

Patrick Richey

Academic Debate v. Advocacy in the Real World: A Comparative Analysis

Alan Cirlin, Ph.D.
Executive Secretary, International Public Debate Association
Director of Forensics, St. Mary's University
San Antonio, TX 78228
(210) 431-2008
Acirlin@stmarytx.edu

Abstract

Academic debate is a game which students play partly because it is fun and partly to empower them to effectively participate in their civic organizations, governments and social movements later in life. Ideally, the relationship between academic debate and the real world will be such that playing the game significantly improves a student's life-time persuasive skills in social contexts. And in practice this is often true. But just as often this relationship is weak or completely absent. This paper is a first approximation, systematic analysis of the relationships between academic debate and the skills needed for real world persuasive success across a variety of debating formats.

- - - - -
Introduction
- - - - -

It is hard to generalize without a sufficient data base. And when it comes to a global vision of academic debate, who has that? Academic Debate is not the kind of activity which generates a great deal of public interest or monetary support. Hence, the intellectual work which has been done in this area tends to be the result of the passion of individuals many of whom are not professional scholars. And until the advent of the Internet, even scholars were severely limited by their ability to gather data. How much

could a debate coach in Amsterdam know about the details of academic debate in Singapore, And Tel Aviv, And Kansas City, And Moscow, And Manchester, And Tokyo, And Madrid, etc. etc. etc.

This, I suppose, puts me in the vanguard of scholars exploring the international nature and aspects of academic debate. And that, in and of itself, says a great deal about how little is known in any systematic way. My level of understanding is extremely primitive and spotty. I've had the opportunity and good fortune to be able to take a peak at debate in a number of different countries including Canada, England, Greece, Israel, Japan, Malaysia, The Netherlands, Russia, Scotland, Singapore, Spain, the U.S. and now Czechoslovakia. In the case of the U.S. my experience is relatively extensive. In the case of other countries such as Canada and Czechoslovakia it is based exclusively on conversation and second hand reports. Typically, my experience in foreign countries has involved debate tours of from 7-14 days. And, of course, I have hosted a number of touring debaters and debate teams from England, Holland, Ireland, Japan, Russia, and Scotland and have always taken the opportunity to engage these foreign debaters in discussions about the nature of debate in their countries. Conclusion: The data base for my expertise is pathetically inadequate and yet puts me in the forefront of scholars in this area. If there are true experts in international forensics out there somewhere, I am unaware of them or their research. But I would love to meet such individuals and read their works.

I once tried to initiate an internet research project to solicit the help of individuals from all around the world in compiling a comprehensive atlas of academic debate. I wanted to describe the history and current status of debate in all those countries with significant programs. So I tried to locate at least one qualified individual to do the researching and writing for each country. The results were nil. After considerable internet work, I found it virtually impossible to find anyone in any country who simultaneously knew their own debate history (or had the resources and was willing to find out) and was also able and willing to put it down on paper. If the funding were available, I might be able to push such a project through, but in the absence of some kind of incentives to reward volunteers for their efforts, the project seems undoable. And this means the history of academic debate around the world is disappearing even as each new generation of college debaters graduates and moves on.

All of which is to say that the analysis provided below, while representing the best available data which I happened to have at my disposal, is little more than a crude first approximation. It is my hope that it still will represent a significant and thought-provoking analysis of the relationship between academic debate and the pragmatics of pedagogy. If so, a great deal more work would be necessary before a proper and comprehensive follow-up analysis could be prepared.

Method: What I will be doing here is to systematically go through all of the common global debate formats of which I am aware. For each I will present a VERY brief history and description¹ and then discuss its pedagogical strengths and weaknesses. [Bias: I personally define pedagogical strengths and weaknesses in terms of the skills students

will need toward their life=s work. Hence, skills which will be useful in later life are strengths. Habits or speaking styles which work against students in their professional lives are weakness.]

NOTE: I want to emphasize that this entire exercise is a first approximation and I would gladly accept corrections and criticism from anyone with more first hand data than I have. I also look forward to the work of other, more informed, scholars who might want to produce a corrected version of this data base.

Debate Formats - A World Tour

The British Union Debate Format. So far as I know this is the oldest, livingⁱⁱ debate format in the world. It grew out of various university debating societies in Great Britain developing methods to practice a Parliamentary style of argumentation. This format grew up over a great many years and became the dominant format in the former British Crown colonies. It was also the format which served as the foundation for the Worlds competition until it was replaced by the current 4-team format in 1997. British Union debate is a 2-team format. Each team has two members. The Government (which supports a resolution) consists of a Prime Minister (PM) and a Member of Government (MG). The Opposition consists of a Leader of the Opposition (LO) and a Member of the Opposition (MO). Typically, the time format for this style is 8 minutes each for 4 constructive speeches and one 5-minute rebuttal speech by each side. There are some variations on this theme.

