arise with a "random" sample. My survey mostly circumvents this sampling problem because it has been sent out on a list-serv that reaches

a large portion of coaches who in turn can distribute the survey to students.   Because my survey can reach such a large portion of the community I am surveying, any sampling issues that involve not reaching certain members are minimized.

Further, while Leslie (2010) embraced a postmodern view that claims we cannot learn about the whole of something by examining its parts, any forensic researcher can tell you that talking to every forensic student is impossible because of time and location restraints. Since all forensic students are never gathered in one place at the same time, an online electronic survey is the best way to reach the highest number of students. Forensic students should have had no trouble completing the survey due to their standard demographics' ability to effectively use the internet. Any worries about cyber-stalkers or con-artists should be minimized since only those receiving the electronic link to the survey can find it, and the survey was sent to only people in the forensic community.

A survey is also a good choice for my research project because, as Walliman (2005) noted, the main benefit of a survey is its impersonality. The questions do not change no matter who the respondent is or how they respond. Responses are anonymous so participants may feel more freedom to answer honestly without someone judging them. Forensic students do not have to reveal their identity to me and thus, can feel safer sharing their true thoughts without worrying about any potential competitive or personal repercussions.

The main part of the survey was created with two types of questions to elicit responses: Likert scale items and open-ended prompts. Likert's (1932) scale is so popular that you would be hard pressed to find a social science scholar that is not familiar with it, as it is used in a vast array of studies. The scale is meant to measure attitudes of respondents about whatever the survey is inquiring about. As Ryan (1980) noted, "Subjects typically are asked by those who use

the Likert scales to indicate the extent to which they agree/disagree with each of several attitude statements" (p. 305). An agree/disagree scale is not always used since any value marker would suffice, but this approach is used quite frequently. Hartley and Betts (2010) pointed out the many variations of a Likert scale, from the traditional 1-5 scale to a non-numbered scale to even an 11 point scale. The entire point of a Likert scale is to offer a range of potential responses to how a respondent feels about the provided statements, so there really is no limit as to how creative many researchers will get with a Likert or Likert-type scale.

For my research project, a Likert scale was chosen because the simplicity of the scale matched the simplicity of the questions I wanted to ask forensic students. Each of the sixteen prompts is a statement and has a singular focus, which are the key components of a Likert scale prompt (Tucker, Weaver II, & Berryman-Fink, 1981). As mentioned earlier I used the traditional five point scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree or Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree) in my research project because respondents should be able to differentiate well enough between the options so not to necessitate an increase in points. As McDonald (2004) found, reliability of Likert scales do not increase after five points.

Each statement on the Likert scale is positive, which goes against what many scholars believe is best practice. Those using Likert scales are often encouraged to reverse code a statement or make a statement negative in order to battle response-sets, or when "a subject checks the same response to an entire set of scales" (Tucker, Weaver II, & Berryman-Fink, 1981, p. 173). There is a common belief among scholars that respondents will pause and more closely consider their responses if the way the statements are phrased varies in positivity. However, as Tourangeau, Couper, and Conrad (2004) and Weems et al. (2003) argued, varying arrangements on a Likert scale can produce different results. While changing the phrasing of a question may

alter responses, we might never know for sure what changes are for the better or for the worse. For my research project, I believe that negatively worded or inversed statements might make it harder for respondents to understand the statements, thus increasing the likelihood of an inaccurate response. Therefore, all the statements in my Likert scale are positively phrased.

Of course, as mentioned earlier, all of the sixteen Likert scale statements are derived from the sixteen most common learning objectives found from the content analysis performed on the collected Basic Course syllabi. Without performing the content analysis, I would not have Likert scale statements grounded in real learning objectives. This also helps with clarity. One of the main concerns when creating a survey is keeping the statements or questions clear and unbiased (Bowers & Courtright, 1984). Using the learning objectives to form the Likert statements helped enhance clarity and made sure students would have a chance to simply mark if they felt like forensics offered those learning opportunities. By collecting data in this manner, the focus can initially be on the learning objective opportunity and then shift to open ended prompts for elaboration.

Reinard (2008) explained that questionnaires ask for written responses to subjects' understanding of things, often their own perceptions of themselves or something related to them. Tuckman (1999) elaborated that questionnaire items must either be phrased as a question or a statement, and researchers should stay consistent with whatever they choose so as to not confuse the respondents. The open ended prompts in my survey come mostly in statement form ("Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response."), which follows each Likert scale statement. This stays consistent through all sixteen Likert scale statements, making the pattern easy to follow for the respondent. Bowers and Courtright (1984) would

support this type of organization, as they strongly advise for researchers to structure their surveys in a way that flows and makes sense to the respondents.

The open ended prompts are useful because I do not know how the students connect to the learning opportunities in forensics, only to what degree they feel those learning opportunities are present in the activity. Because a researcher does not know the response to a question, an open ended statement is used to elicit a unique answer from the respondent in his/her own words (Poindexter & McCombs, 2000). This is why the open ended statement is used in my survey: to provide an opportunity for the respondent to explain their previous Likert scale answer in their own words, expanding upon their relationship with the learning opportunities in forensics.

However, I also use open ended prompts to help answer RQ3. These prompts are put at the end of the survey to avoid confusion with the previous questionnaire prompts addressing RQ1 and RQ2. The previous sections offer chances to say if they had the opportunity to learn and how that learning took place, but this section gave the respondents a place to explain what exactly they learned and to what level of competency. Since public speaking, interpersonal communication, and small group communication were the three main focuses of Basic Courses around the country (according to the previous content analysis of Basic Course syllabi) these last open ended questions ask about students' perceived level of competency in those areas. Open ended questions were also used because they usually generate a more in-depth answer (Tucker, Weaver II, & Berryman-Fink, 1981) and three questions did not seem like it would overwhelm respondents.

Survey Data Analysis

Once I collected the data from the survey using both Likert scale and open ended prompts, I analyzed the results using grounded theory coding techniques. In this section I will

explain how I analyzed both types of data as well as offer justifications for the methods of analysis I chose.

The Likert scale prompts were organized into categories of frequency and the analysis consisted of percentages and frequency data reflecting the forensic student population and their feelings on learning opportunities in forensics. This addressed RQ1in a very straight forward manner. Since I used GoogleDocs to run my survey, it provided frequency and percentage information from the results, which made the process of analyzing the Likert items much easier than anticipated.

Analyzing the open ended survey data using grounded theory coding techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was an easy choice because this method helped directly address RQ2 and RQ3. Lindolf and Taylor (2002) explained that grounded theory is used when the researcher wants patterns to emerge from the subjects' responses without influencing the data with the researcher's bias. The theory is grounded in the relationships between the data and the categories that are coded into, which generally emerge later in the research process after the researcher is done collecting data. Since my research project has open ended prompts, I wanted to insure that the analysis was performed after all of the data was collected and that the categories emerged from the data itself and not from my perceptions of the research question. Avoid this bias was important and I think I succeeded.

Charmaz (2006) explained that grounded theory coding "shapes an analytic frame from which you build the analysis" (p. 45). The first step is the initial coding process. Glaser (1978) noted that when using grounded theory, researchers must study the emerging data. Initial coding should stick closely to the data, making sure preexisting categories are not being applied to the data. Because the Likert scale statements are linked to learning objectives and have a clear,

quantitative response, I used preexisting categories (the prompts) to organize the data. The open ended prompts, however, required I begin analysis from the perspective of the respondents, thus I generated categories by coding incidents. Charmaz asserted a researcher could use line-by-line coding or incident-by-incident coding when examining their data; incident-by-incident coding worked for my research project because it focused on ideas and not single words or sentences. Since similar ideas were more frequent than specific words, phrases, or sentences, this seemed like the ideal option for this research project. I took the open ended questions and looked at the ideas they represent and then put those ideas into categories that emerged during the initial coding process.

The next step in the coding process is making meaning from those categories. This requires seeing what the categories and "incidents" mean and how they help to answer the research question. Since my research question is fairly specific and I am looking for particular feedback from forensic students, I used axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) when the coded categories needed further linking. The purpose of axial coding is to sort, synthesize, and organize large amounts of data and reassemble them in new ways after the initial open coding (Creswell, 1998). Strauss and Corbin pointed out that axial coding is meant to answer the questions of when, where, how and with what consequences. This would fit with my research project since I seek to determine if the experience gained on an intercollegiate forensic team meet Basic Communication Course learning objectives, as well as how students are learning and what competency levels they can reach. Any data that helps in the processing of the research questions is something I welcome.

After describing how I collected and analyzed the data, as well as defending the choices I made to do so, the next chapter will reveal the results of this study. The results section will

present analysis of both the Likert scale items as well as the open ended prompts to which the

participants responded.

