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Ross Dudley McDonald
Western Washington University

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The Great Debate, Debate: The educational and societal benefits of academic debate

Ross McDonald

Honors project 2000
Western Washington University

Dr. Kelly McDonald advisor



HONORS THESIS

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Abstract

Academic debate offers many positive benefits to both the individual and society. By examining both the relevant literature and survey and personal interviews research a multi-perceptual vision of what academic debate does for both the individual and society developed. The benefits of the activity are increased critical thinking skills, improved oral and written communication skills, research experience, information processing and exposure to many different fields of study. The primary research discussed here in supports these conclusions. These skills prepare individuals to deal with the issues facing society and make them better citizens of the nation. An examination of some of the problems with debate exposes areas to address to increase the benefit of the activity and making it accessible to more people.

Education, both secondary and collegiate, involves a series of choices. Students select among classes, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to fill their time in accord with their interests. For some, athletics fulfills their vocational and competitive interests, still others opt into participation in co-curricular programs such as student government or academic debate. This study investigates the later phenomena, that is, why do students participate in academic debate? As a participant in academic debate for five years in high school and college, I have realized a number of unique and important personal and social benefits. The benefits I have experienced have been greatly beneficial this is a study determining what others had found to be the benefits of debate. This paper first focus is on finding out the academic benefits like improved communication, critical thinking, information gathering and processing, writing, leadership skills, and how debate exposes participants to different academic fields. Second, debate's impact outside of competition in terms of the roles debaters can fill in a democratic society. Third, how different individuals feel about their own experiences going beyond the statistical studies and seeing what other participants have to say about their activity. Finally, examining some of the problems that academic debate has been criticized of. In seeking answers to these questions and greater insights into academic debate as a whole, this paper examines the relevant literature mainly communication and debate journals and books on debate along with analyzing the results from my own survey and interviews. The results were both enlightening and reassuring as they reinforced my positive attitudes towards academic debate as well as giving me greater insight into others' perceptions of the activity. Two goals of this research were: one,

improved support for and participation in academic debate and two giving those already involved a better perspective on their activity in both its positive and negative aspects.

Academic debate has a very long history going back to ancient Greece. Over the centuries it has developed into many different forms. The first scholar of debate was Protagoras of Abdera (481-411 BC) who taught debate to his students. From these early beginnings debate spread to and flourished in ancient centers of learning. The early American colonists brought this tradition with them, which became a part of the education system here. Intercollegiate debating started in the 1800's where colleges would invite one another to their campus to have a debate under agreed upon rules. These usually took place between only two colleges. These were rare events and few participated, by the 1920's however tournament debating began with multiple colleges attending. Each tournament would establish its own rules on judging, topics to be argued and what side a team would take. By 1947 tournament debating was flourishing and the National Debate Tournament (NDT) was started. This led to a standardization of rules and procedures among all tournaments so teams could qualify for the national tournament. Teams also would debate both sides of an issue - a change from the past where a team would only argue one side of an issue. In 1971 Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) began as an alternative to the NDT. CEDA was formed to promote value debating instead of the policy debating of the NDT. After time these two forms started to converge and in 1997 both offered a common policy resolution so that teams could participate in both.¹ During the 1980's parliamentary debate started as an alternative to cross examination and has flourished ever since. Academic debate is now a

¹ Freeley, A. (1993). Argumentation and debate: Critical thinking for reasoned decision making (8th ed.). (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.) 19-20.

highly structured rule-based form of argumentation that many students participate in all across the United States.

Academic debate offers many positive benefits both for the individual and for society, closely matching the goals of liberal arts education. “The study of argumentation, like that of all the humanities, offers the potential for human development through growth and interaction with the environment.”² The unique critical thinking skills fostered by academic debate benefits individuals throughout their formal education and life, potentially more than any other academic activity. Participation in academic debate provides individuals with educational benefits covering a wide spectrum from serving as a healthy competitive outlet to increased knowledge of social and political issues. However academic debate currently faces many problems and criticisms mainly about access that should be looked at more closely so that its benefits can be brought to more people.

With the long history of academic debate, it is important that one is clear on what form of debate is being discussed. For this paper, the following definitions will serve as a beginning. “Debate is a competitive speaking activity between two or more people arguing about a proposition of policy or judgment under mutually agreed-upon rules in front of a listener(s) who has the responsibility to decide who did the better job of debating, using whatever criteria the listener deems important.”³ Debate also entails, “the joint presentation of the best available evidence and reasoning, on both sides of a proposition, under established rules. Importantly, the term proposition, often referred to as the solution being tested, may also be an alleged truth, belief, or value that is being

² Patterson, J.W. & Zarefsky, D. (1983). Contemporary debate. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.) 313.

subjected to critical study.’’⁴ Under these broader definitions academic debate takes on more specific forms.

For this paper, I will be focusing on collegiate debate, specifically the formats practiced by the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) and National Debate Tournament (NDT) and National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA). While these two styles are not the sole extent of formats for collegiate academic debate in the United States, they are the two most dominant.

Cross-examination debate places two teams against each other debating out a resolution that remains constant for the entire season. The focus is on proving the resolution either true or false, using evidence from public sources such as books and newspapers. Each team is made up of two individuals who each get both a constructive and rebuttal speech. Following each constructive speech is a time for the opposing team to ask questions of the speaker.⁵

Parliamentary debate is organized of teams of two individuals. Participants consider a resolution disclosed only 15 minutes before the competition round begins and do not use externally cited authority for evidence. Instead parliamentary debate’s evidence is constituted by a common knowledge standard where one argues using examples that a typical student should know. There is also no separate questioning period and participants are to follow parliamentary procedure asking questions during their

³ Bartanen, M. & Frank, D. (1994). Nonpolicy Debate (2nd de.). (Scottsdale, Arizona: Gorsuch Scarisbrick, publishers) 3.

⁴ Keefe, C. & Harte, T. & Norton, L. (1982). Introduction to debate. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co.) 28.