The topic or resolution for the debate is announced at the beginning of every round. Each team is given a limited period before the debate to think about the resolution and to plan their presentations. They are generally not permitted to confer with any third party during this preparation period (although this rule is commonly bent or broken on some debating circuits). Topics vary from serious social and political issues to humorous or even abstract wordings. The Government often has the burden to make sense of the resolution as well as to provide definitions and a supporting case.

This format is still common in parts of Britain, especially at high school level. It is also the foundation of the Canadian (CUSID) and U.S. (APDA and NPDA) debate associations. In addition, there is a small Japanese Parliamentary debate circuit which uses this format and I have been given to understand the format is used to some degree in other areas of Australasia. I've also seen this format practiced in Holland and Israel and I'm sure it enjoys common usage in other areas as well. Heckling, interrupting the speaker to ask questions, and rising to points of information are part of this format. A trained Chief Judge who can rule on objections and points of information is important to the format. As a general rule, the first and last minute of each speaker's constructive presentation is protected from interruptions.

This British Union format has evolved along different, if similar, lines in different countries. There is a Dutch version - debated in the Dutch Language.ⁱⁱⁱ There are also

the CUSID and APDA versions which are very similar since, on the east coast of North America, they are part of the same debate circuit. There is the English-as-a-Second-Language Japan Parliamentary Debate Association (JPDA) founded by Michael Lubetsky - a temporarily transplanted Canadian. This association has been indirectly but strongly influenced by the U.S. evidence oriented debating styles. There is also a U.S. National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA) style which is even more strongly influenced by the evidence-oriented debating format (which will be taken up separately below). And there are, so far as I know, dozens of other, smaller variations upon this format actively being used either as part of debating leagues or as training tools around the world.

Strengths: The format tends to develop strong speaking skills with respect to fluency, humor, wit, general knowledge, and most especially dealing with interruptions.

Weaknesses: There is a tendency for debaters practicing this format to develop a very brusque style. Ethos can suffer. Biting wit can become more important than winning audience approval. The format encourages frequent interruption. The focus is on sound bites rather than on a big picture. The format encourages selective listening.

The National Debate Tournament (NDT) Format. This first major innovation on the British Union format was developed in the United States early in the 20th Century. This new format had a number of sources in addition to the British Union including literary discussion societies, itinerant lecturers, Chautauquas^{iv}, and various student debating societies. The first inter-university debates took place in the 1890's among ivy league schools on the U.S. east coast. By the 1940's these had grown to become nation-wide debating circuit and included a large end-of-the-season championship tournament. The NDT was originally founded in 1947 to arrange this championship tournament and quickly grew to become the sponsoring organization for the entire debating league. A single topic was chosen as the subject of debate for an entire academic year and announced in the summer before debating began. The topics are always of a serious social and/or political nature and generally cast in the form of a policy. The format has had a number of rules changes over the years, yet has remained relatively stable. Most variations of the format involved the removal and addition of cross-examination and changes in time limits. Most NDT programs were coached by a college or university professor and most NDT debates were adjudicated by a cadre of trained judges. The result was a continual increase in the speed of delivery and the reliance on evidence cards which were read verbatim during debates.

In 1972 the speaking style generated by the NDT format resulted lead a number of coaches, headed by Dr. Jack Howe of the California State University at Long Beach, to found the Cross Examination Debate Association^v. At first this new association achieved a significant improvement in speaking style. But over the years that style drifted back toward the NDT norm and by the early 1990's there was virtually no difference. Soon thereafter the two associations (NDT & CEDA) selected a joint topic to debate and within

a very short time, they had effectively reintegrated. Today there are still officially two associations, but there is no essential difference between them as far as debate format and style is concerned.^{vi}

The NDT format is very similar to the British Union. There are two speakers per side, except that they are called the Affirmative (for the team which affirms the resolution being debated) and the Negative (for the team which opposes the resolution). The four constructive speeches are generally from 8-10 minutes and the four rebuttals from 4-5 minutes. Cross Examination, when part of the format, is typically 3 minutes in length. This format is not very common around the world. Aside from the U.S. where it was dominant during most of the 20th Century, it only seems to have gained a strong foothold in Japan where it is used by Japan Debate Association (JDA) and the National Association of Forensics and Argumentation (NAFA). The JDA is the Japanese equivalent of the NDT and the NAFA is a secondary Japanese debate association which is student run and seems to be primarily affiliated with a national collection of English Language schools.

Strengths: The format tends to develop strong fluency and very strong organization and refutational skills. Students develop a broad knowledge base on a limited set of social and political subjects.