Chapter Four

Results

My research question sought to find out if participation on an intercollegiate forensic team provided the same learning opportunities as the Basic Communication Course. I collected a variety of BCC syllabi from across the country, created a survey from the most common learning objectives and sent the survey to teams across the country via different email lists. A total of fifty-eight (58) participants completed the survey. The number of years of previous experience of the participants in collegiate forensics was fairly evenly distributed: half the participants had 0-1 years of experience in collegiate forensics, while the other half had 2-3 years of experience. Participants responded to sixteen (16) Likert scale prompts created from the BCC learning objectives. Student responses become shorter and, at times, less frequent as they advanced through the prompts. This response variance impacts the depth of results for the prompts as the survey progressed. Three open ended items appeared after these sixteen prompts. The items asked students to elaborate on their perceived competency (as it relates to their experience in forensics) in the three main areas of which the BCC tends to focus: public speaking, interpersonal communication, and small group communication. The results (see Table 2) are discussed below by reviewing each of the sixteen prompts and then exploring the three open ended items about the students' perceived competency.

Learning Objective Prompts

Prompt 1: "My experience in collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to help make me understand and apply effective oral communication."

The first prompt concerned the student's opportunity to apply effective oral communication in forensics. 61% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 23%

Agreed, 3% were Neutral, and 6% Strongly Disagreed. The 6% of participants who felt they did not get opportunities to apply effective oral communication is surprising due to the nature of forensics being an activity where oral communication is the very essence of what students do. Other prompts might be more understandable, but oral communication is at the core of what forensics is about. As one student noted, "The whole point of the competition is to see who can most effectively communicate (orally) their point, and the trophies or prizes go to those who the judges feel did the best job. My question is, how is it NOT learning to apply effective oral communication?" Unfortunately none of the students who responded negatively expanded on their answer explaining why they believe they did not learn to apply effective oral communication. Generally, however, students seem to agree that forensics provides this learning opportunity. Three themes emerged from this prompt: "scope of opportunities", "competition as motivator" and "advantages beyond coursework".

The first theme that emerged from the short response portion of this prompt is scope of opportunities for oral communication. Responses indicated that students felt forensics helps develop and improve oral communication skills by offering opportunities to speak in a variety of settings. One student noted, "Through hands on experience, I have been able to understand that effective oral communication means being effective in a mulititude (sic) of circumstances." Another student wrote that "… oral communication is the entire event. That's like asking 'Has your experience on the college football team provided you with opportunities for physical exercise?'" The students clearly thought forensics offered many opportunities to learn oral communication.

Table 2

Opportunities for BCC Learning Objectives in Collegiate Forensics

Prompts	SA	A	N	D	SD
Oral communication	38	14	2	0	4
Research a speech topic	37	11	4	2	4
Outline/organize a speech	37	11	2	4	2
Write a speech	34	11	7	2	4
Deliver a speech	41	9	3	1	4
Small Group Communication	16	10	23	6	3
Interpersonal Communication	25	16	4	8	5
Basic Comm./Public Speaking theory	31	16	4	3	4
Persuasive techniques	30	13	9	0	4
Ethical communication	22	14	12	5	5
Critical thinking	31	15	7	1	4
Listening skills	29	17	6	3	3
Evaluate other speeches	38	11	6	0	3
Audience analysis	26	11	9	7	5
Variety of speeches	35	9	5	3	5
Communication tendencies in self	30	16	8	1	3

Note: The scale used about is a standard Likert Scale with SA= strongly agree, A=agree, N=neutral, D=disagree, SD=strongly disagree.

The next theme is "competition as motivator". Several responses cited the competitive aspect of forensics as an important factor in learning effective oral communication, essentially endorsing forensics as a better way to learn than through the traditional classroom. One student noted that "There were few opportunities in college course work outside of forensics to apply oral communication". Another response echoed that sentiment: "I have learned more by appling (sic) speech skills in a competive (sic) setting, then I ever did sitting in a classroom. Also you countiune (sic) to practice these skills, and work on professionalism much longer then in the classroom".

The last theme to emerge was "advantages beyond coursework". The experience forensics offered is a factor in how forensics can teach students how to effectively use oral

communication. Also highlighted in other similar responses (e.g. "I have learned more about how to orally communicate in forensics then I would have learned in a classroom setting"), one student expressed the difference between the classroom and forensics: "A Communications class teaches students within a controlled setting in a classroom, but speech not only does that, it also gives real-world experience in communication before large audiences". In general, students felt that forensics offered enough opportunities to learn effective oral communication.

Prompt 2: "My experience in collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to help make me competent in effectively researching a topic for a speech."

The second prompt asked students if they felt forensics offered opportunities to effectively research a topic for a speech. 60% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 18% Agreed, 6% were Neutral, 3% Disagreed and 6% Strongly Disagreed. Several short answer responses elaborated that because they did not compete in the public address or limited preparation events, they did not feel they learned much in terms of research. However, as one student put it, "for interpretation events, I've searched through anthologies and such to find literature that fits the argument for the program". Three themes emerged from this prompt: "finding quality research", "evaluating quality research", and "advantages beyond the classroom".

The first theme that emerged from the short response portion of this prompt is "finding quality research". The bulk of the responses were dedicated to finding credible research and sources. Comments such as "Through Forensics, I can easily access databases and effective internet search engines to find the materials I need to construct a speech", and "Forensics has certainly provided many opportunities for research, and it has exposed me to effective tools in research: academic databases, academic journals, reference librarians, and professors in relevant

departments on campus" show that most of the students felt like they learned how to find quality information.

The next theme is "importance of quality research". Other students commented on how forensics teaches how important quality research can be. One student noted the different aspects of finding credible sources: "Research has to be well-rounded: credible sources, up to date sources, and a depth of sources are required. You have the opportunity to participate in many different events, requiring different types of sources. Research needs to constantly be updated". Another student wrote about source evaluation:

> Sources like wikipedia does not count because anyone can edit that information. Sources
> should be from experts in that subject area and information should be recent for the
> simple reason that information changes over the years the more we learn about our world.
> We need to know how information about a subject has changed over the years in order to
> express an idea effectively.

The last theme is "advantages beyond the classroom". Students wrote that the research forensics helps teach you is often not found in classrooms. One student noted the confidence they felt after researching something for forensics after struggling in college courses: "I now feel immensely confident in my ability to perform research". Another student wrote directly about how forensics as a competition enhances research abilities:

> Forensics teaches you not only how to research but to research the topics that go
> unnoticed or missed. Particularly in informative and persuasive speaking you have to dig
> for analysis, stats, and information, that is well above the considered levels of most
> undergraduate courses. Further, your research is continually revised and inspected by

anywhere from 4-10 reviewers from multiple institutions each weekend. No other course on any college campus in any University across this country can promise the same thing. Students apparently notice and appreciate the unique learning aspect of forensics as opposed to the traditional classroom. In general, students felt that forensics offered enough opportunities to be competent in effectively researching a speech topic.

Prompt 3: "My experience in collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to help make me competent in effectively outlining and organizing a speech."

The third prompt concerned outlining and organizing a speech. 60% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 18% Agreed, 6% were Neutral, 3% Disagreed and 6% Strongly Disagreed. Responses that were disagreements in this prompt again come as a surprise as you would think that most coaches and forensic professionals encourage students to at least create initial outlines for speeches they want to write. The themes of "advantages beyond coursework" and "competition as motivator" also appeared in this prompt, as did a new theme of "drawbacks of forensics".

The first theme that emerged from the short response portion of this prompt is "advantages beyond coursework". Elaborations of responses were generally positive, indicating that forensics helps students learn how to outline and organize speeches effectively. Students noted that forensics helps teach organization techniques which helps with course work. One response explained that forensics "…helps me make claims and defend arguments, and organize my points through subpoints and signposts. It helps with all papers, not just speech, as it gives an organized outline that any professor can follow". Another student wrote that "My forensics career has improved my writing ability for other courses. I regularly receive high marks for structure and organization".

Not only did the students think forensics helps with course work, but several students argued their experience in forensics created a better learning environment than the standard classroom. One student noted that "Forensics is where I've found that outlines are emphasized the most. I haven't had a class yet where the professors pay much heed to the outlines, necessarily. In forensics, though, I'm not allowed to write a speech until I have a detailed and organized outline".

The second theme is "competition as motivator". One student noted an important point about learning from forensics: "The norms of forensics teach you what instructors have difficulty imparting, after all if you view knowledge through a competitive lens you feel the need to learn faster to compete better". The driving force behind this learning apparently is derived from the competition aspect of forensics. This was a major theme, as many students pointed out how clarity was important for competitive success. The impact on the judges was highlighted with several comments such as "If the speech is not well organized, you will automatically be dropped in rank" and "I have to organize well in order to win over the judges. Organization is key. I can have great points but without good organization, I can't win".

The last them is the "drawbacks of forensics". The nature of forensics has made it hard to escape the importance of being organized. As one student noted, "I now organize speeches in my dreams, it has become a habit". However, several students noted that the formulaic nature of speech organizational patterns in forensics may be detrimental to their learning. Responses included mention of "preordained structures" and persuasive speeches "with the foundations of a cause, an effect, and a solution". As one student noted that, while helpful in organizing speeches, norms can be dangerous: "Forensics also helps students learn how to organize a speech…However, the formulaic nature that has developed in a number of events, such as

impromptu and communication analysis, undermines this educational benefit". In general, students felt that forensics offered enough opportunities to be competent in effectively outlining and organizing a speech, but also recognized the potential problem with strict norms.

