

INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC DEBATE AT A CRITICAL  
PEDAGOGICAL JUNCTURE: THE DILEMMAS OF  
VIRTUAL DEBATING

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## ABSTRACT

The lived tournament experiences within the International Public Debate (IPDA) community are an integral part of this qualitative study. In-depth interviews with students, coaches, and debate alumni provide an extensive outlook of where intercollegiate discussion is today. Virtual synchronous debating platforms such as Yaatly, Zoom, and 8x8 - as well as in-person competitions - are essential places for research participants to assess the health of the activity. In addition, the author's researcher positionality - in conjunction with symbolic interactionism - attempts to deconstruct IPDA debate patterns and trends from an emic perspective.

Recent trends indicate that college teams from other intercollegiate debate formats have introduced various debating norms and pedagogical styles that concern some IPDA scholars (Rogers & Freeman, 2022). In essence, various IPDA scholars believe that these alterations and gradual changes to the debate format place IPDA debate towards a downward trajectory like NDT and CEDA in the 1970s and 1980s (McGee & McGee, 2000; Cirlin, 2007; Key, 2009; Key, 2010; Key, 2014; McMullen, 2019). These changes include excessive spreading or rapid-fire delivery, complicated jargon, specific knowledge, bizarre argument interpretation, time constraints, hyper-competition, and using expert judges in debate rounds. Therefore, the findings from this research project will serve as a meaningful assessment of the current state of IPDA by examining the long-standing problems within the debate format and will conclude by presenting recommendations for future research.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to everyone who helped me and guided me throughout the creation of this manuscript. Thank you to my family, friends, and colleagues who stood by in support of this research endeavor. I have two words for all who have supported me throughout the years: “Thank you.”

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFA	American Forensic Association
CEDA	Cross Examination Debate Association
IPDA	International Public Debate Association
IFA	International Forensics Association
NDC – IE	National Developmental Conference on Individual Events
NDT	National Debate Tournament
NFA	National Forensic Association
NFA - LD	Lincoln Douglas Debate
NPDA	National Parliamentary Debate Association
PKD	Pi Kappa Delta
PRP	Phi Rho Pi
SNAFU	Southern and Northern Atlantic Forensic Union

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

*“I come to warn you that you have yet a chance and hope to escape the fate that awaits you if you but have the strength of will to grasp it. Do not take lightly the lessons of the past but use them to procure your future’ – the Ghost of Christmas Past, Scrooge, Charles Dickens”*  
(Rogers & Freeman, 2022, p. 13).

Rogers and Freeman (2022) described the popular sentiment among debate scholars within the IPDA debate community as an omnipresent “ghost” haunting the debate format - a ghost threatening the debate format’s existence. As Key (2014) opined in his thesis, “something is wrong with academic debate” (p. 8). Key’s assertion posits many questions: “What exactly is wrong? Exactly what “ghost” is Rogers and Freeman referring to? How does it affect IPDA debate? How does it threaten the debate format? And why does it matter now?”

Watching and observing the IPDA debate conference panel discussion at the 2021 National Communication Association in Seattle brought these questions to the forefront of my imagination. The conference panel - titled “Taking Back IPDA” - featured panelists who vividly described the changing landscape of the IPDA debate format in front of their eyes. One panelist - a debate coach - described a virtual debate round where a competitor routinely interrupted their opponent mid-speech to give “points of order.” Another panelist stated speed talking and excessive jargon - the mainstay of intercollegiate policy debate formats - have gradually taken shape within IPDA debate. Another panelist opined IPDA debate is simply “devolving” into a parliamentary style debate. “In 20 years, IPDA debate has gone down just like NDT and CEDA back in the ‘80s and ‘90s!” The panelists nodded their heads in agreement. Undoubtedly, college

debate has faced momentous occasions of upheaval and change throughout history. Debate trends ebb and flow in a constant stream of change. According to substantial extant scholarship, debate scholars have long postulated and weighed the impacts of stylistic patterns omnipresent within debate formats (Jevons, 1912; Davis, 1916; Lindsley, 1918; Holm, 1940; Dalton & Pross, 1954; Swinney, 1968; Sheppard, 1973; Cirlin, 2002; Dimrock, 2006; Duerringer, 2008; Evans, 2008; Duerringer, 2010; Diers, 2011; Key, 2010; Key, 2014; Dimrock, 2016). Key (2014) stated, “speed, use of nuanced jargon...[and] evidence” are issues contested by debate scholars for decades. Furthermore, the switch to online competition caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic necessitates re-evaluating the current state of the International Public Debate (IPDA) community.

The inspiration for this project arose from the 2020 and 2021 National Communication Association conference panels on IPDA debate. The conference panelists asserted IPDA had moved away from its founding mission and principles of providing a real-world audience-friendly format. They alleged the move to a virtual format had exacerbated long-standing problems and concerns within the debate format. Various debating norms and practices from other collegiate debate formats have gained prominence within the virtual IPDA debating sphere. According to the Preamble of the IPDA Debate Constitution, the philosophical tenets of the debate format include “inclusivity, lay judging, multiple topics, limited preparation, extemporaneous delivery, rhetorical delivery, and ethos” (International Public Debate Association, 2015).

The popular sentiment inspires the genesis for this research project among various former debaters, debate coaches, and scholars within the International Public Debate Association

(IPDA). Change proves an uncomfortable and disturbing reality for some within the community. McGee and McGee (2000) described changes within the debate format “as a disease” - a disease metastasizing to all parts of the body (p. 14). Rogers and Freeman (2022) concurred by describing the disease not as a physical ailment but as a form of “technical debate” ravaging an audience-friendly, public-oriented intercollegiate debate. Cirlin (1997) lamented the disease as “stylistic abuses” observed in policy debate (p. 1). “Too much speed. Too much evidence. Too much jargon” (Cirlin, 1997, p. 1). Key (2014) described the sociology of intercollegiate debate as a shouting chess match of watered-down arguments and frenzied speed talking with debaters divulging massive amounts of evidence in a short time. Drake (2008) addressed the prevailing sentiments by asking: “Are we to teach the wind-up oratory of collegiate individual events? Are we to succumb to the logic-only oratory of Parliamentary and Cross-Examination debate? Or are we to continue to be appeased at the stumble-bum, ho-hum rhetoric of most of our own competitors?” (p. 3).

