THE NARRATIVE OF THE PROFESSIONAL: THE VALUE OF COLLEGIATE

FORENSICS PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

Forensics, or competitive speech and debate, has a history stretching back to the ancient Greeks. Although practitioners, students, and coaches have long sung its praises, limited research has been done to demonstrate the long-term value of forensics competition for students. This study used narrative interviews to discover the perceived value of forensics competition to individuals who were at least ten years removed from competition and had not remained active in forensics. After interviewing 34 individuals, this study used grounded theory (Glaser, 1965; 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze the results. Analysis revealed that individuals followed a similar pattern of becoming involved in forensics and remaining as participants. Additionally, they believed they learned academic skills, social skills, and had more opportunities because of their participation in forensics, despite having to overcome some negative effects of participation. Participants noted that they used many of the skills they developed in forensics every day. Participants also demonstrated that forensics was a part of their identity and many remained connected to former teammates, former competitors, and their alma mater. Analysis led to the development of the Narrative of the Professional, which is the story of the forensics competitor.

Key Words: forensics, grounded theory, narrative, narrative interviews, Narrative of the Professional

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Speech and debate, commonly known as forensics, is a valuable part of a well-rounded college education (Jellicorse, 1986) and is premised on teaching oratory. An orator is broadly defined as a person skilled at public speaking, especially skilled in eloquence, argument, and critical thinking. Forensics has ancient roots in the study of oratorical rhetoric. For example, the Greek rhetorician and philosopher, Aristotle's classic treatise, *On Rhetoric* (trans. 1991), outlines the significance of public speaking as both an art and a science. Aristotle (trans. 1991) defines rhetoric as the available means of persuasion. Since mastery of the art was necessary for victory in a case at law or for passage of proposals in the assembly or for fame as a speaker in civic ceremonies, he calls it a combination of the science of logic and of the ethical branch of politics (Conley, 1991). Accordingly, effective public oratory, or persuasion, notes Aristotle, involves the rational and creative exhibition of logic, emotion, and ethics. His contemporaries Plato and Protagoras extended the art and science of public speaking by emphasizing practice, teaching Aristotle's techniques with modifications that focused on audience-centered messages. Later, the Roman rhetorician Cicero extended Aristotle's notion in his book *On the Orator* (trans. 1988) with detailed explanations of his five canons of public oratory and rhetoric, including: invention, disposition, memory, elocution, and pronunciation. These canons of rhetoric constitute Cicero's (trans. 1988) notion of elocution, or the authentic persuasion that focuses on audience adaptation. In this way, Cicero's (trans. 1988) canons teach the student of rhetoric how to provide the thesis of the message to the audience while delighting the audience with emotional appeals.

The ancient rhetorical oratorical tradition is premised on the idea that rhetoric, or persuasion, can be taught using language to convince or persuade. Protagoras is credited with first engaging his students in what is currently termed "debate," requiring his students to debate

both sides of a question (Murphy, 1983). As ancient rhetoric evolved, it influenced the mobilization of Christianity (for example St. Augustine's Homiletics taught during the Middle Ages), the facilitation of logic and the scientific method (for example, Francis Bacon's contributions to scientific arguments in the 17th century), Chaim Perelman's development of presence and the universal audience that redefined the study of argumentation, and Kenneth Burke's notion of dramatism that extended rhetoric to politics, art, and literature (Conley, 1991).

In the United States, speaking and debating in school has been part of the curriculum in U.S. educational institutions since the early 1800s (Jellicorse, 1986), and was a common student activity before that (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014; Delancey & Ryan, 1990). In the late 19th century into the early 20th century, schools or university debating societies engaged in public debates with one or two other schools. During the mid-20th century college forensics became more formalized, and employed a tournament format for competition (Reid, 2000).

While originally sponsored by student debating societies or clubs, speech and debate at the college level eventually became associated with college or university departments of communication. As the field of Communication began to differentiate itself from English and Logic, debate began to be affiliated with the Communication discipline. The National Association of Teachers of Speech, currently known as the National Communication Association (NCA), is credited with facilitating and growing human communication as a distinct discipline, and communication departments were a direct result of a demand for forensics education (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014; Jellicorse, 1986).

College forensics developed a tournament format in order to provide more competitive learning opportunities for students. These tournaments became regular offerings with institutions hosting a variety of other college or university forensics teams. Forensics tournaments routinely

charge teams fees in order to pay for awards, judge fees, and other amenities such as snacks and, occasionally, space rental. In addition to regular tournaments throughout the year, national tournaments began to be held, to help determine the best teams and schools overall in the country. Pi Kappa Delta was the first national organization to host a national tournament in 1920 (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014). The National Debate Tournament (NDT) began in 1947 as an invitational tournament hosted by the United States Military Academy (Freeley & Steinberg, 2005). It eventually became an exclusive invitational tournament, requiring that teams qualify through a rigorous competitive process in order to attend. The same phenomenon occurred with speech events, only later. The National Forensics Association (NFA) tournament was established in 1973 (National Forensics Association, n.d.), while the American Forensics Association (AFA) sponsored the first National Individual Events Tournament (NIET) in 1978 (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014). Similar to the NDT, the NIET required a rigorous competitive process in order to attend, while the NFA's requirements were less stringent. National tournaments sponsored by the fraternal organizations (Pi Kappa Delta, Delta Sigma Rho, Phi Rho Pi) continued, but were limited to members of those organizations.

Over time, larger schools with larger budgets became able to be more dominant regionally and nationally because these programs could travel and attend more tournaments. The prominence of successfully competitive collegiate forensics programs mirrors the national ranking and tournament placing structure of inter-collegiate athletics, but without the corporate sponsorship. Because schools with larger budgets could afford to travel to more tournaments, these programs created what Bartanen and Littlefield (2014) refer to as a "tension" between "national circuit" and "regional" forensics programs (p. 139).

Collegiate-level forensics featuring inter-school competition has always required an expenditure of resources. Freeley and Steinberg (2005) note that in the early days of debate competition, schools or debating clubs would send out "contracts" to other clubs and schools, establishing "propositions, how judges would be selected, and where the visiting team would be housed, and offering to reciprocate as host on some future occasion" (p. 20). Teams would then travel to schools that had returned the contracts, and debate representatives from those schools in public debates. Bartanen and Littlefield (2014) point out that cost and inconvenience of travel during this era was a cause of this scheduling of debate "tours."

Since the time of debating clubs touring the nation in trains and engaging in public debates, the importance of resources has not diminished. Rogers' (2006) study of debate program budgets found that competitive debate programs average budgets ranged from $40,000-$50,000, competitive speech programs averaged $35,000-$43,000, and community college budgets ranged from $16,000-$43,000. The financial needs associated with forensics have received some attention (Jarman, 2013; Rogers, 1991; Rogers, 2006; Ziegelmueller, 1997) and associated success with the resources available.

College forensics participation provides a wide range of academic and social benefits. Collegiate forensics bolsters students' critical thinking (e.g. Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, & Louden, 1999), and participation in a variety of debate formats, (Rogers 2002, 2005) fosters social responsibility, cultural understanding and tolerance, academic success, ethics, and psychological factors. Rogers (2002) reports that his review of 682 published articles on speech and debate found only 25 that "suggested that the competitive debate experience was anything less than positive" (p. 2).

College forensics offers students opportunities for competitive success and educational value. Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2001) argue that competitive forensics prioritizes competition over education, concluding the forensics education is mythic. Contrary to Burnett, et. al's (2001) critique of the value of competitive forensics, Duncan (2013) offered ancient Roman rhetorician Isocrates, often referred to as the "foremost speech teacher in the ancient world" (Berquist, 1959, p. 255), as evidence that forensics education is bolstered by competition. This project supports Duncan's assessment that competitive forensics has intrinsic value. However, the lasting personal, social, professional, and intellectual impacts of college forensics participation, beyond the immediate competitive and educational value, has received far less examination and analysis.

Given the value of collegiate forensics participation (e.g., Allen, et. al, 1999) it seems likely that the educational value would carry over into a former collegiate forensics participant's professional life. Perhaps, forensics participation has "value" beyond that which is typically deemed as competitive and/or educational? Perhaps beneficial forensics participation is reflected in professional practices after competitive and educational forensics experiences? In short, this project posits a greater understanding of forensics participation, beyond its competitive and educational value, as reflected after participation and in the former participant's professional duties, obligations, successes, and failures. Moreover, this project addresses if and how forensics education and participation lead to philanthropic contributions to the college or university by those former students who identify forensics participation as reflective of their professional success. After all, positive experiences in college are among the top reasons for alumni donating financially to their college or university ("What Guides the Study," 2011), and this project investigates the relationship between the value of collegiate forensics for professional and

philanthropic purposes. Moreover, there is no research detailing the professional impact of collegiate forensics participants and how that impact shaped financial donations to their alma mater.

Statement of the Problem

A number of scholars have bemoaned the lack of quantity of college forensics empirical research, as well as the quality of research regarding college forensics (Brennan, 2003; Cronn-Mills & Croucher, 2013; Dean, 1990; Worth, 2000). Porter (1990) argues, "the most significant problem facing the forensic community today is that we have neither documented nor articulated the importance of our area of expertise to the university community at large" (p. 95). Unfortunately, Cronn-Mills and Croucher (2013) note that there has been a focus on the same issues over and over again in college forensics research. Additionally, they note that very little of the research presented at conferences is published in academic journals (Cronn-Mills & Croucher, 2013).

Given the vast sums of money spent on forensics competition each year, and the number of students who participate, it seems important to discover if all of the money, time, and energy assist in shaping professional life. If so, is participation in collegiate forensics a reason for donating money to the college/university after graduation? The examination of forensics participation is particularly relevant given public opinion that higher education serves applied purposes (Nugent, 2018). However, little research exists regarding the long-term impacts of college forensics competition for career and professional development and its potential impact on college/university alumni relations.

Rationale for the Study

While there are some resources available to explain the benefits of participation in forensics (c.f. Allen, et. al, 2009; Rogers, 2002), there is less material defending the long-term utility of college forensics for career preparedness and development. Currently, only Embree's (2009) study examines ways that forensics participants integrate and adapt skills they learned from forensics into their lives. Lux (2012) is the only person to ask former competitors what skills they learned in forensics and how they use them in their lives, but does not provide evidence that forensics skills translate to professional life. This study rectifies the void in scholarship and research about forensics skills learned and transferred to professional life. This study extends Embree (2009) and Lux (2012) by asking former college forensics participants to recall what they learned from forensics during competition and then discuss how they have applied to their everyday lives.

Additionally, there has been little systematic investigation regarding the involvement of students in forensics, such as how they became involved and why they decided to remain involved. Littlefield and Larson-Casselton (2004) discussed how interactions with college coaches affected students' interest in college competition. This study asks people how they became involved in forensics competition and why they chose to remain involved. Addressing this issue might help current coaches and directors when recruiting future students.

A number of authors advocate including college forensics alumni in team activities. These activities include sharing narratives to create a sense of team identification and unity (Derryberry, 2005), creating connections to the community, providing current students with realistic expectations of life after college, or judging at local tournaments (Dyer, 2004), understanding a team's history (Redding & Hobbs, 2002), or help recruit new students Stepp,

1996). However, little systematic examination of alumni activity in forensics has occurred. This study will help to examine the college forensics alumni involvement in their alma mater.

Significance

The significance of this study is three-fold. First, it provides the opportunity to gain insight into the perceptions individuals have regarding their participation in college forensics in relation to their professional life and development. By providing people with the opportunity to tell their stories of their college forensics experiences, this study provides useful insights into the influence of college forensics for professional development and how this information potentially informs college and university alumni relations. Narratives (Fisher, 1984; 1985; 1989) are an important way of developing understanding as well as processing of knowledge, and can be used by professionals to better understand their past educational experiences. Edwards (2014) notes the importance of narratives for nurses, especially the way in which narratives affect our awareness, and can even help uncover hidden knowledge.

Second, this study plausibly provides information to college forensics students, coaches, and administrators about the value of college forensics for student recruitment and alumni development. Colleges and universities face more funding cuts since the recession of 2008 and most states, have, as of yet, to return funding levels to their pre-2008 amounts (Tugend, 2016). Forensics programs are vulnerable to funding cuts because, as Bartanen (2006) notes, the increased focus on controlling costs requires forensics programs students, coaches, and administrators to justify the significance and relevance of the activity. Littlefield (1991) points out that the most common reason provided by administrators for cutting forensics programs was the monetary cost. Both Jarman (2013) and Rogers (2006) point out that budget cuts have increased for forensics programs. This project provides first-hand descriptions of how former

forensics participants use and integrate forensics competition and education into their professional lives, how the skills and ideas learned provide value, and potentially why former forensics participants should provide financial support as career professionals.

Third, this study investigates the professional development opportunities related to collegiate forensics participation and if that experience justifies financial contributions to the college/university after graduation. Because student identification with their university increases when they participate in activities (Myers, Davis, Schreuder, & Seibold, 2016), students who participated in college forensics should be more likely to identify with their alma mater. Because they are more likely to identify with their college or university (Jackson, Bachmeier, Wood, & Craft, 1995), college forensics alumni also are more likely to be active alumni members, and be more willing to donate money to their home institution. Additionally, students who are more involved in activities are more likely to donate or be active alumni (Gaier, 2005; Miller & Casebeer, 1990; Steeper, 2009). If alumni were active in college forensics, they should be more likely to be active as alumni.

Definition of Terms

In order for the reader to better understand this study and for consistency throughout, several terms must be defined and the context of forensics must be explained. This section begins with that context and then defined important and relevant terms. I also provide a basic description of tournaments and events.

Context

On average, there are approximately 15 tournaments each weekend at which students must travel to host colleges or universities.[1] Students compete in preliminary competition rounds

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[1] I examined tournament calendars provided by the Council of Forensic Organizations, ForensicsTournament.net, Tabroom.com, the International Public Debate Association website, the National Parliamentary Debate Association

and, if judged among the best, students also compete in elimination rounds. Each tournament routinely ends with an awards assembly where top competitors are awarded trophies for their excellence. At the end of each competitive season, students may participate at several national and/or international tournaments. The American Forensic Association (AFA) is the umbrella organization for many forensics activities and organizations in the United States. Formed in 1949, the AFA sponsors two premier national tournaments: the NIET, and the NDT. The NIET (National Individual Events Tournament) tournament was chartered in 1978 by the AFA (American Forensic Association, n.d.). The NIET has a rigorous at-large qualification procedure, requiring students to place in elimination rounds at least three times, and their placings must not add up to more than 8 (National Individual Events Tournament, 2006). Most tournaments offer the events sponsored by the NIET and follow the NIET rules and descriptions for those events. In addition to the at-large qualification system, competitors can qualify near the end of the competition year through a district tournament (National Individual Events Tournament, n.d.). The NDT (National Debate Tournament) also has a qualification procedure, and only 80 teams can compete in the tournament (National Debate Tournament, 2018). The best teams in the United States can apply for an "at-large" bid to qualify for the tournament. Those teams not receiving an at-large bid can qualify through a district tournament, similar to the NIET.

Other national organizations also sponsor national tournaments. The National Forensic Association (NFA) was formed in 1973 to provide a governing body for a national individual events tournament that had been taking place for two years (National Forensic Association, n.d.). To qualify for the NFA, a student must be one of the top six competitors at a tournament that has

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tournament calendar, and Speechwire.com for the 2018-19 season. There were 268 individual tournaments scheduled across 17 weekends from September 14, 2018, through March 4, 2019. Most tournaments after March 4 were national tournaments.

seven schools, and there must be at least 11 participants in an event (National Forensic Association, 2018). National tournaments hosted by other organizations are less restrictive. For example, the National Parliamentary Debate Association tournament is open to any students or schools who wish to compete (National Parliamentary Debate Association, 2018b). The Cross Examination Debate Association also is an open tournament (2018).

Several fraternal organizations sponsor national tournaments as well. Pi Kappa Delta sponsors a national tournament for its member schools (Pi Kappa Delta, 2019). Phi Rho Pi is a fraternal organization for community colleges and sponsors a national tournament for its members as well. These fraternal organization tournaments usually are "full-service" tournaments, meaning that they offer both individual events competition as well as at least one form of debate, and sometimes multiple forms of debate.

Over 1400 students competed in at least one tournament in CEDA-NDT during the 2018-19 academic year (Tabroom.com, 2019). CEDA-NDT is a debate format in which two-person teams compete against each other, and use evidence and research they have compiled beforehand. The resolution, developed and released in July of each year, commonly is written as a policy change for the US government. Teams debate the same resolution through the academic year.

Approximately 1200 students competed in the National Parliamentary Debate Association format of parliamentary debate during the 2018-2019 academic year (2019). Parliamentary debate is a more extemporaneous format of debate, in which two teams compete against each other, but a different resolution is debated each round (National Parliamentary Debate Association, 2018). The resolutions also vary in type, sometimes being policies, but also sometimes being value questions or metaphorical in nature.

A one-on-one format of debate, Public Debate, has increased in popularity in recent years. The International Public Debate Association (IPDA), formed in 1997, sponsors tournaments across the United States (n.d.). During the 2018-2019 academic year, approximately 700 students have competed in this format of debate (International Public Debate Association, 2019). IPDA is an extemporaneous form of debate. Before each round, competitors meet their opponent and then choose a resolution from five possible choices (International Public Debate Association, 2015).

Bartanen (as cited in Lux, 2014, 21) noted, "During this school year, thousands of high school and college students will participate in some form of organized speech competition." A large number of students compete in forensics in a given year. The Council of Forensic Organizations (COFO) lists over 600 colleges and universities that compete in some form of forensics events or activities (n.d.). On any given weekend, nearly 900 college students might be competing at a tournament somewhere in the United States.[2] At this time, there are four different companies that provide tournament registration and administration software. Just one of those software providers has 1161 students registered on his website for the 2018-19 academic year and forensics season (D. Cantrell, Personal Communication, 14 February 2019).

All of these students traveling around the country to tournaments cost money. Rogers' (2006) study of forensics program resources noted that program budgets ranged from as little as $5000 to over $100,000. Colleges and universities must pay entry fees to the tournament to help defray costs for the host. They also often pay for transportation, lodging, and food. Entry fees for

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[2] In order to estimate the number of students competing on a variety of weekends, I looked at the entries and/or results from all of the tournaments held on three weekends throughout the academic year using Speechwire.com, forensicstournament.net, the International Public Debate Association Website, and tabroom.com. I then eliminated duplicate mentions of students and totaled the resulting numbers. September 21-23, 2018 totaled 891 students, October 19-21, 2018 totaled 766 students, and January 19-21, 2019, totaled 1028 students, for an average of 891.

debate teams range from $30-$80 per team at regular tournaments, with national tournaments costing over $100 per team. Individual events entry fees range from $8-$10 per event per student. If a student entered three events, the school would pay $30 in entry fees for that student to compete in his/her three events. In addition to these fees, schools are expected to provide a sufficient number of judges to help facilitate the tournament. If a school has more entries than they can cover with the judges they provide, they must pay penalty fees so that the host school can hire other individuals to cover those judging requirements.

Definitions

An alphabetical listing of these important terms is provided below and operates to frame the context and focus of this project. Of particular focus are terms that describe the forensics culture and experience.

Alumni are individuals who have graduated from a college or university.

Alumni giving is the "the process whereby alumni of a college or university give money by any method (one-time, annual, planned) to their alma mater" (Loveday, 2012, p.14).

Alumni Involvement includes participation in the "affairs of one's alma mater after graduation" (Steeper, 2009, p. 9). This involvement can include a variety of activities, from donating money to participating as trustees (Gaier, 2005). Other involvement might include legislative advocacy, mentoring of both students and young alumni, and recruiting (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010).

Alumni Relations is the perceived relationship or connection that alumni have with the institution they attended. Hurwitz (2005) notes that alumni relations programs work to connect alumni to the institution. Merkel (2010) states "alumni relations and communications are

frequently associated with fundraising and development" (p. 23). This aspect of alumni relations also will be considered as part of this study.

Alumni Satisfaction measures an alumni's feelings regarding their college experience (Drew-Branch, 2011).

Collegiate Forensics is a co-curricular activity in high schools and college where students compete in debate, public speaking events, and interpretation of literature. Freeley and Steinberg (2005) also include that it involves rhetorical scholarship.

Critiques (Kritiks) are value-oriented positions or arguments presented in a policy debate (Freeley & Steinberg, 2005). The argument might focus on some aspect of the opponents' actions in the debate round, or the underlying ideas behind their arguments (Freeley & Steinberg, 2005).

Debate is a forensic activity that includes "the process of inquiry and advocacy; the seeking of a reasoned judgement on a proposal" (Freeley & Steinberg, 2005 p. 468). Vancil (1993) also indicates that debate should help clarify issues, focus on a central question, and have rules that provide for equal opportunities for all involved. Competitive debate is an intellectual activity where two teams argue over the truth of a proposition, and a decision is rendered by a judge or judges.

Flowing—The act of taking notes during a debate. Freeley & Steinberg (2005) define the "flow sheet" as "an outline of a debate, with the arguments presented in each speech recorded in vertical columns and arranges so that a person can follow horizontally the flow of each argument as it evolves progressively through all of the speeches" (p. 256).