Prompt 4: "My experience in collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to help make me competent in effectively writing a speech."

The fourth prompt concerned the opportunity to effectively write a speech. 55% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 18% Agreed, 11% were Neutral, 3% Disagreed and 6% Strongly Disagreed. The numbers of agreement dip from outlining and organizing to writing a speech. This may be indicative of a lack of student confidence in their writing abilities, or it may be that a coach's words may end up in the speeches frequently enough to make students feel as if they are not writing the speech anymore. While we might not know the reason, the decrease between outlining and organizing and writing warrants a note. Three themes emerged in this prompt: "needing help", "using examples" and "value of editing".

The first theme of "needing help" emerged with comments from students about the apparent uneasiness of effectively writing a speech. One student commented, "I was clueless on how to write a speech before Forensics. I am still learning this process, but I think it is starting to become more clear to me the more I do it". Many student responses centered on having a lot of help from coaches: "My speeches are more understandable and powerful with the help of coaches"; "edits, etc. from coaching staff are all filtered/applied through my own personal writing"; "Usually I can find where I want to put quotations and I can write a very good first draft. Then I usually go to a coach for feedback and a review of what I have written".

The second theme of "using examples" emerged when several responses indicated that reading or watching other speeches helped them understand what to do. One student explained

that forensics "taught me how to not only write a speech, but craft a speech that was written in comparison to other successful speeches". Another student pointed out that "Watching excellent speeches every weekend has helped me when writing speeches". Many students wrote about the value of seeing how it was done first before they wrote their speech.

The "value of editing" was the final theme. Responses indicated that forensics helps in effective speech writing by encouraging re-writes, or edits of a speech. A student argued that "writing, rewriting, and editing speeches throughout college forensics is key to being able to effectively write a speech". Several students echoed this belief, noting that rewriting a speech is something that is expected in forensics and that coaches often assist in this process as well. In general, students felt that forensics offered enough opportunities to be competent in effectively writing a speech, even if student confidence is lower in this area than in outlining and organizing.

Prompt 5: "My experience in collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to help make me competent in effectively delivering a speech."

The fifth prompt was about the chance to effectively deliver a speech. 66% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 15% Agreed, 5% were Neutral, 2% Disagreed and 6% Strongly Disagreed. What is most interesting is the discrepancy between the opportunity to write a speech and deliver a speech. While 66% of participants strongly agreed they had enough chances to deliver a speech competently, only 55% felt the same way about if they had the opportunity to learn how to competently write a speech. This might indicate a more performative emphasis that students perceive about the activity. Two themes emerged from this prompt: "increased confidence" and "advantages beyond coursework".

Responses indicated students felt forensics helped with "increased confidence", thus making them competent to effectively deliver a speech. "Giving a speech, in my opinion, is

primarily about the confidence to deliver well," one response explained. Another student elaborated on this concept, writing "I have always been comfortable in front of a crowd, and speaking comes naturally. But forensics helps focus on the nit picky things that can make a good speech become great".

The second theme was "advantages beyond coursework". Forensics gives more opportunity than a classroom and students seem to gain confidence through the repetition that the activity provides. "Practice makes perfect. Repeatedly putting youself (sic) in front of an audience gives us, as competitors, the opportunity to deal with the nerves associated with performing in front of peers. I have no fear when presenting in class anymore!", noted one student. Comments centered on the amount of time students practice and present speeches throughout the year and the amount of feedback those presentations receive, leading to more effective speeches. Several comments also focused on how different forensics is in helping delivery than in other forums such as classrooms. A specific response from a student elaborated on the impact of forensics:

> Forensics really helps teach a speaker how to deliver a speech. In most other public speaking venues, immediacy with the audience is not very important. However, forensics really pushes a student to do this, which is hugely important to being a good speaker. Students also learn how to use appropriate gestures and facial expressions to get their point across.

In general, students felt that forensics offered enough opportunities to be competent in effectively delivering a speech, even more so than writing a speech.

Prompt 6: "Collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to learn about Small Group Communication and apply it."

The sixth prompt was about applying Small Group Communication skills. 26% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 16% Agreed, 37% were Neutral, 10% Disagreed and 5% Strongly Disagreed. While many forensic professionals argue the activity helps students learn about working in groups, more than half the students in this study were unsure or did not feel there are opportunities to apply knowledge of Small Group Communication in forensics. Themes that emerged from this prompt include: "time spent with teammates", "lack of training" and "not applicable".

Student felt small group communication had much to do with "time spent with teammates". Many comments related to working or socializing with teammates as a way small group communication is taught. The students that agreed with this sentiment wrote strongly affirming responses, including "Being on a speech team is the most intensive small group experience I have ever had" and "Because speech teams are so close to one another…we getting (sic) to fully understand small group comm. on a personal and first hand level". Traveling can also act as a testament to small group team dynamics: "If you can not kill someone on the way HOME from a tournament, when you've eaten junk for three days, slept a total of five hours, and screwed up three impromptu rounds- you've reached a mastery of small group cohesion".

However, many comments centered around the "lack of training" of small group communication learning in forensics. As one student noted, "it's not as much formal training in that area like there is with actual speech development and delivery". Confusion was a theme for many responses. "We do learn some team work, but we are not really taught what effective team work is. I think I know, but I don't know for sure that I know", is what one student wrote.

Still others felt as if small group communication was not a part of the activity and that small group communication was "not applicable". Responses dealing with this included "I haven't personally had to apply small group communication to forensics", and "Forensics is primarily focusing on the speech of individual. It really did not supply a place for interaction between group in the round". Essentially, some students felt that forensics offered enough opportunities to learn and apply small group communication, while plenty others expressed confusion about the relationship between small group communication and forensics.

Prompt 7: "Collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to learn about Interpersonal Communication and apply it."

The seventh prompt concerned application of interpersonal communication skills. 40% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 26% Agreed, 6% were Neutral, 13% Disagreed and 8% Strongly Disagreed. The number of responses that are in the affirmative greatly outweigh the small group communication section, which is something to note about student awareness in these areas. Themes that emerged from this prompt include "self-esteem", "competition as motivation" and "time spent with teammates".

Most of the open ended comments were directed at "self-esteem" issues, as many students perceived interpersonal communication to be about how they felt in relation to others. There were many pertinent responses, but one stood out: "Our levels of self-esteem directly affects how confidently and believable we present our speeches, and how we interact with other competitors who'll we'll see again excercises (sic) our ability to maintain relations". Students seemed to think how they felt about themselves impacted not only their relationships with others but also their competitive success. Confidence seemed to play a large role in student perception of interpersonal communication.

Another theme that re-emerged was "competition as motivation" and how competition breeds self-monitoring and management of interpersonal relations. Forensics is an activity where "everything is professional; you cannot disclose too much otherwise another competitor would develop unwarranted perceptions about you and thus diminish your reputation". Being judged plays a large role in how students learn and apply interpersonal communication because "Being able to maintain these traits of Interpersonal Communication is key to gaining success in Forensics because many times how you conduct yourself can influence the opinion of the judge". One student pointed out that forensics is all about maintaining interpersonal relationships:

> Speech is all about schmoozing! It is so political; being well-liked and respected as an individual is a crucial part of competitive success and acceptance into grad programs or coaching positions. I create a persona for myself and intentionally perform that persona at speech tournaments--I want to be the nice, pretty, talented, just-awkward-enough-to-be-relatable one.

Students noted that being friendly with competitors is important because being liked helps in competition settings. Further, students felt getting to know judges and coaches helped them in this manner as well.

Many students also pointed out that "time spent with teammates" brought about forced interpersonal issues and conflict management. "Riding in a van with your teammates for hours at a time really gives a student time to practice managing self-disclosure and conflict", noted a student. Travel impacts this learning because "when working and traveling with a team often, there is a lot of underlying interpersonal communication that goes on". Students felt that being with teammates in meetings, practices, squad rooms, competition settings, crowded vans, and hotel rooms bred conflict, but also opportunities to learn about how to deal with the conflict that

happens in close relationships. Overall, students felt as if forensics did offer learning opportunities for interpersonal communication by interacting with others in a competitive and social function.

Prompt 8: "Collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to learn about basic Communication and Public Speaking theory and apply it."

The eighth prompt was about general communication and public speaking theory application. 50% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 26% Agreed, 6% were Neutral, 5% Disagreed and 6% Strongly Disagreed. These numbers are stronger in the affirmative than either small group or interpersonal communication, perhaps indicating a stronger emphasis in forensics on public speaking. Themes that emerged from this prompt included some themes that came up previously: "competition as motivation" and "lack of training".