Intercollegiate debate scholars have long postulated the health of the activity by examining the cultural practices observed in tournaments (Cirlin, 1997; Key, 2014). Speech delivery, speed, and argument presentation remain an omnipresent concern for debate scholars at tournaments, tab room discussions, and conference panels writ large (Sheppard, 1973; Ulrich, 1984; Sheckels & Warfield, 1990; Dean, 1992; Cirlin, 1997; McGee & McGee, 2000; Cirlin, 2002; Cirlin, 2008; Duerringer, 2008; Evans, 2008; Hobbs & Pattalung, 2008; Key, 2009; Duerringer, 2010; Key, 2010; Diers, 2011; Key, 2014; McMullen, 2019; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). Unwritten cultural norms and practices espoused by debate coaches from all backgrounds govern virtually all aspects of the debating community (Gaer, 2002; Paine, 2005; Key, 2014).

However, this research illustrates recent changes bringing the debate community within the International Public Debate Association (IPDA) into a critical juncture. Since March 2020, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has upended all aspects of the debating community. The cancellation of all national speech and debate tournaments in the Spring of 2020 and with travel restrictions forced the forensic community to transition into an exclusively virtual and synchronous format (Holm, 2020; Morris & NDC-IE, 2020). Consequently, the move to virtual competition has caused concern among some dissatisfied coaches within the IPDA community by encountering debating norms antithetical to the principles set by the IPDA framers (Richey, 2007; Rogers & Freeman, 2022).

The inception of this research project arose not only by observing conversations among scholars in the IPDA debate community but also from my experiences as a debate coach. Albeit less knowledgeable than other debate historians, my search for answers about the current state of the International Public Debate Association led to the creation of this research project. By observing debating practices, cultural norms, and the prevailing sentiments among IPDA debate coaches and historians, readers will gain valuable insight into the insular nature of the debating community.

According to Richey (2007), Cirlin (2008), McMullen (2013), and Key (2014), the search for answers lies in reviewing the extant literature surrounding the creation of the International Public Debate Association in 1997. Its origins and foundational principles are based upon constructing a public-oriented debate format separate from the national policy debate formats of NDT (National Debate Tournament) and CEDA (Cross Examination Debate Association). Former CEDA and NDT policy coaches and debaters formed the new International Debate Association as an audience-friendly format (Richey, 2007; Cirlin, 2008; Key, 2014). Extant

scholarship by debate historians documents the origins of the IPDA debate format. However, the transition to online competition caused by the COVID-19 pandemic demands a re-evaluation of the International Public Debate Association (IPDA) today. The rise of virtual competition facilitated the growth of the IPDA debate format into new frontiers. Tournaments from the East to West Coast have gradually adopted IPDA into their repertoire of events offered at competitions (Richey et al., 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022; International Public Debate Association, 2021).

Regional, stylistic, and cultural differences have developed as more teams join the format. These recent and sudden changes are what McGee and McGee (2000) and Key (2014) describe as a cancerous disease threatening the ideals and principles of the IPDA format. Outside forensic programs adopting IPDA have introduced debating norms and pedagogical styles within virtual tournaments causing anxiety and apprehension among various IPDA framers and historians (Richey, 2007; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). According to Rogers and Freeman (2022), these debate norms include the use of excessive “rapid-fire” speed delivery, complicated jargon, specific knowledge, bizarre argument interpretation, time constraints, hyper-competition, and the use of “expert” judges in debate rounds (p. 5).

Therefore, this research project explores cultural norms within the debate community in greater detail by examining past and present pedagogical “turns” – or ideological shifts – leading to the creation of IPDA debate. Through symbolic interactionism, qualitative interviews, and examining extant literature, this research will reveal emerging cultural trends and provide recommendations for future research in the forensics community. This research defines intercollegiate debate within forensics as what Bartenen and Littlefield (2015) described as “a

[competitive] form of high-level, intellectual play that involves critical thinking, skillful speaking, and a thorough knowledge of subject matter” (p. 155).

Moreover, this study is sixfold. The second chapter examines the origins of collegiate debate and the extant literature surrounding the events leading to the creation of IPDA debate. The third chapter describes the methodology, researcher positionality, data collection, and a summary of the data analysis phases. The fourth chapter mentions key research findings and themes emerging from the data analysis phases. The fifth chapter discusses two major implications resulting from research findings. The final chapter concludes with study limitations and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

*“Debate is a social process involving people in a myriad of contexts”*

(Pelham & Watt, 1989, p. 4).

### **Problem Statement**

Change is an inevitability in any forensic activity. It is an ever-present phenomenon of the human experience. People live and die. Ideas grow, evolve, and dissipate over time. Societies rise and fall. What is important today might not stay important tomorrow. Furthermore, what serves the people of today differs from the mainstay of future generations. Substantial extant literature indicates forensicators have long grappled with the complexities of dealing with changing ideals and cultural norms subsisting and evolving over time (Lindsley, 1918; Holm, 1940; Dalton & Pross, 1954; Swinney, 1968; Sheppard, 1973; Cirlin, 2002; Dimrock, 2006; Duerringer, 2008; Evans, 2008; Duerringer, 2010; Diers, 2011; Key, 2010; Key, 2014; Dimrock, 2016).

As far back as over a century ago, forensic scholars have attempted to deconstruct debating norms such as delivery, presentation, excessive speed, and use of evidence within debate rounds. Lindsley (1918) once wrote in the 1918 *Quarterly Journal of Speech*:

We have inherited the wrong ideas about argumentative delivery. These wrong ideas are allowed to grow. Instructors in debate should be more severe in correcting these faults. Ninety per cent of college debaters seem to have not the slightest knowledge of effective presentation. Their speaking is so ‘preponderantly boisterous and conclusive, so disfigured by volcanic fervor, for which the latter ejected affords no adequate excuse’ that our sensibilities are paralyzed and rendered incapable of absorbing the evidence they produce...To encourage this forced, rapid-fire, tense, and nervous delivery is wrong (p. 1).

Forensicators have long grappled with dealing with issues of delivery, argumentation, and modes of presentation at debate rounds. However, the transition to virtual competition caused by the ongoing pandemic demands a re-evaluation of the current state of the International Public Debate (IPDA) community. With the advent of virtual competitions nearly a quarter century after its founding, IPDA debate has grown to new frontiers with more teams adopting it as their debate format. Tournaments from East to West Coast and North to South have also incorporated IPDA into their repertoire of competition events. Its growth and popularity have led some IPDA scholars to question the community's future trajectory as more teams adopt the format. Therefore, this research project attempts to examine the current state of the IPDA debate community regarding its core values and steadfast commitment to providing an audience-centered public debate. A significant portion of this project draws upon previously published research - most notably, Key's (2014) thesis titled "Going Public: An Organizational Autoethnographic Exploration of the International Public Debate Association." Moreover, this project focuses on the historical events leading to the creation of IPDA debate. Will IPDA follow the same downward path as its predecessors - NDT and CEDA - or will it carve out a new path of its own?