⁵ Outline for a typical Cross-examination debate: (Aff)=affirmative (Neg)= Negative (CX)=Cross-examination Aff-8 min. constructive, Neg-3 min. CX, Neg-8 min. constructive, Aff-3 min. CX, Aff-8 min. constructive, Neg-3 min. CX, Neg-8 min. constructive, Aff-3 min. CX, Neg-5 min. rebuttal, Aff-5 min. rebuttal, Neg-5 min. rebuttal, Aff-5 min. rebuttal. times vary slightly depending on region.

opponent's speech. The time and speech order for parliamentary debate is structured differently than cross-examination debate.⁶

The descriptions of the specific form of academic debate this paper will be looking at leave out academic debates larger purpose. Academic debate is not simply the arguing of ideas in an organized fashion; it is a highly beneficial educational experience. "The primary purpose of debate in an academic environment is to provide educational experience for all who participate-debaters, judges, and audiences. The experiences acquired serve as preparation for any effective future participation in the types of debate essential to sustain a democratic nation."⁷ This paper will focus on this primary purpose establishing from the point of view of its participants just how it holds to this goal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Regardless of what format is used, academic debate is a valuable educational activity that provides individuals with a unique method of training in many valuable areas. Critical thinking skills are one of the most frequently cited and maybe most beneficial skills academic debate is credited with developing. Individuals also show improved oral and written communication skills. Students gain experience in research and information processing, both valuable skills for any area of academic study. By debating issues from many different angles, debaters expose themselves to many different disciplines and see the way in which they interact. By debating many important social and political issues, debaters receive invaluable experience in deciding tough issues and in-depth knowledge of subject areas. Each prepares them to be responsible and beneficial

⁶ Outline for a parliamentary debate round: (PM)=Prime Minister (LO)=Leader of Opposition (MG)=Member of Government (MO)=Member of Opposition PM-7 min. constructive, LO-7 min. constructive, MG-8 min. constructive, MO-8 min. constructive, LO-4 min. rebuttal, PM-5 min. rebuttal
⁷ Keefe, C. 28

members of a democratic society. “Academic debate is one of the most valuable education experiences. Skills in creating, researching, and defending debate positions prepares students for a lifetime of citizenship as well as career success and satisfaction.”⁸ Not only does academic debate benefit the individual in academics and career it also benefits society as a whole.

Critical Thinking

Debate educators, when asked to show the educational benefit of their programs, frequently cite increased critical thinking skills. Critical thinking encompasses a variety of skills around sound decision making. With the increasing amount of information available format the Internet and electronic media critical thinking skills are even more important today. Critical thinking is a fundamental solid part of debate as an individual must take new information and process it quickly to decide upon the next course of action for subsequent rounds of competition or in developing positions. Debate scholars have conducted many studies on the actual increase in critical thinking skills that debate fosters and they have all shown that there is indeed merit to the claim.

Critical thinking is not a term that is suited to a simple definition for it encompasses many different things. “Critical thinking involves analyzing problems. Selecting and examining evidence. Interpreting data, determining logical relationships, testing reasoning, reaching conclusion, and selecting appropriate language.”⁹ All critical skills for making good rational choices when confronted with a large amount of information. This is a fundamental skill for today’s complicated world.

⁸ Bartanen and Frank xi

⁹ Keefe, C. 33

For an individual to achieve satisfaction in life and for our democracy to work smoothly it is necessary that critical thinking be developed. "Competency in critical thinking is rightly viewed as a requisite intellectual skill for self-realization as an effective participant in human affairs, for the pursuit of higher education, and for successful participation in the highly competitive world of business and the professions."¹⁰ This skill is transferable to, "one's personal problems. Ideally, the same habits of investigation, analysis, testing, reasoning, and open mindedness will be readily transferred to one's own behavior. Individual as well as collective decisions will be made on a more rational basis."¹¹ Developing this skill is not only beneficial for an individual but is fundamental for our society to deal with the new problems it now faces.

A society such as ours rests on the shoulders of its citizens. If we think those shoulders are sagging under the burden of information too difficult and too complex for many to sort, it is not a lack of native ability that is at fault. It is our failure, generally as a culture and specifically as teachers, to invest the time, energy, and pedagogical creativity needed to foster the development of critical thinking skills in our students.¹²

This serves as a perfect argument for increasing the support of academic debate and encouraging more students to participate in the activity.

While the importance of critical thinking cannot be questioned, some wonder how beneficial debate really is in the fostering of such a skill. By analyzing the studies conducted to answer just that question, the conclusion is that the claim is indeed true. "Objective analyses of the defensible studies indicate academic debating consistently enhances participant critical thinking abilities. And under certain conditions and

¹⁰ Freeley, A. & Steinberg, D. (2000). Argumentation and debate: Critical thinking for reasoned decision making (10th ed.). (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company) 1.

¹¹ Keefe, C. 34

¹² Murphy, S. & Samosky, J. (1993). Argumentation and debate: Learning to think critically. Speaker and Gavel, 30,(1-4), (39-45) 40.

instructional approaches, debating can significantly increase critical thinking abilities.”¹³

A recent meta-analysis of the critical thinking studies helps to resolve some of the conflicting issues surrounding the merits of forensics competition.

The most important outcome of the present meta-analysis is that regardless of the specific measure used to assess critical thinking, the type of design employed, or the specific type of communication skill training taught, critical thinking improved as a result of training in communication skills. The findings illustrate that participation in public communication skill building exercises consistently improved critical thinking. Participation in forensics demonstrated the largest improvement in critical thinking scores whether considering longitudinal or cross-sectional designs.¹⁴

This meta study demonstrated that the improvement in critical thinking crosses through all styles of collegiate debate. The positive impacts of academic debate reflected in the meta, “reaffirms what many ex-debaters and others in forensics, public speaking, mock trial, or argumentation would support: participation improves the thinking of those involved.”¹⁵ Academic debates ability to uniquely foster critical thinking becomes one of the strongest reasons why it is such an important activity.

Experience in how to think critically is certainly one of the most important attributes one can develop. It does not begin with a first course in argumentation and debate, nor will it end with one. However, experience in academic debate could be a peak period for critical thinking in one’s lifetime of learning. We know that with experience, debates improve their critical faculty. We also know that successful citizens regard this germinative period as one in which the acquisition of critical thinking through actual experience produces a valued asset for the future.¹⁶

It is clear that training in debate fosters the important skill of critical thinking but this alone is not the only important skill that debate develops.

¹³ Colbert, K. (1995). Enhancing Critical Thinking ability Through Academic Debate. Contemporary Argumentation & Debate, The Journal of the Cross Examination debate association, 16, (52-72) 52.

¹⁴ Allen, M. & Berkowitz, S. & Hunt, S. & Loudon, A. (1999). A meta-analysis of the impact of forensics and communication education on critical thinking. Communication education, 48, (18-29) 27.