Weaknesses: Debaters who practice this format are generally criticized for speaking far too quickly. (This was the style which I grew up on and even after years of trying to restrain myself to slow down, I still find myself speaking too quickly for general audiences.) Wit and humor tend to be de-emphasized in this format. Ethos suffers badly - abusiveness is sometimes prized by judges and debaters can be criticized for a lack of aggressiveness. There is a serious focus on sound bites of information and evidence. And while supporters of this format pride themselves on how much it promotes research skills and detailed knowledge of a subject, the average contemporary NDT or CEDA debater commonly knows little more than what is given to them by way of the research generated by others. The context of evidence is generally ignored and/or abused.

The Lincoln-Douglas (LD) Format. This format is generally associated with NDT style debate. The format is named after a famous series of political debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas in 1858. The element which defines the LD format is that it involves two teams of one individual each. It generally follows the Affirmative-Negative nomenclature rather than Government-Opposition and it usually, but not always, includes cross examination. Another quality of the LD format is the unequal length of speeches. In almost all academic debate, the affirmative speaks both first and last (first to open the debate and to define the terms and last as a counterbalance of having the burden of proof). In team debate this is no problem, since the format allows for both members of the negative or opposition to present back-to-back speeches between the constructives and rebuttals. In LD, however, there is no opportunity for the negative to speak twice. Hence you end up with a variety of uneven time formats. The

typical format is 6-7-4-6-3: A 6 minute Affirmative Constructive followed by a 7 minute Negative Constructive. Then you have three rebuttal speeches: a 4 minute Affirmative Rebuttal followed by a 6 minute Negative Rebuttal followed by a 3 minute Affirmative Rebuttal. Cross Examination can be added after each of the constructive speeches. And you will note that, even though the speech lengths vary, the total time allowed to each side is the same. This format has traditionally been a little-brother to the NDT style of debate in the U.S. at both the University and High School Level. It usually involves debating on the same topic as the NDT but doesn't carry the same prestige. It is very popular on the U.S. high school circuits.

Like NDT, the LD format has had a number of rules changes over the years, but has also remained fairly stable. This form of debate was often used as a training system for NDT. New debaters might begin by debating LD and then move on to team debate once they had gained more skill and confidence. This format was also an alternative when a program was bringing an odd number of debaters to a tournament or when one's partner was unable to attend. For reasons which are not entirely clear, LD debating in the U.S. has consistently lagged behind NDT in speed and abusiveness. That is to say, LD has been the kinder, gentler format. But this is not to say that it has remained kind and gentle. Over the past four decades LD has speeded up, just as NDT debate has done. And the level of aggressiveness in LD as steadily increased as well. It has just never come close to catching up with NDT.

So far as I know, the LD format has only been popularized in the U.S. At least, I have never encountered it anywhere else around the world. I'm sure there must be occasional LD-style debates in other countries. The U.S. presidential debates, for example, have been LD formats (when there were only two candidates debating), and I would imagine there must be similar debates which have taken place in other countries. But I know of no systematic LD academic debate leagues outside of the United States. I would love to be corrected on this point if it is in error.

The strengths and weaknesses of this format are similar to those of NDT.

Strengths: The format tends to develop strong fluency and extremely strong organization and refutational skills. The need to be entirely dependent on your own resources during a debate round and not having any block of time where you can depend on your partner to be doing the work, tends to make organization skills ever more important. Students develop a broad knowledge base on a limited set of social and political subjects. And I rather suspect, although I have only scanty evidence in support of this thesis, that LD debaters generally have a stronger understanding of the big picture relating to the resolution than do their NDT counterparts. This belief is based on my experiences in competing in and judging both NDT and LD in the U.S. I suspect that LD debaters, given the differences in the format, are called upon more often to explain their positions globally and hence have a greater need to understand their positions comprehensively.

Weaknesses: LD debaters also speak too quickly, but they are generally not as bad as their NDT counterparts. Wit and humor have more of a place here but are still de-

emphasized. Ethos suffers, but not as much so as in NDT. There is still a focus on sound bites of information and evidence but comprehensive knowledge plays a much bigger role. Evidence still tends to be second hand and abused by being quoted out of context. LD debaters frequently build their cases out of materials purchased from companies which produce evidence cards and briefs and/or from materials generated by others in their debate program.