Fundraising is the process of convincing others to voluntarily give money to a person or institution. Fundraising is sometimes called "development, or advancement" (Torres Bernall & Mille, 2014, p. 300).

Interpretation of Literature is a forensic activity. Yordon (1999) defines it generally as "the process of studying and performing texts" (p. 410). Oral interpretation involves students finding and performing literature, similar to what might occur in an acting class. Oral interpretation events include Prose Interpretation, Drama Interpretation, Poetry Interpretation, and Duo Interpretation.

Professional—The Cambridge Dictionary Online (2019) defines a professional as "a person who has a job that requires skill, education, or training" (n.p.) Additionally, The Cambridge Dictionary Online (2019) notes that professional can be used as an adjective to describe a person as, "having the qualities of skilled and educated people, such as effectiveness and seriousness of manner" (n.p.).

Public Speaking Events- are forensic events that require students to research a topic and then present a speech based on the purpose of the event. There are both prepared events and limited-preparation events. Prepared events include Informative Speaking, Persuasive Speaking, After Dinner Speaking, and Communication Analysis. The limited-preparation events include Extemporaneous Speaking and Impromptu Speaking.

Organizational Identification is a theory relevant to this project, that involves a specific form of social identification "where the individual defines him or herself in terms of their membership in a particular organization" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 105).

Round is one competitive opportunity involved in the forensic tournament. For example, one entire debate is a round, as is one section of speeches. A debate round consists of the

competitors completing all of the speeches, which varies depending on the format. In one speech round, such as prose, 5-7 individual competitors from different schools will be grouped together and present their works or material. The judge would rank the competitors 1-5, and assign a score based on points.

Tournament consists of a number of schools joining together to compete against each other. The tournament consists of preliminary rounds and elimination rounds. All students compete in 2-3 preliminary rounds of individual events in an individual event, or speech tournament. Students compete in 5-8 preliminary rounds of debate at a tournament. After preliminary rounds have concluded, the overall top finishers compete against each other in a single elimination format to determine the winners.

This study focuses on college forensics participation for career engagement and development and how, if relevant, forensics participation is plausibly beneficial to alumni relations. The guiding focus of this study is to examine the professional development that occurs through participation in forensics and how that development affects alumni satisfaction and if the participation affects individuals' interest in participating in fundraising by donating to their alma mater.

Organization of the Study

This chapter defined, described, and discussed the context of collegiate forensics. In doing so, I provide a rationale for studying the value of collegiate forensics participation and the potential for improving alumni relations with former competitors. The four remaining chapters provide detailed content related to the creation of appropriate research questions, theoretical and methodological considerations that shape the data collection, analysis, and results of the data collected. The results are interpreted using concepts from three relevant academic theories,

methods, and perspectives, including narrative theory, grounded theory, and academic literature related to the "best practices" of collegiate alumni relations and development practices

Chapter Two contains a review of the literature of the perspectives and ideas relevant to this study and posits a series of questions that focus the remainder of this study. Chapter Three presents and explains the methodology used in this study. Chapter Four discusses the results, and Chapter Five provides analysis and conclusions regarding the study. In short, this dissertation discusses how the narratives I collected from former college forensic participants provide data for a grounded theory approach that I analyze to create what I call the "Narrative of the Professional" theory. The final chapters discuss this proposed theory and its relevance to understanding college forensics participation, the application of the skills learned through participation to professional life, and how those skills may assist or bolster alumni financial or other support for college forensics.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

College forensics provides competitors with many valuable experiences. In the previous chapter, I broadly outlined the college forensics context and specifically offered a rather modest educated "guess." My "guess" is that forensics has value because of its applied nature; it provides opportunities for professional development, and has the potential to improve alumni relations. The basic logic behind this "guess" is this: thousands of students participate in forensic activities that facilitate critical thinking, extemporaneous speaking, artistic performance, and professionalism at regional and national tournaments throughout the academic year. Many forensics competitors complete their college educations and begin professional lives where they are asked to perform duties. Perhaps these professional duties are made easier or more successful because of collegiate forensics experience? If so, what "values" learned from competitive college forensics participation assist them in their professional life? Do those former participants perceive their experiences as being so valuable that they are willing to engage in contributions or other development activities related to collegiate fundraising?

This broad "guess" comes with a lot of personal bias on my part. I have participated in collegiate forensics for a total of thirty years. I started as an undergraduate debater where my partner and I earned awards at local and regional tournaments. As an undergraduate I also participated in individual events, including Extemporaneous Speaking, Impromptu Speaking, Prose Interpretation, and Poetry Interpretation. In graduate school, I assisted in coaching both speaking and debate activities. I have judged too-many-to-count forensics rounds at state, regional, and national tournaments both as a graduate student and now as an assistant professor and director of forensics at Northwest College in Powell, Wyoming. In short, I have devoted my professional life to collegiate forensics, and I could provide a detailed narrative about how the

activity shaped my professional development. I could provide numerous stories and examples justifying participation in collegiate forensics, and my personal oral history would no doubt follow a narrative pattern of development. My oral history of forensics participation began as a scared undergraduate who found joy, social experiences, and academic excellence while I participated. So much "value" I earned from forensics, so goes my narrative, that I share it with the hundreds of students I have served as a coach, director of forensics, and assistant director of forensics for 24 years.

Oral history projects capture the value of learned and social experience using a narrative format. But my oral history, I "guess," is not isolated. I know that others share my appreciation of the "value" of forensics. While I can examine my own life, interviewing other individuals provides a wider range of experiences from which to draw on, and my results will be more useful if a number of individuals have had similar experiences. Additionally, this project allows me the opportunity to capture those narratives and to document the "value" of the participation by others. This study examines the narratives (stories) of former college forensics competitors to gain a sense of their experiences in college forensics and how their participation impacted their professional lives.

This study addresses the call made by Redding and Hobbs (2002) for increased use of alumni narratives in bolstering funding for academic and co-curricular programs consistently threatened with budget cuts in higher education. The utility of alumni narratives as a means to justify the value of college forensics (Redding & Hobbs, 2002) may help maintain, promote, and grow collegiate forensics activities. The literature relevant to this study covers a variety of academic areas, including college forensics, narrative theory, and alumni relations and fundraising. The literature regarding college forensics encompasses several categories, including

the use of narrative theory in studying college forensics. Porter (1990) notes that there is a dearth of college forensics research, pointing out that "we will continue to be overlooked as a viable area of study until we recognize and begin conducting scholarly research in our discipline" (p. 95). Many of the articles and papers found regarding the value of college forensics, and even the use of narratives in college forensics, are what one might call "think pieces." These are argumentative and persuasive in nature, but do not engage in any new research grounded in the collection and analysis of data guided by a coherent and consistent research question, theoretical application and extension of results and analysis, and conclusions offered as plausible explanations of the research questions. Klumpp (1990) makes this point clear by dividing college forensics research into three different types: "(1) reports on attitudes and structural characteristics of college forensics programs; (2) "how to" essays on particular forensic activities, usually innovative in character; and (3) theoretical essays that provide a vocabulary and structure for teaching particular forensics skills" (p. 80). Cronn-Mills and Croucher (2013) echo Klumpp's (1990) analysis, noting the lack of rigorous methodological and theoretical research about forensics and its values.

In the following sections, I discuss the relevancy of six broad research questions as evidenced in forensics education literature, narrative theory, and alumni relations. The research questions should not be perceived as testable or quantifiable. Rather, these six research questions function to guide my methodological and theoretical approach (guided interviews and narrative inquiry) for purposes of understanding this over-riding and fundamental question:

Do stories by former participants about college forensics reflect the significance and relevancy of the activity for professional life and career development?

This fundamental question warrants specificity to issues related to the college forensics context, value, and identification. These six supplemental questions (as evidenced in the methodological technique (guided interviews) include:

RQ1: Do former college forensics competitors identify with their teams and schools?

RQ2: Do former college forensics competitors have shared experiences of learning about, participating in, and integrating their experiences into their professional lives?

The fundamental question directs my inquiry in other ways beyond context, to include insight on the value or benefits of collegiate forensics participation:

RQ3: How do individuals perceive college forensics participation affected their professional lives and careers?

RQ4: Are the skills and knowledge developed through college forensics participation beneficial for career development?

The fundamental question directs further inquiry beyond the college forensics context and value, to include a focus on identification with the forensics experience:

RQ5: Do former college forensics participants see college forensics as an integral part of their identity?

RQ6: Do former college forensics participants remain involved with the college or university where they competed?

In what follows, I discuss academic literature related to the context, value, and identification with college forensics.

A Brief History of Collegiate Forensics

As noted in chapter one, collegiate forensics has a long history. Students in the United States have been interested in debating important issues for a long time. "From the Spy Club at

Harvard in 1722 to the Young Ladies's [sic] Association, the first women's debating society, at Oberlin in 1835, the one common thread in literary societies was student interest in debating important issues" (Delancey & Ryan, 1990, p. 49). Bartanen and Littlefield (2014) state, "forensic disputation was introduced at Yale in 1747" (p. 29). In the nineteenth century, literary societies became popular at colleges and universities, and these societies developed their own debating styles (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014). By the early 1880s, literary societies from different colleges began debating each other (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014; Delancey & Ryan, 1990).

Speaking contests began to be formalized as well. The first Interstate Oratory Contest was held in 1874 in Illinois. Five colleges competed in the first contest, but by 1891, it had grown to 91 colleges and universities (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014). Bartanen and Littlefield (2014) also note that during this time, students became more interested in participating in more rigorous and formal debate. This led to the development of debating societies, which ultimately became more popular than the literary societies.

In what Bartanen and Littlefield refer to as the "Public Oratory Era," (p. 27) colleges "would schedule only a few intercollegiate debates during the academic year" (Freeley & Steinberg, 2005, p. 19). These were formal events with large audiences, and local officials often served as judges. (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014). As debate became more popular, more people wanted to participate. However, as noted in chapter 1, "debate tours" were expensive, took students out of school for long periods of time, and were limited to a few students.

Tournament debating began in the 1920s as a means of allowing more students to participate. The first national tournament was hosted by Pi Kappa Delta in 1920, but Southwestern College in Kansas is credited with hosting the first open tournament in 1926

(Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014). The tournament format soon became popular because it was cost-efficient and allowed for more students to participate. While the tournament model allowed for more students, it also led to the development of professional coaches, standardization of formats, events, and debate resolutions. Tournament competition has remained the norm for most competitions since World War II (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014).

Forensics' roots in the classical Greek rhetorical tradition of disputation have been retained throughout its development. As professional coaches became more common in forensics, the discussion of best practices was common in their discussions and academic literature (Bartanen & Littlefield). As college forensics was becoming more formalized, Departments of Speech were becoming more common at colleges and universities. There were immediate tensions between forensics and the academic departments that have never been resolved. The departments' need for credibility in the academy led to a focus on research and scholarship over teaching. Forensics retained its practicality and focus on pedagogy, which conflicted with the research and scholarship focus of departments. Additionally, the focus on humanistic and social scientific research by academic departments led to less support for forensics (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2014). Klumpp (1990) notes that this focus creates problems for coaches who wish to conduct research and publish it in peer-reviewed academic journals. The use of anecdote and an oral style, which works well in speaking settings, does not transfer to the academic publication setting.

The Value of Collegiate Forensics

Many authors address the value of college forensics. There are three different ways that scholars have examined the value of college forensics: 1) the overall value of college forensics; 2) the value of debate; and, 3) the value of individual events. The value of debate or

argumentation skills have received extensive study. Brembeck (1949) examined the utility of a course in argumentation. He noted that students who took a single semester of argumentation "significantly outgained" (Brembeck 1949, p. 187) students who had not. The rise of urban debate leagues in inner-city high schools across the United States has resulted in an examination of their utility. Warner and Bruschke (2001) note how they can be used as a tool of empowerment. Shields and Preston (2007) note the increased academic accomplishments of participants in urban debate leagues, as do Mezuk, Bondarenko, Smith, and Tucker (2011).

A number of studies have been undertaken to examine the utility of college forensics and/or communication courses on critical thinking. Whalen (1991) examined the effect of debate on critical thinking, as compared to an argumentation class and a public speaking class, and found that debate competitors outgained the other students, as did Colbert (1987). Allen, et. al (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of studies, finding that there was a 44% increase in critical thinking ability after taking a communication course or participating in college forensics.

There has been some examination of how current and former competitors evaluate the utility of the skills they learn in forensics. Embree (2009) also interviewed former college forensics participants and found that they had adapted the skills and lessons learned in college forensics competition to professional life. Embree (2009) found that former competitors learned specific skills as well as life lessons in college forensics, as well as labeling it as transformative. His participants also noted that there were problems they experienced in forensics (Embree, 2009). Pelletier (2012) conducted an ethnographic study of nontraditional student experiences in college forensics and found that college forensics helped nontraditional students integrate into campus life and make connections with other students. Brennan (2003) interviewed current competitors to see what their experiences were and their perception of college forensics. He

found that college forensics provided an exposure to multiculturalism; participants learn to

appreciate diversity, and that they are provided real-world experiences (Brennan 2003). Lux

(2012) compared the learning outcomes valued by directors of forensics to the skills former

college forensics competitors believed they used in their jobs. He found that they generally

agreed on the skills that were most useful, such as communication skills, critical thinking, self-

confidence, and professional conduct (Lux, 2012). However, he also found that former

competitors believed that a number of the skills they used in their current jobs (such as

education, listening, organization, and leadership) received less emphasis on the teams for whom

they competed than competition, audience analysis, research, and teamwork (Lux, 2012).

Lux (2014) surveyed former competitors at the AFA-NIET and the NFA national

tournament, and found that they used many of the skills they acquired in college forensics in

their jobs. Lux's (2014) respondents indicated that communication skills, critical thinking skills,

and an increased understanding of professional conduct were three of the most important skills

learned in college forensics and used in their jobs. Billings (2011) surveyed former individual

events competitors, and also found that communication skills, critical thinking and

argumentation, and organization skills were noted as being the most common skills learned

through participation in college forensics. Littlefield (2001) found that communication and

speaking skills were the most useful benefits of debate participation. Quenette, Larsen-Casselton,

and Littlefield (2007) found that students perceived both positive and negative effects of

participation in college forensics. Students perceived that they gained self-confidence, had

competitive success, and gained in their academic achievements, but also believed that college

forensics took too much time, affected the health of competitors, and negatively affected self-

concept, among other effects (Quenette, et.al, 2007). Williams, McGee, & Worth (2001) also

surveyed debate competitors (primarily participants in CEDA, NDT, and NPDA) regarding their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of participation in debate. Their respondents voiced similar concerns regarding health and relationships. However, they also believed that debate improved their speaking, research skills, and critical thinking.

Rogers (2002, 2005), as noted above, has made some examination of the skills developed by debate. He found that debate participation positively affected students' academic success and social adjustment (Rogers 2002). Rogers also found that participation in debate led to "sustained, significant positive life outcomes" (Rogers, 2005) for students up to four years after their competitive career ended. K. Bartanen (1998) notes that college forensics participation is valuable because it teaches the learning goals of a liberal arts education. Harrigan (2008) argues that switch-side debating allows for better understanding of issues because students are forced to consider all sides of an issue. Strait and Wallace (2008) note the importance of debate because it improves critical thinking and creates practical wisdom. Strait (2007) argues that policy debate, in the form of NDT-CEDA, exemplifies Habermas' ideal speech situation. Scholars outside the academic field of communication also recognize the value of debate. Lantis (2004) notes the utility of teaching and discussing ethics by using classroom debates in International Studies courses.

Some authors argue that college forensics could be made even more useful, or more effective as a teaching tool. Eubank and Owens (1958) argued for the inclusion of individual events as part of the tournament experience, because they taught students valuable skills. Dean (1992) discusses how Persuasive Speaking might be made more audience friendly. M. Bartanen (1994) and Hada (1999) argue that college forensics competitions should use more lay judges so that it would remain or become more educational and focus more on public audiences, instead of

specialized audiences of professional judges. Swafford and Hinck (2010) also argue for the importance of the ability to address a variety of audiences, focusing the use of interpersonal scripts as a means by which students can become more comfortable interacting with a variety of judges. Delancey and Ryan (1990) argue that hosting public debates, or audience-style debating, is good for college forensics programs for a number of reasons, including the development of public speaking skills, and positive publicity. Cram (2012) argues that a focus on quality of evidence in NDT-CEDA debate would provide more real-life, or useful skills to debaters. Paroske (2011) states that the language used by the "technical" debaters and "civic" debaters differs and prevents them from interacting. Ziegelmueller (1995), not necessarily responding specifically to any of these scholars, notes several of the criticisms of NDT-CEDA debate and relates them to changes in the communication discipline itself. For example, he points out that the shift to using critical arguments in debate parallels or follows that same shift in communication theory (Ziegelmueller 1995).

In addition to those hoping to improve college forensics competition, a number of scholars point out problems in philosophy and practice. As noted above, Burnett, et. al (2001) argue that the focus on competition can lead to a loss of education in forensics. Hiland (2017) notes that expanding novice debate's acceptance could help to make CEDA/NDT debate more appealing to a wider range of students as well as making debate a more defensible activity. A number of studies point out that women are underrepresented in both elimination rounds as well as upper divisions of debate and individual events (Donovan, 2012; Furgerson & Rudnick, 2014). Additionally, Stepp (1997) notes that few women and minorities competed at national tournaments.

There has been some discussion of the value of college forensics to departments of communication, and the connection it has, or should have. Pearce (1974) notes that communication faculty who were not involved in college forensics were less favorably disposed toward it. Smith & Popovich (1980) argue that forensics from an administrative perspective, fewer tournaments, and serving a larger number of students might be a necessary move for forensics programs. Delancey (1984), however, argues that college forensics might be the key to raising the profile of communication departments and aid in recruiting. Conflicting relationships between college forensics programs and communication departments led to one national college forensics organization, the National Forensic Association, to develop "academic learning compacts," which incorporated student learning outcomes into college forensics pedagogy (Kelly, Paine, Richardson, & White, 2014).

While much research and scholarship has focused on the benefits of college forensics, little has been done beyond Rogers (2005), Embree (2009), and Lux (2012) to discover the importance of college forensics skills for people later in their lives. Unfortunately, Rogers (2005) only studied debaters and compared them to a control group of non-debaters. This study includes both debaters and individual events participants. Embree (2009) interviewed former forensics competitors, focusing on the skills forensics participation developed. Embree (2009) also focused on forensics as an educational activity, and evaluated it through an educational lens. This study goes beyond Embree's (2009) examination of skills and education by studying the extent to which forensics affects former participants. By focusing on identification with their team and school, this study seeks to discover how individuals see themselves as forensics competitors, and looks beyond the skills they acquired in forensics.

Long, Meredith, Lamb, Steele, and Oommen (2007) studied the means by which students came to identify with their college forensics teams. They found that organizational identification with their college forensics program was correlated with students' social identification with the college forensics program. Students who identified with the organization and team were more likely to stay on the team and continue competition (Croucher et al. 2007). Croucher et al. (2007) do not advocate for specific strategies to achieve that identification. This study asks former competitors about their former teams and schools, and examines the connections they maintain with their alma mater(s). The connections individuals might retain could include participation in alumni events, donating money, or even retaining memorabilia and trophies.

No studies have examined the reasons people joined competitive college forensics. Beyond the discussion of recruiting Littlefield and Larsen-Casselton (2004) offer, there is no systematic exploration of how and why individuals might join a speech and debate team. The motivations of those individuals who do so can be important for recruiting as well as for helping coaches understand and administer their current teams. Additionally, there is limited examination of why individuals choose to remain team members after joining. This study examines the reasons and mechanisms by which the participants became involved in forensics and remained active members of their teams.

Identification by Narratives

Narratives, or stories, have long been part of human interaction. Fisher (1984) argued, "humans are essentially storytellers" (p. 1). Ochs and Caps (1996) state, "Personal narrative . . . [while] born out of experience, also gives shape to that experience" (p. 20). Narratives are an important way of developing understanding and processing of knowledge, and can be used by professionals to better understand their experiences. Edwards (2014) notes the importance of

narratives for nurses in order to make sense of their experiences. Yarrow (2008) argued that Ganaian Non-Governmental Organization workers were able to discover their own agency through their narratives. Keller and Streib (2013) even argue that the coherence of the narrative is evidence that life experiences or information have been integrated into people's lives. Bute and Jensen (2011) point out that narratives in which individuals talk about something after a period of time has passed allow for the person to have a better sense of the experience the narrative speaks about. Bute and Jensen (2011) even suggest that people with the most distance between the narrative and the experience are more likely to "integrate those experiences into their broader stories of self" (p. 228).

Fisher developed the narrative paradigm with an eye toward replacing what he termed the "rational world paradigm" with the "narrative paradigm" (Fisher, 1984, p. 3). Narratives are evaluated through the consideration of two factors: Narrative Probability and Narrative Fidelity (Fisher, 1985). Narrative probability, or narrative rationality, "refers to formal features of a story conceived as a discrete sequence of thought" (Fisher, 1985, p. 349). For a story to have probability or to be accepted, the story must make sense to the listeners. Fisher terms this "hanging together" (1985, p. 349), which means, in part, that it must not be self-contradictory. Rowland (1989) also adds that the narrative paradigm is good for assessing stories.