¹⁵ Allen, M. & Berkowitz, S. & Hunt, S. & Loudon, A. 28

¹⁶ Keefe, C. 35

Additional Skills Promoted

Debate is fundamentally a communication activity, and as such fosters many skills associated with communication. Debate serves as a training ground for how to make good arguments, to think on your feet and to listen well. It also gives participants the poise and confidence necessary to convince another person of a position.

The debate round is an intense learning environment where an individual's communication skill is developed and honed. "Debate provides an unexcelled opportunity for students to apply the theories of argumentation under conditions designed to increase their knowledge and understanding of these theories and proficiency in their use."¹⁷ Debate, while developing critical thinking skills also develops the ability to communicate those thoughts. Simply being able to think well and come up with good ideas is not enough - one must also be able to communicate them. "In learning to debate, students learn the skills required for communicating ideas to others."¹⁸ In communicating one's ideas debate teaches students that presentation can be just as important as any other aspect of the argument. "The end result [of debate participation] is a positive attitude that develops personal poise and confidence as a supplement to the thoroughly prepared argument. The debate with adequate preparation and a positive attitude certainly has the potential for persuading an audience to accept his point of view."¹⁹ The pressure of a debate round forces the rapid recognition and development of critical skills that work.

¹⁷ Freeley (10th) 23.

¹⁸ Murphy, S. & Samosky, J. (1993). Argumentation and debate: Learning to think critically. Speaker and Gavel, 30,(1-4), (39-45) 45.

¹⁹ Keefe, C. 37.

Listening well is critical to developing good arguments and communicating one's ideas. Both parliamentary and cross-examination debate give one the opportunity to ask questions of their opponent. To do this well, one must have critical listening skills to really know what an opponent has said. "Selecting the properly worded questions is a real challenge to the thought process. Knowing how to select the right answer also is based on listening."²⁰ This is a valuable skill for all aspects of life and gives an individual a real advantage when interacting with others. For by listening well one is able to follow arguments and instructions and reply appropriately avoiding confusion and irrelevant arguments.

In preparing for debate tournaments debaters do large amounts of research on the topic area and other pertinent issues. This develops very proficient research methods among debate participants. "[The] Research on debate topics is comprehensive...everything that relates to the question becomes the object of attention. Thus, the comprehensive nature of this research is difficult to match in any other educational activity."²¹ This in-depth information gathering leads a debater to develop skills necessary to conduct effective research. By, "respecting opinion and pursuing truth, one gradually develops a healthy intellectual attitude toward scholarly activity.... develops ability to organize materials..." and "efficient and orderly methods of classification."²² The strong researching skills prove valuable both in academia and the work place.

Debaters while researching and arguing different positions come at an issue from many different angles encompassing a number of liberal arts disciplines.

²⁰ Keefe, C. 35

²¹ Keefe, C. 30

“In addition to practice in the use of speech and English, the debater confront specific problems in the areas of history, economics, political science, psychology, and sociology. This broad integration of several of the liberal arts adds a whole dimension to the benefits generated by research. Rarely does a student have such an excellent opportunity to draw from a variety of points of view a dynamic perspective of what the liberal arts education is really about.²³

This research in many different academic fields helps make debate a unique and beneficial activity for students. “Debate is a life-skill. So much of the specific information we learn in classes will become quickly outdated. In a world where the amount of information is exploding, the key is probably not what a person learns but whether a person learns how to learn.”²⁴ Academic debate, given its competitive aspect, pushes students to develop the skills necessary to reviews and process a good deal of information quickly, a skill that they take with them into the world.

To value academic debate simply by the skills that it develops does not get recognize the full benefits of the activity to the individual. Beyond the skill development is the intellectual simulation that debate provides.

But even if one were to exclude all pragmatic rationalizations, debate can still have real, if unquantifiable, intellectual value to the individual. The ultimate worth of debate lies in its nature as a liberal art and its special value to the debater for developing with in him a greater awareness and perhaps a greater sensitivity to differing point of view. This value will, . . . lead to the realization of the more practical benefits accredited to debate. John Stuart Mill once hypothesized that men are men before they are lawyers or physicians; but if you make them capable and sensible men, they become capable and sensitive lawyers or physicians.²⁵

²² Keefe, C. 31

²³ Keefe, C. 31

²⁴ Bartanen and Frank 8-10.

²⁵ Thomas, D. & Hart, J. (Eds.). (1987). Advanced debate: Readings in theory practice and teaching (3rd. ed.). (Lincolnwood, Illinois: National Textbook Company) 10.

Debate creates capable and sensible individuals with a greater awareness of issues and sensitivity to differing views. This makes them valuable contributors to their society beyond individual skills honed by academic debate.

Benefits for Society

The benefits of debate reach beyond just the individual and affect all of society by creating individuals knowledgeable about issues facing the country and trained in the key tools necessary for democratic society. Debate topics cover many of the controversial issues facing our country today, educating participants on the many aspects of these difficult issues, issues ranging from the environment to civil rights law to rogue states. By being educated in these subjects and developing their argumentative skills debaters are ready to help solve the issues facing our country. "Debate is the foundation of a free society. Effective government and the smooth operation of society require people who are willing and able to develop and argue their positions in a practical way.... Disputes do, of course, sometimes escalate. But in contexts in which people use meaningful, productive, fair debate, we can address and explore problems adequately and competing positions fully before reaching decisions."²⁶ Debate becomes "a tool subject. Instrumental in helping people carry on the essential functions of a democratic society."²⁷

Criticisms

While examining the benefits of debate, it is important not to ignore some of its criticism. The time spent researching, traveling, practicing and debating tends to isolate debaters from their communities, and this lack of connection is a major problem for the activity. Debate is criticized for encouraging unrealistic arguments and a style of

²⁶ Bartanen and Frank 8-10.

²⁷ Keefe, C. 30.

speaking inaccessible to a lay audience.²⁸ Another major criticism is the lack of representation of our diverse country. Debate seems to be an activity of the elite for the elite only representing those in college with the time and financial resources to participate. With the increased use of computers for research, new concerns and criticisms have developed pointing to the cost of using these resources and how this increases the gap between wealthy and poor programs.