- - - - -

The Worlds Format. The Worlds format was developed as an administrative solution to a problem of congestion. In 1976 the capstone of the British Union debating season became the World Universities Debating Championship. This event moves from country to country and has become increasingly prestigious over the years. Thus it has attracted an ever increasing number of participants. The congestion problem wasn't finding judges; the problem was finding rooms. Trevor Sather, former head of the English-Speaking Union's Debate Division, explained that it was becoming impossible to find any venue with enough rooms to host the competition. The new Worlds format was a way of doubling the number of participants at a stroke. And simultaneously this cut the number of required judges in half. The solution, in essence, was to put four teams in one room rather than two while keeping the overall time frame for the debate about the same. In order to accomplish this the Worlds format allows each speaker only one constructive speech and there are no rebuttals.

The Worlds Competition format may be briefly described as follows: There are four teams of two debaters each. Two teams support the resolution: the First Government [Prime Minister (PM) and Deputy Prime Minister (DPM)] and the Second Government [Member for the Government (MG) and Government Whip (GW)]. The other two teams oppose the resolution: the First Opposition [Leader of the Opposition (LO) and Deputy Leader of the Opposition (DLO)] and the Second Opposition [Member for the Opposition (MO) and Opposition Whip (OW)]. These speakers can also be referred to as the First Government member, Second Government member, Third Government member, etc.

The topic is announced and the debaters have 15 minutes in which to prepare their arguments. During the debate the speakers sit in order on two sides of a long table. All the Government debaters sit on the Audience's left, all the Opposition debaters on the right. The Prime Minister sits farthest from the audience and opens the debate. The debaters are allowed one speech each. I've heard of these speeches varying from 3 to 10 minutes in length at different competitions. The speakers alternate sides and make their presentations in the following order: PM, LO, DPM, DLO, MG, MO, GW, OW. As with the British Union style of debating the first and last minute of each speech are protected from interruptions. In between the first and last minute all four members of the opposition can pop up and down to interrupt with questions and points of information. During some of the debates I've observed, the interruptions are pretty much constant and the speaker accepts almost none of them. I'm not sure if heckling is permitted. If so, it's never been used in any of the demonstration or competition debates I've heard. The

resolutions for the debate are essentially the same as those used in the British Union format.

Since this format is has been adopted by World Universities Debating Championship it has become a standard for all those who intend to participate in this event. In some places the Worlds format has supplanted all other forms of debate. In most places this format has been added to the local mix of debating styles. One disadvantage of the format is that it requires at least nine individuals to practice and ten if you wish to employ a separate individual to keep time and announce with a slap on the desk when the first protected minute is over or the final minute has begun. The LD format, by contrast, can be practiced by only three individuals or even two if you want to forgo the judge. In the Worlds format a judge can be necessary to rule on points of information.

Strengths: World format debate, like the British Union format, tends to develop strong speaking skills with respect to fluency, general knowledge, and most especially dealing with interruptions. It does encourage the development of humor and wit, but less so, since presentations are often plagued by interruptions. The biggest selling point for this style, in my opinion, is that it puts heavy emphasis on audience analysis.

Weaknesses: There is a tendency for debaters practicing this format to come across as very curt and impolite. Humor is frequently caustic and aimed at the opposition speakers. The format not only encourages but actually requires frequent interruption. The focus of the debate is generally lost between the First and Second Government teams, since it is expected that the Second Government team will take the debate in some new direction without directly contradicting the First Government position. Style seems to be far more important than coherency.

The 3/4-Person Formats. The 3-Person and 4-Person debate team formats are a simple variation on the British Union style. Instead of two debaters per team, you have three or four. This merely adds extra constructive speeches for the additional debaters in the round. There are still only two rebuttals at the end. There are several time limit variations in 3/4-Person debate but otherwise the formats seem to be the same the world round: The first government speaker is followed by the first opposition speaker. The second government speaker is followed by the second opposition speaker. The third government speaker is followed by the third opposition speaker. (In the 4-Person format you add a fourth government speaker followed by a fourth opposition speaker.) Then you have your two rebuttal speeches in reverse order, the opposition first and then the government.

In most ways, the 3/4-Person formats follow the same conventions as British Union debating. The topics and resolutions used in 3/4-Person debates are typical of the British Union style. The process of announcing the topic and the start of the round and allowing limited preparation time are the same. And the conventions of rising for questions &

points of information and having protected minutes at the start and end of every constructive speech are the same as well.

In Great Britain, home of Parliamentary debate, the 3-Person format is rare but the 4-person format is quite common, especially at the high school level.^{vii} The 3-Person format was used by the USSR and USA in their exhibition debate tours under the Speech Communication Association (SCA)^{viii} auspices. The SCA Committee on International Discussion and Debate (CIDD) organized these tours and coordinated the format. The 3-Person format is also quite popular in Asia and is the foundation of the High Schools world league.

The strengths and weaknesses of this format is a cross between the British Union and the Worlds Competition formats. I don't have enough experience with these formats to be certain, but based on the experience I do have, my feeling is that an assessment of the 3/4-Person formats is likely to lean towards the Worlds Competition assessment more closely than the British Union.