### **Research Questions**

RQ1. What is the state of the IPDA debate community following the transition to online competition?

RQ2. How is the IPDA debate community evolving in relation to the rise of online competition?

RQ3. How have the recent changes with regard to virtual debate impacted the IPDA debate community?

### **Justification**

At the time of this writing in 2023, the forensics community has endured two years of virtual competitions considering travel restrictions and social distancing guidelines caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (Morris & NDC-IE, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). Never before had the forensics community endured such a disruption to its seasonal calendar. The abrupt cancellation of all in-person national tournaments during the Spring of 2020 prompted a transition to virtual competition (Holm, 2020; Morris & NDC-IE, 2020). Despite these challenges, the IPDA community has grown significantly in influence and popularity - a trend likely to continue for the foreseeable future. What began as a simple experiment has grown into a full-fledged community of debaters, coaches, educators, and scholars committed to preserving the ideals of an audience-centered debate format espoused by the IPDA framers (McMullen, 2013; Key, 2014).

The year of 2022 marked an important milestone for the International Public Debate Association. A quarter century after its founding, the IPDA forensics community has embarked on a return to normalcy with in-person tournaments emerging from the pandemic. The timing for this research project is critical since it is commonplace for debate formats to come under scrutiny by community members during their lifespan. According to Key (2014), debate formats typically enter a “devolution” process where gradual changes and cultural trends erode their foundation. Key (2014) continued:

Essentially, the life span of rhetoric in any debate organization is roughly 20 years. NDT began in 1947, and meaningful criticism began in 1968. CEDA was born in 1973 and, by the early 1990s, had effectively merged with NDT. It only took 13 years for NPDA [the National Parliamentary Debate Association], founded in 1993, to be condemned as a pedagogical failure (p. 27).

Key's (2014) sentiments about change echoed the sentiments made by Cirlin (1997), McGee and McGee (2000), and Rogers and Freeman (2022). These scholars viewed the blight of change as an ever-present threat to the integrity of the IPDA debate format - a cancerous disease afflicting all parts of the body. As previously mentioned, Rogers and Freeman (2022) concurred by describing the disease not as a physical ailment but as a form of "technical debate" ravaging an audience-friendly, public-oriented intercollegiate debate. Cirlin (1997) lamented by describing the disease leading to "stylistic abuses" observed in policy debate (p. 1). Given the rise of virtual competition, it is essential to probe where IPDA has been and examine where it is today. By examining recent cultural trends and participant observations, this research project will serve as a meaningful diagnosis of the current state of IPDA regarding its founding principles of preserving an audience-centered debate format.

The collegiate debate as we know today is a tradition from 18th and 19th-century literary and fraternal debating among elite colleges and universities (Nichols, 1937; Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954; Park, 1987). However, its origins are traced back to the ancient Greeks around 400 BC (Pelham & Watt, 1989). According to Pelham and Watt (1989), "Our earliest record of educational debate indicates that Protagoras, a Greek, conducted debates among his students some 400 years before Christ. Thus, Protagoras is known as the 'Father of Debate'" (p. 4). Public debate is an integral part of American democracy and the political system. Our ability to speak freely has guided the American judicial, legislative, and executive process within the government

since its founding. The impact of public debate on American culture is undoubtedly profound - shaping everything from politics, current events, and legislation to religion (Pelham & Watt, 1988; Key, 2014). Potter (1954) eloquently described the historical progression of college debate in the 1954 edition of the Tau Kappa Alpha journal. Throughout the past century, Tau Kappa Alpha (TKA) began as an honorary fraternal organization - like Pi Kappa Delta - dedicated to promoting forensic programs throughout the United States (Potter, 1954). Substantial extant literature conducted by Potter (1944) and Potter (1954), in conjunction with Ringwalt (1897), Mallet (1924), McKean (1930), Nichols (1936), Nichols (1937), Pellegrini (1942), Temple and Dunn (1948), Dallinger (1952), Windes (1960), Kraus (1961), Swinney (1968), Hall and Rhodes (1972), Ulrich (1984), Park (1987), Pelham and Watt (1989), Key (2014), Galison (2019) and many other texts provide an expansive account of the development of college debate as we know today.

Albeit written throughout different periods, these texts give a diverse narrative of the events shaping modern college debate. By analyzing and reviewing the historical precedent of college forensics, one can better understand the events surrounding the NDT and CEDA rupture (Jones, 1978), which eventually led to the formation of the International Public Debate Association in the 1990s. Therefore, the history of the collegiate debate is divided into four parts: first, ancient and medieval history; second, the emergence of syllogistic disputation; third, the rise of forensic disputation; and finally, the growth of competitive intercollegiate forensics.

### **Background of Forensics**

Before venturing into the history of college debate, it is essential to provide a succinct definition of “debate” and “forensics” to lay audiences. According to Bartanen and Littlefield

(2015), college debate is a highly competitive activity involving argumentation, reasoning, persuasion, and rhetoric. Consider the following definition of “forensics”:

We use the term *forensics* to describe competitive speech and debate because forensic or legal oratory requires a third party to determine which of two positions is superior. Forensic oratory in the form of competitive debate constitutes a form of play in that a winner is determined after two teams present arguments for the benefit of a judge or audience (p. 156).

Windes (1960) defines academic debating as “a generic term for oral contests in argumentation, held according to established rules, the purpose being to present both sides of a controversy so effectively that a decision may be reached” (p. 100). Swanson (1992) described forensics and debate interchangeably as co-curricular activities across colleges and universities. Therefore, this research project uses intercollegiate “debate” and “forensics” interchangeably for brevity. Potter (1954), Windes (1960), Bartenen and Littlefield (2015), in conjunction with Pelham and Watt (1989), all describe intercollegiate debate as an integral part of the forensics community comprising of multiple national forensic organizations such as the National Forensic Association, the American Forensic Association, the National Parliamentary Debate Association, Pi Kappa Delta, Phi Rho Pi, and Tau Kappa Alpha.