Competition played a role in how students performed. Clarity for judges was mentioned in applying specific techniques. One student wrote "In a round you are able to change your speaking ability to fit your audience. For example, if a judge is sending non-verbals of being bored or confused, you can shift your approach mid-speech to get the judge back…" Verbal and nonverbal communication during competition was also mentioned often. Another student pointed out that "Movement when we arrive at a new point in persuasive and informative speaking is supposed to help the audience realize that this is now a new point".

"Lack of training" also reemerged in this prompt. Only one student noted any argumentation theory, mentioning "the Aristotelian canons". While some students noted the reason why they did certain things in forensics, most of the other comments pointed out that while engaging in public speaking, they often were unaware of the rationales or theories behind

why they were doing what they were doing. A poignant response explained that "The application of knowledge pertaining to verbal and nonverbal communication is evident within my practice of speech delivery in forensics, however, the activity does not specifically lend itself to teaching the theory behind these concepts". Another student succinctly noted about communication and public speaking theory in forensics, "Apply, yes. Do I feel like I discussed and learned more about these, no". Student did not seem to understand the theory behind the practices in forensics. For this prompt, students seem to respond that they were motivated to perform certain ways because of competition, but do not fully understand the reasons behind certain norms in forensics.

Prompt 9: "Collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to learn about effective persuasive techniques and apply them."

The ninth prompt regarded application of effective persuasive techniques. 48% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 21% Agreed, 15% were Neutral, and 6% Strongly Disagreed. What is most interesting about these numbers is that only 6% had any disagreement with this prompt, perhaps indicating a strong focus on persuasion in the activity. Themes that emerged from this prompt include "expected persuasive location", "competition as motivation" and "flexible application".

The first theme was that persuasive techniques were found in the obvious locations: in Persuasive Speaking. Not surprisingly, most of the comments explained how the category of Persuasive Speaking gave students a chance to apply persuasive techniques. There was a fixation on the event, with one response merely being "Hello Interstate Oratorical Association". Interstate Oratorical Association (IOA) hosts one of the oldest national speech competitions in the country, in which only the top two persuasive speeches from each state qualify to compete. Many

programs view attending IOA as one of the highest honors a speaker can achieve, making the emphasis on persuasion rather apparent. Persuasive techniques were mentioned in general, since forensics allows for use of "pathos, ethos, and logos in a more effective manner" as well as providing a deeper understanding of "how to persuade people of my view using evidence, emotional appeals, interesting vocal and facial delivery, logical progression of reason, and pause/silence in delivery".

Like in many of the other prompts, competition came into play as a motivator. Students noted that persuasive techniques are important when attempting to be competitively successful. "In every event, you are trying to persuade that you deserve the 1st place, you are truly selling yourself", wrote a student. Another observation about the competitive nature of forensics noted that "College speech was not always about persuading the audience of your topic's intent, but rather persuading that your speech was the best in the round". Students want to learn how to be persuasive in order to be more competitively successful.

Even though students noted the traditional methods of persuasion in forensics, responses also pointed out persuasive techniques are not limited to public address or limited preparation events, thus making the application of persuasive techniques flexible. Oral interpretation events were mentioned as opportunities to persuade an audience: "interpretation pieces are often used to persuade audiences through emotion and entertainment". As one student argued, "various persuasive techniques are employed in nearly every event". Students explained that a speaker needs to persuade the audience that their performance is the best, which in oral interpretation often results in certain performative choices or introductions which establish relevancy. It is these non-traditional methods of using persuasive techniques that students recognize and apply in

forensics. Essentially, the responses to this prompt indicated that students seem to see and grab the opportunities forensics provides to learn about effective persuasive techniques.

Prompt 10: "Collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to learn about ethical responsibility in communication."

The tenth prompt asked if students had opportunities in forensics to learn about ethical responsibility in communication. 35% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 23% Agreed, 19% were Neutral, 8% Disagreed and 8% Strongly Disagreed. Even though many forensic professionals decry ethical communication as an issue of which students should be aware, ethical communication learning opportunities was the second lowest prompt with which students agreed. The themes that emerged from this prompt are "plagiarism is wrong" and "lack of training".

Student responses seemed to indicate a strong understanding that plagiarism is wrong. Ethics are practiced through "crediting sources, providing accurate information, and respecting the continuity and integrity of texts" in oral interpretation. Students pointed out the importance of source citations ("We always cite our sources. ALWAYS".) and indicated the seriousness of any intentional breach of ethics ("If your sources are wrong...God help you".). Plagiarism not only was recognized as bad, but that it impacts more than the student who commits the infraction. Not only did students comment on how poor ethical choices such as plagiarism can reflect poorly on themselves and their team, it can also impact students on other teams:

> People are more likely to cheat in class than in forensics because in class, it's usually just the one person's grade that is affected. If someone were to cheat and use someone else's writing or cutting for forensics, that person would be more apt to feel guilty because how well they do with that speech affects how everyone is placed within the competition.

Aside from plagiarism, most responses explained that ethics in forensics were rarely discussed and there is a lack of training on it. One student noted, however, that he/she learned about ethical communication "through negative & positive experiences, personal reflection, and coach counseling". Experience in forensics plays a crucial role to students learning about ethics. After all, "There are tons of nonverbal 'rules' in forensics…'rules' are based only on what is ethical and violators are usually shunned by other speakers and coaches". Several other responses noted this monitoring of experience as the primary way of learning about ethical communication and practice in forensics. As a whole, students seem to know about certain aspects of ethical communication, such as plagiarism, but learn about ethics primarily through casual means.

Prompt 11: "By participating in collegiate forensics I have had the chance to improve my critical thinking about the communication process."

The eleventh prompt concerned the chance to improve critical thinking skills in the communication process. 50% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 24% Agreed, 11% were Neutral, 2% Disagreed and 6% Strongly Disagreed. With many forensic scholars making the claim that forensics can offer advanced critical thinking skill building, these responses seem to indicate only roughly ¾ of students perceive forensics to provide this learning opportunity. That means that about 25% of students felt forensics does not offer chances to improve critical thinking, which is likely a stunning figure for most forensic educators. The themes that this prompt generated include "focus on critical thinking" and "advantages beyond coursework".

Responses generally indicated students could see the opportunities to improve critical thinking in forensics because of the focus on critical thinking in the activity. Only a few

comments reflected an unawareness of critical thinking in forensics. One student wrote, "I have not thought directly about thinking critically about the communication process, but I am sure I have absorbed something of that sort". Improving critical thinking skills was often cited as an important aspect of forensics: "The best part of speech was not learning how to talk, but learning how to think about talking". The emphasis on critical thinking in forensics led some students to think that the activity focuses on it "a little too much".

Students also felt they improved their critical thinking skills by asking themselves and others "to think critically about the world around them", something forensics offers opportunities for better than the traditional classroom. One student explained that forensics "has given me the opportunity to expand my analyzation (sic) and critical thinking processes. It has given me the opportunity to examine communication in its raw forms". Students noted that their words impacted others: "I have learned to think about how my words might impact other people and how I want, what I have to say, perceived". Because of the continued time to work on things, students explained that forensics offers significant amount of opportunities to improve critical thinking skills. Forensics provides opportunities to improve critical thinking and students recognize the focus on it in the activity.

Prompt 12: "By participating in collegiate forensics I have had the chance to improve my listening skills."

The twelfth prompt was about if students had the chance to improve their listening skills. 47% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 27% Agreed, 10% were Neutral, 5% Disagreed and 5% Strongly Disagreed. While the numbers seemed to indicate a general positive response from students, the open ended prompts often mentioned an unawareness of

listening training. Many themes were addressed in this prompt including "lack of training", "expectations", "learning techniques" and "competition as a motivator".

The responses indicated that there seemed to be a lack of training on how to listen, but plenty of opportunity to improve listening. One student explained, "I haven't received coaching in how to listen well". Students commented on how no one tells them what good listening is beyond common sense, nor do their coaches show the theoretical background of listening and the advantages of listening. Essentially, many students noted that even though every round offers plenty of chances to practice effective listening, they were never trained on how to do this effectively.

Expectations play a role in listening too. Other students elaborated that the expectation is to listen and learn, but it is difficult to do because "The physical exhaustion that too often accompanies speech frequently inhibits my ability to listen closely to every single speech I hear in a weekend". In the end, students "are only forced to 'appear' to listen". Because of this difficulty, students noted that they often pretend to listen during rounds, instead of engaging in active listening. Expectations of listening force many students to maintain a façade of listening when they are unable to be fully engaged.

Despite these apparent struggles, student comments often declared listening and observing others to be an important learning technique to determine how to be successful in forensics. "Watching opponents was 80% of how I learned to be an effective national competitor," one student wrote. "Speech is far more about listening and learning than just talking". Another student explained that observational learning was just as important as direct experience: "You learn through not only experiencing speeches yourself, but also through hearing those around you for examples of what to do, as well as what not to do".