Strengths: There will be a tendency to promote strong speaking skills with respect to fluency, general knowledge, and most especially dealing with interruptions. And it will encourage the development of humor and wit. I suspect this tendency will be strongest in the British Union format and weakest in the Worlds Competition format. More debaters mean more interruptions and this will work against the speakers ability to effectively incorporate humor and wit into the presentation. The pedagogical advantage of the 3/4-Person format over the British Union format is that, by permitting a larger team, it gives individual speakers more time to think and there is less pressure on individuals to pop up with questions to get their two cents in. The pedagogical advantage of the 3/4-Person format over the Worlds Competition format is that, by having only one team per side, it allows a much greater degree of integration. The first two speakers on a side are trying to coordinate with the third and fourth speaker rather than being in competition with them.

Weaknesses: By the same token, my experience tends to support the conclusion that the more debaters involved in a round the stronger the pressure on each one to try to stand out. And since the 3/4-Person format only really allows for this to happen by interrupting, there is strong pressure on all debaters to do so. The tendency for debaters practicing this format will still be to come across as very curt and impolite. Humor will often be caustic and aimed at the opposition. Style will still occupy a more important place than coherency.

- - - - -

The Public Debate Format. Public Debate is almost certainly the youngest of the debate formats. And, again to the best of my knowledge, it is the only debate format in modern history which was intentionally developed using empirical methodologies to achieve specific pedagogical ends. In other words, the Public Debate format was created by starting with the educational goals and working backwards, using a method of trial and error mostly, until a viable debate format emerged which consistently achieved the ends for which it was intended. The development process started at the University of

Richmond during the early 1980's. By the early 1990's the development project had moved to St. Mary's University and the format was working fairly well. And in the fall of 1996 it had achieved its current form and became the basic format of the International Public Debate Association (IPDA).^{ix}

Public Debate is a Lincoln-Douglas format (although there is no theoretical or practical barrier to prevent developing a team version of the activity). The time limits are: 5-7-3-4-3: A 5 minute Affirmative Constructive followed by a 7 minute Negative Constructive. They you have three rebuttal speeches: a 3 minute Affirmative Rebuttal followed by a 4 minute Negative Rebuttal followed by a 3 minute Affirmative Rebuttal. A two minute Cross Examination period has also been added after each of the constructive speeches. Topics vary considerably and are announced at the start of each round. Individual pairs of debaters are presented with a choice of five topics and, starting with the negative speaker, alternatively strike two topics each until only one remains. 30 minutes preparation time is allowed from the announcement of the topics until the start of the round.

A number of other rules help to define this format: No reading of evidence is allowed. Debaters may only use their brilliant minds and whatever notes they have prepared during their preparation period. During the prep time, they are allowed to research their topics any way they like and consult anyone they chose to get help, inspiration or coaching. (This has lead to a great deal of comradely on the IPDA debate circuit. It is quite common to see groups of debaters from different programs prepping together and helping each other if they happen to have the same topic.) Most importantly IPDA eschews trained judges. The typical Public Debate tournament uses classroom students and freshman debaters for its judging pool. There is obviously some loss of judging expertise, but a huge rhetorical gain. You can't speed read to a lay judge or talk debate jargon at them. So Public Debaters tend to develop a much more oratorical style than debaters on other U.S. debating circuits. And this was the goal of the format.

As mentioned above, the Public Debate format was developed in the U.S. over a 15 year period, and the International Public Debate Association has existed since 1997. During this time, the active debate programs of IPDA have grown to encompass a geographic range of about a dozen U.S. south-central states. And the international Email debate tournament (based on a written version of the same format) has attracted participants from about 30 countries over the past 3 seasons. The format has been showcased in various international venues and there are a number of small Public Debate-style programs in the following countries: China, Israel, Singapore, Spain, and Malaysia.

Strengths: The format tends to develop strong fluency and a very oratorical, audience-centered speaking style. Speed is not a problem. And IPDA debaters tend to be very high ethos speakers.

Weaknesses: The format does not demand exceptional research skills. Knowledgeable debaters have a definite edge in debate rounds, but a strong rhetorical or theatrical style can often overpower a superior knowledge base. I'm not entirely sure this is a pure

weakness, but it can appear problematic, most especially to the debaters who are losing rounds even though they have a superior knowledge base.^x

- - - - -
Format Elements, Rhetorical Elements, & Pedagogical Effects
 - - - - -

What follows is a quick summary of debate format elements with my conclusions concerning the effect each has on rhetorical style and the quality of the educational experience. Please note that this is not an empirical set of results. It reflects both the very preliminary nature of this study and my personal educational biases. Also recognize that debate is a highly synergistic enterprise. Small, seemingly insignificant changes in format can have profound affects on the look and feel of the debating style they promote. So while we can talk about the effects of various elements taken out of context, they will not necessarily have these effects in every context.