To an outsider, the existence of these organizations presents a confusing array of different factions of the forensics community. However, forensics is an insular community of forensic competitors, coaches, alumni, and scholars among differing subgroups (Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Key, 2014). Although united by activity, Key (2014) noted not all forensic organizations are created alike. College debate as we know it today is a melting pot of competitors and scholars from various pedagogical styles, beliefs, approaches, and paradigms commonplace among competing forensic organizations. For example, a debater accustomed to National Parliamentary

Debate (NPDA) will be accustomed to a debating style and time format different from the International Public Debate format and vice versa (Diers & Birkholt, 2002). It is customary for an IPDA debate coach to discourage the use of “spreading” during debate rounds - a commonplace practice within the college policy debate formats of Cross Examination Debate (CEDA) or Lincoln-Douglas debate (NFA-LD) (Minch & Borchers, 1996; McMullen, 2013; Key, 2014; McMullen, 2019; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). Qualification procedures and governing rules distinct from the American Forensic Association differ from those governing the national Phi Rho Pi community college tournament (Key, 2014). A speaker or a team competing exclusively in Individual Events would be oblivious to the rules and policies governing a debate tournament.

Meyerson and Martin (1987) describe the different paradigms within college forensic organizations as an essential part of the forensic culture. “Paradigms...are alternative points of view that members and researchers bring to their experience of culture” (p. 624). Chen (2010) surmised “culture” as a term describing a diverse system of subgroups constituting the entirety of a community group. For this research project, group identities such as geographical location, individual forensic experience, background, debate format, pedagogical style, and personal beliefs are all cultural paradigms intersecting within the larger forensics community (Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Swift, 2008; Chen, 2010; Key, 2014). It is no wonder why differing beliefs and attitudes abound within competing forensic organizations today.

### **Origins of College Debate**

According to Nichols (1936) and (1937), debating is an educational and public exercise as a set of traditions passed down from the ancient Greeks and medieval history. Nichols (1936) described debating as a “heritage” descended from centuries of intellectual development.

Pellegrini (1942) illustrated debate as the foundational element of Western civilization. “The roots of modern oratory are to be sought in the civilization of ancient Greece and Rome, the historical antecedents of modern debate were the disputations of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance” (Pellegrini, 1942, p. 14). According to Windes (1960) and Pelham and Watt (1989), the ancient Greek scholar Protagoras, an early pioneer of debate, instructed his students through public oratory demonstrations.

Described as the “Father of Debate” by Pelham and Watt (1989), Protagoras set forth traditions exercised by medieval universities within academic curricula. College debate evolved from the ancient Greeks to medieval “Latin syllogistic disputations” - a commonplace classroom exercise at medieval universities (Pellegrini, 1942; Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954; Windes, 1960; Kraus, 1961; Belic, 1999; Bartenen & Littlefield, 2015; Dufour, 2019). Syllogistic disputations consisted of educational exercises testing a student’s proficiency in school subject matter. Like modern exams and thesis projects of today, disputations conveyed exercises aimed at showcasing a student’s breadth of knowledge in their field of study. To do well at a syllogistic disputation represented “intellectual mastery” and expertise over one’s academic field (Potter, 1954). Attaining mastery and expertise about a subject matter demonstrated proficiency and represented the culmination of one’s academic study (Pellegrini, 1942; Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954; Kraus, 1961; Bartenen & Littlefield, 2015; Dufour, 2019). In addition, knowledge experts adept in oratory resided among the upper echelons of society and the ruling classes. Their contributions throughout history shaped college debates during the Enlightenment period within Western civilization.

Syllogistic argumentation grew in colleges during the Middle Ages, and “even during the Renaissance when Latin was the language of educated persons and when Aristotle’s *Organon*

was accepted as the proper measure for determining truth, debate was to a large extent the armor and armament of the scholar and cleric” (Potter, 1954, p. 6). College debate provided practical applications to clerics and students. Clerics relied on argumentation to defend the church’s position against opposing faiths, and students learned classroom materials with debate exercises (Potter, 1954; Kraus, 1961). Debates conveyed a public exercise of intellectual and educational fortitude to showcase a student’s proficiency in an academic subject.

Argumentation during the Enlightenment descended upon centuries of teachings of logic passed down from the ancient Greeks. Dufour (2019) and Martin (2019) jointly described how *Port Royal Logic* revolutionized college debate. Rene Descartes - a 16th-century French philosopher - pioneered scientific innovations in mathematics, physics, and philosophy and presented many significant contributions to the development of logic (Smith, 1976; Dufour, 2019; Martin, 2019). Written in 1662, authors Antonine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole released a treatise on logic entitled, “Port Royal Logic (*La Logique ou l’Art de penser*)” dedicated to “[reconstructing]...Cartesian foundations of standard doctrines from earlier logic” (Martin, 2019, p. 1). In other words, their work analyzed Cartesian theories of making sense of truth - the observable reality of the world. Port Royal Logic set forth new doctrines of ontology and epistemology. These doctrines included truth conditions, syllogistic paradigms, fallacious argumentation, conditional truth clauses, probability theory, and logical propositions (Martin, 2019).

According to Dufour (2019), the traditions set forth by Port Royal Logic not only added to the teachings of Aristotle but also initiated a new way of thinking and making sense of the observable world. Dufour (2019) noted:

It is true that *Logic* goes beyond its traditional field in borrowing from various disciplines. However, it is more than a patchwork of ‘rhetoric, moral, physics, metaphysic and geometry’: from a philosophic point of view, it is also a manifest crossroads of ancient and contemporary influences (Dufour, 2019, p. 246).

Change, evolution and progress guided Port Royal Logic’s immediate and profound impact upon colleges and universities. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries - at the height of the Enlightenment - logic textbooks influenced many academic disciplines (Kraus, 1961). Many early American colleges and universities adopted syllogistic argumentation within their academic curriculum. Most notably, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Rutgers, and Princeton established courses and exercises on oratory and argumentation within the Colonies (Pellegrini, 1942; Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954; Kraus, 1961; Dufour, 2019). Galison (2019) described syllogistic arguments at Harvard during the last quarter of the 18th century. These exercises featured spirited debates about slavery and religion. One such disputation took place on “Wednesday, 21 July 1773” between “Eliphalet Pearson and Theodore Parsons...[as] two graduating students from Harvard College” (p. 351). The topic centered on the question of slavery within the Colonies. The topic read: “*Whether the slavery, to which Africans are in this province, by the permission of law, subjected, be agreeable to the law of nature*” (p. 351). Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson - along with local clergy persons, prominent local officials, students, and faculty of the academic community - presided over the public debate. Indeed, the debate came at a time of great political and social upheaval when tensions between British troops and the colonists reached their zenith. At time when the ideals of freedom and liberty resided among colonists, the seeds of change and progress took shape within the early American colleges and influenced the newly established syllogistic debating format.