Competition motivates students to listen, too. Students noted how forensics differs from classroom presentations because "In forensics people pay a lot more attention to speeches than they would in class. The reason why is because competitors want to know why someone was placed first, second, third, etc. and how they can improve as well". Again, competition seems to play a role in how students learn and practice communication skills. Even though students know they should be listening to learn and to gain a perceived competitive edge, they have trouble overcoming obstacles such as tiredness and hunger. Without training on how to do this, students are not sure how to properly handle this difficult listening situation.

Prompt 13: "By participating in collegiate forensics I have had the chance to effectively evaluate other's speeches."

The thirteenth prompt regarded the opportunity to evaluate other speeches. 61% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 18% Agreed, 19% were Neutral, and 5% Strongly Disagreed. Interesting that only 47% of students felt strongly that forensics can help with listening skills, but 61% felt strongly that forensics can give chances to effectively evaluate other speeches, an action that requires listening skills. Themes are emerged from this prompt include "competition as a motivator", "competition as a teacher" and "time with teammates".

Most of the responses indicated that students critique and evaluate speeches during competition in an informal way. Students seem to evaluate other student performances to see where they might stack up competitively, observing that "every round is an evaluation". Forensic students "mentally imagine how they stack up against the competition that they've seen" and often discuss it with each other. However, "it is always a little disconcerting to hear other people's opinions and to see how the results turn out, because the evaluations are so personal and subjective!" "Whether you mean to or not, you are always watching your fellow forensicators to

see what techniques you like and which you don't," one student explained. "You're ranking the round in your head whether you realize it or not". Other responses elaborated that due to the competitive nature of the activity, evaluating for competitive gains is standard practice. As one student put it, "Often we learn from what other's do, so we take what things we like from them and apply them to ourselves".

Competition can also serve as a teacher to help students learn. Students evaluate other competitors to learn how to be better. Many responses noted that "Competitors evaluate speeches in order to understand what the competitors should do themselves in their speeches". One student wrote about how s/he learns through evaluating other's performances:

> There's nothing like watching other people to improve your own skills. Watching good people allows me to adopt certain things while watching bad people allows me to avoid certain things. It took a little time to realize though what was simply neutral. Now everywhere I look I seem to be able to find issues in presentation.

Many other responses focused on evaluating teammate's speeches, including time spent peer coaching. One student explained that his/her team "…watches each other perform quite frequently and we constantly help each other improve by analyzing the ballots we receive, from the tournaments as well as our peers". Comparing notes with teammates on another teammates speech gives students a chance to learn and evaluate in a safe atmosphere without having to be concerned about the formalities of the activity. More experienced team members often help teach the less experienced on how to do certain things by providing feedback to performances. Overall, students clearly see that forensics offers chances to evaluate other speeches in a variety of informal ways that serve different purposes.

Prompt 14: "By participating in collegiate forensics I have had the chance to effectively analyze an audience for a speech."

The fourteenth prompt was about forensics providing chances to analyze an audience for a speech. 42% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 18% Agreed, 15% were Neutral, 11% Disagreed and 8% Strongly Disagreed. Merely 60% of students taking the survey felt as if they had the chance to do a proper speech audience analysis. Themes that emerged from this prompt include "competition as a motivator" before, during, and after rounds of competition.

Students see opportunity to analyze an audience before competition. "Different regions have different styles, so i (sic) can tailor my speech to meet their needs", one student explained in a response. This is one way students see how to effectively analyze an audience though preparation before their competition. Another response articulated how forensics "is all about analyzing your audience. You need to have relevant ideas to whom you're sharing the ideas with. This includes your judge as well as the competitors. I have had opportunities to analyze audiences for speeches through analysis of judges by considering previous critiques…However, forensics does not lend itself to analyzing a whole audience prior to entering a particular round". Preparation before that round is only part of analyzing an audience.

Forensic students also seem to notice how to adapt to an audience during competition. One student remarked about the audience that "If they laugh, I pause and allow them time to laugh. If they look bored, I amp up my vocal and facial interest". Other ways students use audience analysis during performance is by "adapting to the acoustics/sizing/layout of the room, or simply checking through nonverbal communication to make sure the audience is following the argument". However, making those adjustments is not always easy mid-round, especially when "It's pretty hard to tell how the audience and judges feel. I get stone-faced a lot".

After the competition, responses seem to indicate that ballots played a crucial role in analyzing the audience and making adjustments before the next time out. "You always have to analyze an audience and whether they are collectively into the topic on which you are presenting," one response noted. "If not, then back to the drawing board to explore new concepts for the speech that would appeal to an audience, or get a new topic". Rewrites and edits to performances are common when trying to effectively analyze the audience. Students see these chances and take full advantage of them before, during, and after competition.

Prompt 15: "By participating in collegiate forensics I have had the chance to prepare and deliver a variety of different types of speeches."

The fifteenth prompt regarded whether students had the chance to prepare and deliver a variety of different speeches. 56% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 15% Agreed, 8% were Neutral, 5% Disagreed and 8% Strongly Disagreed. While about 13% had some sort of disagreement, most of the commentary in the open ended prompts indicated that students understand that forensics offers chances to do different speeches, but team/activity norms or personal preference prevent them from seizing those chances. Themes for this prompt include "scope of opportunities" and "advantages beyond coursework".

The first theme is "scope of opportunities". While 71% of responses indicated an agreement of this statement, the vast majority of comments explained how forensics offers three genres of speeches offering a wide variety of opportunities to try different types of speeches. Some, but not all, students reflected on how they have participated in all of these areas ("I've tried all the different genres"), but other students commented on that doing so requires some courage and "Not everyone chooses to step outside their comfort zone". The genres of competition all "require different forms of preparation and delivery to be successful". Many

students noted the difference in the categories, explaining how something like "Performing a drama is drastically different than performing a CA which is drastically different than performing in impromptu". None of the responses went into detail as to the specific ways each genre or category is different; they merely noted that the categories offer many chances to deliver a variety of speeches.

The second theme in this prompt is that forensics provides "advantages beyond coursework". Several responses noted how forensics offers more chances to do different speeches than a typical classroom. Collegiate forensics gives students "the opportunity to perform multiple types of speeches". Compared to what a student can learn in a semester-long course, "There are alot (sic) more speech types then in gerneral (sic) coms (sic) 101 class". One student even noted how forensics offers an excellent learning space, writing about how they "never could have [felt comfortable with as many types of speeches] without forensics". Students seem to recognize that forensics has many chances to deliver a variety of speeches and that exceeds what the traditional classroom can offer.

Prompt 16: "By participating in collegiate forensics I have had the chance to evaluate verbal and nonverbal communication tendencies in myself."

The sixteenth prompt was concerned with if students had the chance to evaluate verbal and nonverbal communication tendencies in themselves. 48% Strongly Agreed that forensics offered this opportunity, 26% Agreed, 13% were Neutral, 2% Disagreed and 5% Strongly Disagreed. Most of the comments were in agreement with this statement, and one student noted that it "can be expanded to say that the opportunity is given to correct some of these tendencies". Themes that emerged from this prompt include "competition as a motivator" and "varied types of evaluation".

All of the responses dealt with aspects of competition and how it helps students be aware of communication tendencies in themselves. Speed was an issue for several students ("I had no idea that I talked so fast and had so much physical energy") but most of the comments dealt with general verbal and nonverbal tendencies ("slight speech impediments, enunciation techniques, facial expressions and hand gestures"). One student noted that "By performing in collegiate forensics, I have discovered what my weaknesses are when speaking publicly and have been able to work on those ideosyncrasies (sic)". Other responses dealt with evaluating and adjusting verbal and nonverbal tendencies while an audience member.

"Varied types of evaluation" also was a theme. Students expressed evaluation occurs through feedback from ballots and coaches, and reflection. Working with judges and coaches often leads students to learn about certain communication tendencies they might be performing. "Through coaching and referencing of judges critiques I have done plenty of evaluation of my verbal and nonverbal communication tendencies," one student commented. "Forensics has encouraged me to put effort into eliminating bad tendencies and maximizing good tendencies to their full potential". Other responses indicated how students reflect on their performances after the round and compare their verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors to what is successful in competition. Overall, students see the chances to evaluate communication tendencies in themselves and they do that in a variety of ways both formal and informal.

While these sixteen prompts were to determine if students have the opportunities to achieve these learning outcomes (and what those opportunities are), the open ended prompts were created to determine to what level students felt competent in the general areas of the BCC.

Perceived Levels of Competency Items

This section turned out to be problematic. My intention was to have this section discuss the competency levels of the students in important learning focus areas of the BCC; this did not happen. After coding the three separate prompts regarding public speaking, interpersonal communication, and small group communication, it is apparent that the goal of the prompts failed. It seems students were unable to articulate competency and instead returned to discussing opportunities to learn the skills, making the data in this section redundant with the previous set of prompts. That brings up the theme of "competence is elusive".