There is no disputing that debate takes up large amounts of a student's time; what is given up to make the time necessary to debate is where the criticism lies. Debaters can easily become trapped academic world of debate losing sight of their connection with their community and campus. Instead of interacting with their fellow students or serving as volunteers or activist for organizations they believe in, their time is spent getting ready for competitions. This is a concern if we are to accept that these individuals are so versed in the issues of the day and are especially fit to serve their communities. While academic debate nurtures the qualities of good citizens, it leaves them with very little time to act as citizens. Closer examination of this issue brings to light several mitigating facts. The first of which is that debaters do participate in their communities post-graduation leaving debate and using the skills they have developed to contribute to society. In this light debate should be seen as a training ground for future involvement. Additionally, not all students are stuck during the research for this paper many individuals indicated their involvement in the community or knowledge of others involvement, this will be dealt with in the interview chapter of this paper.

²⁸ Gentry, J. (2000). But when they shine: Great students in policy debate. The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta, 85(2), (1-10) 1.

Academic debate's encouragement of unrealistic arguments and enthusiasm for a style of speaking not understandable or accessible to a lay audience are seen as negative aspects of the activity. "There are many who wonder whether academic debate in CEDA of NDT any longer provides real world argumentation skills."²⁹ This was one reason parliamentary debate was formed with its focus on a common knowledge standard and its emphasis on accessible communication, as opposed to the shotgun approach argument delivery that dominates cross examination debate. While these complaints are well founded, even counter-intuitive arguments have benefit. "There is value in exposing students to a wide range of arguments, including ones that, at first glance, seem illogical or tangential to the debate topic. Creativity breeds innovation, and the challenge is to nurture creativity while keeping debate closely linked to real-world arguments."³⁰ This is a challenge that activity must embrace or risk losing touch with the greater community.

Debate faces a great disparity when it comes to the people that it represents. It is an activity dominated by white men, typically middle and upper class. There are many constraints and barriers to entry, both social and economic, which keeps debate from having a diverse membership. This is slowly changing; there are many more women participating and with more community out-reach programs such as urban debate leagues there are moves being made to solve this problem. It is important that this academic activity be open to all who wish to participate, and that more students get an opportunity to benefit from what it can teach.

With the greater dependency on computer-aided research than ever before with the increased access to electronic data bases, there have been concerns about the type of

²⁹ Rowland, R. (1995). The practical pedagogical function of academic debate. Contemporary argumentation and debate, 16, (98-108) 98.

argument this develops and a growing gap in competitiveness between programs simply as a result of their funding for computer resources. This ignores the great benefit to be gained from computer aided research. "No one disputes that depth of research carried out by the debaters of today. And contemporary debaters, who often access materials through computer services, are for more up to date on crucial issues on any topic than were debates in previous generations."³¹ Additionally while computer resources are expensive, they do not add to the gap between wealthy and poor programs this all ready exists electronic data bases can actually help to solve the gap. "Access to Lexis/Nexis has served to level the playing field for many debate programs."³²

In comparing the criticisms of debate it is clear that it is a highly valuable academic activity that benefits not only the individual but society as a well. It is important to remember, however, the criticisms that do exist and continue to work to address these issues. Debate needs to be kept, at least in some aspects grounded in the real world so students learn about what is actually going on in the world instead of coming up with the most off-the-wall argument possible. It is fundamental to the health of the activity that as a whole it continues to promote and encourage participation from groups that traditionally have not been represented. As with any change, such as computers, the activity needs to recognize the problems and potentials that exist, addressing them quickly so that the activity can benefit from the change.

³⁰ Bartanen and Frank 11.

³¹ Rowland 98.

³² Morris, E. & Fritch, J. (1996/97). The challenge of computers in debate. The Forensic Educator, 11, (20-25) 21.

METHOD

The literature review included an examined of many surveys conducted by others and from this was developed a survey that would focus on developing a picture of what people's personal perspective on academic debate was as a comparison. Most of the surveys examined in the literature review were based around specific academic development and establishment of provable benefits of debate. The survey for this research was designed to elicit individuals' feelings on the benefits and problems of debate getting a more personal view of the activity. One critical question driving this study was, did the personal views of the participants reflect what the literature said, was academic debate a valuable academic activity for both the individual and society?

Based on the review of prior research, this study was made up of two parts: a survey and a structured interview section. This format allowed the examination of two types of data and achieves a greater diversity of responses. Every participant received assurance of confidentiality to encourage honest answers to the question.³³ The survey was made up of eleven questions, covering basic demographics and Likert-type scale questions asking participants to rank opinions on certain issues.³⁴ The goal was to develop a data set reflecting a broad range of opinions on specific issues that had emerged from the literature review. Specifically, did individuals see academic debate as increasing their awareness of social/political issues, having societal benefits, developing applicable skills, and allowing for outside access? Following what the literature says the expectation would be that there would be strong support for all of these except for the last one, which their would disagreement with. A survey allowed for scaled data and cross-

³³ See appendix #1 for consent letter

tabulation between demographics and opinion to draw out themes. The goal of the structured interview portion of the study was for participants to express their own feelings and get a richer more in-depth view of how individuals felt about academic debate. It allowed respondents to go beyond the structure of the survey and provide insights, clarifications and elaborations that had not developed in the literature review. The interviews were structured around seven questions³⁵ written in an open-ended style, as to not constrain the interviewee in their answer. The questions served as a guide to draw out feelings about change for the individual as well as the activity, academic debate's meaning for the individual, its openness to new participants and its affect outside of academia. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

While the interviews provided valuable insight into people's thoughts and feelings on academic debate, they were limited because of the time required to conduct personal interviews. To mitigate this problem, two open-ended questions in the survey asked for respondents to come up with an analogy for debate and three adjectives that described debate to them. This was another way for participants to provide detailed personal insights into their impressions of academic debate.

The survey results were very encouraging, showing that debaters predominantly viewed debate as a positive educational experience. The strong agreement for educational benefits was overwhelming; not only increasing an individual's personal knowledge in one subject but across many issues and encouraging the skills necessary to communicate that knowledge with others.

³⁴ See appendix #2 for survey questionnaire

³⁵ Appendix #3 is the interview guide a list of the questions

Research Participants

Overall 51 participants completed surveys and 13 participated in interviews. Nearly equal numbers of participants from parliamentary and cross examination debate formats completed the surveys. The surveys were conducted during the 1999-2000 season at regional debate tournaments in the northwest covering Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and part of California. The interviews were conducted over the same period at Western Washington University to members of the university debate team.