The Latin syllogistic disputation oratory format had a significant influence at Harvard. A “tutor, usually the reverend president, elected a question...[and] a student, called a ‘respondent,’ appointed to defend the side of the question which, in the opinion of the tutor, usually the reverend president, elected a question...[and] a student, called a ‘respondent,’ appointed to defend the side of the question which, in the opinion of the tutor, represented truth” (Potter, 1954, p. 4). The teacher called the classmates in attendance to the opposition side. Speakers prepared, organized, and delivered their constructive and rebuttal speeches in fluent Latin (Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954). These debates took place in classrooms and became public spectacles for the entire academic community to observe. The “exhibition disputation” - as Potter (1954) described it - featured college-wide debates with topics selected from various subjects taught at the college. The “tutor” functioned as the modern-day tournament director by selecting the debate topics and appointing select students to represent both the affirmative and opposing sides. The tutor carefully selected debate topics (or questions) to appease audience members. Once the questions selected, the students chosen, and the venue carefully considered, the campus community received the public exposition debate details (Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954).

The popularity of syllogistic argumentation declined during the advent of the Enlightenment period. Shifting attitudes and changing customs created demand for a new debating format. Students denounced syllogistic argumentation as “rigid,” “archaic,” and “boring” (Potter, 1954, p. 6). According to Potter (1944) and Potter (1954), syllogistic disputations declined from the 18th century into the early 19th century. The syllogistic disputation format became reviled by students for its archaic use of Latin. Early 18th-century students at Harvard disliked the lengthy classroom disputation exercises mandated to all undergraduates across multiple disciplines. As early as 1717, students began voicing their

displeasure with the traditional debating format (Potter, 1944). “[In] 1725-26 President Wadsworth [the Harvard College President] had found it almost impossible, despite threats and fines, to find the respondents and their opponents on days set aside for disputing” (Potter, 1944, p. 29). In a journal entry dated May 23, 1786, a young John Quincy Adams once stated, “these syllogistics are very much despised by the scholars” (Potter, 1944, p. 29). John Quincy Adams - then a young student at Harvard College - once eloquently described the scholars and tutors of the traditional method as those who should “write in their foreheads DUNCE in capital letters” (Potter, 1944, p. 29). The decline in the syllogistic format occurred not only at Harvard. Other colonial colleges eventually shifted away from the syllogistic format in favor of a new format. This format, called forensic disputation, began at commencement and classroom exercises (Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954). Colleges such as Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Brown, Rutgers, Dartmouth, and Pennsylvania gradually adopted the forensic disputation format, a debate format much less rigid than its counterpart. By the 19th century, the syllogistic model morphed into forensic disputation exercises.

As syllogistic disputations fell, forensic disputations gradually gained acceptance at the early American colonial colleges. Once again, progress, innovation, and changing attitudes led to the rise of the new forensic disputation format. The rise of forensic disputations gave interest in a new type of rhetoric and oratory featuring contemporary English instead of Latin - a feature resonating among many college students of the time (Potter, 1944; Bartanen & Littlefield, 2015). Potter (1944) pinpointed the advent of forensic disputations at around 1747, when the early colonial colleges gradually adopted the format within their curriculum. In 1755, Philadelphia College - known as the University of Pennsylvania today - adopted forensic disputations within its academic community. Other colleges soon followed. That same year, Columbia College -

known as Columbia University today - adopted the forensic disputation format, followed by Harvard in 1757, Princeton in 1764, Brown in 1769, Dartmouth in 1782, and Rutgers in 1788 (Potter, 1944).

The new forensic disputation model differed from its predecessor in structure and popularity. This new argumentation model resembled the debates in judicial courts. The judge received speakers from both sides and rendered a decision (Potter, 1944). One such debate took place at Rhode Island College - known as Brown University today - on September 7, 1769, regarding the state of the British colonies. The topic for the debate stated: “WHETHER BRITISH AMERICA CAN UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES CONSISTENT WITH GOOD POLICY, AFFECT TO BECOME AN INDEPENDENT STATE” (Potter, 1944, p. 131). Both debaters - featuring a respondent and the opponent - argued about positions surrounding colonists' welfare under British rule and as citizens of a newly independent country. Contemporary issues such as patriotism, liberty, and taxation without representation took center stage in the debate. “All manner of taxation, say they without our consent by ourselves or representatives, is an essential violation of the British Constitution, and therefore our rights as freemen...Wherefore, rouse! Resist! Conquer!” (p. 133). By analyzing the respondent's speech, it is clear the speaker possessed an extraordinary ability to utilize persuasive language to captivate an audience. This practice still endures today, where debaters from opposing sides deliver and articulate their positions persuasively and passionately in front of audiences.

Forensic disputations during the late 18th century represented a monumental change away from stale, syllogistic exercises to secular questions about contemporary issues (Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954; Kraus, 1961; Bartanen & Littlefield, 2015). Gone were days of tedious and lengthy exercises of archaic Latin surrounding religious topics. Debate topics ranged from

politics, philosophy, and morality to historical subjects. “Civil Liberty is necessary to give birth to the Arts and Sciences” (Potter, 1944, p. 45). “Does Ancient Poetry excel the Modern?” (p. 45). “Is Public Education preferable to a private?” (p. 47). The structure of the forensic disputation model allowed for greater flexibility for students to debate the topics at hand. However, as the 19th century progressed, the forensic argumentation model declined in popularity. Like its historical predecessors, colleges gradually dropped the debate format at commencement exercises. Students began choosing courses to develop “applied or professional training” instead of participating in formal argumentation exercises (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2015).

According to Bartanen and Littlefield (2015), the early 19th century witnessed the changing attitudes about forensic disputations. The decline of forensic disputations led to the rise of literary and debating societies at colleges and universities. “Literary societies provided a break from disputations and the highly regulated classroom environments characterized by long lectures, memorization, and strict rules” (p. 158). Potter (1944) noted the emergence of literary societies as a worthy alternative to the rigid disputations existing throughout the Middle Ages and the Enlightenment. As more colleges and universities gradually dropped the traditional disputation model, the new literary and debating societies reshaped classroom debates. Once again, changing attitudes, progress and new innovations led to the rise and popularity of debating and literary societies. Weekly and monthly commencement undergraduate exercises no longer featured classroom debates. Instead, they emerged as an extracurricular activity, where “the intellectual play of discussing and debating issues of the day became a way for students to [better understand] what was happening in the world around them” (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2015, p. 158).