One student responded to the interpersonal prompt with: "I feel forensics has forced me to interact with individuals I never thought I would have interacted with before… [forensics] has allowed me to grow and (sic) immense amount as far as my interpersonal communication skills are concerned". This response is representative of the entire set of data. Students explained how forensics has given them chances to learn and grow. However, these responses overlap with the previous set of data. While I did not think the prompts were unclear, I must wonder why this data emerged in this way. Are all the respondents not competent in these areas? I do not believe that is the case. However, the responses seem to indicate that they cannot distinguish between opportunity and competency. Students may be competent in certain areas, but if they cannot articulate their competency, we must question to what degree they are proficient.

Further, if our students know they have the chance to learn, but they also cannot articulate the actual competence, this is a symptom of our issues as an activity as a whole. In other words, if forensic professionals cannot articulate what being competent in these areas (public speaking, interpersonal communication, and small group communication) means, how can we expect our students to be able to measure if they have learned anything? Learning

happens individually and can be measured individually, but having a bench mark can be extraordinarily helpful for both teachers and students. This theme of the elusiveness of competency and a lack of clear pedagogical goals in forensics is the exact reason this study is being conducted. I will explore this development further in Chapter Five.

Through this data it appears as if the answer to RQ1 is that yes, forensics can provide the same learning opportunities as the Basic Communication Course. RQ2 was also answered with a variety of responses to each prompt. However, due to the complex nature of forensics and varying experiences student have on different teams, there is no guarantee that students will/do learn these things. And as I've previously mentioned, RQ3 cannot be answered through the results because respondents did not understand what competency means. The next chapter will explore what these results mean for the forensics community as well as the BCC.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

Forensics to me is about teaching my students to be self-reliant communicators. There are times when being hands-on is appropriate, but there are other times when letting students succeed or fail on their own is important too. The lessons that students learn in this activity are valuable. The results of this study indicate that what I do is worth something in the lives of students. RQ1 is seen to be answered in the affirmative, making RQ2 come into play. Since every student's experience is different in forensics, RQ2 can be answered by stating that how students learn the BCC learning objectives varies. These answers were demonstrated in Chapter 4 and were (to be honest) anticipated. What emerged beyond the general answers to the research questions is what makes this thesis so interesting. This chapter takes a closer examination of the results of the study while proposing future research along the way. I will first address the limitations to this study. Next, I explore the impact competition has on learning in forensics. Third, I question the impact of competition on forensics. Fourth, I discuss what impact the experiential learning has on forensics as well as the BCC. Finally, I delve into what forensic students seem to be missing on a theoretical level and offer solutions to this problem.

Limitations

Before discussing the conclusions from the results, I will examine the limitations of this study. First, the BCC learning objectives may not completely represent the entire Communication discipline as accurately as possible. When I created the survey I asked for as many BCC syllabi as I could get through emailing the BCC list-serv. This means that any BC director not on the list-serv would have not have known of my interest in receiving syllabi and thus would not have had the chance to submit to my research. As a result, the learning objectives

I pulled from these syllabi may be an inaccurate representation of what is taught across the country. These risks are to be expected when trying to gain information on the BCC. However, even with the potential limitations of syllabi collection, the learning objectives seemed to fit with my personal experience and with each other, increasing my faith in the validity of the situation. Ideally, a larger sample size of syllabi would be acquired for future research.

Similar to the BCC list-serv concern, the survey was sent out to forensic community members through an Individual Events list-serv. If coaches or students were not on the list-serv, they would not have had access to my call for research participants, making my participant pool limited to those who are on this particular email list. Many forensic coaches and students are not on this list-serv and therefore were left out from the research from the start of the project. Further, anyone who took the survey was self-selected; I did not force them to take it nor did they have to admit to anyone if they did or did not take the survey. This means that those who took the survey likely have a predisposition to express feelings on forensics and education because they likely are more invested in these things, or at least invested enough to take a survey on the topics. This leads to a potential limitation because those that took the survey may not be an accurate representation of the entire forensic community. While these limitations may be a concern, the results still are interesting. What makes the results so fascinating is what can be concluded from those results. These next sections address what the results might mean for both the forensics community and the BCC.

The Role of Competition in Learning

The results of this study indicate that many of the learning objectives were achieved because of the competitive aspect of forensics which spurred students to become better communicators in different fashions. Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) and Hinck (2003)

brought the debate about if forensics is competitive or educational to the forefront of many discussions amongst forensic educators. The accusation that forensics was merely about competition offended many coaches who spent countless hours teaching students how to be better speakers and communicators. Even now, the vast majority of the forensic community fights to defend the activity to university and college committees, arguing that forensics is educational and the competition itself is merely the structure in which the education occurs. If that was the case, however, practicing speeches as an intramural club would suffice in achieving the learning objectives and popularity that forensics has now. As we know, this is not the case at all. Regional and national competition plays a vital role in forensics. To try and ignore the competitive aspects of the activity would be ill advised. The results from this study show that forensic students learn because they are pushed to improve by their desire to compete at a high level. Many students noted that they changed communicative and speech behaviors and actions because they thought it would make them more successful at tournaments. Students learned from ballot comments, coaching, and observing other successful student performances. Without that drive to win, it is likely that students would not be pushed to grow as speakers and communicators.

It is with this in mind that forensic professionals need to stop arguing about whether forensics is merely competitive or educational, and start asking how we can use competition to help our students learn to the best of their abilities. Instead of relying on instincts or past experiences as the guide to motivate students, forensic coaches need to take a closer look at how sports coaches motivate their athletes. What often stops educators from doing this effectively is that they are unaware of all the factors that influence motivation or are unsure which strategies to use and/or when to use them. Using Keller's (2010) ARCS Motivational Design Model may be a

place to start examining how to best motivate students from an educational standpoint. However, forensic educators need to go further than that and start to delve more deeply into motivational techniques derived from sports. If competition is what is driving forensic students to learn, coaches must be knowledgeable about competition motivation in order to maximize, or at the very least enhance, student learning. More research needs to be done in this area if forensic professionals want to continue to help students learn.

Of course this plays with the assumption that all students are motivated purely by competitive success. As Brennan (2010) noted, success is not always defined by competitive gains; students can be motivated to learn intrinsically as well. However, as any forensic coach can tell you, students who experience competitive success often increase their work ethic. When it comes down to it, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can work together to produce simultaneous positive influences on behavior (Lepper & Henderlong, 2000).

Determining what motivates students can be a tough task. Many coaches over-think this hurdle. The best way to go about this is to just ask the students to set personal goals and push them to achieve those goals. By knowing what a student wants to achieve, an educator can better help a student create intrinsic motivation (Molden & Dweck, 2000) as well as assist in the achievement of extrinsic goals. Knestrick (2002) explained how goal setting can be beneficial for motivating students:

> The construction of goals is one method for creating achievable activities. Since
> individuals enter into situations for different reasons and have different means of
> achieving goals, success was what the individual perceived it to be. This leads to different
> ideas about what causes success and failure as well as different perceptions about their
> desired outcome. (p. 8)

Essentially, coaches can try to have students set personal and competitive goals. Not only will the student be able to see what they want to accomplish, but the coach can also see. This gives the coach and student an opportunity to discuss how to go about reaching those goals. Once the coach knows what the student wants to achieve and how s/he is thinking about it, they can more easily find ways to help motivate the student towards those goals.

While forensic students seem to learn from their competitive activities, students in the traditional classroom are generally seen to have poor educational gains when competition is involved (Chan & Shui-Fong, 2008). Teachers are taught to avoid any serious competition in the classroom because it inherently produces a "win/loss" mindset to learning which turns off many students. However, with these findings indicating that competition may be a driving force behind forensic student learning, we must wonder if competition has a place in the classroom after all. If students are having significant learning gains through their competitive experience in forensics, future research should explore if competition similar to what students experience in forensics can translate to students in the traditional classroom.

Many coaches and teachers are hesitant to embrace a focus on competition because of a variety of concerns. However, competition can be used in a positive way to help with student learning. Forensic programs that have sustained competitive focus and success are often looked upon with mixed admiration and scorn. Many forensic educators are of the mind that a large focus on competition hurts student learning. Other members of the activity argue that mentality is sour grapes and coaches and students should be lauded for their efforts to learn and win awards. Nevertheless, competition as a potentially negative part of forensics is hotly debated. The next section will explore the potential impact of competition on forensics.

The Potential Impact of Competition on Forensics

While it is true that forensic coaches can embrace the competitive drive of students to increase learning outcomes, one piece of evidence from the results warrants discussion: 11% more students felt that forensics offered the chance to learn how to effectively deliver a speech than write a speech. That means that more students feel comfortable on the delivery aspects of speech than on the actual creation of rhetoric. The downfall of competition might be that we tend to teach what is competitively successful, and what is competitively successful is often hard to duplicate. Too often we give students goals to "be like so-and-so" and attempt to have them mimic the great performances without giving them the building blocks and tools to properly form the skills needed to succeed at those great performances. I am not suggesting that our national finalists do not have excellent delivery and original rhetoric, as well as an excellent understanding of the theories behind those things; I cannot know what any student is learning or what a student knows merely through conjecture. I am suggesting, however, that we tend to teach the cosmetics of forensics rather than starting with the basics of what makes the norms and practices of forensics valid and effective.