Nomenclature. Some formats use the Government/Opposition distinction while others use the Affirmative/Negative distinction. To the best of my knowledge this makes virtually no difference in the quality of the final activity. It is more a cultural or historical accident than a pedagogical element.

Lincoln-Douglas v. Team Formats. This is a major element. LD formats place maximum pressure on the individual speakers to be responsible for all aspects of the debate experience. Team formats tend to breed specialization. In and of itself, neither of these are better than the other. The LD format teaches independence; team formats teach teamwork. As teams get larger, the debate activity becomes more complex and potentially more confusing. This again is neither good nor bad in and of itself. Learning to deal with complexity and to avoid confusion are valid rhetorical goals. I suspect that debaters who start out doing LD and then go to a team format have a certain competitive advantage over those who go from the team to the LD format. The LD debater must perforce understand all debate holistically. They bring this understanding to their role in a team. The team debater might have a more limited understanding of debate biased by a particular role they have learned to play. When they bring this to an LD environment, they may tend to over-emphasize the components they understand and de-emphasize the components with which they are less familiar. And this might be detrimental both competitively and educationally.

2 Teams v. 4 Teams. All debate formats involve 2 teams except for the new Worlds Competition format. In my opinion the Worlds format creates unacceptable levels of confusion for both audience and debaters by putting the last four speakers in the position of trying to both support and distance themselves from the other team on their side of the resolution. I think the flow of the debate gets significantly disrupted and the original issues brought up by the first four speakers get lost. In the end, the adjudicators end up voting for the best individual speakers and have little to say concerning whether the Government or the Opposition won the debate. I personally think the 2-team formats are far superior for teaching debate and persuasion theory in a practical context.

Topics. Some formats select one resolution for a whole debate season. CEDA used to pick one resolution for each academic semester. Parliamentary style debates pick a new resolution for each debate. The Public Debate format provides a set of 5 resolutions for each pair of debaters for each debate. The advantage of a single resolution is that it allows for serious and in-depth study and research on that topic. The disadvantages are that it encourages stale argumentation at one extreme and wild and often abusive interpretations of the topic at the other. I think the single topic formats might produce a much better rhetorical quality of debate if the judging paradigm were changed, but since this has never been done, this is only conjecture. A single topic also, whether for a season or for each round, forces debaters to deal with whatever they get. Multiple topics give debaters a certain amount of control and allows them to eliminate topics they feel least prepared to handle. Another advantage of multiple topics is that they teach debaters something about the relationships among subjects, arguments, and audiences. Overall, each system of topic selection has its advantages and disadvantages. One final advantage of multiple topics is that it allows students to debate a wide range of subjects in a wide variety of forms - Policy, Value, Fact, Definition, Serious, Humorous, etc. An NDT debater might only debate 4-8 subjects during their entire career and all, or virtually all, of them will be serious policy topics.

Research. The NDT format promotes the use of evidence cards. The IPDA format expressly forbids the reading of evidence. Written evidence can obviously enhance the quality of argumentation in a debate by grounding it more closely to the real world. But the abuse of written evidence in the NDT format is so rampant and excessive, it is hard to imagine what pedagogical advantages might be if the use of evidence were handled more honestly and rhetorically. The non-evidence formats clearly suffer for the lack of grounding when it comes to the quality and accuracy of the argumentation. But those debaters with strong knowledge bases have a definite advantage and over time tend to raise the bar for the less knowledgeable debaters. Another disadvantage of evidence cards and advantage of not using them is that the time and energy commitment required to manage materials in evidentiary debate formats is often excessive. Non-evidence card formats are a lot more fun for debaters and audience members. At the moment, I lean in the direction of not allowing the reading of evidence in academic debate. But I might change my opinion if an evidence card format which used lay judges were created. The combination just might reduce both the abuses of evidence card reading and the time and energy requirements for dealing with them as well.^{xi}

Cross Examination v. Heckling v. Neither. Cross examination formats force debaters to take questions. I personally like the educational advantages of this element. Cross examination sessions can get ugly and combative, but this is hardly a necessary aspect. There is nothing about cross examination which inherently requires abusiveness. Heckling and rising to points of personal privilege by contrast tend to create a more combative atmosphere. The heckle is definitely aggressive in practice. And rising to ask question is often used as an offensive tool to disrupt the speaker as much as to solicit information. I also think the stylistic conventions of rising to ask a question with one hand on the speaker's head is just plain silly. I hate to imagine one of these students

forgetting themselves and doing this while asking a question in some business meeting or public assembly. So my bias is obviously to prefer CX to heckling. But I think that even heckling is better than formats which allow no direct confrontation among speakers. While the non-CX/Heckling format generally promotes a quieter version of debate, I think it is missing something of significant educational value. And I don't think quiet, non-abrasive rhetoric ought to be the goal of academic debate. I believe that developing a maximally effective high ethos style ought to be the goal.