According to Nichols (1937) and Potter (1954), debating and literary societies evolved into fraternal organizations and elite honor societies. The turn of the 19th century saw the very first intercollegiate competitions between the top-tier fraternal organizations and elite honor societies within the Ivy League universities (New York Times, 1892; Yale University, 1894; Columbia Spectator, 1899; Baker, 1899; Brown University, 1900a; Brown University, 1900b; Nichols, 1937; Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954; Dallinger, 1952; Park, 1987). Extant articles by the Harvard Crimson (1892) student newspaper and the New York Times (1892) illustrated the very first intercollegiate debate between Harvard and Yale on November 18, 1892. Pelham and Watt (1989) described the growth of college debate in the United States:

Educational debating in America was a tradition carried over from such British universities as Oxford and Cambridge. The first American intercollegiate debates occurred between Harvard and Yale in 1892, or between Michigan and Wisconsin universities in 1893 (there is some debate on this point). Regardless, early intercollegiate debate lasted several hours (p. 5).

The Harvard-Yale debate launched a new era of competitive debating in the United States. Debating societies made argumentation an exciting extracurricular activity for students who made it into a competitive public spectacle similar to academic sports. Other intercollegiate competitions followed the Harvard-Yale debate in 1892 in the following years (Yale University, 1894; Columbia Spectator, 1899; Baker, 1899; Brown University, 1900a; Brown University, 1900b). Bartanen and Littlefield (2015) described the new intercollegiate debating format as akin to a game - a type of play - aimed at providing competitions.

College life for the average student at this period felt routine, mundane, and times - according to Potter (1944) - boring. The drudgery of daily campus life contained rote classroom exercises, daily morning prayers, an afternoon break, and more class lectures before finally

ending with an evening recess. Indeed, college life during the colonial period leading up to the 19th century did not contain the typical eccentricities of today's modern college life. Organized athletics had not been founded yet; modern dating “was of course unthought of”; and religious liturgies comprised most of a young student’s daily routine (Potter, 1944). “Practically the only legitimate avenue of escape from the monotony of the prescribed existence open to the colonial undergraduate was the company of his fellow students” (p. 65). College education belonged only to wealthy, Protestant white men from the upper echelons and educated classes of society prohibiting women and non-whites from attending college (Potter, 1944; Bartanen & Littlefield, 2015).

The formation of literary and debating societies represented a new era for student organizations to emerge and thrive. By the middle to late 19th century, new literary and debating societies abounded throughout the Ivy League colleges and public state universities of the Northeast. These societies produced many acclaimed speakers, including “Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, Daniel Webster, Rufus Choate, Albert Beveridge, William Jennings Bryan, and Woodrow Wilson” (Potter, 1954, p. 9). According to Bartanen and Littlefield (2015), the 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed neighboring literary and debating societies competing against each other at the same university. College literary and debating societies commonly staged various intersocietal, campus-wide debates featuring opposing student organizations within the same student body. The emergence of the “Progressive Era - roughly from 1880 to 1914 - provided fertile ground for the expansion of competitive speech and debate” (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2015, p. 158). Nichols (1936) and Potter (1944) jointly described this period as the rise of debating societies at the College of William and Mary, King’s College (Columbia University), Harvard, Yale, Brown, Dartmouth, Rutgers, the College of New Jersey (Princeton University), and the University of

Pennsylvania. College debates between Park College and William Jewel College in Missouri also began at this time (Dallinger, 1952).

According to Nichols (1936), Potter (1944), and Bartanen and Littlefield (2015), additional intercollegiate debates followed the first Harvard-Yale debate in the subsequent years. Princeton - Yale and Michigan - Wisconsin faced off in 1893, Harvard and Princeton in 1894, followed by the “University of Chicago, Boston University, Wesleyan University, Bates College, Williams College and Dartmouth entered the new activity” (Nichols, 1936, p. 216). By the end of the 1890s, “Michigan, Chicago, Minnesota and Northwestern universities” formed a Midwestern debating league (Nicholas, 1936). Ringwalt (1897) described this period as a “wonderful revival of interest” in the intercollegiate debating realm swiftly taking shape throughout colleges and universities across the nation (p. 633). The first Harvard/Yale debate in 1892 - featuring the resolution of “*Resolved*, That a young man casting his first ballot in 1892 should vote for the nominees of the Democratic party” - had indeed set off a new era of college debate at the turn of the 19th century (Ringwalt, 1897, p. 634).

The intercollegiate competitions of the late 19th century bore much resemblance to the modern-day debates. Each debate consisted of three debaters from each side given 12 minutes for their initial constructive speeches and 5 minutes for rebuttal speeches (Nichols, 1936). The Midwestern Debate League allowed the opposing team to speak first within rebuttals (Nichols, 1936). Students wanted the debate experience to replicate worthwhile and practical skills for real-world application. Debate resolutions featured current events, politics, and economics to social problems (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2015). Pressing modern-day issues such as the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Fugitive Slave Law, the 1895 Venezuelan boundary dispute with Great Britain, and the retiring of the Civil War Greenbacks all took center stage within the

debates (Ringwalt, 1897). The excitement and enthusiasm for intercollegiate debating by students grew as more colleges and universities adopted the format.

Decades of rapid expansion in the 20th century succeeded the initial birth of intercollegiate debate at the turn of the 19th century. Nichols (1937) documented the popularity of the new Harvard-Yale intercollegiate debating format growing steadily among colleges and universities before and after World War I. According to Temple and Dunn (1948), Grimmer (1959), and Hall and Rhodes (1972), the early 20th century also witnessed the rise of international debating societies, where foreign teams from across Europe and Asia would visit the U.S. to debate in American universities (Grimmer, 1959). Just over one hundred years ago - in 1921 - Bates College organized a series of debating tours featuring a unique “Anglo-American exchange debate” (Hall and Rhodes, 1972, p. 5). Representatives from various American universities - Bates, along with “Swarthmore, Columbia, Yale Harvard, Princeton and [Univ. of Pennsylvania]” - collaborated with members of the Oxford Union to organize the first international debate tournament (p. 6). “On June 16, 1921, the trio from Bates appeared at the Oxford Union to debate the topic, “That this House approves the American policy of non-intervention in European affairs” (Hall & Rhodes, 1972, p. 6). The first debate in June 1921 ushered in a new era of collegiate British Parliamentary debating in the U.S., which grew steadily from its inception in the 1920s until the advent of World War II in 1941.

The culture of intercollegiate debating shifted immediately after World War II. Changing cultural and social attitudes following the war provided a host of new changes and innovations within college forensics. Bartanen and Littlefield (2015) described the cultural shift within the community during this period:

Competition for the sake of competition replaced the earlier emphasis in forensics on training future citizens as a social good...forensic educators shifted their focus. Forensics competition at all levels became more about achieving technical competency in a competitive environment (p. 159).