Often students might grow into an understanding of these things after they successfully assimilate into forensic culture. However, we must consider how we go about teaching this assimilation. The results of this study indicated that more students feel confident about their effective delivery than they do about effective speech writing. While delivery is an important part of giving a speech, the heart of a presentation is the words and the evidence. Do our students know less than we think they do about writing a speech? For example, it is shocking to see how few forensic students can explain various methods of organizing a persuasive argument. Too

often, students only preach and validate problem/cause/solution or cause/effect/solution, without any mention for other forms of argumentation organization or theory.

If forensic professionals argue that one of the core skills students learn from a forensic experience is that a student knows how to effectively write a speech, this skill must be developed as it would be in a classroom: start with the basics and work up to more advanced methods. Competition spurs a quickened pace for learning, but at what cost? Being able to copy what other successful speeches look like does not mean that the student knows how those methods work or why they work. Too often students just want to win. A forensic coach must attempt to put the competitive drive in hold for a bit and help build the student's knowledge base and skills before attempting to mimic advanced methods of speech writing and delivery. Instead of simply copying what others do, coaches need to explain and show how theories work with a speech and then allow the students to explore in praxis. Many of the norms and practices that occur in forensics today are theoretically based or grounded in practical application of pedagogy; on the other hand, many norms and practices are merely grounded in unfounded forensic community dogma. It is the job of any forensic coach to minimize glorification of the final product in competition, to explain the how and why of forensic practices to students as more than an afterthought.

Of course this means that forensic coaches must then know forensic theory and practice beyond what they know through years of likely undergraduate competition. Most of the coaches in the community come from former competitors who fashion themselves as relative experts. But without knowing the rationales behind their expertise, many student turned coaches cannot effectively teach their students. As Berman (2008) noted,

Experts are often so unaware of what they are doing that they cannot explain it to

someone else. Their unconscious, effortless use of their skills ensures flawless

performance. Because experts may forget about, or lose awareness of, key steps in skill

development, they may not be effective as coaches. (p. 5)

If coaches are unconcerned about the "why" and "how" of forensic theory and practice, they are

less likely to be able to pass along essential knowledge to their students. This is why it is

important for coaches to understand their beliefs about the activity. While there is certainly no

one correct interpretation of why or how things work, some explanations are more justified and

explained than others. Coaches need to work to understand where they stand on forensic norms

and practices so they can teach students about the rationales behind what they teach. Blind

teaching leads to blind student experiences. Forensics is about letting the student learn through

experience, but coaches need to be there to act as a reflection guide and source of knowledge and

wisdom. It is this experience that makes forensics so special. It is also this experience that makes

any learning really possible. The next section addresses how forensics offers more evidence for

experiential learning as being a valid form of education.

Experiential Learning is Valid

Competition was not the only factor the results found increase educational gains. The fact

that forensics is an experiential learning opportunity is what students rely on to have a deeper

learning experience than in the classroom. Results from this study showed how many students

learned better in forensics than they did in a traditional classroom because of the additional

practice and applied experience. These results act as a potentially defining argument as to how

forensics is indeed educational. Due to the experiential component of the activity, students learn

and grow better than in a traditional classroom setting. Perhaps forensic educators will turn to

experiential literature to pick up tips on how to best teach their students during the forensic experience. Taking the lead from Sellnow (1994) and Walker (in press), forensic scholars need to research this area more and coaches need to examine about how their students are learning through their experience. If anything this study has shown that while forensics correlates with experiential learning, the experience that forensic students get is unique in its own right. Scholars and coaches need to explore this field more to find how experiential learning applies to forensics in general, and how we can help students better process their experience to enhance their learning.

With these results it also important to note that experiential learning and even performative learning styles can act as a legitimate form of education not only for forensics, but for the classroom as well. Scholars have preached this (Dewey, 1938; Jarvis, 2001; Wurdinger, 2005) but further evidence such as this can only lend to help increase the legitimacy and use of experiential learning. Instead of constantly falling back into a lecture method because of familiarity, college instructors should look to find ways to integrate this pedagogical approach into the classroom. This will take open-minds and courage from not only instructors but from administrators and students as well. Change is something that many people are uncomfortable with, but experiential learning has the chance to drastically empower our students. Too often today's college students approach their education with an apparent apathy; experiential learning offers an escape from that apathy into an education that allows students to take ownership of their learning by placing an emphasis on their experiences. This opens up higher education for a swarm of changes in instruction and assessment, particularly with self-reflective processes as ways to evaluate student learning. I challenge more teachers to work the principles of experiential learning into their classroom. The change may not be overnight, but gradual

movement to a more student-centered approach to education is something we should all work towards.

Finally, at a time where the validity of many Basic Course programs are in question across the country, experiential learning can potentially save the day. Universities and colleges are constantly looking for not only demonstrations of applicable learning, but also student civic engagement. Experiential learning clearly pushes students to apply their knowledge of the world and of the course concepts and it boosts critical self-reflection. These are goals most administrators and instructors can agree upon as worthy of pursuing. Being civically engaged is also a main thrust to many school mission statements. With the BCC often being a general education course, experiential learning in the BCC could increase student awareness of their community by getting students out of the classroom and out in the world learning from their experiences. The BCC is uniquely placed to reach a wide range of students and create a significant impact on civic responsibility and community engagement. Because of the potential impact this could have on university and college stated learning outcomes, BCC directors need to consider incorporating aspects of experiential learning into their programs.

Not only that, but taking an experiential approach in the BCC could also generate interest for the communication studies field as a whole. Many students may be attracted to study communication if the BCC, which is often the only exposure students get to communication studies, engages the students more. With an experiential approach the concepts become more personal and so too does the learning. At a time where students often appear listless about their education, making the BCC something that inherently promotes personal connection can draw students into the field. Since many instructors embrace a teaching focus of "human communication", having students see and study communication in their individual experiences

seems like an appropriate fit. Perhaps more students will be drawn to the field of communication studies, which would help to stabilize and grow many departments across the country. Embracing this approach could spur a surge of student interest that solidifies the need to study communication and have staff devoted to teach it. Directors of the BCC need to find ways to incorporate experiential learning into their programs. However, the education should not just stop in the BCC classroom. The next section addresses how forensic students need better educational understanding of the BCC learning objectives because of their clear lack of understanding behind forensic practices.

Forensics is more than Public Speaking

Based on the results of this study, it appears many forensic students are missing out on key parts of BCC learning. Student responses indicated a higher level of comfort with aspects of public speaking than with other forms of communication, but also noted they were familiar and engaged in other aspects of communication. However, just because they went through the communicative actions, does not mean they fully understood. Forensics measures presentation skills, but cannot measure other communicative skills very well. Much like a classroom, success in forensics is based on if a student can perform in certain way. If a student can create a good outline in class, they pass that assignment, and so on and so forth. This is how assignments/evaluations are often done. However, performing something does not prove that a student knows the "why" behind their skills, which is what makes knowledge cross-applicable from the classroom to other things in life. After all, forensics is more than public speaking. Students in the survey seemed to be unaware of Small Group Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Listening, Ethics, and general public speaking theory. Even though many of them acknowledged the application of these things, most of them admitted to not having any

formal training and being unaware of the "why" or "how" behind their communicative acts-- they just did what they were told was good.

As mentioned previously, the BCC is often the only communication studies course to which college students are exposed. Since it is the primary introduction course to the discipline, it represents the most fundamental concepts of the field. Coaches and students know that forensics offers the potential to learn about so much more than public speaking. For forensic students to be able to achieve the learning objectives of the BCC, which contain the most fundamental concepts in the field, the students need to know more on a theoretical level. This is particularly important because of how forensics acts in an experiential fashion. For example, listening is an important communicative skill to learn because observation/copying is a critical aspect of certain approaches to experiential learning. If forensic students do not learn the rationale behind forensic practices, than any skill they learn runs the risk of becoming non-transferable to other activities and aspects of their life—a disaster in almost any communication/forensic public relation or educational framework.

Ideally, in an experiential approach to forensics, students would engage in more critical reflections and coaches would help them through it. More than van rides or casually talking about the weekend in a coaching appointment, critical reflection needs to be happening in separate sessions as individuals and as groups. These reflections can serve to help students navigate their experiences in forensics and tie what they have done into communication theory. However, this presumes that coaches are teaching students about communication theory and the "why" behind forensic practices. Coaches often try to do this but because of the well known strain on time and resources, quality of coaching to novices tends to be about "getting them up to speed" instead of about teaching them about the building blocks of forensics. It is because of this

dilemma that I propose to create a Introduction to Forensics course that has similar learning objectives to the BCC and can act as an experiential waiver to BCC. Students would be enrolled in the course and would also be competing on the forensics team. This course would have actual meeting times to learn about theoretical explanations of practices and would help novice students learn about communication and forensics in a safe, experiential way. I have constructed a basic syllabus for an Introduction to Forensics course (see Appendix A). Future educators can expand and/or alter it in any way they seem most beneficial to their educational needs. I have include an outline for what topics to cover, but do not include specific content. Ideally, students would do some reading but the instructor would discuss concepts in class and students would engage in regular forensic practice outside of class to work on their "class projects". It is up to each forensic educator to determine what they believe is important to teach their students and fill in the gaps as they see fit. The main thrust of the course is to engage students in a variety of communication approaches that will help them in forensics, but also help them see how it will be applicable outside of forensics. The bulk of the points earned in the course come from competing at tournaments (experience) and engaging in critical reflections. While the course is for novices, another course could be created to help veteran students explore and master more complex areas of forensics and communication.