Time Limits. To a large degree I don't think this matters. Longer speeches tend to encourage experienced debaters with solid data bases to go into exorbitant detail. This tends to make them speed up if the audience is willing to listen at a higher speed. More time also inclines the less experienced, less knowledgeable speakers run out of steam and either ramble or stop short in their presentations. Shorter speeches tend to focus the more experienced debaters but do so perhaps at the cost of significantly curtailing the quality of the argumentation. One thing I have noticed -- too much time in rebuttals definitely encourages fast talk and excessive detail. It's only when debaters, especially the experienced debaters, feel a serious time crunch of going from Constructives to Rebuttals that they will start sifting issues, boiling the rhetoric down to its important themes, and synthesizing.

Rebuttals. I like rebuttal speeches. I like the pedagogical value of giving each speaker the opportunity to present their view of the debate once the main argumentation is over. In LD formats this is almost a required element. And this is one of the strengths of the NDT format. The British Union and 3/4-Person formats only allow one speaker to present a rebuttal. And the Worlds Competition format doesn't allow rebuttals at all. This is another reason why, from a pedagogical perspective, I'm not a big fan of the Worlds format.

Judges. The options for adjudicators seem to be, Expert Judges, Student Judges & Lay Judges. Expert Judges, in the U.S. at least, can be defined as professional directors of forensics, debate coaches, graduate students, alumni debaters and anyone else with an extensive knowledge of debate theory and practice. The expert judge can be an excellent judge but debaters often adjust to such judges by increasing their rate of speech, using lots of jargon in making their arguments, spending a significant portion of their speech arguing debate theory, and ignoring many of the basic conventions of good public speaking. Guest professor judges of Political Science, History, Philosophy, etc. who have no prior experience with debate are often confused into this category and especially when judging the NDT format are often horrified at the style of speaking they hear.^{xii} By "Student Judges" I mean those students who are part of the debate circuit. They tend to adjudicate somewhat like the expert judge, but at nowhere near the same degree of intensity. And both Expert and Student judges tend to become somewhat faddish in their expectations. A certain style of speaking comes into vogue and the Expert and Student judges often reward those who follow the fad and punish those who don't. Expert and Student judges can also be highly biased. They tend to vote for the teams and debaters who they think ought to win, even if they are having a bad round or are otherwise losing a debate. There can also be a lot of politics involved in the decisions of the Expert and

Student judges. They might vote against team A and for team B because they like one program and not the other; or because they are afraid that if team A advances it will be more likely to beat one of their own teams later on in the competition; or because they are afraid that if they vote against team B the judges from team B will take offence and vote against their teams, etc., etc., etc. Lay Judges are, in my opinion, the far superior alternative. I define Lay Judges as reasonably intelligent human beings with no particular training in debate. And I would include the guest professors in this category. Lay Judges can make very quirky decisions for very strange reasons. But their quiriness is honest and their strange decisions tend to be evenly and randomly distributed. And Lay Judges tend to be exactly the audience that debaters will see in their future careers as lawyers, business persons, and politicians. It is an excellent pedagogical advantage to have students practice their audience analysis skills on this kind of audience as often as possible. In my mind and based on a lot of research,^{xiii} there is no question but that lay judges promote a best quality of academic debate vis a vis rhetorical style.

Coaching. In the world of academic debate most programs can be described as either being coached by a professional or being student-run. Both kinds of program are generally affiliated with Colleges or Universities. A student-run program is usually in the form of a club or society. The professional program is more likely to be part of an academic division. Student-run programs can be tremendously vigorous. But they are usually only as good as their most enthusiastic member and their quality can vary tremendously from season to season as the make-up of their membership changes. Student-run programs are in perpetual danger of going out of existence. A program headed by a professional coach or director of forensics generally has the advantage of continuity. Some professional heads of debate programs have had tenures of over 30 years. On the one hand this provides for objectivity, continuity, and consistency; on the other, it can lead to severe burn-out. Programs headed by professional coaches, at least in the U.S., tend to have more stable sources of financial support as well. Some of the larger U.S. forensics programs have annual travel budgets of over \$100,000. Educational programs and opportunities are often increased when a professional coach is at the helm. But a program headed by a professional can also be dragged under if that coach lacks interest or ability. Overall, I think a professionally coached program has a definite advantage. But, of course, being a professional coach myself, I'm biased.