Narrative fidelity addresses whether or not the story follows the logic of good reasons (Fisher, 1985). Fisher argued that, in addition to being judged against themselves (narrative probability), narratives also are evaluated against external evidence. This evidence can be individualized, in that each person evaluates whether or not the story rings true to his or her own experiences. Additionally, the narrative might be evaluated using formal logic, or even evaluated based on its underlying values.

McClure (2009) worked to expand the narrative paradigm by reconceptualizing narratives with Burke's (1953) concept of Identification. He notes that identification in narratives provides people with a means to reconstruct meaning (McClure 2009). Crick and Gabriel (2016) note that narratives can be used in healthcare settings to develop "a more specialized narrative of healing that is attentive to the desires and constraints of a patient's form of identification" (p. 1325). They note that the patient must identify with the narrative so that the patient is willing to participate in the treatment.

There is some scholarship examining the usefulness of narratives in college forensics. Primarily these examine or argue for the use of narratives as a means of developing and maintaining team culture. Orme (2012) examined storytelling in college forensics programs and found that they function as a means of transmitting team culture and knowledge. Several individuals have argued that team narratives are an important aspect of team culture (Derryberry 2005; Miller 2011). Derryberry (2005) places an especially high importance on stories and how they can contribute to team culture, unity, relationships, and memory. Compton (2006) argued for the use of a collective memory perspective to examine and understand college forensics. He (Compton 2006) noted that use of student narratives as a means of transmitting team histories could be useful. Jensen and Jensen (2007) argue that understanding a program's past through its narratives allows a director or coach to communicate about changes more effectively. Wickelgren and Holm (2008) argue for the use of coach and team narratives to encourage ethical behavior on college forensics teams. Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, and Piercy (1998) examined stories of women's experiences in college forensics. Greenstreet and Frederick (2000) also used open-ended critical incident statements to examine women's experience of gender in college

forensics. No examination of former college forensics participants has asked how they see

college forensics as a part of their identity.

Alumni Relations and Fundraising

State funding for higher education has been decreasing for some time, and along with

increased tuition, private funding is becoming a more common source for institutions of higher

education (Gallo, 2012; Speck, 2010; Worth, 2012). One common and ready-made source of

private funds is an institution's alumni (Gallo, 2012, 2013b). In fact, alumni have been

supporting their *alma maters* for quite some time ("The Influence of Philanthropy," 2011).

Alumni are an institution's only permanent stakeholder group because of their lifelong

connection to that institution (Warwick, 1913, as cited in Webb, 1998). Alumni have a natural

interest in their home institution because its success affects their reputation and the value of their

experiences (Gallo, 2012). Gallo (2013a) argues that because alumni have a unique connection to

their alma mater, the alumni relationship should be developed and nurtured, rather than

exploited. She notes that developing an overall relationship with alumni benefits the institution

beyond fundraising, and opens up broader possibilities for alumni assistance to the institution

(Gallo, 2013a). In fact, there are a large number of ways that alumni can contribute to an

institution beyond donating money (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010).

There are a variety of reasons people engage in altruistic or philanthropic behavior.

Mutual benefits are often a motive for giving, as is a public good ("What Guides the Study,"

2011). Additionally, the idea of identification is another reason for donating to an organization

(Jackson, et.al, 1995; Worth, 2016). Myers, et. al (2016) found that student identification with

their university increased when they participated in activities. More specifically, Mael and

Ashforth (1992) found that the amount of time spent at the institution, the overall satisfaction the

person had with the institution, whether or not a mentor relationship existed with a person at the institution, and their perception of the time spent at the institution all affected the alumni's identification with the institution. Gaier (2005) specifically found that alumni satisfaction increased the likelihood of alumni giving. Other research confirms that student connections and experiences while attending an institution play an important role in alumni giving decisions (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001; Sun, Hoffman, & Grady, 2007; Wood, 2012). Similarly, Pearson (1999) found that "the relationship alumni have with [their institution] plays a paramount role in their gift-making decisions" (p. 7). He also found that if alumni were active and engaged as students, and satisfied with their student experience, they were more likely to donate (Pearson, 1999).

Another influence on alumni relations and alumni philanthropy is whether or not a spirit of giving is developed while individuals are still students (Ezarik, 2010; Kellogg, 1996; Pottick, Giordano, & Chirico, 2015; Meer, 2013). Pottick et al. (2015) found that through a student-led fundraising campaign, both student and alumni giving could be increased, at least in the short term. One strategy for alumni development is to begin developing alumni relationships with students. There are multiple ways to involve alumni on campus, including admissions and campus programming (Singer and Hughey, 2002, Volkwein, 2010). Singer and Hughey (2002) note that student and alumni interactions help alumni understand the need for funds, and help students connect with individuals who are sponsoring their scholarships. Dyer (2004) points out the importance of involving forensics alumni in the program for the same reason: Students can gain an understanding of the value of the skills they possess through their interactions with alumni. Stepp (1996) also discusses the importance of involving alumni in forensics programs as

a way to maintain connections with alumni, and to encourage financial support for forensics programs.

One distinct way that students can be involved with their college or university is through extra-curricular activities. Gaier (2005) states, "Alumni who participated in at least one formal student activity during the undergraduate experience were 87 percent more likely to give" (p. 285). Gaier's (2005) work extended findings by Miller and Casebeer (1990), who also found that those involved in activities as students were much more likely to donate as alumni. Steeper (2009) validated this connection as well.

Perhaps the most significant resource to date on the role of fundraising and alumni relations is Michael Worth's book, <u>Fundraising: Principles and Practice</u> (2016). Worth's inquiry provides a comprehensive history of fundraising in higher education, noting that "fundraising is a noble and important activity, central to the advancement of important organizations and institutions that play critical roles in our society" (Worth, 2016, p. 25).

Worth (2012) points out that the shift from public funding to a dependence on private funding has been happening for a number of years. "Over the past three decades, the burden of paying for higher education generally has shifted from taxpayers to students and their families" (Worth, 2012, p. 5). Worth (2012) also notes that the perception of higher education has changed over time as well. In the mid-1800s, education in general, as well as post-secondary education, was seen as a public good. However, presently, more and more people see higher education as a private good, and the costs associated with it are seen as an investment made by the student and his or her family (Worth, 2012).

Worth (2012) states that although the public funding of education has decreased, the private funding for higher education has increase over the same amount of time. While public

colleges and universities received $8.3 billion from private donations in 2000, they received

$11.3 billion in 2009 (Worth, 2012). While the amounts of money donated are growing, the

percentage of alumni who donate is relatively small. At private institutions, 40 percent of alumni

make a contribution in a given year, while at public institutions, the average number of alumni

who donate is less than 10 percent (Wylie & Sammis, as cited by Thrush, 2010).

As the importance of alumni and other private funding has increased, so has the

importance of college foundations. Foundations can generate their own funds, ensure the proper

management of gifts, and have more flexibility in the investment of funds (Worth, 2012). These

characteristics allow colleges and universities to use foundations to more easily raise and spend

money than institutional funds.

Worth (2012) notes that higher education fundraising is different from other nonprofit

fundraising. While colleges and universities have a built-in constituency of alumni, they also

might have a less exciting cause than other nonprofits (Worth, 2012). Because of this lack of an

exciting cause, but the advantage of a built-in constituency, colleges and universities focus their

fundraising on those alumni—because they have a natural tie to the institution (Worth, 2012).

The focus on alumni also leads to a focus on relationships with those who might be interested in

and able to donate.

Worth (2012) notes that there are three levels of giving for colleges and universities.

There are annual giving, major gifts, and principle gifts. Annual gifts are just that, an annual

contribution from a wide variety and large number of donors and/or alumni (Worth 2012).

Although the annual fund involves many alumni/donors, it usually is a small portion of the

foundation's total operating budget (Worth, 2012). Major gifts are gifts that are larger than an

annual gift, and often are spread over a number of years (Worth, 2012). Worth (2012) points out

that major gifts are usually defined by a specific dollar amount that varies from institution to institution. Worth (2012) defines principle gifts as "large major gifts that have a transformational impact on the institution, and are among the largest gifts the institution will receive" (p. 30).

Worth (2016) also discusses the fundraising process, or cycle, which goes through six steps. The first step is to define the organization's mission, goals, and needs. These must be done by the organization before starting any fundraising process. Second, the organization must identify and learn about prospective donors (Worth, 2016). Without identifying a target audience for fundraising "it would be equivalent to walking through town and hoping money would fall from the sky" (Worth, 2016, p. 106). After prospective donors have been identified, a relationship must be developed with them (Worth, 2016). This relationship varies depending on the type of gift the institution is hoping to receive, but is still a necessary part of the process.

The fourth step in the fundraising process is to solicit a gift (Worth, 2016). A donor must be ready to give at the time of the solicitation, or the previous efforts will have been wasted. Worth (2016) calls the fifth step, "Acknowledgement and recognition" (p. 109). Acknowledgement includes a receipt for the donation, but also might include some sort of personal "thank-you" note. Recognition involves ensuring that donors are publicly acknowledged. The sixth step of fundraising is stewardship. Stewardship includes remaining in contact with the donor so that they feel as though they remain connected to the institution, but also that they know how their donation is being used (Worth, 2016). Understanding these stages can help an organization prepare and plan their fundraising campaign.

Worth (2012) credits G. T. Smith with the idea for the "Five I's" to describe an individual's growing relationship with an institution. The five "I's" stand for Interest, Information, Involvement, Identification (with the institution) and Investment (giving). Interest

in the institution needs to be developed so that the individual can then be provided with information about how they might support the institution. After that, individuals can be involved with the institution through various means, such as attending athletic events or alumni events. This involvement leads the person to identify with the institution, and then invest, or donate.

While understanding the fundraising process is important, Worth (2016) also argues that a culture of philanthropy is important for an organization as well. An organization should try to develop this culture among potential donors. Additionally, organizations should also consider a culture of philanthropy with its members or employees as well. If members of the organization do not see the value of fundraising, they probably will not support it. They also probably will not engage in activities that might be helpful to the fundraising put on by the organization (Worth, 2016).

Worth (2016) discusses a variety of solicitation methods as well as their advantages and disadvantages. He notes that direct mail is the method that brings in the largest number of donors and gifts. While direct mail is the least expensive method of contacting donors, it also is easily lost, and requires the recipients of the mail to act. Phone solicitation is another method by which organizations can contact and interact with donors. Phone solicitation allows organizations to personalize their requests, but is more expensive, and donors might see calls as intrusive. Sometimes organizations use special events to raise money. These events allow the organization more face-to-face interaction with donors and prospective donors. Of course, events like this are expensive, and might require multiple meetings before the prospective donors decide to give. Online fundraising is increasing in popularity for some organizations, and is the source of more new donors than direct mail (Worth, 2016). First-time donors online tend to give more than other first-time donors, but they also are less likely to continue giving. Other methods of solicitation

include social networks and multichannel communication. Social networks tend to be better suited for building connections, but can be used for fundraising. Multi-channel communication involves using a number of solicitation strategies in combination with each other (Worth, 2016).

While there are a variety of reasons alumni remain involved with their alma mater, forensics embodies several of those reasons. Student identification with their former institution is an important influence on their involvement and later donations. Students are more likely to identify with their institution if they participated in an activity and felt engaged. While forensics is an activity that increases engagement, and likely a feeling of connection to the institution, there has been limited research regarding the giving and involvement of former forensics students. Long, et al. (2007) and Croucher, et al. (2007) note that students identify with their teams. However, no examination of alumni identification with former teams or schools has been conducted.

Summary

This chapter examined literature related to forensics, its value, the use of narratives to understand forensics, and alumni relations. After an overall summary of forensics and research regarding it, I discussed the use of narratives in forensics research, and then discussed the value of forensics. Next, the chapter examined narrative theory and the value of using narrative as a means of understanding individuals' experiences. Finally, this chapter elucidated the use of alumni relations and reasons for remaining involved with their *alma mater*, specifically focusing on identification and having a spirit of giving.

Overall, this chapter demonstrated the need for more research relevant to the way alumni interpret the value of their experiences in college forensics and how forensics, if relevant,

benefited their professional career. Next, Chapter Three describes the research method used to

explore the experiences of forensics alumni regarding their professional careers.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL, METHODOLOGICAL, AND APPLIED RESEARCH

CONSIDERATIONS

This chapter presents a research methodology that theoretically supports both the

scholarly and applied nature of this project, beginning with a discussion of the methodological

design that grounds the theoretical understanding of forensics value as espoused through former

participant's narrative perspectives by following a grounded theory (Glaser, 1965; 2002; Glaser

& Strauss, 1967) approach. This section discusses both the components and stages of grounded

theory from a qualitative perspective. Next, I discuss participant selection, data collection and

ethical considerations. Third, I discuss the process I used for data analysis. Finally, I end with

limitations and issues of quality assurance.

The methodological design of this project is qualitative. Cochran and Dolan (1984)

define qualitative research as "deal[ing] with the *meaning* of things" (p. 29, italics in original.).

This method is appropriate for this project because I seek to discover what forensics participation

meant, and means, to the individuals whom I interview. As Fairhurst (2014) notes, qualitative

research is meant to create "data that will lead in new and surprising directions" (p. 433).

Additionally, qualitative research allows for in-depth study and focus on meanings (Hagner &

Helm, 1994).

As noted above, there has been some quantitative examination of the critical thinking and

other benefits to forensics participation (e.g., Allen, et. al, 1999; Rogers 2002; Rogers 2005;

Whalen, 1991). Additionally, there has been a call for the use of alumni narratives (Redding &

Hobbs, 2002) in development and university relations literature. However, the focus until now

has been on the utility of alumni narratives as a strategy for forensic team development

(Compton, 2006; Orme, 2012) or coaching student forensics participants (Dyer, 2004; Jensen & Jensen 2007).

Grounded Theory and Qualitative Research

This project utilizes a grounded theory approach of qualitative research (Glaser, 1965; 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory allows the researcher to develop his or her own ideas from the data collected (Glaser, 2002). This method is appropriate for this project, because I seek to investigate how participation in collegiate forensics shaped professional life after leaving the forensics experience. Flick (2009) points out that since it was first introduced, grounded theory has developed many subtleties. However, he notes that there are several key components, and four basic stages.

The first component Flick (2009) establishes is that there is a "spiral of cycles of data collection, coding, analysis, writing, design, theoretical categorization, and data collection" (p. 428). This means that there is a constant interaction with the data by the researcher, so that a category can be developed and refined (Glaser, 2002). After several initial interviews, I examined the questions in my interview protocol to determine their appropriateness. After examining the interviews, I made the questions regarding what they liked about forensics and disliked about forensics more precise and separate from each other. Additionally, I separated questions about student interactions with coaches and with teammates more distinctly than I had originally set up in my interview protocol. In the interviews that followed, this resulted in more clear and distinct answers from participants to all of the issues. I also began developing a broad outline for a narrative structure regarding how individuals had become involved in forensics. Finally, I started to develop theoretical categories into which I might divide and place ideas discussed by study participants.

The second component of grounded theory, according to Flick (2009), is that there is a constant comparative analysis of the cases to each other and to theoretical categories. I discuss the constant comparative method below.

The third component of grounded theory is there is a theoretical sampling process based on categories developed through ongoing analysis (Flick 2009). Theoretical sampling involves "finding cases which allow further development of the rudimentary theory" (Flick, 2009, p. 433). As the research process progresses, the researcher looks for participants who will help to add variety to the categories so as to enrich the data. After approximately a dozen interviews, I realized that I had a large number of participants who had competed primarily in individual events, and very few who had competed in debate. At that point, I began working to include more individuals who had participated in debate, contacting individuals I knew to be former competitors, as well as individuals who responded to my original call, asking if they were debaters. In addition to focusing on debaters, when recruiting debaters, I tried to ensure I included individuals who competed in both parliamentary and policy debate.

The fourth component of grounded theory, according to Flick (2009), is that the size of the sample is determined by "theoretical saturation." Bryant and Charmaz, (2007, as cited in Flick, 2009) define theoretical saturation as, "the point, at which gathering more data about a theoretical category reveals no new properties nor yields any further theoretical insights" (Flick, 2009, p. 439). In other words, there are no new categories, and the categories that exist are not being altered or developed through the collection of more data. After approximately 30 interviews, I began to feel as though I had achieved saturation. However, I still had several individuals left who were debaters that I wanted to interview, so that I might ensure I had a wide

range of participants. The first few of those new participants yielded some new ideas, but the last two did not.

Flick's (2009) fifth component of grounded theory is that the resulting theory is developed inductively from data. In other words, the data are examined over and over again to discover categories and concepts, from which an explanation of the phenomenon is created. Researchers examine the data closely and then, using the concepts discovered, work to reveal "the fundamental patterns in a substantive area or a formal area" (Glaser, 2002, p. 4). Initially, I read and re-read the transcripts to gain an understanding of the issues and ideas presented by my interviewees. After reading through the transcripts several times, I began noting individual responses from the interviews. I wrote them on the transcripts themselves as well as on a separate sheet of paper. I used a separate sheet of paper for each question.

The sixth component of grounded theory is that codes emerge from data rather than being imposed on it (Flick, 2009). As Glaser (2002) notes, "a concept is the naming of an emergent social pattern grounded in research data" (p. 4). The concepts must be developed after looking at the data over time. This occurs through the researcher's reading and re-reading of the transcripts or analysis of the data. As noted above, I began examining the data initially for codes, but only used the participants' own words. As my interviews continued, I was able to combine codes into categories. These categories grew out of the data that the participants provided, and were not preconceived ideas that I imposed on the material. For example, among the reasons some participants liked forensics were "performance," and "being the center of attention," which I combined into one category labeled "performance." This initial coding process was somewhat complicated, because each question or group of questions in my interview protocol elicited a specific group of responses. For example, the question, "What did you like about forensics?"

43

initially elicited 50 unique responses from participants. There was some overlap between questions, but not much. Other questions were similar in the resulting number of responses.

The seventh, and final, component, according to Flick (2009), is that grounded theory develops theory that explains all of the variations in the data, and is analytical in nature, rather than being merely descriptive. As with any theory, one developed through the grounded theory method seeks to explain and analyze the phenomena discussed in the research conducted in the immediate situation, but also seeks to be relevant to other, similar situations. I will discuss theory that I develop later in this chapter and in the conclusions.

Flick (2009) notes that the process of grounded theory has four stages: 1) The initial phase of discovering or constructing a problem; 2) The conceptual-theoretical phase; 3) The confirmatory selective phase; and 4) The reflexive phase. The initial phase involves the researcher determining through one of several ways what to research. The researcher might want decide to examine an issue because of a deficit in the literature of a field, or through personal interest or simple curiosity (Flick, 2009).

The second phase is the conceptual-theoretical phase (Flick, 2009). During the conceptual-theoretical phase, the researcher(s) conduct research and develop categories based on their reading of the data, and through analysis of it. At this point, the researcher is both building theory and examining the data to test the theory he or she is building. Additionally, the researcher is using the data and theory to guide the search for more data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After the initial interviews and coding of those interviews, I looked for a basic structure to these individuals' experiences. I then worked to increase the diversity of the participants to increase the richness of the data.

Flick (2009) notes that the third phase is the confirmatory-selection phase. During this phase, the researcher looks for more evidence to support and validate the categories that have developed. At this point in the research, the process is focused on ensuring that the categories developed encapsulate the material discovered, and that there are no new categories to be developed. Additionally, the researcher is working to see if there are any other variations within the categories developed. At this point, the researcher is working to finalize and achieve saturation, wherein "no additional data are being found . . . [to] develop the properties of the category" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 61). The point at which this happens depends upon the types of stories and the discussion provided.

The fourth stage of grounded theory is the reflexive phase (Flick, 2009). In this phase, the researcher re-examines all of the categories, codes, and evaluates the theory generated. Any number of methods of evaluation can be used to accomplish this reflexive evaluation. Flick (2009), based on Charmaz (as cited by Flick, 2009), offers four criteria for evaluating grounded theory: Credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. Flick (2009) also argues that saturation is not just based on saturation of data, but saturation of categories. He states that the researcher must also gain as much use from the data and as much unique analysis as possible. Going back over the data and re-evaluating it, as well as using member checks should help to ensure the validity and reliability of the data.

Participants

This study examines forensics participation for individuals who have been at least ten years removed from college competition. These individuals participated in either individual events, or debate, or both. Participants needed to have competed for at least one year at the collegiate level. Participants could not be current forensic coaches or presently involved in

forensics in any official capacity. I submitted email requests to two listserves followed by current and former coaches as well as competitors. Within two weeks I had received over 80 email responses indicating interest in participation. Several coaches forwarded my requests from the email listserv to their alumni. Other former competitors forwarded my request to former teammates and friends. Additionally, I contacted a few individuals whom I knew to be former competitors. Ultimately, I interviewed 34 individuals, with 25 being Skype interviews, and 9 being telephone interviews. The average interview lasted about 36 minutes with the shortest at 19 minutes and the longest at 76 minutes. Participants included 19 men and 15 women with 12 primarily participating in debate, 20 participating in individual events, and 2 who participated in both. The average age of participants was 42; the average number of years since competition was 19.6. Twenty-nine of the participants were white, with one reporting as Indian, one as South Asian, one as part Hispanic, one as Japanese, and one as Chinese, regarding their racial or ethnic background.