When sampling the community the survey participants were 35.3% female and 64.7% male a much larger discrepancy than expected. It is even greater considering that the Western team has a fairly equal balance of females to males and this was a large portion of the data set. The other very apparent fact about debate is the limited ethnic background of the participants. Of those surveyed only 16% were non-white the remaining 84% participants identified themselves as white.

Not surprisingly, the age range of those surveyed was clustered quite tightly 92.2% of the people surveyed were between the ages 18 and 25 only 2% between 25 and 30 leaving only 6% between 30 and 40. This being a collegiate activity and with most of the coaches and judges coming recently from their own debate careers, this young grouping was expected.

Overall, this study looked at a small, but fairly typical sampling of the debate community, covering a range of activities and backgrounds. The sample included individuals with different levels of experience, providing a perspective of individuals just entering debate, to others who have been participating in the activity for eight or more years.

RESULTS

Survey Results

Debate is an educational activity yet, some times this simple fact gets lost in all of the competition. The survey is encouraging in that people indicated they picked up educational benefits from debate. The responses to the four statements: debate has increased my political awareness; debate participation has made me more socially aware; debate has made me more aware of global issues; and debate has enhanced my critical thinking skills were all in strong agreement.

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the statement, "Debate has increased my political awareness," over 98% of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with a mean score of 4.8. This was a very encouraging result as debate is predominately about contemporary political issues and having an active and aware population is important to a democracy. It is also encouraging as it reinforces the conclusions of the benefits of academic debate found in literature.

Over 86% of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statement "Debate participation has made me more socially aware," with the mean score of 4.47. This was encouraging as it indicated that for an overwhelming majority of participants debate had actually made them more aware of societal issues. This indicates that even if debaters are separated from their communities as a result of spending their time debating they are aware of the issues that are present out side of academia. This shows that academic debate educates its participants in the issues that face our society and in so doing makes them better prepared to participate in addressing these issues.

Over 98% of participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “Debate has made me more aware of global issues,” with a mean score of 4.84. Not only does debate make students aware of social issues but it also makes them more aware of global issues making them better prepared to be global citizens and understand how local issues work in a larger context. With the ever-greater connectivity of our globe, awareness of these types of issues is extremely important.

Over 96% of participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “Debate has enhanced my critical thinking skills,” with a mean score of 4.73. While this does not have the soundness of the other studies that were cited in this paper, it indicates that respondents hold the perception that they increase their critical thinking skills.

The rest of the questions did not receive as decisive a percentage and so made making any conclusion of them more difficult. They do serve as interesting indicators though and provide some insight into some of the issues that debaters see in their activity.

Self-confidence is something very important for every individual and debate can provide a great route to achieving it. To the statement, “Debate training has improved my self confidence,” over 76% “agreed” or “strongly agreed.” This shows that a majority of people sees debate as helping their self confidence but the lower percentage does not give as strong an endorsement as the other questions. It does, however, show one of the strengths of debate.

Surprisingly, in response to the statement, “Debate presentational skills are not applicable outside of competition,” over 80% either “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” This is surprising in light of the critiques that debate does not teach real world argumentation skills and that it is hard to understand by a lay audience. It can partially be

explained by parliamentary debaters whose activity is much more accessible than cross examination but the high percentage indicates that even cross-examination debaters see themselves building valuable skills.

Along this same line, the statement, "Debate is not accessible to a general, public audience," got 41% saying "agree" and 27% neutral. By adding those who "strongly agree" a majority sees debate as accessible to the public. This, however, does not go very far to answer the critique that debate is not accessible. It, combined with the previous question, seems to indicate that while skills are being developed they are the skills of quick thinking and word allocation and other skills that are not as easy to observe for an untrained audience.

To the statement "Debate has fostered professional contacts," The results were inconclusive, the two significant grouping of responses were 35% "agree" and 33% "neutral." It seems that as far future business contacts go academic debate is not particularly helpful.

The strong social connections and community bonds created by debate were indicated by the response to the statement, "Debate has fostered personal contacts," over 92% of respondents "agree" or "strongly agree." This is a strong indicator of the friendly atmosphere that exists among this activity although it is also highly competitive. This combination is very healthy and beneficial for all that participate.

The response to the statement, "Debate participants are my main social group," were mixed with only 56% indicating they either "agree" or "strongly agree." While these percentages do not support a strong conclusion it speaks to the large amounts of time that debates spend together simply working and at tournaments. It supports the

hypothesis that students find time to participate in debate by sacrificing socialization outside the activity. The next question directly deals with this question.

To the statement, "Debate prevents socializing outside of the community," results were very mixed as; 47% either "disagree" or "strongly disagree" and 35% "agree" or "strongly agree." From this, it is very difficult to draw any strong conclusion. However, combined with the question above, there is an indication of a downside to the amount of time that debate takes up in a person's life. It seems logical that the reality is that while debaters in general socialize outside of debate they are at the same time constrained by their busy schedules.

The response to the statement, "Debate has negatively affected my academic performance," got mixed results over 45% "disagree" or "strongly disagree" with 27% "neutral" it is difficult to make a conclusion. It would seem that for all of the time constraints that debate creates it does not create such a pressure that it hurts academics to any significant degree. When considered with all of its benefits it would seem to be no problem at all.

This study provided many different insights about academic debate challenging some assumptions and supporting others. It serves as a good point to go more in-depth on some of the issues that were brought up but for which the evidence was inconclusive. With the limited number of people surveyed with limited questions this survey offers many points where more study could be done.

Interview Results

Each question on the survey looked at a particular aspect of academic debate where there was the potential for interesting insight from participants. The original goal was to summarize the responses to each question and conclude directly off the seven questions that were asked this, however, did not work out. The wording of the questions led people to comment on many things and not necessarily what I was looking for with the question. Therefore, I have divided the different comments into five categories not necessarily following from the questions I asked. They are: female participation, separation from and participation in outside world, skill development, social aspects, and accessibility for new participants.

Males (as seen in the literature and the survey) heavily dominate academic debate, yet more and more women are joining. This has caused some changes in the community, but women still face hurdles to participation. As far as the changes go, participant 23 put it well when she said, “there have been programs from the debate community that want to talk about sexual harassment or women and that is really good. It is mostly because women who were in debate have finally become parts of the NDT establishment and running it in terms of running programs.” Slowly women are becoming more of a presence in the debate world but not everyone sees much change. As this participant noted, “I don’t think I could say I have seen any change (26).”