According to Bartanen and Littlefield (2015), the community shifted its primary focus from providing a social benefit to young students to a technical and stylistic format adapted for competitions. This critique is similar to today's CEDA, NDT, and IPDA debate formats. As seen throughout centuries of progress and innovation, the current dilemmas occurring within IPDA debate provide a much broader narrative of cultural and social change within college debate. The ebb and flow of time eventually erodes and washes away established norms and conventions making room for new ones to develop and rise.

### **CEDA and NDT History**

*“IPDA has provided a rhetorical alternative which permits debaters and coaches to participate in a debate activity where the twin goals of victory and pedagogy are complementary rather than antithetical” (Cirlin, 2008, p. 1).*

Change, innovation, and progress not only guided syllogistic and forensic disputation formats, but also aided the modern progenitors of the International Public Debate Association. The genesis for creating the IPDA debate format lies solely within its past. According to Dr. Cirlin (2008), the creation of IPDA resulted from the pedagogical and ideological rifts arising from the National Debate Tournament (NDT) – the national intercollegiate policy debate format – and the Cross-Examination Debate Association (CEDA) (Cirlin, 2008; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020).

Founded in 1947 at the United States Military Academy at West Point, the NDT is one of the oldest debating associations in the United States (National Debate Tournament, 2020;

National Debate Tournament, 2021). Its initial origins as a small debate organization allowed a variety of college and university debating teams to join the NDT (McGee & McGee, 2000; Combs, 2002; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; National Debate Tournament, 2020; National Debate Tournament, 2021). According to Louden (2013), the National Debate Tournament Association cemented itself as the top intercollegiate debating format by the 1960s, where it grew from the initial 24 teams in 1947 to 64 teams in 1971. The 26th biennial convention of the national Pi Kappa Delta at Arizona State University yielded an impressive 187 colleges and universities and “nearly 1,000 debaters” in attendance (p. 19).

Louden (2013) described the deep fractures emerging from the policy debating community forming during the late 1960s into the 1980s. Conversations at various developmental conferences revealed growing concern about the state of the policy debating community. Back when the honorary forensic organizations of Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha (DSR-TKA) existed and exerted influence within the forensic community, many coaches congregated to discuss the most pressing concerns surrounding the debate format during the latter half of the 20th century (Louden, 2013). Allen et al. (1999), in conjunction with Key (2014), mentioned the many positive attributes of forensic competition and its benefits to students. After all - as seen through the analysis of the early intercollegiate debating societies of the turn of the 19th century - the primary objective of debate aimed at reinforcing practical applications for building effective orators and an informed citizenry (Bartanen & Littlefield, 2015). In addition, forensic organizations aided the development of many communication departments at colleges and universities (Swanson, 1992).

However, as Key (2014) noted in his thesis, the debate community eventually lost its way and strayed from its well-intentioned goals. Key (2014) remarked about the drastic cultural changes during the NDT - CEDA rupture:

Students in NDT, CEDA, NPDA and NFA-LD are not learning skills, beyond the logical reasoning that all debate teaches, that transfer into everyday experiences, nor are they learning the effective public debate that is so necessary for society to function (p. 23).

McGee and McGee (2000) offered a more striking rebuke of the cultural divide within the policy debating community. Their “autopsy” of CEDA examined the excesses of the debate format eventually leading to its popularity decline. Their work explained how NDT suffered a similar fate and went down a dark path of growth, alterations, and subtle changes altering the debate format throughout the late 1960s into the 1970s. Gradually, as its membership grew, the NDT made several refinements within its national debate tournament to accommodate its growing community. These changes included adopting a “ten-minute preparation time rule, elaborate procedures for assigning judges, judge qualifications and published critiques of the final debate” (National Debate Tournament, 2020, para. 3). Some did not welcome these new changes. According to McGee and McGee (2000), divisions within the forensics community caused the NDT format to suffer a “long, protracted death.” Disagreements about spreading in debates, time format changes, and tournament judging procedures gradually eroded interest in the debate format. The recent cultural changes had effectively alienated and pitted one faction of coaches and competitors against the other (Cox, 1974; Cirilin, 2016). Ultimately, according to Cirilin (1986) and Cirilin (1997), the cultural, ideological, and pedagogical rift between these two parties eventually grew so large and toxic resulting in one faction banding together, defecting

from the NDT format, and establishing CEDA in 1971 (Cox, 1974; Cox & House, 1991; Cirlin, 2016).

At first, the defecting teams felt CEDA had everything they wanted it to be: new, exciting, innovative, and slower paced. Cirlin (1997) described the formation of CEDA following its split from NDT. During the 1970s, college debate teams and coaches associated with the NDT defected from the organization en masse to CEDA – thereby establishing it as a direct counterpart to the NDT (Cirlin, 1986; Cirlin, 1997; McGee & McGee, 2000; Combs, 2002; Cirlin, 2008; Cirlin, 2016; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). According to Cirlin (2008), the newly minted CEDA teams and coaches criticized the NDT for allowing “rapid-fire” arguments laden with ambiguous jargon to gradually alter the debate format (p. 28). In the early 1970s, CEDA founder Jack Howe led a small coalition of teams on a worthy endeavor. “CEDA started out with the noble objective of bringing certain pedagogical and highly stylized logic game masquerading as a rhetorical activity. And for a while it seemed to be working” (Cirlin, 1997, p. 341). CEDA’s popularity grew as NDT shrank in size. NDT teams either folded or joined CEDA as tournament opportunities dwindled throughout the country. Eventually, CEDA overtook NDT in size, stature, influence, and popularity by the 1980s (Cirlin, 1986; Cirlin, 1997; McGee & McGee, 2000; Combs, 2002; Cirlin, 2008; Cirlin, 2016; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022).

Despite all its benefits, the ghost of its NDT past eventually overcame its well-intentioned mission. As the 1980s and 1990s progressed, CEDA gradually mirrored its predecessor and fell victim to much discord and division within the organization (McGee & McGee, 2000; Combs, 2002; Cirlin, 2008; Richey & International Public Debate Association,

2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). Conflicting cultural attitudes of the period widened the pedagogical rifts within NDT and CEDA. Louden (2013) gave a detailed account of the progression of the CEDA format in the late 1980s into the 1990s:

CEDA had basked in the self-assurance of two decades of steady growth but was beginning to experience the same competitive dynamics that produced the elite core in NDT. Many in CEDA, especially the competitively strong, reasoned why not compete with those of like mind. Also, CEDA was faced with defections to Parliamentary and the National Education Debate Association (NEDA) debate formats, and a travel schedule nearly as insane as that practiced in NDT (p. 20).