This course is a vision I have for forensics: experiential, applicable, competitive, fun, and most important educational. When I look back at where I started my experience in forensics and see where I am now, I recognize that I knew so little when I was competing. When I started coaching, I still knew very little but was gathering more curiosity. Now as I gain more experience as a coach and as an educator, I find my world to be ever expanding and constantly worth exploring. This discovery of a world full of communicative interactions and possibilities is

something that both the Basic Communication Course and Forensics helps to encourage in students, which is the reason why I care so much about these two programs. If I can help more students understand and create communicative knowledge through their experience in forensics, than I can look back at my 1st grade self and tell him that I have succeeded in not just becoming a teacher, but a guide to help students know the world, and themselves, better than they ever had before.

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Appendix A

CMST 205: Introduction to Forensics
Fall 2012– M/W 2:00-3:45, AH 334

Instructor:	Office:	Email:
Phone:	Office Hours:	

Course Description: This course is designed to develop the student's communication skills through experience on an intercollegiate forensics team in the areas of small group, interpersonal, nonverbal, listening, oral interpretation, and public speaking. Enrolled students agree to be members of the university speech team for the semester, following all rules and policies that the team enforces. The course requires that each student competes in two tournaments with two or more events in at least two of the following genres: public address, oral interpretation, limited preparation.
Text: Readings will be posted online.

Course Objectives:
By the end of this class students should be able to:
*Practice and demonstrate understanding of effective public speaking theory
*Practice and demonstrate understanding of effective oral interpretation theory
*Practice and demonstrate understanding of effective small group communication theory
*Practice and demonstrate understanding of effective interpersonal communication theory
*Practice and demonstrate understanding of effective nonverbal communication theory
*Practice and demonstrate understanding of effective listening theory

Assignments:	Final Grade Scale: 100-90%-A, 89-80%-B, 79-70%-C, 69-60%-D, 59-0%-F		
Competing 1st tournament	100	Extemp Outline	50
Competing 2nd tournament	100	Workshop Reflection	50
Interp Piece	50	Competition Reflection	100
PA Piece	50	**Total**	**500**

Attendance
Being in class is critical to success in this course because of how quickly material may be covered and the use of group reflections. Missing class will put you behind the rest of your teammates. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences; each following absence will result in the **lowering of your final grade by one letter grade**. An excused absence must have written notification and be from a university sponsored event. You must be prepared to discuss every class period.

Disruptive behavior in the classroom (talking when others are presenting, cell phone use, etc.) may result in you being requested you to leave class and/or deducting points from assignments. Therefore, please be courteous and supportive of your classmates and me. Cell phone use and food are not permitted in the classroom. You may bring in something to drink.

Assignments
All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date and are to have followed all instructions. Work received after that time can receive up to half credit. **I will not accept any late work a week past the due date.** Assigned readings are to be completed before class. **Reading is essential to success in this course.** They will help you understand the theories and concepts we will talk about in class. *A full description of assignments can be found online.*

<u>Grade Appeals</u>
You always have the opportunity to challenge a grade. All grade appeals must be completed in writing. These appeals should be given to me within 1 week of the day on which the grades were returned to the class. I will then review the written appeal and respond. An office appointment may then be used to further discuss the appeal. Your written appeals should contain clear arguments and be presented in a professional manner.

Schedule

Date	Topic	Due
8/27	**Introduction to Forensics** -course polices, team polices -college forensics events	
8/29	**Small Group Communication** -conflict management -teamwork	
9/3	NO CLASS- LABOR DAY	
9/5	**Public Address** -essential history and theory	
9/10	**Public Address** Events	
9/12	**Interpersonal Communication** -self-concept -self-esteem	
9/17	**Public Address** -research and sources	*Pick your PA event*
9/19	**Public Address** -organizing and outlining	
9/24	**Oral Interpretation** -essential history and theory	
9/26	**PA Draft Writing Workshop**	
10/1	**Oral Interpretation** Events	
10/3	**Interpersonal Communication** -self-disclosure	*Draft of PA*
10/8	**Small Group Communication** -social role emergence	
10/10	**Oral Interpretation** -programming -little black book -cutting -introductions	*Interp selected*
10/15	**Nonverbal Communication** -etiquette at tournaments	
10/17	**Interpersonal Communication** -relationship maintenance	*Interp in book*
10/22	**Public Address**	*Rewrites of PA*

	-delivery	
10/24	**Listening** -active listening	
10/29	**Oral Interpretation** -peer coaching	*Final PA*
10/31	Reflection	
11/5	**Limited Preparation** -essential history and theory -Extemp -Impromptu	
11/7	**Limited Preparation** -practice speeches	*Extemp Outline*
11/12	**Workshop Day-PA**	
11/14	Reflection	
11/19	**Workshop Day-Interp**	
11/21	Reflection	
11/26	**Workshop Day-LP**	
11/28	Reflection	
12/3	**Audience Analysis** -ballot reviews	
12/5	**Audience Analysis** -practice ballot analysis	
12/10	Class Tournament	*Workshop Reflection*
12/12	Class Tournament	*Competition Reflection*

Appendix B

ONLINE CONSENT FORM

You are requested to participate in research project by Dr. Leah White and Benjamin Walker titled "Examining if Forensics can match Basic Course learning objectives." You are asked to complete an online survey with questions about your experiences in collegiate forensics. The surveys will ask you to evaluate the educational learning opportunities provided to you during your experience in collegiate forensics. We estimate the total time for taking the survey to be 15 minutes. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential. The risks to your physical, emotional, social, professional, and/or financial well-being are considered "less than minimal."

You have the option to decline a response to any question. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato or the researchers. Submission of the completed survey will be interpreted as your informed consent to participate and affirm you are at least 18 years of age and currently compete in collegiate forensics.

Benefits to participation in the study include personal reflection on the educational value in the activity in which you participate as well as potential pedagogical advancements in forensics that could enhance student learning in the future.

Survey results will only be seen by the primary and secondary researchers conducting this study. Any information gathered will be used for academic purposes only. All important documents for this study will remain with the survey results until the study is completed. After a period of five years, all material related to the study will be destroyed to protect confidentiality.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact Ben Walker via (benjamin.walker@mnsu.edu) or Dr. Leah White (leah.white@mnsu.edu). This project has been reviewed and approved by the MSU Institutional Review Board Committee. If you have questions about the treatment of human subjects, Dr. Barry J. Ries (barry.ries@mnsu.edu), Dean of the College of Graduate Studies and Research. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

Selecting "Accept" below indicates you are at least 18 years old and consent to above statements. If you do not wish to take the survey or are under 18 years old, please select "Decline".

Appendix C

ONLINE SURVEY

How many years of collegiate forensics have you competed in before this year? (select 0-3)
_____

What is your Major or study area of focus? _____

Please respond to the prompts in a way that most accurately reflects your experience in collegiate forensics. The numbers are based on a five-point Likert item scale:
1. Strongly disagree   2. Disagree   3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Agree   5. Strongly agree

"My experience in collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to…."

"…apply effective oral communication."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…research a topic for a speech."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…outline and organize a speech."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…write a speech."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…deliver a speech."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"Collegiate forensics has provided opportunities to…"

"…apply knowledge about Small Group Communication (e.g.; group roles, conflict resolution, teamwork, group think)."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…apply knowledge about Interpersonal Communication (e.g.; self-concept, self-esteem, relationship maintenance, managing self-disclosure, effective listening, managing conflict)."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…apply knowledge about basic Communication and Public Speaking theory (e.g.; verbal and nonverbal communication, process of communication)."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…apply effective persuasive techniques."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…learn about ethical responsibility in communication."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"By participating in collegiate forensics I have…"

"…had the chance to improve my critical thinking about the communication process."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…had the chance to improve my listening skills."
1   2   3   4   5
Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…had the chance to evaluate other's speeches."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…had the chance to analyze an audience for a speech."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…had the chance to prepare and deliver a variety of different types of speeches."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

"…had the chance to evaluate verbal and nonverbal communication tendencies in myself."

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please elaborate on how your experience in college forensics relates to your response.

Please answer the following prompts in a way that most accurately reflects your experience in collegiate forensics.

1) **Explain your perceived level of competency as a public speaker as it relates to your experience in forensics.**

2) **Explain your perceived level of competency in interpersonal communication as it relates to your experience in forensics.**

3) **Explain your perceived level of competency in small group communication as it relates to your experience in forensics.**