The social attitudes that perceive debate as an activity only men do still present a hurdle for women. As participant 45 indicated when she said, “I don’t think there are enough women participating in CEDA. I think debate is a male-dominated activity

because people just want to vote for men more. It is hard, even as a women sitting in the back of the room, watching people debate. Men just look better doing it because it has traditionally been a male activity. More females need to join and not be scared off because they can be just as good.” It is important that the activity recognize these types of barriers and work to overcome them. Hopefully, the view of participant 28 will eventually be shared by more, “in the rounds themselves people seem to consider judges and competitors on basis of skill and not on gender.”

In the interviews and in the literature there was much discussion of debate as being separated from the real world both in arguments and in actual seclusion. In the interviews, I found that people saw the problem as a major issue but also saw ways that debate was not closed off.

Academic debate is frequently described as a world unto itself that separates individuals from their community and skews their view of the world. Proponents of this view point to debate’s unrealistic arguments that are not based on any real world perspective. Arguments with nuclear war impacts or other global destruction scenarios serve as examples. For some debaters, their very perception of current events is changed, as described by participant 23, “I cannot read a newspaper and not think of disadvantage links or whatever. In some ways it is sad when something terrible happens. I can’t think of it in terms of the people, first off I think of what kind of argument that would make our how that would feed the uniqueness to a position of something.” This does not mean, though, that debates are unaware of disinterested in the world around them.

Many people talked about how academic debate prepares students for future involvement as well as serving as a basis for current involvement. “We are pretty shut

off from the outside community except for those who leave debate when it is all said and done leave with lots of good skills that they can use outside in the work force. (42)”

Another respondent adds, “Well besides just preparing people from high school to college to be engaged in the world I think that the it offers the opportunity that is not quite grasped. There is lots of talk now about debaters as activists not just being in the ivory tower and I am sure that could only become more and more prevalent. (23)”

Supporting this idea is participant 24, “I know other people could do good stuff and I have talked to debaters outside of the team who fight for causes such as the WTO or do child care for the poor work with head start because debate empowers them it empowers their causes.” There is also the simple form of involvement where debaters inform their friends about what they have been debating and in doing so inform people about important issues. “I think it makes debaters more aware so that they can tell other people about it. Like this year, we are doing the Iraq case and before I started, I knew nothing about what was going on in Iraq but now whenever I am with my friends I can tell them what is going on. (44)” This discussion shows in many ways that academic debate does not completely separated people from the outside real world. Yet in these interviews, while people acknowledged a certain hint of seclusion, they presented many examples of involved debaters and how debate directly made them better able to be involved.

The interviews gave examples of people’s personal perception of the skills and knowledge they gained from debate. The most common developments discussed were self-confidence, speaking ability and awareness of social and global issues. This offers further evidence of debate’s educational value.

Debate is a great identity-builder increasing an individual's personal self-confidence giving them the ability to stand up for what they believe as well as accept a loss. Participant 23 when discussing her favorite tournament (her first experience at a major national level debate tournament) said it was her favorite because, "I felt like I contributed to our success a total confidence builder and identity builder." This confidence gives people the ability to stand up and refute what their opponents are claiming. "I have great self confidence that I can beat any argument. Now when people make an argument, I say, "no that is wrong because of this" automatically, while before I would be like, "well ok I guess that would be a good idea but." (41)" Academic debate can make people less shy as well as make them comfortable with losing. "It has been great for opening me up. When I started debate I was extremely shy; now I don't have problem talking with people. It also teaches you how to lose well (44)"

In almost any pursuit, communication skills and self-confidence are critical tools to have; these are exactly the kind of skills that the participants indicated debate promoted. "The skills acquired from debate give people confidence, public speaking abilities, and argumentation skills that would not otherwise be available to people. It is my opinion that debaters will go on to be the intellectuals and policymakers of the world. (48)" Less experienced debaters commonly discussed how they, "have learned word allocation. I don't waste time explaining like my original claim before getting to the warrant, I am just like claim, warrant, I am much more logical and precise. (41)"

Participants frequently discussed how their view of the world had altered and their increased awareness about issues they would not normally have pursued. "My experience in debate has significantly changed the way I view the world. I have been exposed to

new ideas, beliefs, and the world of intellectuals. (48)” One reoccurring theme was the increased awareness of the interconnectedness and dependence of the world. “I think most of all is being able to perceive how every thing effects everything else, how people effect other people how our policies effect people. I think interconnections between things has been one thing debate brings out. (26)” It also exposes people to different ideas that they would not have been aware of otherwise. “I am more aware of political issues and more aware issues or theories like deterrence theory that I would not necessarily ascribe to if it were not for debate, I don’t necessarily believe it is true. I know a lot about weapons and lots of technical government stuff that I cannot imagine I would know if it were not for debate. (43)” The educational benefits were some thing that most participants talked about. “I think it has probably been better educationally for me than all my other classes. It has taught me a lot about critical thinking and argument skills, I have learned a lot about postmodernist theory I understand critiques better than I think I would if I had learned that stuff in a class room. (43)” Fundamentally, “debate has the ability to make people aware of social issues and make learning fun. (47)”

One aspect of debate that came out in the interviews was the importance of the social side of debate, something the literature tended not to discuss. The social aspects of debate were very important and served a necessary role for many of the interviewees. “Well, for me debate is a way, like in high school, to find all my friends. It is how I found the people I live with. It is kind of a safety net of people who don’t mind using big words and argue about things that matter to them. (46)” People are not in debate simply to win but instead to learn meet people and have fun. “Debate has given me a chance to have some fun and meet people. I think those are my two main goals: not winning every

round, just going out and having fun. (42)” The social interactions are also very important. “Most important for me has been interactions among peers. (26)”

In many ways, debate is a closed activity making its benefits available for only a few. In the interviews, people’s views on how debate was both closed and open came out. When asked to describe how debate is closed, responses were generally in agreement, with participant 23 who said. “It’s closed because of our particular speaking style. We intimidate a lot of people with our language and our lingo. These are all things that just evolve, you know, in intellectual communities. I am sure the same thing happens in sports. You know, people talk about wide end receivers and I just, like, tune out because I don’t really understand what they are talking about. (23)” The time commitment was another barrier that was brought up. “I think it is closed because of the amount of work debaters have to do and the amount of time that they spend together. (26)” The language and the time commitment were to two most mentioned barriers along with peoples feelings, that if they didn’t do it in high school they are not going to be able to get in and achieve any thing. (28)” These barriers need to be examined to see if it is possible to encourage more participation by larger groups of people by helping them around those barriers. When asked to describe how debate was open one response was, “I think it is open because we talk about things that affect everyone that everyone has access to on the news. (23)” There was also a feeling that the community of coaches try to make the activity open. “I feel that in some ways it remains open is the willingness of most coaches to let people try it, try it at least once no matter how inexperienced they are to see what they can do. (28)” These are encouraging signs but the major barriers of language

time commitment and lack of experience are difficult to overcome and all effort should be made to overcome them.