- - - - -
Conclusion
 - - - - -

The goal of this little paper was to inspire contemplation among the professional coaches and debate association movers and shakers who come to these pages. It invites all to consider such questions as, what are we doing here? and why? What are we trying to achieve? And how do we know if we are doing our students an educational service with the game we are playing? I strongly believe that there are relationships between the rules and conventions of the game of debate and the quality of the education our students receive when they play the game. The assessment provided above is clearly primitive and insufficient. But I hope it is not entirely without merit. My summary judgments may

be equally flawed. But I'm confident the questions are worth asking and that the answers are there to be discovered if we only choose to look.

And that, in the final analysis, is the goal of this paper B that as professional educators we ought to be looking for the relationships between debate formats and educational values. We have the power to redefine the debate activity to help promote definite pedagogical ends. It is for us to develop the data base and understandings to do so wisely. Debate is clearly competitive and ought to be fun. But let's not get so carried away with the competition or the fun that we forget we are engaged in what should fundamentally be an educational activity.

What are we trying to achieve? How can we best achieve our educational goals? We ought to take a close look at our debate formats to find out. And what if we don't like the answers we get? What if the data and logic tell us we are having our students playing a flawed game which is somewhat counterproductive to their best interests? We need to find that out, and if there is a problem, I think we need to do something about it.

- - - - -
Endnotes:
 - - - - -

- i. Please forgive the obvious oversimplification of these descriptions - to those already familiar with a format, these summaries will seem trite - to those unfamiliar with the format these summaries will seem insufficient. They are presented here, merely to provide conceptual clarity for the evaluations which follow. In other words, they are here to insure some common understanding of what is being identified and evaluated.
- ii. By "living" I mean still being actively used as a debate format.
- iii. I was fortunate in being able to observe this format on a couple of occasions, but not speaking Dutch, my understanding was of course severely limited.
- iv. The Chautauquas were a series of adult education seminars created originally to be entertaining as well as educational programs. They began in 1874 at the resort village of Chautauqua on the northwest shore of Lake Chautauqua, New York and grew to encompass a variety of itinerate educational programs.
- v. This was at a time when Cross Examination was not part of the NDT format.
- vi. So today, this format might just as easily be referred to as the NDT/CEDA format. Of course, since it is also used in Japan, it would have to be called the NDT/CEDA/JDA/NAFA format. (So for the sake of simplicity and consistency I will continue to refer to it as the NDT format.

- vii. I'm indebted to Colm Flynn for answering a number of questions about the state of British and Worlds Competition Debate. But please don't blame him for my inaccuracies. Given time constraints, he didn't have a chance to review a full draft of this document before it was completed.
- viii. The Speech Communication Association became the National Communication Association (NCA) in 1997, but nothing significant in the structure or activities of the organization, at least as it pertains to academic debate, seems to have changed.
- ix. This association started out as the Public Debate Association and the word International was added because so many international members had joined the new association by the end of the first season. Also, the Association was sponsoring an International Email Debate Tournament at the start of the second year of the Association's existence.
- x. It is, of course, those debaters who have both a superior knowledge base AND a superior oratorical style who are most successful on the IPDA debating circuit.
- xi. I recall a visiting British Union debate team which once debated in an NDT tournament in the early 1970's. They had prepared evidence cards, but carried their evidence in their coat pockets. Patting one pocket, a team member said, Athis is my affirmative evidence, and patting another, Athis is my negative evidence. By contrast, their American counterparts were lugging about large boxes of evidence. Interestingly the British team got to the quarterfinal round of the tournament before dropping out. And most observers of that round said, the British team was far superior in terms of argumentation, they merely lacked the evidence to keep up with the U.S. team.
- xii. At a recent debating competition in Texas, the host director who was a major advocate of CEDA herself handed out a flyer to all coaches asking them to please tell their CEDA debaters NOT to talk fast or be abusive in rounds since it had seriously offended her faculty and administration judges at the last tournament.
- x. Eg., Cirlin, A. AImproving the Quality of CEDA Debate Through Judging and Evaluation. A paper presented at the 1984 meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Chicago. A Evaluating Cross-Examination in CEDA Debate: On Getting Our Act Together. 1986 CEDA Yearbook, 43-50. AJudging, Evaluation, and the Quality of CEDA Debate.© National Forensic Journal 1986, 4, 81-90. "A Public Debate Manifesto," *Southern Journal of Forensics*, 1998, 4, 339-350." A Sociological Approach to Improving Style in Academic Debate," *Southern Journal of Forensics*, 1997, 3, 170-201.