Eight of the participants were attorneys, with one person being a former attorney, and returning to school for a different degree. Nine participants were involved in higher education; three faculty members, four administrators, with the others as support staff. Four individuals were in graduate programs, one of whom also is in administration at a higher education institution. Two individuals were middle school teachers. Three participants worked for medium-sized or large corporations. One individual was an occupational therapist, one was a small business owner, two worked in the entertainment industry, three were consultants, and one was a hospice chaplain.

Data Collection

In order to better understand the experiences of how people see their participation in

forensics as affecting their professional lives, I used narrative interviews (Lindlof & Taylor,

2002). As Vajda (2007) notes, narrative interviews place the emphasis on the interviewees

experiences as they understand them. Ruppel and Mey (2015) note that narratives can be

analyzed using grounded theory. I asked participants to tell the story of how they became

involved in forensics, including how they learned about it, and why they wanted to be involved

in forensics. I asked participants to discuss how they became involved in forensics and how it

shaped, if at all, their professional life and career. I also asked the participants to discuss the

events (speech and/or debate) in which they participated, and other related educational benefits

of forensics participation. Additionally, I asked individuals to talk about how forensics affected

their professional lives or careers, both positively and negatively. Finally, I asked about their

involvement with the team and their alma mater since graduation, specifically regarding

donations of money or other interaction with the school. (See Appendix A for interview

questions.). The questions posed to the participants requested that they frame their responses as a

narrative; in essence, I requested that the participants relate to me the story of how, if at all and

in reference to positive or negative impacts, forensics participation shaped their professional life.

Data Analysis

Transcribing the interviews resulted in 270 pages of double-spaced text. Individual

interviews were read and re-read, searching for a pattern for the story regarding how they

became involved in forensics and its relevance to professional and career issues. This two-step

process of reading and re-reading the transcripts initially began with an overview and broad

understanding of the complete 270-page transcription. This initial reading supplemented the

transcription process; after the transcription process, the initial reading helped me recall individual interview comments. The second reading of the 270-page transcript included a detailed and deeper reading. For example, I examined the experiences participants had and how they constructed their understanding of forensics as a student as well as how they saw it contribute to their professional life. Following Glaser's (1965) explanation of the constant comparative method, I began this second reading by "comparing incidents applicable to each category" (Glaser, 1965, p. 439). Moreover, I began developing larger categories from transcribed data and formulated categories of individual instances based on how participants addressed collegiate forensics' significance and benefit on their professional development.

Theoretical Considerations

The framing of the questions for purposes of having participants "tell their story" is foundational to this study for a variety of reasons. First, academic literature illustrates the significance of collecting student narratives for investigating a variety of research questions, including narratives about attending college with a learning disability (Connor, 2012; Daly-Cano, Vaccaro, & Newman, 2015), attending college as a first-generation ethnic student (Auerbach, 2004; Pyne, and Means, 2013; Syed, 2010), humorous stories about college (Downs, Javidi, and Nussbaum, 1988), moral challenges while attending college (Narvaez, 1998), discerning sex, gender, and sexuality (Bromley, 1996; Morgan, 2012; O'Mochain, 2006; Pasque & Nicholson, 2011), resolving conflict and creating friendships in college (Pachucki, Lena, and Tepper, 2010), experiences during the first year of college (Pillemer, Krensky, Kleinman, Goldsmith & White, 1991), and others. In each of these studies, data collection techniques involved framing participant interview responses in story format. The format, notes Dibley (2011) offers a naturalistic means of data collection that can "generate vast amounts of rich, thick

text…that enables the researcher to take core themes and stories of experiences in the original story and reveal these…with openness" (p.13). Pederson (2013) notes that narrative interviews allow a researcher to gain greater understanding of the person with whom they are talking.

Foundational to the narrative paradigm is the notion of "good reasons." Fisher (1984) offers the narrative paradigm as an alternative to Aristotle's rational world paradigm because narratives prioritize human communication, allowing the researcher to focus on words, signs, symbols, and narrative structure as it relates the good reasons offered in histories, biographies, characters, and lived experiences. Focusing on the symbolic language embedded in the narrative frame allows for the researcher to construct themes and categories related to the language that illustrate the effectiveness or "goodness" of the story.

Beyond the relevancy of collecting information about college in narrative format as presented in academic literature and its relationship to decision-making and good reasons, Fisher (1984) posits that humans as storytellers is a logical means by which to demonstrate fidelity and coherence, called narrative rationality. In short, collecting narratives allows researchers to understand the significance of the narrative as a "good story" both in terms of fidelity and coherence. Narrative fidelity offers researchers a better understanding about the narrative's significance and importance to the storyteller's beliefs and values while coherence illustrates the value of stories structure and logic in terms of how the story "makes sense."

Ethical Considerations

IRB approval, including the approval of interview questions, was received, and I began collecting data shortly thereafter. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed for accessible analysis of the content. The recordings were held on a password-protected computer in a digital format. Backups were stored on a password protected flash drive. Names were removed or

disassociated from individual transcriptions, and pseudonyms were assigned. Additionally, no identifiable information was shared about any of the participants. Demographic information was collected, including age, occupation, number of years of competition, and number of years since the person participated in forensics. This information was only used in aggregate form.

While unlikely, it is possible that some memories of forensics experiences might be unhappy or distressing. A participant might have had some sort of personal issues with other members of the team or the coach, or been involved in a dysfunctional relationship with other members of the team, or been a member of a dysfunctional team. Participants were notified that they could end the interview at any time, and that they did not have to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable.

Constant Comparative Method

This study facilitates the constant comparative method to analyze the data collected. The constant comparative method allows for the systematic development of theory (Glaser, 1965). Glaser states that "the constant comparative method has four stages: 1) comparing incidents applicable to each category; 2) integrating categories and their properties; 3) delimiting the theory; and 4) writing the theory" (1965, p. 439).

The first stage of the constant comparative method, comparing incidents applicable to each category, involves "coding each incidence . . . [of] data in as many categories as possible (Glaser, 1965, p. 439). In this stage, the researcher examines all of the materials and places each point of information into as many of the categories as it will fit. For example, the researcher might code an incident of "I began in forensics by accident," as "beginning" and as "accident." Putting the incident in both categories provides the researcher with more options and ideas as to the theory and master categories that might develop later. As the researcher categorizes

incidents, he or she should think back to other incidents placed in that category, so as to maintain consistency of the categories (Glaser, 1965). Through this comparison of incidents, sometimes categories might be combined or subdivided. After coding several incidents, the researcher might begin to have some internal conflict regarding the categories and the incidents. At that point the researcher should write a memo of ideas about the theory that might be developing.

The second stage of the constant comparative method is to integrate the categories and their properties. As the researcher continues to examine the data, he or she will start to compare each incident to the categories that have developed, rather than comparing the incidents to other incidents (Glaser, 1965). As this happens, the researcher also will begin to see interaction between the categories. The theory will develop as the researcher compares and evaluates the different categories (Glaser, 1965). After developing categories, I evaluated the different instances mentioned by participants. For example, after developing the category of performance, I examined other reasons why individuals liked forensics, and either included or excluded them from that category. I also found that I could combine the category of "performance" with the responses from how individuals used their forensics skills in their life today such as the "ability to speak with confidence," and "presentation skills."

The third stage of the constant comparative method is what Glaser (1965) terms "delimiting the theory" (p. 441). Delimiting occurs as the researcher finds that the incidents match the categories more clearly as the coding progresses. Glaser (1965) also points out that as the coding progresses, there become fewer and fewer categories, because the interrelated ones overlap and can be combined. At some point the researcher achieves saturation as well. When no new aspects of the category are discovered by coding the incident into the category, theoretical saturation has been achieved (Glaser, 1965). After examining the responses, I began categorizing

and organizing them, looking for similarities within all of the answers to questions, as well as between those groups of answers. Additionally, I could keep combining categories until I came to the final list.

The fourth stage of the constant comparative method is writing theory (Glaser, 1965). This involves summarizing the categories developed through coding and the writing of memos, and the development of the categories. In the case of narratives, the researcher looks for the narrative structure, as well as the other themes that emerge through the constant comparative method. The method resulted in the identification of narrative characteristics as outlined by Fisher (1984). Fisher (1984) discusses the significance of narrative coherence and fidelity as prominent in the narrative paradigm. Fisher (1985) states that narrative probability "refers to formal features of a story conceived as a discrete sequence of thought and/or action in life or literature" (p. 349). These individuals' stories have a distinct form that they followed, and their experiences were similar. The categories created via the constant comparative method are discussed in Chapter 4 with reference to narrative theory.

<div align="center">**Limitations**</div>

There are a number of limitations to this project. As with all qualitative research, the issue of generalizability is one that arises (Chesebro & Borisoff, 2007). Grounded theory also has the possible influence of researcher bias. Individuals, because they are influenced by their experiences and biases, sometimes insert their own views into the situation. As a researcher, I worked to set aside my assumptions regarding forensics and its value. In my examination of the transcripts I developed initial categories based on my interviewees' own words, and did not begin to summarize or develop my own terminology until I began grouping categories of terms

together. Even then, I attempted to use the language of my participants, rather than my own words.

Additionally, narrative interviews involve the added limitation of the construction of the event by the interviewee (Pederson, 2013). In fact, as the researcher, I may be getting a "pre-digested" view of the forensics experiences relevance to professional practice. Especially in the case of individuals who are quite far removed from competition, there might be a positivity bias, especially if the individual liked other people on their team, or their coaches, or the forensics experience (Ritchie, Sedikides, & Skowronski, 2017).

Another limitation is the individuals interviewed. The results are, to some extent, limited to the individuals interviewed by the researcher. As noted below, after my initial request for participants, I had an overwhelming response. Those who responded are likely to be the most enthusiastic participants in forensics, and wanted to share their experiences. Because they were individuals who valued their forensics experiences, and are enthusiastic about them, the participants are likely to have more positive experiences as well as positive recollections.

Quality Assurance

In order to assure that the information is valid and reliable for analysis, I used member checks by research participants as well as checks by former forensics competitors who did not take part in the study. Member checks, or respondent validation, are a valuable method for ensuring that the researcher has understood the discussion presented by participants (Madill & Sullivan, 2017). I asked three participants in this study to read the results and conclusions. I asked them to examine the results to ensure that the categories and quotations represented their experiences accurately, and that the conclusions grew out of the results. Their responses indicated that the results were true to their experiences. One individual had several practical

suggestions for the paper, but indicated that the results accurately reflected his experiences. The second individual noted that he thought the results accurately reflected his experiences. He also noted that his feelings about forensics had changed somewhat after the interview because a former coach had been fired for harassment. He noted that after thinking about the team dynamics, his feelings about forensics were still generally positive, but focusing on prospective competitors being more cautious about the team before joining. The third individual also indicated that the results reflected her experience as a competitor and that the conclusion made sense to her.

I also used other individuals involved in forensics, but those who did not participate to check the validity of the research. I contacted an individual who competed over ten years ago, and with whom I am familiar. She competed at a community college and transferred to a four-year school, competing all four years of her undergraduate career. She subsequently went to law school and is now a practicing attorney. She noted that that her experiences were reflected in the results. She also noted that she was not sure if she was in the "encouraged" or "on purpose" section, because she had joined debate because it was one of the few activities available to students in her very small high school.

I also contacted an individual who participated in forensics over thirty years ago and who is no longer involved with forensics. She competed in debate and individual events at a private university in the northwest United States. After competing four years and coaching one year as a Masters student, she earned a degree in Library Science. She noted that the experiences discussed by the participants in this study reflected her experiences.

Summary

This chapter discussed qualitative research and provided an explanation of grounded theory (Glaser, 1965; 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I then presented an explanation for the recruitment and selection of participants, as well as the means of collecting data. Finally, I presented the limitations and methods for ensuring the quality of the data collected.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Upon receiving IRB approval, I constructed a broad interview protocol based in the grounded theory research tradition, the narrative theoretical perspective, and six broad research questions presented in Chapter Two. This chapter summarizes the results of the interviews with the participants in this study, addressing the fundamental question: "Do stories by former participants about college forensics reflect the significance and relevancy of the activity for professional life and career development?" This fundamental question warrants specificity to issues related to the college forensics context, value, and identification. There were six supplemental questions to develop and more precisely examine the fundamental question. With the exception of the first two research questions, I address the questions in the order they were presented earlier.

Research Questions One and Two

The first two questions address the way that participants became involved in forensics, why they became involved, and the experiences they had learning about forensics, competing, what happened at the end of their participation, and whether or not former competitors identified with their teams and schools. I address these first two questions in reverse order, because I began my interviews by asking participants how they became involved in forensics. The first two supplemental questions are:

RQ1: Do former college forensics competitors identify with their teams and schools?

RQ2: Do participants in college forensics have shared experiences of learning about, participating in, and integrating their experiences into their professional lives?

Research Question Two

The first interview question I asked each participant was how he or she became involved in forensics. Overall, participants' reflections were facilitated by stories regarding how they became involved in forensics with descriptions about getting "hooked" on forensics, being dedicated to it, and then moving on to coach or going into the workforce. Some participants quit forensics, thus concluding their "story," but still their descriptions involved substantive narrative characteristics—especially with regard to narrative patterns. For example, participants reported becoming involved in forensics in one of two ways. Either they were "encouraged" to become involved with forensics through a friend or teacher, or the person joined for some reason of self-motivation, which I have termed "on purpose." Examples of the "on purpose" participation included their desire to become better speakers, researchers, or competitors from high school. I organized the presentation of coded data using traditional narrative organizational patterns I labeled as "Involvement," and "Hooked."

Involvement: Narratives about how participants became involved in college forensics: "Encouraged" and "On Purpose." In what follows, I provide evidence from my constant comparative analysis of how I developed themes from the transcript related to how participants joined college forensics programs. Two broad themes are discussed: "Encouraged" and "On Purpose."

"Encouraged." Like a good story that begins describing how characters and rhetors become involved or associated with opportunities and circumstances, participants shared their "story" for joining college forensics. Most of the participants in this study became involved in forensics through the work or intervention of significant others like family members or friends. Of the 34 participants, 22 were encouraged to become involved by someone in their life.

A number of individuals became involved in forensics through the influence of a family member. For example, Rhonda, 62, a former team manager at two different computer corporations and presently a hospice chaplain, said, "And my father, he made me take two things that he said I would use my whole life, one was typing, and the other was speech." Other participants credited family members as getting them ready for forensics in a less direct way. Jonathan, 39, a civilian attorney for the US Navy, recalled,

> My grandfather and I used to drive around and we would have academic debates. And in the middle of . . . our discussions, he would say, like, "Switch sides!" and I had to switch sides and argue against what I was just defending.

Some participants became involved in forensics through a family friend. Alison, 37, an academic advisor at a medium-sized university in the northeast United States, said, "Our babysitter took us to forensics tournaments with her." Alison and her sister both became involved in forensics partially because of their babysitter. Jane, 36, a former middle school languages teacher and presently a graduate student, explained,

> I used to do the youth sermons at my . . . church. And part of that was finding readings. And, I was approached by one of the members of my church, who said, "Have you ever heard of forensics? Because you can do exactly what you just did, in terms of reading a poem, and maybe win a competition." And I thought, "Well, that sounds right up my alley."

All of these individuals became involved in forensics through family members or friends. Their interests and/or skills were noticed by others, and, for some, like Jonathan, were even developed by family members. All of these participants credited significant others with their involvement in forensics.

"On Purpose." While most participants became involved in forensics through the encouragement of others, some saw forensics as a way to help them acquire skills or to address personality issues, such as shyness. Roseanna, 61, a full professor at a medium-sized university in the northeastern United States, joined forensics because she was shy. "The reason I got involved [in forensics] is because I was incredibly shy, and I realized, even then in my teen years, there would be a lot of things that simply would not be accessible to me." Sally, 38, a former attorney and presently enrolled in an MFA program at a large university in the southern United States, also realized that she was shy and joined forensics in an attempt to help herself overcome social awkwardness.

> I started, as a freshman in high school, and I started because I was painfully introverted and had a really difficult time socially. And I kind of realized that as long as I stayed introverted . . . then I was never gonna be successful professionally or socially.

Both Sally and Roseanna realized that they needed to do something to overcome their shyness and saw forensics as a mechanism for addressing that shyness.

Some participants decided to join forensics because they saw it as an instrumental activity for achieving some other goal. Kristine, 36, and a practicing attorney, saw forensics as a means to help her become a lawyer. "When I got into high school, I immediately joined the speech and debate team, thinking, 'I want to be a lawyer, this is what I should do.'" Kristine's desire to be a lawyer was the impetus for her joining the debate team in high school, which led to her college forensics career.

Finally, some participants joined forensics because it was the best option available. Sanjay, 33, a civilian attorney for the Air Force, had competed in mock trial in high school, but when he went to college, his university did not offer mock trial. "I looked around for an

organization that did [oral advocacy]. And speech and debate seemed to be the only one available at the time. . . ."

Hooked: Narratives about how participants contributed to competitive college forensics: "Enjoyed Competition," "Dedication," "Staying Hooked," and "What Now?" Once individuals began forensics, their stories became more similar. After becoming "hooked" on forensics, participants described failures, trials and frustrations as well as successes, fun, and learning. Finally, all of the participants moved on to other things. Even those individuals who did not go on to coach forensics still maintained a connection to the activity by judging at tournaments, retaining memorabilia, or being involved in alumni organizations.

"Enjoyed Competition." After becoming involved in forensics, participants all found that they enjoyed it and wanted to continue competing. Participants enjoyed forensics for a variety of reasons (discussed later). Diana, 43, a communication consultant, recalled, "I joined the team my sophomore year, and I found that it was both nerve-wracking and exciting at the same time." Jenny, 40, an occupational therapist, joined the debate team as a favor to a friend. "Before we got to the first tournament, he quit, but I was already hooked." Phil, 46, an associate professor at a mid-sized university in the northeastern United States, said, "I came out, and I just enjoyed it, and it just kind of clicked. So I debated my last three years in college." All of the participants found something in forensics that made them want to stay involved and keep participating.

"Dedication." Once hooked, individuals became more involved and dedicated to forensics. As individuals became involved and learned how forensics worked and wanted to compete, they put more time and effort into it. Their time and effort took many different forms, including practice time, travel to tournaments, participating in or attending camps, and team meetings. It meant extra work for her, but Jenny continued competing in policy debate, even

though her university was sometimes unable to provide coaching for that event: "this weird set of coincidences led me to falling in love with an activity that I then participated in for the rest of my college career. . . . I went to debate camp, [and] made friends with other people in the community who helped me out." Kristine also dedicated a substantial amount of time to forensics. "My college was defined by debate, you know? . . . All of my weekends were spent traveling, all of my spare time was thinking about arguments or practicing." James, 47, a publicist, also noted the time commitment to forensics: "I was gone every weekend. Gosh, when you're gone 14 weekends, it can be crazy." Veronica, 38, an appellate attorney in a midwestern state, noted the time commitment. "I look back on how little sleep I got in college and I still don't know how I did it." Skip, 38, an administrator for an online university, noted the time commitment to practice both by coaches and competitors. "The coach was huge, too. Selflessness, staying late, working with me, even on memorization, you know." Except for Veronica, all of these individuals competed for four years in college. Once they had been hooked, they were willing to put in the time and effort to be competitive every year. Not all of them were national champions, but they still were motivated to spend substantial amounts of time working on their speeches, practicing, and traveling to tournaments.

"Staying Hooked." Students only have four years of eligibility to compete in college forensics. While some participants did not use all of their eligibility, all of them at some point left forensics, but significantly stayed involved. Of the 34 participants in this study, one participated for only 1 year, five participated for 2 years, one competed for 3 years, two competed for 3.5 years, and 25 competed all four years of their college career. After using their competition eligibility, many of the participants went on to coach forensics. Seventeen participants enrolled in graduate school immediately after graduating from their four-year

61

program and were GTAs with coaching assistantships. Two participants were hired for coaching positions without attending graduate school. Some participants moved on from their competition and coaching easily. Geoffrey, 49, a communication faculty member at a community college in the upper Midwest, competed at a community college and then transferred to a university, "I joined the team there. I competed as a senior and then did graduate studies there . . . and I coached the team for my two years of graduate work, and that was the end of my forensics experience." Kristine went to law school after earning her bachelor's degree, and also found it easy to move on. "I distinctly made the choice of not participating [in competitive mock trial or moot court] because I knew I couldn't just slightly do it."

"What Now?" Other participants had a more difficult time moving on after leaving forensics. Charles, 43, a playwright and person involved in entertainment finance, noted, "You can only compete for four years, you know, and when it was over, I didn't have a rudder. I didn't have anything. I was like, 'Oh, what now?'" Rachel, 48, who competed at a community college, and is currently a Ph.D. student in Psychology at a medium-sized private university in the Midwest, said, "I really missed doing speech after two years. . . . It was such an awesome experience." Both Charles and Rachel missed many of the aspects of forensics after they moved on.