Personal Statements

The personal statements in the form of an analogy and three adjectives provide the most interesting as well as rewarding of any of the results that came out of the study. While interesting and creative they proved to be difficult to establish groupings for tabulating. What emerged though were strong themes that provide insight into what participants think about academic debate.

The adjectives that were provided were grouped around common themes than tabulated to determine the most common adjectives that were used. Out of this came 59 different adjectives with an amazingly wide range. In grouping them and coming up with categories a very definite trend developed. Of the 51 surveys 20 used "Fun", 14 "Educational" and 8 "Frustrating" as descriptors for debate. These were the largest concentrations on single adjectives. The top fifteen with their frequencies are shown in the following table.

Fun 6	Intense 5	Exciting 6	Challenging 7
Competitive 7	Educational 3	Fulfilling 5	Rewarding 2
Stressful 6	Exhausting 7	Time consuming 2	Work 8
Stimulating 2	Frustrating 3		

The results give a vision of an activity that, while many will describe it with a negative adjective, the overwhelming majority describes its positives. This gives a picture of an activity that people do in spite of what problems it might create. Its benefits being fun and educational are overwhelmingly dominant. After years of participation in

the activity, listening to people complain about the problems debate created for them, and reading all of the literature that discussed the problems with the activity and its decline these results were very uplifting. People saw academic debate as a fun, educational activity the best description possible for a collegiate co-curricular activity.

The analogies that people came up with were equally interesting but much harder to draw conclusions from. When you allow a group of debaters free reign to come up with analogies you come up with some very interesting ones.³⁶ Unfortunately, it made it more difficult to draw any kind of larger conclusions from them. The two largest groupings were around drug and sports analogies. Drugs describing the addictive aspect of academic debate, and sports, give the strict rules of competition and different tactics, which were the most salient explanations used by participants.

Looking at the study as a whole, with both types of information gathered, a vision of academic debate emerges as the individuals participating see it. This vision is a positive one, reaffirming the positive aspects of debate indicated in the literature and in similar studies.³⁷ In the survey, data showed a strong perception of the academic value of debate along with the healthy social aspects. The interviews reflected more on some of the problems of debate but still were primarily positive showing that people saw debate as a truly valuable and positive part of their college experience.

DISCUSSION

This paper has explored academic debate looking for its positive and negative aspects while seeking insight through personal experience. The results from this exploration have been very rewarding. One of the motivations behind this study for me

³⁶ See appendix #4 for a sample of the broad range of responses

³⁷ Jones, K. (1994). Cerebral Gymnastics 101: Why do Debates Debate? *CEDA Yearbook*, 15 (65-75).

was to learn more about an activity that has taken up much of my college life. In the early formulation of this study the concern was that the results would be negative. That there would be resentment from other participants about the time commitment and work that debate takes and that the literature would be filled with nay sawyers talking about the death of the activity as a for gone conclusion with nothing worth saving. Yet upon further readings and while actually conducting interviews the opposite conclusion developed. It was very reassuring that participation in academic debate as seen through the eyes of its participants, created many benefits for both the individual and society. Participants described it as an exciting activity that they enjoy very much despite the stress and hard work.

Academic debate has a long and prestigious history. It is part of the fabric of our culture and it is quite clear from this paper and the supporting articles and research that it will continue to benefit individuals and society in many ways. In light of these facts, it is paramount that the benefits of the activity be made more public, that it continues to receive support from institutions, and that it is made accessible to more individuals.

The literature review conclusively shows the many academic skills that debate promotes. The activity deserves credit for creating an environment where so many beneficial skills are all promoted together and for teaching individuals the skills that will benefit them for their entire lives in a way that is not only very effective but also fun. The participants' responses in the survey attest to their enjoyment of the learning environment and their recognition of its benefits.

In the survey, participants acknowledged the benefits of academic debate that other studies had indicated and also pointed to the strong social bonds that it creates. In

generating strong social groups, academic debate provides a unique environment where students and faculty can freely discuss important ideas. Although it is a competitive activity the competition does not keep people from freely associating with others and creating social connections and friendships. This one place that the study, due to its focus on more academic benefits did not explore in depth and provides an area for future research.

This paper has argued that academic debate has numerous benefits for society as a whole. The evidence suggests that it does not just teach people important skills but also encourages them to be active and aware participants in society. Many of the skills that academic debate promotes have been shown to be skills valuable for participation in a democratic society. The issues debated in academic debate are serious issues facing our society and participants are more prepared to deal with them by being more educated about them. Both the interview and survey data show that participants support these same ideas. They indicate that they are more active and more aware specifically as a result of academic debate. All of this indicates that the original premise is true: academic debate does have societal benefits.

A number of other topics deserve further study examining how to make academic debate more open to a wider range of participants. The difficulty lies within finding a balance between making it more accessible and making it so easy that skill development becomes insignificant. Further study might investigate alternative forms of academic debate or modifications of existing forms. The goal of further research should be to encourage more female and minority participation. Out-reach programs, such as urban

debate leagues, have the potential to achieve these results and find ways to keep novice competitors in the activity after they have joined.

The survey faces obvious limits due to the lack of diversity and few women in the survey data. One of the problems in debate is the domination of the community by males, which was reflected in the survey. This is something that is recognized by those in the activity but the large difference was dramatically indicated by the survey. It is an area where further study would be beneficial focusing on women participants more to determine any differences in opinions that might results.

Debate also suffers from a lack of diversity among participanst and as a result the survey has a very small sample of minorities. This is a potential are for more reserch and an important one to further explore options to alive this problem. Potentially with further study ways to encourage the participation of individuals form more divers backgrounds can be developed.

The survey also faced a limit due to the regional focus of the study. Without going outside of the Northwest region it is impossible to determine if the conclusions will hold true for all other regions. This can potentially be addressed by doing further study at national level tournaments or at the two national champion ship tournaments. The survey resutls do corespond with other sudies though so the likley hood of any large diffence is unlikley. Research in comparing regions though would be a valuable in developing an over all picture of academic debate.