Even though everyone had to move on after they graduated, many participants still remained connected to forensics or found another way to remain involved. Many of them coached as a way to stay involved, but others found other ways to remain involved. For example, Perry judges every year at the annual debate tournament hosted by the local community college, which is his alma mater. Some forensics teams maintain strong connections with alumni through Facebook and other social media. Those teams often invite alumni to come back and provide

feedback for current students who are preparing to attend national tournaments. Jeanette, 32, a middle school language arts teacher in the upper Midwest, goes back to her alma mater to help current students. "In the spring before they went to nationals, some of us alums went back and we had, like, little coaching sessions with all of the team members." William's community college alma mater asks alumni to write motivational letters to current students before they attend the national tournament.

> [The current coach] does a great job of keeping us [alumni] up to date as to how the team is performing and . . . writing letters of encouragement to the team before they head off to nationals. I'm still involved with that. . . . I remember . . . we had letters read to us from years, the few years previous for our [national] tournament. I have done it a few times.

In some way, these participants remained involved with forensics for a period of time after they graduated and ended their competition experience. While many went to graduate school and coached, others remained involved by judging at local tournaments or being a guest coach.

The narrative of the participants in this study followed a clear progression: a pattern of becoming involved because of the impact of significant others (family and friends), getting "hooked" on forensics, enjoying the competition and community provided by forensics, being dedicated to the competition and community, and then moving on to remain dedicated and involved with the activity. While there were some variations in how this story played out for participants, this story was consistent across the group.

After this examination of participants' narratives, we can answer Research Question 2 with a "yes." Participants have shared experiences in learning about, participating in, and integrating forensics into their lives. Their descriptions of their experiences joining forensics teams, participating in tournaments, and being involved tend to be similar.

Research Question One

Camaraderie. The most-mentioned reasons that participants noted as being a reason they liked forensics or things they noted as being important part of student interaction was "Camaraderie." Participants mentioned "Camaraderie" 38 times, far outpacing the next-most-common response category, which was "Competition." Most participants even used the term camaraderie. Sanjay noted that many of his friends were from forensics: "For me it was the camaraderie. . . . some of the best friends I made in college and people that I still keep in touch with . . . [are] people I did speech and debate with." Sanjay's experience was echoed by many other individuals, who stated that they felt a sense of camaraderie and community, as well as a sense of belonging, in forensics. Participants also noted that they made friends with competitors from other teams. Ron, 54, a media consultant in the upper Midwest, said, "The camaraderie was a huge part of it. I would see people from other schools, literally, every weekend during the season. And they became very good friends and they're still friends to this day." This connection to not just his own team, but to the larger competitive community also, helped participants feel like they belonged in forensics. This camaraderie gave the participants a sense of connection not only to their team and school, but to the activity as a whole.

Support. Along with camaraderie, individuals also mentioned teammates supporting each other and working together. Greg, 37, a practicing attorney, recalled, "Within the team we were not competitive with each other. . . . We were very much like a family in the sense that [we were] extremely supportive of each other, competitively." If teammates were competitive with each other, the competition was to help each other improve, and generally friendly. Theodore, 44, director of academic services for an education consulting firm, said that the team "was competitive, but . . . I don't think it was competitive in a detrimental way. I think that it was

64

competitive in a, you know, 'Let's make each other better,' kind of fashion." Both Greg and Theodore experienced connection to their teammates and saw the team as a group of people they could count on.

Notoriety. A few participants noticed that their involvement in forensics provided them with some notoriety at their college or university. Earl, 42, a publicist for an industry group, stated, "[Forensics] became an important part of my social identity. . . . I found that success in debate was shared among the faculty, and that helped my reputation among the teachers." Samantha 41, director of public relations for a college within a large university in the western United States, also noticed that she became well-known in her college at the university. "My faculty and other students were learning that I was involved in [forensics], and I think, sort of, they knew who I was. . . ." For Earl and Samantha, not only was forensics important to them, but others identified them as members of the forensics team.

Research Questions Three and Four

The second set of research questions address the perceived skills and effects that resulted from their participation in forensics.

RQ3: How do individuals perceive college forensics participation affected their professional lives and careers?

RQ4: Are the skills and knowledge developed through college forensics participation beneficial for career development?

Research Question Three

Participants noted a large number of different effects on their lives as students. Individuals saw both positive and negative things happening as a result of their participation in

forensics, including: learning academic skills, development of social skills, opportunities, the team as social circle, and negative effects of participation.

Academic Skills. The most common response from participants regarding their participation in forensics and how it affected them as a student was their discussion of academic skills. Some individuals mentioned that they learned skills, or academic skills, while others were more precise, listing research skills, presentation skills, the ability to manage time and meet deadlines, and writing skills. Dylan, 33, executive assistant for the assistant deans of a college at a large university in the western United States, has a nearly-comprehensive list of the skills he gained from forensics: "It gave me researching skills, presentation skills, critical thinking skills . . . a lot of those types of personal developments . . . And then I met a lot of good friends there."

Some participants saw their involvement in forensics as helping their academics overall. Michaela, 33, a trainer for a midsized corporation in the western United States, discussed how her participation in forensics affected her as a student: "I think, fundamentally, education-wise, is that, I was inherently better-prepared in a lot of respects." Eric, 39, and a senior manager for a property management firm, also saw forensics helping him academically. "The time tradeoff between the time spent working on debate and schoolwork isn't a one-for-one. A lot of the time I worked on debate helped me in schoolwork and made my schoolwork easier." Even though Michaela participated primarily in individual events and Eric participated primarily in CEDA/NDT debate, they both felt better-prepared overall in their academic work.

By far the most common response regarding the impact forensics had on them as a student was the ability to write. In addition to academics overall, Eric also mentioned his writing ability was improved.

66

[Forensics] made my ability to write and make arguments in papers for a wide variety of classes . . . just much easier and much better. The quality of work I produced for those assignments would have been much less had I not been doing outside work on debate.

Rachel also saw forensics as helping her writing. "Forensics, it definitely helped me improve my writing. I definitely felt that because I had to write a speech it was, you know, because you are constantly writing, you're always updating it, you're always changing it and reviewing it." Forensics served multiple purposes for both Rachel and Eric. Forensics provided the basic practice and the use of multiple drafts, which helped them see the value of those aspects of the writing process.

Some participants also mentioned that they were able to use materials from forensics as a jumping off point for their schoolwork. James recalled, "I always thought that what I was learning in speech I could automatically apply in the classroom." Phil also used forensics research in his classes. "I was able to recycle a lot of the debate research for papers and things like that." In this way, participants saw forensics as helping them academically. Because the issues and ideas brought up in competition were likely to be addressed in classes they were taking, participants were able to work more efficiently in their academics, despite having less time for it. To be clear, participants were not plagiarizing material from debate cases or speeches. They might have used an idea from forensics as the basis for a paper, or as a jumping off point for a project.

One of the skills long-mentioned by proponents of forensics competition is the development of research skills (e.g. Billings, 2011; Householder & Louden, 2013; Lux, 2014). Adam, 37, a middle school math teacher, stated, "Policy debate is a forum where I learned to start pulling a thread and keep pulling and keep pulling until all available information on a given

topic has been . . . mapped out." Researching skills also are something that William credited to his forensics competition. "Research, reading, and honing of my various motions, letters, and paper and stuff . . . that started with speech team [sic]." James also identified researching as a skill developed by forensics: "You know how to research, and you know how to organize your thoughts." Participants who competed in both debate and individual events credited forensics with teaching and developing research skills. Adam competed in CEDA/NDT debate, while William and James' competition experiences were in individual events.

Presentation skills were another academic skill that participants credited forensics with developing. James credited forensics with his ability to present confidently. "You can walk into any room, and even if you're scared out of you're frickin' mind, you can deliver." Diana also believed that forensics helped her build confidence. "[In forensics] I was learning a lot about myself and learning a lot about how to come across as confident. . . ." Roseanna credited forensics with her professional advancement:

I do believe all of my forensics skills helped me qualify for that Basic Course Director position. I then believe that my confidence skills and public speaking skills helped me then become department chair, and then go on to be an associate dean.

The ability to present material clearly and confidently was a skill valued by these participants, and their forensics experience was a key to helping them learn that for skills in their careers.

Participants also mentioned other academic skills that they believed were developed by forensics. Walter, 43, an assistant dean of a medical school at a mid-sized university in the Midwestern United States, noted that in addition to overt training in writing and speaking, forensics also helped develop what he called "latent skills." He recalled,

The skills that I learned in forensics on how to tackle things, how to manage my

schedule, how to handle a fairly heavy load, as a student, and still do this extracurricular

activity. . . . Deadlines really don't bother me. I work very well under pressure . . . I

attribute that to, you know, competing in impromptu and extemp.

Another academic skill discussed by participants revolved around arguments and

persuasion. Those who were debaters as well as speech competitors discussed both of these

skills. Luke, 47, a small business owner in a medium-sized city in the south-central United

States, said,

It's the organization of thoughts, to be able to present them the way you want, and

typically, when you are going out selling, or going out talking to clients, you want

something. And you have to persuade them to get what you want.

Luke competed primarily in platform speaking in college forensics, but he still credited forensics

with the ability to frame arguments and organize his thoughts. Sally, a former debater in

CEDA/NDT, also pointed out that forensics helps teach argument: "I think that as far as

academic writing, there's no substitute for debate. Whether it's research or putting together

arguments or being organized . . . I just don't think there's any other activity that teaches those

effectively." Even though they came from different competitive experiences, they both credited

their forensics experiences with the ability to build an argument. Persuasion also involves the

ability to read and react to people. Eric, also a former CEDA/NDT debater, credited his debate

experience with his ability to analyze audiences and be persuasive.

I think one of the keys to debate is that it's very subjective, rather than objective, like a

basketball game. The scorekeeping [in debate] is based on the person watching it. So, you

gain an understanding of how to read people as you're making arguments.

69

In his current job as the senior manager of a parking company in a large city in the northwest US, Eric used those skills daily in order to be persuasive with different clients and customers.

Participants also mentioned that forensics developed their critical thinking skills. A number of studies have examined the value of forensics, primarily focusing on debate, for development of critical thinking skills. Allen, et. al (1999) conducted a meta-analysis of many of those studies. Participants in this study also credited forensics with developing their critical thinking skills as well as their ability to argue and frame arguments. Samantha, who competed in individual events, also credited forensics with developing critical thinking skills.

> [Forensics] obviously helps develop critical thinking skills, thinking about what's happening in the news, or stories that you hear going on in meetings, or, you know, campus political maneuverings, and you're actually coming at it with more of a critical mindset.

Just as others (e.g. Allen, et. al, 1999; Colbert, 1987; Quenette, et. al, 2007)) found, Samantha credited forensics with developing critical thinking skills, which helped her throughout her professional and personal life.

Social Skills. In addition to academic skills, participants credited forensics with helping them develop social skills. As noted above, several participants saw forensics as a means to help them deal with their shyness. However, other participants also mentioned the value of forensics in teaching them how to act professionally, and to interact with their peers. Charles mentioned how his involvement in forensics helped him to learn to behave professionally.

> Competition . . . taught me how to present myself, in a professional manner. [The coach] was also a big stickler about how you act at the tournament. You don't use four-letter words, you don't act the fool when you're not in a round. . . . You always wear a suit, you

always smile, you always are supportive in rounds. . . . That served me really well.

Because I know how to behave in a business meeting now.

Roseanna's experiences also gave her insight into how to be a professional.

Each of [the coaches] would have at least a party a year, and sometimes two. And I still

look at that as a model that I have used in my professional life. As bringing in people

who are on the same level as me, but at the same time bringing into my own home people

who have worked for me.

For Roseanna, the privilege of being invited into the home of a person who had higher status than her was a very meaningful experience, and demonstrated to her how important they felt she was. In her professional life, she wanted to ensure that those who worked for her felt the same way. Deborah, 48, a communication consultant in a large city in the southwest US, also felt her experiences helped her social skills. "For me it was, it was not just skills, it was not just building confidence, it was also, a social element. . . ." Sanjay also saw that forensics developed his social skills. "The real benefit . . . was socially it was a big deal, because you were, and I didn't realize this at the time, you were building friendships and relationships by doing something you find meaningful." All of these individuals saw that forensics helped them to develop their social skills personally and professionally.

The Team Was Their Social Circle. Another effect that individuals attributed to their participation in forensics was that the team was their social circle. Along with the discussion of camaraderie noted above, participants recalled that many, if not all of their friends in college were on the forensics team. Additionally, most of their closest friends from the college forensics team were still friends. Rhonda noted that the forensics team was her primary group of friends. "Those were my best friends. They were. That was my social life. In fact, I'm trying think, did I

have friends outside of that circle of friends [on the forensics team] and I don't think so."

Theodore also spent time with his team:

> We did actually socialize with each other, even outside the weekends we traveled. So, we
> actually spent a lot of time together. Whether that was we were going to see a movie or
> walking down to [the grocery store] or grabbing lunch somewhere, we did spend a lot of
> time with each other."

Jane had a similar experience to Rhonda, in that her friends were all on the forensics team. "They were my closest friends. We spent so much time together. I mean the only people I dated in college were forensics people. . . . You don't have time to be with anyone else." All three of these former competitors had a close social circle that consisted of the forensics team. While not all of the participants recalled that their team was their social group, eighteen mentioned that they socialized with their teammates, and several others talked about partying with their teammates and dating members of the team.

Opportunities. Participants also noted that forensics provided them with a variety of opportunities that they might not have had if they had not competed in forensics. Some of those opportunities included attending college and graduate school, networking and meeting different people, and the opportunity to discuss one's interests.

A number of individuals noted that forensics was the gateway to graduate school for them. Of those interviewed, 21 went on to a Master's Degree program, and 17 of those coached forensics as part or all of their assistantship. Roseanna explicitly connected her forensics experience with going to graduate school: "[Forensics] allowed me to work closely with some faculty. . . . If it had not been for those relationships, I doubt that I would have been given the graduate teaching assistantship that allowed me to earn my Master's Degree." Diana also

credited forensics with her path to graduate school: "I do believe that without forensics I wouldn't have become a speech comm major. I wouldn't have gone to grad school, for God's sakes." For some individuals, forensics was the reason they received any post-secondary education. Derek, 36, the project manager for a telecommunications company in the Midwest, recalled, "I was not a very good student, and I think that speech and debate—I probably never would have gone to college if I didn't have the opportunity to compete." For all of these individuals, forensics participation meant the difference between achieving an education or not.

In addition to the opportunity to further their education, several participants noted that forensics forced them to work with people from diverse backgrounds, interests and beliefs. Charles stated: "Being part of the team really helped me to be able to go out into the world and be around a bunch of people that I didn't necessarily have a lot in common with." Dylan also enjoyed the opportunity to interact with a wide variety of people: "[Forensics] was a good opportunity to meet a lot of different people and gain exposure to a lot of different cultures and ideas."

In addition to exposure to a wide variety of people, participants noted that forensics also gave them networking opportunities, and connections across the nation. Adam stated, "[I can] go to a city in the United States and I know some debater there. . . . It's people I competed against, it's people who I was on the team with . . . that sort of professional network is a pretty powerful tool to have."

The other opportunity participants mentioned was the opportunity to discuss issues of interest to them. Sometimes that came in the form of the topics for speeches, the literature they used in their oral interpretation presentations, or their debate cases, and sometimes the discussion just was with other competitors. Derek enjoyed forensics because it was an opportunity to

present issues to other people. "[Forensics] gives [competitors] the opportunity to say what they are trying to say without being interrupted. . . . I think that's probably what I enjoyed the most about it." Sally also noted the importance of how debate cases were something that the students were able to express themselves through:

> I really liked the idea that debate was a forum that sort of allowed people to bring to it what they were interested in. So, we would always have, people would be running different cases. . . . We could all pursue our own interests, and that was important.

Both Sally and Derek enjoyed the opportunity to be able to use forensics as a way to make their voices heard. Jane enjoyed the opportunity to discuss political issues with teammates: "A lot of my friends were the debater guys, but that had a lot to do with the fact that I was very political. And they always knew their stuff, you know, so we could have really good arguments."

The participants all valued the opportunities available to them through forensics. Even though they saw those opportunities as highly varied, they knew that forensics provided them with the opportunities, and the opportunities were another thing they appreciated about forensics.

Negative Effects of Participation. Although participants believed they gained a number of valuable skills from forensics, and it helped them develop as a person, they also noted several negative effects resulting from participation. The negative experiences included missed opportunities, emotional and mental stress, and a forensics culture that sometimes was damaging to them emotionally, mentally, and physically.

The most commonly mentioned negative aspect of participation in forensics was that of being gone or traveling to tournaments. Most tournaments occur on the weekend, and are usually at a college or university that requires some amount of driving. Additionally, tournaments often take two days to complete, which means that students often are gone from school the entire

weekend, returning late on Sunday evening, or sometimes on Monday. Students usually end up missing some school on Friday, or if the tournament is a longer distance away, missing Thursday and Friday, as well as Monday. Some participants mentioned that they did not like traveling and being gone, which resulted in missed schoolwork, even though they enjoyed forensics. Rachel recalled, "I'm a bit of a homebody—so I did not like going away for competitions." Several individuals also mentioned that they felt they missed out on "normal" college experiences, such as parties and athletic events, as well as other opportunities, such as travel abroad programs. Luke recalled, "I really didn't have normal college fun during my undergraduate—I didn't go to a lot of parties." Jonathan also noted that he didn't have the opportunity to have the "normal college fun" of athletic events: "We took a lot of time away, socially. I went to [a large university in the Northwest US with a successful athletic program] and I never went to a football game. Because every weekend was a debate weekend." Dylan recalled, "There were other things I thought about doing, like traveling abroad . . . but I didn't want to give up time during the year, because I didn't want to miss any competitions. And then during the summer I was trying to get caught up on school."

In addition to some of these lost opportunities, participants also recalled that forensics affected their academic life. Julia, 39, supervisor of a state public defender's office in a medium-sized city in the Midwest recalled, "There were times when I missed a lot of lectures and stuff that was hard for me to catch back up on. So, I had to make friends with people to get notes for things." Diana lamented the time away from school as well:

> [Forensics] was . . . pretty stressful academically, because I still had to make up all the homework that I would have been doing, potentially, if I had stayed behind. And I was a really good student, so that put a lot of pressure on me.

All of these participants noticed the effect that forensics had on their life, socially and academically. However, other individuals, noted above, recalled that despite the lost time in school, forensics helped more than it hurt.

Participants may be voicing some of the issues brought up by Burnett, et. al (2001), such as the heavy emphasis on competition by many in forensics. The focus on competition might explain the anxiety and stress felt by these individuals. Billings (2011) also found that former competitors found that the activity was very stressful and took a lot of time. This study supports his findings.

In addition to academic stress, forensics caused some students emotional and mental stress. For example, Veronica felt pressure from her teammates to be more competitive: "The thing I liked least was probably the unwanted pressure by teammates that I wasn't being as competitive as they expected me to be." Luke also recalled, "By the time I was done, I was emotionally tired. 'Cause I had given it everything I had." Samantha also recalled stress and pressure:

> There were times when I really felt the stress and the pressure of getting ready for a competition or I was also studying for finals, or just trying to figure out time management. . . . There were times when it was definitely challenging, but it was something to push through and feel better about it having come through that."

All of these participants felt emotional and mental stress created by forensics. Veronica felt direct pressure from her teammates regarding competition, while Luke and Samantha felt more emotional and mental stress. Veronica, Luke, and Samantha all were competitors in individual events. Many participants reflected Samantha's attitude, that surviving the stressful situations gave them a sense of accomplishment.

Finally, forensics negatively affected some participants' emotional, mental, and physical health. Although not all participants mentioned it directly, many noted the stress they experienced as a part of competition and travel. Sanjay recalled, "It definitely had its drawbacks, in the sense that we were traveling quite a bit, and you had to learn to manage your school with your travel obligations." Jane had more serious mental health issues, and noted that forensics allowed her to hide them: "I think the way I overloaded my classes and . . . I filled my day, specifically with things like forensics and theatre, made it really easy for me to stay sick [with an eating disorder]." Sally also noted that the competitive and individual nature of forensics, especially debate, made it difficult for students to deal with stress:

> I think that in the hyper-competitive sports environment, that people deal with disappointment and the contexts of losses in a particular way, that is sort of communal. I don't think that debate . . . with the psychological impacts of the stress of debate tournaments and the competitive nature of it, in a way that really attends to the individual needs of people or that necessarily fosters that complete unity that a bigger team environment does. . . . [My debate] partner had some really significant mental health issues. And . . . whenever things went wrong . . . the burden of coping with his mental health issues . . . was on me.

While all of these individuals experienced emotional and mental health stresses, some obviously felt those stresses more than others. The stressfulness and pressure of forensics also contributed to difficulties for individuals like Sally.

While camaraderie and community were mentioned by many participants as positive aspects of forensics, several individuals also pointed out the downside of those connections. Walter noted, "I think we used each other—which is fine—as a crutch. But as a support system,

once you're out of the activity, then that support system's gone." Derek also noted the difficulty of meeting people after leaving the activity: "Now that I'm no longer part of that community, being a competitor or coach . . . I've found it's really difficult to find ways to meet people." Both Walter and Derek believed the connections they made in forensics were valuable, but found that forensics created some level of dependence on the activity and people in the activity.

Some participants also experienced physical health issues as a result of competition. Alison discussed effects of forensics on her physical health: "Your health and well-being is actually not taken care of. . . . You'll go entire days without eating. . . . You'd be in so many events you just wouldn't eat all day. I ended up getting very sick." Although they didn't become ill, other participants recalled other activities that might have affected their physical health. Partying, and a partying culture was mentioned by several individuals as being part of their experiences. Greg stated, "The drinking, partying culture was just too excessive." Ron also recalled, "People had a lot of sex on tournament weekends . . . and damn, we drank!" Participants did not list these as affecting their physical health, but these activities could have affected them physically. Veronica's physical and mental health deteriorated so much after a semester abroad that her mother forced her to quit forensics because it was creating so much stress for her: "It was my mom that basically said, 'Since you can't decide what you're giving up, I will decide for you.' And like I said, she was very aware of what was stressing me out the most." The stress that Veronica experienced was real and traumatic. She was honest about the benefits that forensics offered her, but she also was able to be honest about the downsides as well.

Another negative emotional and mental health issue identified by participants was that the connection individuals had to forensics sometimes was extreme. Two individuals who were

national champions noted that debate defined their college career. Others also found that forensics was a very key part of their identity. Forensics became such a significant part of Charles' identity that he ignored other commitments and found it difficult to adjust after his competitive career was over: "When your identity is completely wrapped up in this external validation that you got from winning trophies and being up in front of huge crowds . . . and it's not there anymore . . . it took me awhile to figure it out."

Finally, some participants noted that they saw or experienced sexual harassment. Unfortunately, Alison experienced harassment from one of her coaches:

> It was an interesting relationship because [the coach] was slightly abusive, you know. He punched me in the forehead the second time I ever met him. Um, he'd rub up against us, even though it made us uncomfortable. . . . He'd comment on our appearance with other coaches. . . .

Sally also noted that she was harassed by a coach/judge from another team in her region.

> There was definitely sexism. I spent four years getting sexually harassed by the coach of another school, and when I finally, my senior year, complained to [the national debate organization to which her school belonged], they didn't do anything about it.

The experiences of Sally and Alison are, unfortunately, not uncommon. Reports of sexual harassment have been investigated in debate for over 20 years (c.f. Greenstreet & Frederick, 2000; Stepp, Simerly & Logue, 1994; Szwapa, 1994). However, there has been limited examination of sexual harassment in individual events. The issue of harassment has received more attention recently with the rise of Federal Title IX compliance (Bidwell, 2015; Kitchener 2019), and has resulted in some forensics organizations implementing their own Title IX Requirements (c.f. National Parliamentary Debate Association, 2016).

Research Question Four

The fourth question this study addressed was, "Are the skills and knowledge developed through college forensics participation carried over into later life?" Participants noted several different skills and kinds of knowledge that they still used in their present lives. Similar to the academic skills discussed above, participants believed that many of the skills and abilities they developed were related directly to their forensics experience. Those skills included: Presentation and Listening Skills, Research and Preparation Skills, Being Professional, Critical Thinking, and Persuasion.

Presentation and Listening Skills. One of the most common ways that participants believed that forensics skills carried over into later life was in the presentation skills they learned. The ability to speak well and to listen was something that many individuals took pride in, and saw as a key result of their participation in forensics. William credited his success as an attorney to his experience on the speech team: "I can bring an articulation and passion and relate to the jury in a manner that is convincing and informative. So speech team directly affects that." Geoffrey noted that the ability to listen was, in particular a skill he took away from forensics, and still used:

> In forensics . . . it's the acute listening skills, and so you can follow along, and you kind
>
> of critique people as they are speaking. You're doing that second-level listening. We're
>
> not just hearing what they are saying, we also are thinking about "does this make sense?

While Geoffrey and William focused on the ability to present and listen, Sanjay thought of presenting information in a different way:

> It's not until . . . years later do you realize what the skills are that you developed at the
>
> time. . . . One big takeaway that in speech and debate, whether you are doing parli debate,

or . . . policy . . . or if you're doing IEs, at the end of the day you're packaging

information to people in a convenient way.

Other individuals noted skills such as note-taking as a skill that was critical to their

success in forensics, and that they still used today. Sally noted that her note-taking ability was

helpful:

Flowing is something that has been incredibly useful throughout my life. I am a great

note-taker as a result of all the practice I have flowing. So, when I was a lawyer, I could

basically keep my own transcript of what was going on during the hearing.

Sally competed in CEDA/NDT debate, and the ability to take notes is critical to being able to

track and understand arguments. That skill was something she retained and used daily. All of

these individuals believed that forensics had honed and developed these skills, and that they

would not have had those skills without forensics.

Research and Preparation Skills. A number of participants discussed the ability to

research as an important skill that they still used in their lives. William noted, "In the

researching, reading, and writing of my various motions, letters, and paper and stuff. I started

developing those skills—obviously honed through law school—but that started with speech

team." Greg also credited forensics with teaching him research and preparation skills, which

translated into his success as a law student and lawyer:

Frankly, the debate stuff helps me with research and writing. Training your mind to think

the way it has to analytically, for debate, is so important to the way you have to think,

even in terms of writing and researching as an attorney.

Both William and Greg, as attorneys, saw the research skills from forensics as helping them in their current work. William competed in individual events, and Greg competed in parliamentary debate, but both found forensics useful.

Jonathan also noted that the research skills, and the ability to examine and quickly understand information, were helpful in his current position. "Mainly it's the research and the writing, making arguments. . . . Working under a deadline, and getting deep very quickly on an area of law that I'm not super familiar with." Dylan also noted the ability to process information quickly: "The other day [my supervisors] needed to find some information . . . so I am just downloading pdfs and doing quick searches and scanning for key words. . . Very similar to debate research." Both Jonathan and Dylan competed in parliamentary debate, and found that ability to read and understand information quickly was a useful takeaway from forensics.

Being Professional. Nearly half of the participants mentioned some aspect of being professional as one thing they learned in forensics and still used. Michaela recalled "van talk," the act of not talking about other competitors or judges until the team is back in the van, and away from others, as a concept that she still uses with teams she supervises.

> I really like "van talk" in the business context. Like when we go to a trade show, you
> know, you don't know what competitors are around you, so I thought that was a really
> great context for the business world.

Jeanette also saw "van talk" as a useful concept. She has even transferred the concept to her middle school students:

> We always talked about how there was "van talk". . . . You are always representing
> something. You're representing your school or you're representing yourself. And so, with

my students I kind of tell them, "Remember, where we're going, we're representing our

school. You have to be mindful of that."

Even though Jeanette and Michaela are in very different professions (sales and middle school

language arts teacher) they could use the concept of "van talk" in their present lives with other,

non-forensics participants.

For other individuals, being professional was more about presenting yourself. Charles

attributed his career success to his ability to present himself professionally: "I was able to work

my way up in [my career] pretty quickly because of the skills I learned about how to be a

professional, from the team." Rachel also saw forensics as a place where she learned to be

professional. "[Forensics] definitely comes into play . . . even just in everyday conversation.

How you carry yourself, in terms of being professional."

Several participants also mentioned that forensics forced them to interact with different

people, so they learned how to interact with a variety of people. Roseanna saw forensics as being

integral to her ability to work with people from different backgrounds: "Really I think it was

being exposed to people in all sorts of majors. I gained something, I got out of my own world."

Julia also learned about dealing with people from different backgrounds and with people who

thought differently than her, but through the debate positions competitors presented in rounds:

> Debate teaches you that there are different people that kind of have different perspectives
>
> on things than you do. . . . Critiques were real big when I was competing, the last couple
>
> of years, and so I think you realize that you have to be sensitive to other people's culture
>
> and why they do things the way they do, and be cognizant of that when you're dealing
>
> with clients.

Both Roseanna and Julia learned to interact with diverse people through their experiences in forensics, even though they competed 20 years apart, and in different kinds of events. They also saw the tolerance they learned in forensics carrying over into their careers.

In addition to thinking about how to treat people in a variety of settings, Diana also noted that forensics taught her how to provide constructive feedback to people: "I think the ability to give people specific, concrete feedback . . . the ball started getting rolling in forensics."

The final aspect of professionalism that individuals credit to forensics is their ability to adapt to different situations and interact with difficult people. Veronica noted that she learned to adapt to different judges as a competitor, and applied that same skill now as an appellate court lawyer: "While maintaining your own integrity as a performer, you learn to tweak. You learn to tweak within your integrity. . . . That was another thing you pick up from competition: If you want to win, you learn to tweak. . . ." Adam also found that forensics helped him when talking to parents about students in his middle school math classes:

> I think the way that debate trained people to frame issues is something that has been really useful as a teacher in terms of framing issues with parents. And, sort of managing expectations. If I say "controlling the uniqueness," are you still with me? . . . And, I think you can't do college debate without your skin getting pretty thick.

William credited his ability to work with a variety of clients to his forensics experience:

> Even when I'm not in court, there is that interpersonal communication, when I'm just speaking with clients, for example, and trying to explain to them the various facets of their case strengths and weaknesses. . . . I credit my training and experience in forensics for being able to do that well.

Adam, William, and Veronica found that forensics helped them learn to interact professionally with people, even though that interaction might be difficult.

Critical Thinking and Quick Thinking. A number of participants saw forensics as developing their critical thinking. Some individuals specifically credited forensics with developing their critical thinking skills. Sanjay noted: "[Forensics] was instrumental, I think, in giving, honing a skill set that enables you to think critically and formulate arguments in a cogent manner." Kristine also saw forensics as helping her to think critically: "The analytical skills, I'm sure, are a very strong carryover [from competition]." Michaela also saw forensics as developing her critical thinking skills: "[Forensics] just made me a better thinker."

In addition to critical thinking skills, some participants also noted that forensics developed the ability to think on their feet, and respond to a situation. Derek pointed out:

> The ability to consciously think about the way that your audience is reacting, and also be able to know, recognize, when someone is starting to tune out. And, also, the ability to kind of process that and actively bring them back in. That's a huge thing that I developed specifically from forensics, that is super useful, especially in the sales environment.

Veronica also noted how thinking quickly was developed by forensics, and was useful in her current career: "Limited prep [events help the most] when I'm in court. . . . My normal court is a hot court, and that's when they interrupt with questions. . . . It becomes very impromptu." Derek and Veronica connected the ability to think on their feet as being a direct result of their competition experience.

Persuasion and Argumentation. Finally, a number of individuals saw persuasion and the ability to build arguments as skills they learned in forensics and still used today. Rhonda noted that her work as a sales representative at two large computer companies required her to use

persuasive skills in her operational updates to management: "So [for] operational updates I would use [forensics], all these skills. . . . And then also, there's a persuasive element, you know. . . . If you think about that, that's a lot like putting . . . a [debate] case together." Earl also used his forensics skills in public relations: "Building a messaging campaign is a lot like building a debate case. You need to think of it in terms of an entire narrative. . . . You don't use those words, but a PR campaign is a debate case." Theodore also used his forensics skills to be persuasive in his job at a higher education consulting company:

> In my professional career . . . my days are full of meetings. So I have to persuade people for one platform over another. . . . So, being able to understand and communicate stock issues to an audience member, for example. When you get to the professional world . . . when you organize your thoughts that way, people think you're amazing. But, really, it's pretty basic for somebody like me who's been through these forensics rules.

Lastly, Charles also saw that forensics was a learning ground for making and presenting arguments. "I'm always really grateful that I learned how to, you know, form an argument or present it in a professional manner." All of these participants saw building arguments and being persuasive as a direct result of their participation in forensics.

Altruism. In addition to the ideas specifically mentioned by study participants, they also exhibited a sense of altruism. Many individuals mentioned wanting to give back to the activity because they had gained so much from it. Many of the individuals in this study gave back to their school by judging at tournaments. Kristine noted that she judged at a national tournament that was nearby. She also recalled that she and her partner always wanted to help others on their team:

[My partner] and I really liked helping other people. . . . We had lots of ideas on

arguments and ways to do things, so we often volunteered to help. We all group-prepped

together, most of the rounds, so we would usually share our case ideas if we had one."

Samantha also noted that the help she received from one of her teachers and the forensics team

led her to join forensics. Later, when she considered quitting forensics, a sense of altruism led

her to continue her participation: "Each time I thought about quitting . . . I thought about the

people who, the team members before me who had made a difference in my life, and I realized I

could to that for students coming in." When Veronica moved from the Midwest to the West

Coast to attend law school, she found time to volunteer as an individual events coach at her new

school: "I went off to law school, and I found the undergraduate team there was mostly debate. . .

. The individual events [team] wasn't as developed at that time. And I came down and said,

"Hey, could you use an extra hand?"

Research Questions Five and Six

The final two research questions addressed how former competitors understood their

experiences in their present life.

RQ5: Do former college forensics participants see college forensics as an integral part of

their identity?

RQ6: Do former college forensics participants remain involved with the college or

university where they competed?

Research Question Five

The fifth research question this study sought to answer was: "Do former college forensics

participants see college forensics as an integral part of their identity?" Some of the discussion

presented regarding previous questions partially indicates that all of the participants at least felt

somewhat that their identity was affected by participation in forensics. There were both direct and indirect indications that individuals saw forensics as continuing to be a part of their identity. Some participants directly attributed their life path to the influence that forensics had on their lives, and the direct impact on their identity. Skip believed his success in life was due to forensics: "I can't emphasize how greatly it impacted . . . my academics and progressing, who I am, just who I am today. . . . I attribute what I do today, largely due to forensics." Roseanna also saw forensics as integral to her identity: "[If I had not] found the speech team . . . who knows what the hell I would have been doing. I'm pretty darn certain that I wouldn't be where I'm at today." Jonathan even changed his academic major as a result of his participation in forensics:

> Debate was just a great part of my life. It may have changed my career path. . . . I wanted to be a marine biologist who studied whales. And then I started doing debate and I was like, "Can I get paid to do this?"

Ron also credited forensics with his life path: "I in no way, shape, or form would be the person I am today without forensics." All of these individuals saw forensics as directly affecting their lives and who they were.

Other participants made indirect references to how forensics was still a part of their identity. All of the previous discussion regarding the importance of forensics in their current positions, or how they used it today, demonstrates the effect the participants saw forensics having on them. Others maintained forensics as a part of their identity in other ways. Nineteen individuals indicated they retained some sort of memorabilia (such as team shirts), trophies, or pictures and newspaper articles. Jonathan noted that he still had some trophies. "I have a couple of boxes of trophies that are still up in the attic." Samantha also noted that she held on to some of her trophies, and some other materials:

I've moved several times and so I've had to cut down, but I did keep two or three of my, of the trophies that mean the most to me, and I think in some old boxes I have programs or different things from competitions. Obviously, I have lots of pictures.

Deborah, a two-time winner at the National Individual Events Tournament, noted that she remained interested in the tournament, and often watched the awards ceremony: "I don't have any of the team shirts, but honestly, I've got my two platters right here in my office. . . . Every year, I watch the live feed of the national awards, along with the alumni."

Other participants maintained contact with their teams and coaches, as well as with former teammates. Seventeen individuals stated that they maintained informal connections with their former teammates as well as competitors. Five participants also noted that they were involved more formally with their alumni association or a forensics alumni group. Alison noted, "I am still friends with a lot of the people on the team." Jane also maintained contact with former teammates: "I'm still in contact with a teammate of mine. . . . Other people on the team, I'm essentially Facebook friends with. . . . I do talk a little bit with two of my debate friends."

While Alison and Jane maintained informal contacts with teammates, other participants had more formal connections to their alma mater. Luke attended a large university in the central United States. In addition to organizing a forensics alumni reunion, he is a member of his university's alumni association. "The team is now in a rotation where probably every other year we are going to hold a big reunion. . . . In terms of other events, my wife and I have football tickets, and seat licenses. . . ." James also is a member of his alumni association: "They voted me on, so now I'm on the national alumni board."

Finally, other participants maintained formal connections to the forensics team by attending team events, or volunteering to coach. Jeanette lives near her alma mater, and returns

89

to help present team members. "We'll have events where we'll go back and watch performances. So, in the spring before they went to nationals, some of us alums went back and we had like little coaching sessions with all of the team members." Perry returns each year to judge at a tournament hosted by his former school: "They have an annual tournament. . . . Both my wife and I go and [judge]." As noted above, some institutions ask former competitors to write letters to current competitors before the team goes to the national tournament.

Research Question Six

Many participants maintained contact with their institution in a number of different ways while some chose to not support their institution. Some maintain connections to their institution through the forensics team, in less official capacities, such as judging, attending showcases, writing letters, or coaching current students, as noted above.

Some participants remain involved with, and support their alma mater, by donating money. Of the 34 participants in this study, 22 had donated money to their institution at some point. Many were like Skip, who donated a small amount here or there: "Oh, you know, [I've donated] maybe a couple hundred bucks. Just over the years." Ron also is an occasional giver. "[I don't donate] on an annual basis, but I will say once every couple of years I will send them a check." Other individuals were more systematic in their donations to their institutions. Sanjay, after talking to a former coach, decided to be more purposeful in his support.

> This year I gave $400. Last year, I gave $200, the year before I gave a hundred dollars, and I had been doing that, I want to say, for the last few years. . . . [One of my former coaches] said, "See how often you can double it. . . ." He kind of challenged me a little bit to do that. So, I thought, "Yeah, that's a good idea, let me see what I can do."

While most individuals were not as serious or methodical in their giving as Sanjay was, he brings up an important point: Being asked to give makes a person more likely to give.

Some participants did not provide support to their college or university. This was largely due to a lack of money. Derek noted, "Part of that [not donating money] is that I'm still paying my student loans. But the other part of it is the only school I would consider donating to would be the [community college] program [I attended]." William was a bit more emphatic about not donating, but fondly recalled his community college experiences:

> I did [give money], and it was my tuition. . . . I haven't really given money to any of my previous schools. . . . If I were to give money to any . . . I'd give it to [the community college]. . . . Because I really think it was at [the community college] through the speech team . . . that really gave me the solid foundation and to then continue to the different schools that I attended.

Neither William nor Derek gave money to their former schools, but both saw their experiences in a similar light. They saw the community college experiences that they had as heavily influencing their lives, and valued those slightly more.

Some individuals did not give money to their alma mater as a form of protest. Adam, although he had donated in the past, indicated that he stopped donating because of his perception that sexual assaults had been covered up by the college's administration.

> I'm not giving them any money until they [his college] fix some of their larger campus culture stuff. . . . They have . . . had a serial rapist on campus, whose parents give big to the school, and . . . they've given cover to this person.

Alison also gave money to her former school, but refused to support the forensics team because her coaches had engaged in ethically questionable behavior, as well as pettiness. Her team had

placed highly at a national tournament, but only students who competed in debate were recognized by the school, or in other publicity and recruiting material.

> He [the former coach] won't recognize any of us. So there were about five of us, that really got it, and he won't recognize any of us on the website. It's like we were never there. . . . So, a bunch of us who are not included on that kind of stuff, we have repeatedly said we are not going to give money to the institution.

Even though Alison and Adam disliked the policies or practices of their school, they still demonstrated an attachment to those institutions. Adam refused to give money as a means of attempting to create change at his institution. Alison donated money to her alma mater, but did not support the forensics team.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the participants, data collection and analysis, and results. Narrative interviews of 34 individuals presented results that addressed the overarching research question and addressed the six underlying research questions. The results indicate that participants followed a similar pattern in their experiences with forensics. This study also found that former competitors identify with forensics, their former teammates, as well as their school. Additionally, participants believed that forensics had a significant influence on their lives. They also noted that they consistently used the skills they learned in their everyday professional lives. Finally, they believed forensics was integral to their identity, and remained involved with their alma mater.

CHAPTER 5. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapter discussed the results of the interviews used to collect data from former collegiate forensics competitors. The interviews focused my inquiry into better understanding how the forensics experienced shaped former college forensics competitors' professional lives. Primarily, this research investigates how the impact of the forensics experience shaped the professional lives of former competitors and if that experience either bolstered or hindered the former competitor's willingness to provide support (broadly defined) for the forensics activity and/or their alma mater.

Recall that this study warranted its significance in at least two broad ways. Collegiate forensics, like many activities and programs within American higher education, face significant participation and economic cuts. With fewer students enrolling in higher education because of significant enrollment drops due to lower birth rates (Nadworney, 2018) and the burgeoning public criticism of the "worth" of higher education (Dann, 2017), the future of collegiate forensics is in question. Additionally, collegiate forensics, like most other programs in higher education, must consistently demonstrate its utility for professional and career development. In short, the significance of this study is its relationship to the broad question: what is the "worth" of attending college and does participation in forensics extend or not the perceived "worth?"