Appendix #1

Dear research participant:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. The principal researcher for this study is an undergraduate student in the Honors Program at Western Washington University. The advisor for this project is a faculty member at Western Washington University who is overseeing this research as part of the coursework and requirements for completion of a bachelor's degree with honors at WWU. The Department of Communication at Western Washington University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

I am interested in learning about participants' attitudes regarding their involvement in collegiate debate. You will participate in a brief interview lasting 15-20 minutes and will complete a short survey. The interview discussion will be taped for purposes of data collection and analysis.

Your participation is solicited, although it is strictly voluntary. We assure you that your name will not be associated in any way with the research finding. Materials taken from the interviews or surveys will only note that "male" or "one female" made the comments. No other names or identifiers will be used in the final write-up.

If you would like additional information about the study feel free to contact me.

Thank you for participating.

Sincerely,

Ross D. McDonald
Principal Investigator

Kelly M. McDonald, Ph.D.
Research Advisor
Department of Communication
103 College Hall
Western Washington University
Bellingham, WA 98225-9102
(360) 650-3877

Signature of subject

By signing, the subject certifies that he or she is at least 18 years of age.

Appendix # 2

Questionnaire

Participant Number: _____

1. Sex: (Please place an 'X' in the appropriate box) _____ Female _____ Male
2. Ethnic background: (Please place an 'X' in the appropriate box) _____ Black-African Native Descent
 _____ Asian or Pacific Islander
 _____ Hispanic
 _____ White (not Hispanic)
 _____ American Indian of Alaskan Native
3. Age: (Please place an 'X' in the appropriate box) _____ less than 18
 _____ 18 – 20
 _____ 21 – 25
 _____ 26 – 30
 _____ 31 – 40
 _____ 40 – 49
 _____ 50 and over
4. Involvement in debate: (Please place an 'X' in all that apply) _____ Competitor
 _____ Coach / Judge

Please indicate the number of years you have been involved in debate in the appropriate blanks. For example, "1" would denote one year of involvement in high school debate.

5. Number of years of competition in debate: _____ High school
 _____ College
6. Number of years coaching / judging debate: _____ High school
 _____ College

Please check all that apply:

7. Type of debate I was involved with as a competitor: _____ NPDA _____ CEDA _____
 NDT
8. Type of debate I was involved with as a coach / judge: _____ NPDA _____
 CEDA _____ NDT

9. Please complete the following statement:

Debate is like _____.

Please explain why you selected the object or idea you used for your comparison.

10. Please list three adjectives that you would use to describe your experience in participating in collegiate debate:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

11. Please respond to the series of statements below by circling the number that corresponds with your answer.

Note that "1=strongly disagree", "2=disagree", "3=neutral", "4=agree", "5=strongly agree."

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
a. Debate has increased my political awareness	1	2	3	4	5
b. Debate presentational skills are not applicable outside of competition	1	2	3	4	5
c. Debate has fostered professional contacts	1	2	3	4	5
d. Debate participants are my main social group	1	2	3	4	5
e. Debate has enhanced my critical thinking skills	1	2	3	4	5
f. Debate training has improved my self confidence	1	2	3	4	5
g. Debate prevents socializing outside of the community	1	2	3	4	5
h. Debate participation has made me more socially aware	1	2	3	4	5
i. Debate has fostered personal contacts	1	2	3	4	5
j. Debate has made me more aware of global issues	1	2	3	4	5
k. Debate has negatively affected my academic performance	1	2	3	4	5
l. Debate is not accessible to a general, public audience	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix #3

Interview Guide

1. In your experience in debate what changes in argumentation have you witnessed in both style and form?
2. What changes, if any, do you see in the debate community that could be attributed to the increase in women participants?
3. Do you feel that your experience in debate has changed the way you view the world and if so how?
4. In what way if at all do you think debate has the ability to affect society out side of the debate community?
5. What has debate meant for you? Please be specific to even describe a particular event or tournament that was important or meaningful to you.
6. In what ways do you feel debate is a closed community and in what ways do you feel that it is open?
7. Do you see any a change happening in the debate community now and what do you feel is the pressure behind this change?

Appendix #4: Variety of Analogies

1. A Drug- When you're doing it you love it, and when you try to quit, you can't. No reason, honestly I'm not a drug addict, but it is the closest analogy I can come up with. (41)
2. An illustration of ideology. Debate says one thing is right and one thing is wrong, which illustrates hierarchical ideals of dominance. Debate puts people into odd relationships (debate partnerships rely both on interpersonal communication and competitiveness) that force gender relations (and class and race but not as much) to the surface. (27)
3. A timid tornado: I get a mental image of a frenzied, whirlwind of papers and language about a room. Mental thoughts spin in the minds of competitors. Forces are in conflict with one another. All decisions are split second. Some of us live in OZ after rounds, while others weather the storm and learn from mistake, only to build a better cellar to protect them next time. Regardless, we all search for a way to return home. But that won't happen until Sunday at midnight. (29)
4. The most strenuous athletic competition imaginable, except one used words and ideas instead of balls, weights or muscles. Debate incorporates more strategy than the best game of basketball, more force than the hardest game of football, and more intellectual prowess than a weight lifting competition incorporates physical strength. Plus debate is physically taxing - very cardiovascular - when you consider how fast we read. (11)
5. Doing your taxes on methamphetamines while your dad is asking what happened to his car last night, because the question invited ambiguous metaphorical abuse. Actually, I find debate to be the most intense and rigorous intellectual exercise with the most interesting people in this country. (16)
6. An oral, dueling editorial opinion page. Its better than a newspaper because I get to see it happen and its oral/presented. It helps me understand key arguments on important world/US issues. (20)
7. Any discussion around the dinner table, doubled in pace, squared in formality, and actually requiring you to make sense. Because some day discussions take place around there, and they're loose and structure, but they still seem to be trying to get to a point. Debate by upping the ante, brings it more to that point. (28)
8. Hunting and gathering: In *The Unabomber Manifesto*, the Unabomber explains how humans have become alienated from the power process. This natural struggle builds our confidence, among other things. Hunting and gathering is an ancient example of self-fulfillment through the power process. I don't hunt and gather anymore, but I debate, so it so doesn't matter. (37)

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