In this chapter, I provide detailed analysis of the stories collected about participation in college forensics, its "worth," and how this "worth" translates into financial or volunteer support for the forensics activity and/or the participant's alma mater. Broadly, this project investigates if positive experiences from forensics participation yields support for the activity and/or the participant's alma mater. I filter the results and discussion of the data provided in the previous chapter with theoretical analysis aided by narrative theory (Fisher, 1984, 1985, 1989) and

prominent "best practices" strategies in college and university alumni relations (Worth, 2012, 2016). This process mirrors the rationale and purpose of a grounded theory approach to qualitative research. As discussed in chapter three, grounded theory, as described by its originators Glaser and Strauss (1967) stipulates that the researcher be involved in the process from the beginning. Grounded theory researchers collect, code, compare, categorize, and from concrete data conclude by offering an explanatory theory. In short, this chapter provides an analysis of the stories collected in this study and posits a plausible explanation about the phenomenon. My analysis of the concrete data collected via interviews offers an explanatory theory about collegiate forensics participation, career and professional development, and alumni relations. I call this the Narrative of the Professional.

Narrative of the Professional

The Narrative of the professional is the story developed through the individuals interviewed in this study and analysis of those interviews. This story might not be generalizable to all forensics alumni. Many former competitors might go on to have blue-collar jobs or be self-employed, or even might be stay-at-home parents. However, the individuals interviewed for this study all had what could be termed professional occupations.

The narrative starts with a person becoming involved in the forensics team through the encouragement of another person or through their own actions to fulfill a perceived need. As a member of the forensics team, and a participant in debate or individual events, they learn and develop academic skills that help them to be successful in school. Some of the academic skills individuals learn are communication and organizational skills, researching, and critical thinking skills. Other skills they learn include things like scheduling, and working under pressure, as well as interpersonal skills through the interactions with teammates. They continue to be involved in

forensics for a variety of reasons, but most commonly because of the camaraderie they feel toward their teammates. Some individuals remain involved because they enjoy the competition, and others because they want to continue to develop their skills. At some point they move on to other things. Some individuals go to graduate school or law school, and some go into the workforce. The skills they learned in forensics, however, help them to be successful in their chosen professions. Sometimes those skills involved knowing how to act in a business interview or office setting. Sometimes the skills are extensions of those learned in forensics, such as researching or speaking. Finally, many former forensics competitors remain involved with their programs. Their involvement occurs in a variety of ways. Some donate money to their alma mater. Others continue to coach or assist their former teams by judging at tournaments. Ultimately, the participants in this study see forensics as integral to their personal, academic, and professional development. From their perspective, they do not see how they could have achieved their current life or status without their participation in forensics.

This proposed theory, the result of my methodological focus on grounded theory, extends upon Fisher's (1984, 1985, 1989) narrative paradigm. The Narrative of the Professional more closely examines the individual agency developed through members' participation in forensics.

Narrative Probability

The stories of this study's participants maintained a narrative probability, or coherence (Fisher, 1984, 1985). Fisher (1984, 1985) states that narrative probability, or coherence, is whether or not the story makes sense to its listeners. The story must be recognizable as a story, and have a narrative structure (Fisher, 1985). Additionally, we might look at the resemblance between stories and the credibility of the characters as a means of evaluating narrative probability.

The stories participants presented regarding how they became involved in forensics, and their subsequent experiences with competition were quite similar. Their experiences followed a similar pattern to each other, with them being introduced to forensics, becoming "hooked" on it, dedicating themselves to the activity, and then moving on at some point. This involvement narrative follows the pattern of a story and "hangs together" (Fisher, 1985, p. 349) as a story because the pattern is one many of us might identify with in our involvement with any activity. Additionally, it follows a story line of "becoming a professional." The progression of the story is ultimately to move on from being a student and competitor to being a professional.

Stories of participants also resembled each other in many respects, which demonstrates narrative coherence. Participants demonstrated identification with their school, other team members, as well as competitors. As noted in Chapter 4, camaraderie was mentioned 38 times by participants. Some individuals felt camaraderie through the members of their own team while others felt camaraderie with competitors from other schools. This connection to others demonstrates narrative coherence across participants' experiences, lending credence to all members' stories about forensics.

Participants' stories also were consistent regarding the academic benefits of forensics. Nearly all of the participants mentioned some sort of academic benefits resulting from their participation in forensics. The academic skills learned in forensics helped participants to be successful in school, and sometimes even in graduate school or professional programs, such as law school. Once again, this consistency of the narrative regarding how forensics was helpful demonstrates the coherence of participants' stories.

There are a few examples of participants not having coherence across stories. One seemingly contradictory story is that forensics was time well spent, but that it also took too much

time. While participants felt as though they benefitted from participation, they still felt as though the time commitment to forensics took time away from other aspects of their lives. This contradiction takes away from the coherence of the stories regarding their involvement in forensics. A few individuals mentioned that even though forensics was time-consuming, it made them more efficient in their other academic work. This was something that made the time spent on forensics worthwhile. Even with the contradiction in perspectives of taking too much time while their time was well spent, the academic skills developed helped them to be successful professionals.

The social skills discussed by this study's participants also helped to prepare them for being a professional. Learning to interact with people who were different, or thought differently, helped participants to be successful later in life, and in their careers. The interaction with students from other schools as well as their own teammates helped study participants to leanr social skills they would use later in life. As with academic skills, the social skills developed through forensics helped participants to learn how to interact with others and helped them to develop as a professional. Participants' stories regarding social skills and socializing are consistent across the group, especially the socializing that individuals engaged in with their teammates. The socialization helped them to become professionals.

In addition to the narrative structure and consistency between stories, coherence also is a factor of the credibility of the people telling the stories (Baesler, 1995). Participants' credibility is clear because of the consistency of their experiences, as well as the fact that they were sharing their own experiences. All of the individuals in this study recalled their own experiences and focused on how forensics had affected them and their lives professionally. These personal insights help to demonstrate the thoughtfulness participants used to develop their answers.

97

Additionally, this also demonstrates how participants saw forensics helping them to develop into a professional.

The willingness of participants to discuss the negative aspects of competition also helps demonstrate their credibility. Although they all felt their time in forensics was well spent, individuals also could see and evaluate the downsides of forensics participation. As noted above, participants saw that forensics was time-consuming. Other problems that they pointed out included issues of physical and mental health, partying, focus on winning, and even harassment and abuse. The story of the Narrative of the Professional is recognizable and has a narrative structure. Those telling the Narrative also demonstrate credibility because of their stories' consistencies.

Narrative Fidelity

Participants' stories reflected narrative fidelity (Fisher, 1984, 1985, 1989) as well. In order to address narrative fidelity, I will examine several questions. The first question to address the fidelity of the story is "are the events factual?" (Fisher, 1989). Baesler (1995) notes that whether or not a story is seen as factual depends on whether the moral of the story is clear. Presumably, the stories told by participants are true. They were reflecting on their own experiences. Additionally, however, they emphasized one point, which was, "Forensics had an important effect on my life." The argument of this essay is that forensics made them, or helped them to become, a professional. This clarity of the story is demonstrated by how participants credited forensics with their current positions, skills, and even their personalities. Several study participants stated, in one form or another: "I in no way, shape, or form would be the person I am today without forensics," exemplifies the moral of the overall story of these individuals' experiences.

The second question we ask to address the fidelity of the stories is "How does the story connect to the values being advocated for by the story? (Fisher, 1989). The Narrative of the Professional values the skills developed through participation in forensics, and the way forensics prepared the participant for his or her career. The different skills mentioned by participants all helped to develop their ability as professionals. The skills that participants attributed to their participation in forensics included things like writing, researching, and critical thinking. All of these skills are abilities a professional would be expected to have. Other academic skills developed by forensics participation included organizational skills, and the ability to work under pressure. Individuals attributed the skills they developed in forensics as leading to professional success, or at least being useful in their professional careers.

Another skill that participants saw as useful in their careers was the ability to research. Participants who were attorneys especially focused on this skill, but others mentioned it as well. Attorneys found forensics helpful in their journey through law school, as well as the work they engaged in every day. Those research skills helped non-lawyers to maintain connection with the best practices in their professions. Critical thinking and quick thinking also were skills that participants associated with forensics. Learning to think critically and think on one's feet were skills that participants still used and valued, even though their competition days were over. These were skills that individuals saw themselves using both in their jobs as well as in their personal lives. Some individuals talked about how they used critical thinking in meetings and evaluating proposed plans or business options. Others mentioned that they were able to think quickly and respond to their audience because of their experiences in forensics. The last skill that individuals attributed to forensics participation was persuasion and argumentation. The participants in this

study engaged in persuasion and argumentation in their jobs, and credited forensics with teaching those skills.

The overriding value of forensics, according to the Narrative of the Professional, is that forensics teaches people to be professionals, and provides them with the skills to be a professional. The different skills named by participants were those they saw as being needed by them in their professions. The examples that participants named and discussed helped to explain the value of those skills. Also, the stories and examples provided do demonstrate how forensics is valuable to professionals. The stories are intricately connected to the values discussed by participants.

The third question that needs to be addressed when examining narrative fidelity, is, "What reasoning patterns were used in the stories?" This question helps to address the thinking in participants' stories as well as across participants' stories. Participants who joined forensics on purpose used deductive reasoning in their explanation of why they joined. For example, some individuals joined forensics because they thought it would help with their shyness Mapping out a syllogism of their reasoning, we can see that it looks like the following:

Major Premise: "I should join an activity that will help me to become less shy."

Minor Premise: "Forensics is an activity that will help me be less shy."

Conclusion: "I should join forensics."

All of the participants who joined forensics on purpose followed a similar pattern to their deductive reasoning regarding why they become involved in the activity. The syllogism is valid internally because it is constructed correctly and repeats the terms. Additionally, because all of the individuals who joined "on purpose" followed this format of reasoning, it is consistent.

The form of inductive reasoning that predominates the rest of the participants' discussion is causal reasoning. No matter what the person was talking about in their life or experiences, the cause was forensics. Forensics helped participants develop academic and social skills , and gave them opportunities in a variety of settings. The causal importance of forensics in participants' lives is present in the negative aspects of some of their discussions as well. Even with negative experiences, participants saw forensics as a causal factor.

The only other form of inductive reasoning was the occasional use of argument from example. When discussing ways that they believed forensics had helped them learn to be professionals, participants used reasoning from example. Participants used examples of different skills for concepts that they believed they learned through their involvement in forensics, and that they transferred into their professional life.

The fourth criteria Fisher (1989) provides for the examination of the fidelity of a narrative is, "How do participants' narratives affect the decision-making of the listeners?" or, "What are the outcomes of following the values upheld in the story?" The Narrative of the Professional provides listeners with a clear story of the value of the participation in forensics. After hearing the Narrative of the Professional, a listener would likely believe that forensics participation is a key ingredient to professional success. Presumably, listeners would be encouraged to participate in forensics, or at least support forensics. Beyond learning to be a professional, many of the things discussed by participants are life skills. Time management, the ability to break complex tasks or problems into simpler ones, and how to deal with pressure and stress all are life skills that allow a person to be successful as a professional, or in other situations. Individuals in college, or others who might hear this probably would see forensics as an important opportunity to develop professional skills. However, there are some obvious

drawbacks to forensics, including the time commitment, and the stress associated with it. These drawbacks might lead listeners to realize that they needed to weigh carefully whether or not they should join forensics.

The last criteria Fisher (1989) sets up for evaluating narrative fidelity is "Do the story's values represent the highest values of human experience?" or, "What is the importance of the story?" The story told in the Narrative of the Professional is that forensics is life-changing. The Narrative of the Professional also upholds both the value of individualism and the importance of community. The value of individualism can be seen in participants' discussion of the practical skills they learned in forensics. Participants look back on their experiences and see that all of the things they did in forensics, as well as the people they met and the skills they developed, made very important changes in them and had a long-lasting impact on their lives.

In addition to individualism, there is also a value of community in the Narrative of the Professional. Many individuals discussed the importance of camaraderie and friendship as part of their forensics experience. Additionally, the altruism exhibited by participants also speaks to the value of community and a sense of responsibility to the group. Participants were willing to help teammates or go back to their former teams to donate time or help coach as a way to give back. Both of these overarching values demonstrate the transcendence of the Narrative of the Professional, helping to demonstrate its narrative fidelity.

Fundraising

The Narrative of the Professional also is relevant to fundraising. While the average number of alumni who donate is less than 10 percent (Wylie & Sammis, as cited by Thrush, 2010), 22 of the 34 individuals in this study had donated money to their former schools. Of the individuals who had not donated, many were willing to donate. As discussed in Chapter 4, the

altruism and identification with their institution demonstrated by participants seems to be a part of the Narrative of the Professional. Even some who did not give money maintained attachments to their institution through contributing time, expertise, or moral support.

The Narrative of the Professional includes a sense of connection to the institution and teammates, but also a connection to current team members. In Worth's (2012) discussion of the five "I's" (Interest, Information, Involvement, Identification with the institution, and Investment), many forensics participants are between the fourth and fifth "I." Participants have an interest in the institution and the forensics program because they have a history with the institution through their competition experience. They have access to information, and often are provided with information through team web pages or social media from the school or team. Participants' involvement began as undergraduates, but also continues through their connections with former teammates and any interactions they have with the current team, such as attending showcases or writing letters. Participants also demonstrate identification with their institution and forensics by keeping team shirts, trophies, and other icons. The fifth "I," Investment, is when individuals donate to the institution. Worth (2012) focuses this relationship on major donors, but if it applies to all donors, even some forensics competitors who have not donated money to their former institutions demonstrate important connections to their institutions. If the "Five I's" is a progression, former competitors likely are at the fourth step, and can be encouraged to move to the fifth step.

Worth (2016) notes the importance of a culture of philanthropy within an organization. As noted above, forensics participants in this study demonstrate a high level of identification with their team, institution, and the activity. Participants also demonstrated altruism. Both characteristics are part of the Narrative of the Professional. As they discussed their participation

and what they learned, individuals also talked about ways that they gave back to their team, the activity, or their school. As noted above, some forensics teams have alumni write letters to current students as encouragement. Others remain involved through returning and helping current students.

These experiences also demonstrate the importance of what Worth (2016) calls the stewardship aspect of the fundraising process. Stewardship is necessary so that donors feel as though they remain connected to the institution, and know where their donations are going. Forensics teams can maintain connections with their alumni through social media or other means. This meets Worth's (2012) Information "I," but also is a form of stewardship (Worth, 2016). Team web pages and social media pages all are ways for alumni to maintain connections with their former team, and to see the results of their support. Many participants in this study noted that they followed their former team's web page or the team Facebook page as a way to stay connected to the team.

Summary

The Narrative of the Professional demonstrates narrative coherence and narrative fidelity (Fisher 1984, 1985, 1989), and demonstrates a commitment to an individual's alma mater. The process by which they came to forensics was similar, and many pointed to similar skills that they developed through their participation. Additionally, participants' connection to their former institution(s) are strong and could be used to increase alumni involvement with institutions, teams, or forensics in general.

The Narrative of the Professional demonstrates narrative coherence (Fisher 1984, 1985, 1989) in several ways. First, their stories follow a pattern that leads to becoming a professional. From being introduced to forensics, to becoming "hooked" on forensics, to dedicating

themselves to the activity, to moving on, participants' stories developed in a similar way. Additionally, they recalled that the academic and social skills developed through their participation in forensics helped them to become the professionals they are today. Participants also demonstrated coherence through their honesty about the effects that forensics had on their lives as students and later into adulthood.

The Narrative of the Professional also demonstrates narrative fidelity (Fisher 1984, 1985, 1989). Participants' stories meet Fisher's (1989) five criteria for demonstrating narrative fidelity. The stories are factual, and connect to broader values that are present in all of the stories. Additionally, the arguments presented by participants in their stories are clear. Their experiences and explanation of those experiences is consistent, and demonstrate how forensics lead to the individual's current professional life. Participants' experiences are relatable to others, and value both community and individualism.

The Narrative of the Professional is connected to fundraising because participants are more likely to identify with their team and their institution. Also, forensics participants are more likely to have a sense of altruism toward forensics, their team, and their institution. Some best practices for institutions and directors of forensics to consider include asking forensics participants to give back in some way. Additionally, many of the ways that coaches and teams maintain connection with their alumni are potentially valuable mechanisms for reaching out to alumni, allowing them to maintain connections, giving them information, and engaging in stewardship.

Conclusions: Research Questions

The overarching research question this study asked was: **Do stories by former participants about college forensics reflect the significance and relevancy of the activity for professional life and career development?**

The Narrative of the Professional demonstrates the importance of forensics participation in the development of individuals' professional lives. The story of their involvement in forensics demonstrates the important role of forensics in teaching them to be a professional. Participants in this study saw the academic skills they developed in forensics as being directly useful in their current job or occupation. Academic skills they learned or developed often were key to their success because they were skills that allowed them to do well in school as well as be proficient in their occupation.

Participants in this study also noted the social skills that they developed in forensics helped them be successful. The interaction with a variety of people from a variety of backgrounds and places taught them how to be more comfortable socially and to relate to a variety of people. These skills also are important to the Narrative of the Professional, because they are skills that help professionals to interact. The ability to talk to a variety of people from a variety of backgrounds is essential to a professional's success.

In addition to the overarching research question examined by this study, there were six supplemental questions that examined narrow or unique aspects of the overarching question. All of them are discussed here, in relation to the Narrative of the Professional. The overarching question initially directed a focus toward identification and shared experiences.

RQ1: Do former college forensics competitors identify with their teams and schools?

RQ2: Do participants in college forensics have shared experiences of learning about, participating in, and integrating their experiences into their professional lives?

The Narrative of the Professional demonstrates that former forensics competitors do identify with their teams and schools. Participants mentioned camaraderie and support as being an important aspect of their participation on the team. However, participants also strongly identified with the broader forensics community, and not just their individual teams or schools. This identification with the activity as a whole creates a sense of connection with a much larger group of people than just an institution or team. In the Narrative of the Professional, participants have developed a network that they can rely on and tap into whenever they might need to do so.

These results confirm previous research regarding identity (Croucher, et al., 2007; Croucher, Long, Meredith, Oommen & Steele, 2009), in their conclusion that competitors' organizational identification correlated with their identification with their forensics program. Participants connected with their teammates as well as competitors. Many participants seemed to see themselves as forensics competitors first, and team members second, rather than members of a specific team. According to Myers, et. al (2016), however, interpersonal connections might be the prerequisite for increasing identification with an organization. Perhaps forensics competitors identify with the forensics community as the organization, rather than their team or school.

While the focus of this study is not on recruiting, the involvement of teachers and family members in recruiting or encouraging participants to become involved in forensics cannot be underestimated. As several individuals have discussed over the years, recruiting is essential to developing and maintaining a successful program (Lapps, 1975; Lavelle & Hamburger, 2009). Past authors have noted the importance of formal recruiting efforts. However, this study demonstrates the importance of individual connections that might encourage an individual to

participate in an activity. Whether that individual was a teacher, family member, or friend, many of the participants in this study became involved because of those individual connections. This study seems to support Williams and Hughes (2003) suggestion that "Forensics administrators and coaches need to . . . seek new students from new places" (p. 10).

The Narrative of the Professional also demonstrates that most forensics competitors follow a similar path into, through, and out of the activity. Although participants became involved in forensics through different mechanisms (Encouraged, and On Purpose), the rest of their narrative was remarkably similar. While some individuals were introduced to forensics by friends or family members, others joined on purpose, usually to accomplish a goal. After joining forensics, they became "hooked" on it. Individuals became hooked for a variety of reasons. Some enjoyed the competition, some liked the camaraderie, but they were hooked, and then dedicated themselves to the activity. Even though some participants had to move on to other things, many maintained a connection to the activity. The shared experiences exemplified in the Narrative of the Professional help to solidify the connections forensics competitors have with each other and with their teams. This allows them to more readily connect with other former competitors, but also with many other people. The ability to interact with a wide variety of individuals is a skill that allows the professional to be more successful.

The second group of questions focused on the value or benefits of collegiate forensics participation:

RQ3: How do individuals perceive college forensics participation affected their professional lives and careers?

RQ4: Are the skills and knowledge developed through college forensics participation beneficial for career development?

108

Similar to Lux (2014) and Rogers (2005), participants believed they gained academic skills from their participation in forensics. Lux argued that listening, organization, and leadership skills could receive greater emphasis by forensics programs. However, participants in this study believed they did learn organization and other skills. As exemplified by Walter, individuals believed they learned organizational skills, even if those skills were not explicitly part of forensics. While Rogers (2005) found that forensics neither helped nor hurt debaters' GPA, he did find that it helped students achieve internships, which helped them in their chosen field, and tended to help them be more likely to be accepted to graduate school. Participants in this study believed they had gained very specific skills from their participation in forensics. More importantly, this study demonstrates that whether they participated in debate or in individual events, participants believed that they acquired similar skills.

Study participants also mentioned that their forensics experiences developed their social skills. Quenette, et. al (2007) and others (Billings, 2009; Jensen & Jensen, 2006; Miller, 2011; Rogers, 2002; White, 2017) have discussed different ways in which forensics develops social skills. Participants in this study reinforce previous work on this concept, but also articulate more clearly and more specifically how the social skills developed, as well as what social skills they learned.

Participants confirmed Miller's (2018) extensive discussion of team cohesion and team culture, as well as Brennan's (2003) findings that forensics competitors have a sense of community. Individuals in this study noted the importance of team membership and bonding beyond practice or competition. Forensics created a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) for these individuals when they were students. This sense of belonging can be developed by close connections with faculty or staff members (O'Keeffe, 2013), as well as other students

(Wilson, et. al, 2013). For these participants, forensics provided that sense of connection, especially to other students.

This study adds to Rogers' (2002, 2005) findings that debaters applied and were accepted to graduate schools or engaged in post baccalaureate education at higher rates than non-debaters. Individuals saw forensics as a career-changing activity, and one that led them to pursue further education. Rogers (2005), and Rogers, Freeman, and Rennels (2017) also found that debaters were more open to, and maintained, cross-cultural relationships. Participants saw those relationships that they developed through forensics participation as opportunities to interact with new and different people. The networking opportunities discussed by participants such as Adam also develop and explain Rogers (2005) finding that debaters found jobs more easily, changed jobs less, and when they changed jobs, changed voluntarily, rather than involuntarily.

Advocacy is another way that forensics often is seen as useful. There is limited discussion of forensics as an opportunity to speak out on issues that are important to competitors. Much of the discussion of forensics as means of developing the ability to be an advocate (e.g., DeNisco, 2018; Lux, 2014; Salinas & Pineda, 2009) revolves around students applying skills they learned in forensics to "real world" advocacy. However, this study reveals that competitors also see forensics as an opportunity to advocate for issues they believe in *during* competition. While some discussion of the use of advocacy has occurred regarding CEDA/NDT debate, (c.f. Galloway, 2007; Zompetti, 2004), discussion of advocacy in other formats of debate or individual events is limited. This opportunity to discuss issues of importance to themselves also provides insight into how forensics was an important aspect of their identity, which is discussed below.

The Narrative of the Professional indicates that forensics participation had an important effect on participants' professional lives and careers. Participants in this study noted that the academic skills they acquired helped them to be better students. Those same academic skills translated into skills they used in their professional lives. Participants noted that presentation skills, research skills, being professional, critical thinking, and persuasion skills all were competencies that they learned in forensics and still used regularly in their careers. Additionally, participants demonstrated altruism. While no one mentioned it as something they learned or saw it as a skill that they developed, many individuals discussed the sense of commitment they had to other team members, wanting to give back to the community, or supporting other team members while they were in college. These findings confirm Rogers, et. al (2017) category of "social responsibility" where he found that debaters had greater volunteerism and were more likely to vote. Once again, this study also finds that this sense of altruism among individual events competitors as well as debaters. Young, Henry, and Koch (2017) argue that the ability to empathize is a key aspect of the how forensics can train competitors in their emotional development, and may help to explain this sense of social responsibility or altruism.

The participants in this study explained the importance of their participation in forensics and how it was beneficial for their career. As noted above, the academic skills they developed directly translated into things that they were doing in their careers. Similar to others (Embree, 2009; Quenette, et al., 2007), this study found that both presentation and listening skills were developed and used by participants. They found all of these abilities useful in their jobs after competition. Past studies (Lux, 2012; Quenette et al. 2007) found that current students listed research skills as one of the academic skills developed by forensics competition. There also is empirical research regarding academic skills (Allen, et al. 1999; Colbert, 1987). This study

supports their conclusions. Several past studies (Allen et al., 1999; Embree, 2009; Lux, 2012; Williams, et. al, 2001) found that current and former competitors believed that critical thinking was a clear benefit of competing in forensics. The participants in this study help to articulate that as well. Additionally, this study demonstrates that individuals continue to use those skills after their competition career has ended.

Similar to Ziegelmueller's claim, (1995) and the findings of several others (Billings, 2011; Embree, 2009; Lux, 2012), the ability to form and use arguments is one that participants learned in forensics and use in their daily life. Most studies of college forensics participation have focused on debate, and the development of argumentation skills through debate participation (e.g. Littlefield, 2001; Williams, et. al, 2001). This study confirms Billings' (2011) findings that individual events competitors also learned the skill of argument development as part of their competition experiences.

Additionally, many participants believed that they learned valuable social skills as a result of their participation in forensics. For some it was a sense of how to be a professional. Others learned confidence and poise. And still others learned to interact with a variety of people because of the long periods of time spent together with the same group of people. In some cases, it was practicing and working with teammates and coaches. Others mentioned long periods of time for travel to and from tournaments as an opportunity to get to know their teammates and coaches. Rogers et al., (2017) found that debaters were more likely to display greater cultural tolerance than those who did not participate in forensics. This study provides some support for, and illustration of, Rogers et al., (2017). This study extends his work to other forms of competition as well.

In addition to skills they developed, many participants also saw forensics as creating or opening up opportunities for them. Many individuals mentioned the networking opportunities and educational opportunities provided by their participation in forensics. Others enjoyed the opportunity to be advocates for particular issues.

Finally, some individuals noted the negative aspects of forensics participation, including health concerns and harassment. These negative aspects of forensics are not necessarily harmful to a person's professional development, but can interfere with their academic success, which does affect their professional development. Additionally, the mental stress from harassment can negatively affect a person for a long period of time, and affect their academics success as well as their social interactions.

Individuals in this study experienced stress trying to juggle their schoolwork and competition as well, confirming Ward's (2018) findings that students felt emotional exhaustion, and Billings' (2011) findings that the activity was stressful. Rogers et al., (2017) notes that debaters had a greater sense of confidence than non-debaters. Perhaps the experiences of getting through the stressful points in time helped to build their self-confidence.

Atchison and Hall (2017), as well as Ward (2018) and Billings (2011), have noted the physical toll that forensics can take on competitors as well as coaches. The participants in this study support those findings. Ward (2017) notes that wellness has been an issue of discussion since 1989. However, both Greg and Alison competed at least 10 years after the discussion of wellness began, indicating that unhealthy practices still were occurring then. Atchison and Hall (2017) note that tournaments should provide opportunities for exercise, sleep, and meals to enhance the wellness of competitors and coaches alike. However, the competitive aspect of

113

forensics that Burnett, et. al (2001) identify as problematic might limit the effectiveness of these practices.

Finally, the last two research questions address participants' identification with the forensics experience:

RQ5: Do former college forensics participants see college forensics as an integral part of their identity?

RQ6: Do former college forensics participants remain involved with the college or university where they competed?

The Narrative of the Professional indicates that forensics participation is an integral part of a person's development as a professional, and is an important aspect of his/her identity. Some participants even stated that forensics was the reason they were who they were, or the reason they had chosen their current career. Participants saw forensics as teaching them skills that they continued to use in their current life. Additionally, many retained memorabilia or other material connections such as trophies. These connections demonstrate an important connection of forensics to their identity.

All of these different connections people maintain with their colleges and universities indicate that these individuals still identify with that institution. Brown (2017) refers to five different types of organizational identification, including discursive, dramaturgical, and symbolic. Participants engaged in discursive identification (Brown, 2017) through their communication with former competitors and teammates, and sharing stories about their experiences. Participants engaged in dramaturgical identification through their participation in rituals such as returning home to help coach current competitors before they attended nationals, or writing letters to current competitors. Finally, as noted above, the use of symbols important to

them, such as keeping awards and team shirts, is an example of symbolic identification (Brown 2017). Croucher, et al., (2009) found that there was no correlation between identification with the team and being involved. This study finds that many participants both identify with their former teams and remain involved.

As noted above, it could be that Young, et. al's (2017) idea that forensics develops empathy helps to explain these participants' connection to their institution. Additionally, this study supports and helps explain Rogers, et al. (2017) discussion of how competitors and former competitors are more socially engaged. This study also demonstrates that former competitors are interested in maintaining contact with their former institutions and want to support those institutions. Some demonstrated connection and support by donating money, while others demonstrated support through other means.

All of these individuals also retained some number of memorabilia or awards that they felt were meaningful. Byron and Laurence (2015) note that "physical objects are linked to the social construction of self" (316). McCarthy (1984) points out that "physical objects . . . are ever-present reminders of identities" (255). By holding on to trophies or team shirts, as well as photos and other items, these individuals maintain their identification as a member of the forensics team.

Not only do individuals maintain connections with the activity, their teams, and institutions, they maintain those connections in a variety of ways. Some individuals participated in team reunions, or returned to judge at tournaments. Others maintained connections through participation in alumni organizations, as well as donating money to the institution. Over half of the participants had donated money to their institution, demonstrating the connection they felt to their former institutions. Participants saw their interaction with the former institution as a way to

give back to the activity of forensics, and provide opportunities to new competitors, or as a way to help their former program to maintain its level of activity.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research on the proposed Narrative of the Professional theory should focus on the criteria for assessing communication theory (as outlined by Griffin, 2006; Infante, 1990; Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2017; West & Turner, 2010) include scope, logical consistency, parsimony, utility, testability, heurism, and test of time.

"A theory's scope is its comprehensiveness or inclusiveness" (Littlejohn, et al., 2017). The Narrative of the Professional has a scope that applies to all individuals who have participated in forensics. Future research regarding the scope of the Narrative of the Professional might be directed toward other forensics competitors by focusing on specific events, such as debate, or individual events. Additionally, researchers and scholars might also use the Narrative of the Professional to examine other co-curricular activities, such as FFA, livestock judging, or Enactus, to see if students or former competitors have similar experiences to those in forensics. Even activities such as sports, Greek life, or intramural activities might be studied to discover similarities or differences that might occur between these activities and more focused, co-curricular activities, such as forensics. If these other activities do not result in stories similar to that of the Narrative of the Professional, the value of forensics would be demonstrated more clearly.

Littlejohn, et al. (2017) note that the second criterion for assessing communication theory is the concept of logical consistency, or appropriateness. This means that the theory is internally consistent, and actually explains what it says that it explains (Littlejohn, et al., 2017). The assumptions of the Narrative of the Professional are based on the idea that forensics is a causal

factor for change in participants' lives. The idea that forensics participants' experiences are very similar to each other could be examined. Another assumption of the theory is that the stress that competitors experience develops the ability to deal with stress. This could be studied by looking at other stressful activities in which students participate. Additionally, other activities that develop similar skills might be studied to see if the Narrative of the Professional is true in those cases as well.

Littlejohn, et al. (2017) state that heuristic value is the third criterion for assessing communication theory. Heuristic value is the extent to which the theory produces "new ideas for research and additional theories" (Littlejohn, et al., 2017, p. 15). At the very least, this theory could help generate new research regarding forensics. Other researchers might seek to find if the Narrative of the Professional holds true for a larger sample of individuals. Additionally, scholars could test how much forensics participation is needed for the Narrative of the Professional to come to fruition. The Narrative of the Professional might be used as a marketing slogan or strategy to help explain the value of communication and forensics.

Finally, there are very few theoretical groundings regarding forensics participation. As noted several times in this study, much of the focus is on the educational value of forensics, with a focus on the skills it provides (e.g. Allen, et al., 1999; Lux, 2012; Yaremchuk, et al., 2002). Embree (2009) used transformational learning theory to explain and understand the value of forensics. Littlefield (2002) uses rhetorical theory to argue that forensics is epistemic. The Narrative of the Professional is one of a few, if not the only theory, to grow out of forensics research and directly related to forensics research. It could also stimulate further theory-building in forensics research. The Narrative of the Professional is an opportunity to frame and

understand research that has already been done (e.g. Billings, 2011; Lux, 2014; Rogers, 2005; Rogers, et al., 2017).

Validity, or testability, is the fourth criterion for evaluating communication theories (Littlejohn, et. al, 2017). The concept of validity addresses the ability to test the accuracy of the theory's claims. This is true for the Narrative of the Professional. The theory can be tested and examined through further studies of forensics participants as well as studies of individuals in other activities or situations. The Narrative of the Professional could be the basis of new studies of current competitors. Researchers could use some of the benefits and problems discussed by participants in this study, and compare them to what contemporary competitors might see as benefits or problems. The United States has undergone cultural shifts in the last 20 years, and contemporary students might see different aspects of forensics being valuable.

Similarly, former competitors who quit forensics before using their eligibility could be studied. Individuals who only competed for a year or two, and then quit, might provide more insight into the problems associated with forensics competition. Additionally, those individuals might clarify the Narrative of the Professional by offering explanations as to how much participation is necessary for the individual to perceive that they had gained what they could from competition.

Littlejohn, et al., (2017) indicate that parsimony, or simplicity, is the next criterion for evaluating communication theories. The Narrative of the Professional is not complicated: participation in forensics will help individuals develop the skills and knowledge to be a professional. This simplicity allows it to be used in a variety of settings and in a variety of ways.

Utility, or usefulness is the sixth criterion for evaluating communication theories (Infante, et al., (1990). The usefulness of the theory indicates that it might be applied in a wide range of

ways (Infante, et al., 1991). The Narrative of the Professional could be used in a number of ways. One avenue of exploration would be to use the Narrative of the Professional for recruiting by departments of communication and forensics teams. The Narrative of the Professional might be used to develop a marketing campaign or just individual materials to explain to recruits how forensics participation could be beneficial to them.

Finally, communication theories are assessed by whether or not they stand the test of time (West & Turner, 2010). As West and Turner note, this criterion can only be used "after some time has passed since the theory's creation" (p. 70). The Narrative of the Professional will have to be evaluated after a period of time has passed. Obviously, if it spurs new research and scholarship for a number of years, it will meet this criterion for assessment.

Conclusion

This study examined the stories of former forensics participants to discover the ways in which they believed forensics affected their professional life and careers. Although forensics has a long history, only recently have scholars and researchers begun to study its value. Forensics has, for a long time, been held up as a valuable activity because of the skills it develops. Debate and individual events have been held up as tools of empowerment (e.g. Warner & Bruschke, 2001), and as a means of helping all students to improve their academic prowess (e.g. Mezuk, et al., 2011). Few studies have examined the value former competitors place on forensics (e. g., Embree, 2009; Lux, 2012). This study attempted to address that dearth of information.

Previous scholarship and research regarding forensics had several deficiencies. The primary focus of most quantitative research was on critical thinking and debate. Other research and scholarship were what might be termed "think pieces," which did not develop new research nor collect new data to help address specific research questions. Also, limited research has been

119

done regarding the connections competitors and former competitors have with their institutions, teammates, and the activity.

The purpose of this study was to discover how former participants understood their forensics experiences in light of their current profession. Individuals were recruited through listserves, using convenience sampling. After conducting and transcribing interviews, they were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965). After analyzing the results, I developed the Narrative of the Professional as a way to explain and understand the narratives presented by the participants in this study.

This study supports and extends previous research regarding the value of college forensics participation. Interviews with former forensics participants provide unique insights into their experiences in competitive forensics and how it affected their lives. Not only do former individuals interviewed in this study value their time spent competing, but they also had similar experiences in their journey through forensics competition. Additionally, they felt connected to their team, their school, and other competitors. These connections were so strong that many of them remain involved in the activity or with their alma mater through a variety of alumni activities, including letter-writing, coaching for nationals, or giving money.

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APPENDIX A. LIST OF QUESTIONS

1. Tell me the story of how you came to be involved in forensics

    a. How did you learn about it?

    b. What made you try it?

2. Please talk about your participation in forensics, including the events you competed in.

    a. What did you like about forensics?

    b. Were there any things that you disliked about forensics?

3. How did it affect your life while you were competing and in school? Do you think those

    effects positive or negative?

4. How did forensics affect your life after you ended participation or competition? Do you think

    those effects were positive or negative?

5. If the person stopped competing while they had eligibility remaining (i.e. before graduation) I

    will ask why they ended their competitive career.

6. Can you tell me about the team you competed on?

    a. How did team members interact with each other?

    b. How did team members interact with the coach or coaches?

    c. How did you interact with the coach or coaches?

7. Are you still involved with the college where you competed?

    a. Do you still judge at tournaments or help students in any way?

    b. Are you involved with the college or university in any other way (attend alumni

    functions, serve on any college-related committees, etc.)?

8. Do you donate to the alumni association, or foundation?

NDSU   **North Dakota State University**
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Campus Address
NDSU Dept. 2310
PO Box 6050
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701.231.7705

Title of Research Study: Forensics Alumni Narratives

Dear _____:

My name is Robert Becker. I am a graduate student in the Department of Communication at North Dakota State University (NDSU), and). I am conducting a research project to examine the effects of forensics participation on people's lives. I hope that with this research I will learn more about why people compete, how forensics affects their lives, and how students use the skills they developed in forensics.

Because you are an alumni of _____ forensics program you are invited to participate in this research project. You will be one of approximately 20 people being interviewed for this study.

You may find it interesting and thought provoking to participate in the interview. If, however, you feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, you have the right to decline to answer any question(s), or to end the interview.

It should take about one hour to complete the interview. We will ask you about your experiences in forensics competition, and the ways those experiences affected your life. The interview will be audio recorded. We will keep private all research records that identify you. When the interview is transcribed, you will be given a pseudonym, and other potentially identifying information will be left out of the transcripts. In any written documents (including publications) regarding the study, only the pseudonym will be used.

Audio files will be stored in a password-
protected file on a computer that is only accessible to the principal investigator and co-investigators. Electronic copies of the interview transcripts will be saved and protected in the same fashion. After the data has been analyzed, the audio recordings will be deleted.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me at 307.754.6118, or contact my advisor at Mark Meister (307) 231-7705 or mark.meister@ndsu.edu.

You have rights as a research participant. If you have questions about your rights or complaints about this research, you may talk to the researcher or contact the NDSU Human Research Protection Program at 701.231.8995, toll-free at 1-855-800-6717, by email at ndsu.irb@ndsu.edu, or by mail at: NDSU HRPP Office, NDSU Dept. 4000, P.O. Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050.

Thank you for your taking part in this research. If you wish to receive a copy of the results, please contact me.

NDSU   North Dakota State University

[Communication]
[Department 2310, Minard 338]
Fargo, ND 58108-6050
[(701) 231-7705]

Title of Research Study: Forensics Alumni Narratives

This study is being conducted by:

Mark Meister   Robert Becker
Department 2310   Department 2310
Minard Hall 338   Minard Hall
NDSU   NDSU
Fargo, ND 58108-6050   Fargo, ND 58108-6050
(701) 231-7705   (307) 754-6118
Mark.meister@ndsu.edu   Robert.becker@nwc.edu

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you competed in forensics as a college student, and have not been involved in forensics for approximately ten years.

What is the reason for doing the study?

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects forensics participation may have had on your life.

What will I be asked to do? *OR What Information will be collected about me?*

You will be asked about your experiences competing on a forensics team as an undergraduate. This will include questions about your competition experience, as well as team dynamics and academic experiences. Other questions will address your experiences later in life and how they were affected by your forensics experiences.

Where is the study going to take place, and how long will it take?
This interview will take place at a location of your own choosing, and should take approximately one hour.

What are the risks and discomforts?

The risks involved in participating in this study should be minimal. However, this depends on your individual experiences participating in forensics. If you experienced harassment or discrimination as a competitor, discussion of those experiences may result in psychological distress.

What are the benefits to me?

You are not expected to get any benefit from being in this research study.

What are the benefits to other people?

This research may result in assisting forensics coaches or programs to demonstrate the importance of forensics in the face of declining budgets. Additionally, this research may help programs and coaches understand why students stop competition early, thus helping coaches understand how to better retain students.

Do I have to take part in the study? Your participation in this research is your choice. If you decide to participate in the study, you may change your mind and stop participating at any time without penalty.

What are the alternatives to being in this research study?

Instead of being in this research study, you can choose not to participate.

Who will see the information that I give?

We will keep private all research records that identify you. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study, we will write about the combined information that we have gathered. We may publish the results of the study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. Your name will be kept separate from your interview recording and transcript.

If you end your interview early, your information will be removed at your request, or retained if you request.

What if I have questions?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the research study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have any questions about the study, you can contact the researcher, Robert Becker at 307-754-6118 or robert.becker@nwc.edu; or the research supervisor, Mark Meister, at 701-231-7705 or mark.meister@ndsu.edu

What are my rights as a research participant?

You have rights as a participant in research. If you have questions about your rights, or complaints about this research, you may talk to the researcher or contact the NDSU Human Research Protection Program by:

- Telephone: 701.231.8995 or toll-free 1.855.800.6717
- Email: ndsu.irb@ndsu.edu
- Mail: NDSU HRPP Office, NDSU Dept. 4000, PO Box 6050, Fargo, ND 58108-6050.

The role of the Human Research Protection Program is to see that your rights are protected in this research; more information about your rights can be found at: www.ndsu.edu/irb .

Documentation of Informed Consent:

You are freely making a decision whether to be in this research study. Signing this form means that

1. you have read and understood this consent form
2. you have had your questions answered, and
3. you have decided to be in the study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____   _____

Your signature   Date

_____

Your printed name

_____   _____

Signature of researcher explaining study   Date

_____

Printed name of researcher explaining study