By 1995, much of the NDT debate community crossed over to CEDA, which only exacerbated long-standing problems and tensions among dissatisfied teams and coaches (Cirlin, 2008; Jensen, 2017; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). This rift subsequently led to the creation of the International Public Debate Association in 1997, which sought to correct the longstanding problems within intercollegiate policy debate (Cirlin, 2008; Key, 2010; Jensen, 2017; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). Across the nation, like its NDT and CEDA predecessors, IPDA has grown in popularity throughout the West Coast, the Midwest, Northwest, Northeast, and Southeastern regions as more college teams joined the organization throughout the late 1990s to the mid-2010s (Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022).

As stated within its Constitution, IPDA debate is an organization dedicated to “real-world” argumentation suited for lay audiences (International Public Debate Association, 2019). The late Dr. Alan Cirlin – then-Director of Debate at St. Mary’s University – co-founded the debate format in conjunction with Dr. Jack Rogers – the current Director of Forensics at the University of Central Missouri. The founders of IPDA established a debate format estranged

from the habits and procedures commonplace in NDT and CEDA (Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). The impact of this collaboration created a new debate format emphasizing education over competition; inclusivity over exclusivity; practicality over formality; lay adjudication over trained judges; persuasion over evidence and speed (Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). Cirlin and Rogers resolved to create a debating platform impervious to the same alterations and gradual changes observed in the NDT and CEDA rift of the late 1960s to mid-1970s (Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). According to the IPDA debate constitution, its mission is to provide students a unique opportunity “to develop advanced skills in audience sensitivity and analysis and the opportunity to develop a range of speaking and argumentation styles which will be successful in business, legal and professional settings” (International Public Debate Association, 2021, p. 1).

As seen throughout this chapter, centuries of change, progress, and innovation exerted a significant influence upon the progenitors of the International Public Debate Association. Shifting attitudes and deep conflicts within NDT and CEDA provided an important backdrop for the events that led to the creation of the debate format. The next section explores the inception of IPDA in greater detail.

### **Background of IPDA Debate**

The International Public Debate Association is an intercollegiate extemporaneous debate format. The Affirmative (AFF) and the Negative (NEG) have only thirty minutes of preparation to prepare their arguments and gather evidence (Key, 2010; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; International Public Debate Association, 2021). They are given a “strike sheet” by either their judge or by tournament staff containing five debate topics to strike

(Chikeleze et al., 2018; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020). The NEG has the first opportunity to strike whichever topic they do not want to debate. Then, the AFF can strike their topic of choice. Turns are taken between the AFF and NEG until only one remaining topic is left (Key, 2010; Chikeleze et al., 2018; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; International Public Debate Association, 2021). The single, unstruck topic thereby becomes the resolution for the debate round. After the topic selection, debaters prepare their arguments and gather their evidence for half an hour until the debate round begins (Key, 2010; McMullen, 2019; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; International Public Debate Association, 2021). The actual debate round is exactly twenty-six minutes long, interspersed with Affirmative and Negative constructive speeches, cross-examination questions, and concluding rebuttal speeches (Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; International Public Debate Association, 2021).

Cirlin (2008) and Rogers (2002) had initially designed the IPDA debate format to help maintain a “level playing field” for novice and varsity debaters to discuss topics easily accessible for lay judges with little to no debate experience (p. 25). Of all the intercollegiate debate formats, the International Debate Association is today's youngest debate organization (Cirlin, 1997; Key, 2014). Co-founder Cirlin (2007) mentioned, “it is the only debate format in modern history which was intentionally developed using empirical methodologies to achieve specific pedagogical ends” (p. 11). IPDA co-founder Rogers (2022) described the inception of the debate format arising out of an informal late-night dinner conversation. Rogers wrote:

Several of the topics and concerns that we discussed while at the convention were re-hashed and Alan [Cirlin] tried to convince me to return to San Antonio to engage in what he referred to as '*a series of discussions to explore the viability of creating a more accessible, student friendly, skills oriented, format of debate*' over the Christmas break... Alan [Cirlin] was always the master persuader who liked to believe he operated from behind the scenes. However, anyone who really knew Alan also knew who was really 'pulling the strings.' His enthusiasm and gregarious nature were contagious, so after several phone calls and discussions, I agreed to meet with Alan in San Antonio. In May of 1996, Alan and I began a week-long collaboration, the result of which would lead to the conceptual birth of the Public Debate Association (p. 4).

The establishment of IPDA initiated by co-founders Alan Cirlin, Jack Rogers, and Trey Gibson ushered in a new evolution of collegiate debate as a worthy alternative to NDT-CEDA policy debate (Cirlin, 1997; Key, 2014; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). For brevity, the co-founders Cirlin, Rogers, and Gibson are referenced as the "IPDA debate framers." The initial discussions among the IPDA framers laid the template for the rules codified by the IPDA Constitution and By-laws.

Our discussions could be summarized by our observations that the habits that had made NDT inaccessible and incomprehensible to most of the debate community and the wider external academic community, had slowly infiltrated CEDA as the NDT circuit continued to lose popularity, and those NDT programs began drifting into CEDA looking for a place to compete (Rogers & Freeman, 2022, p. 5).

Rogers and Freeman (2022) mentioned the established rules within IPDA debate sought to correct many of the problems observed by the IPDA framers within the NDT and CEDA policy debate formats by promoting extemporaneous delivery instead of rote memorization, discouraging "spreading" or rapid-fire delivery, and promoting the unique inclusion of lay audiences as judges at debate rounds (p. 8). Additionally, the changing of debate resolutions for each round prevents debaters from spending inordinate amounts of time researching, gathering, organizing large evidence files, and preparing Affirmative and Negative cases upon a single

debate topic for the year – a commonplace practice within the policy-oriented NDT and CEDA formats (Jones, 1978; Gass, 1988; Hallmark, 1990; Jensen & Preston, 1991; Horn & Underberg, 1993; Jensen, 1996; Preston, 2016; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; National Debate Tournament, 2020; National Debate Tournament, 2021; CEDA, 2021).

First, the IPDA framers - Cirlin, Rogers, and Gibson - created a debate format discouraging the use of evidence within debate rounds. As per the IPDA debate rules, debaters are not permitted to bring or use printed evidence to the round (Key, 2014; International Public Debate Association, 2021). This practice prevents speakers from simply reading reams of evidence without consciously persuading audiences. This practice is a departure from other intercollegiate policy debate formats - most notably in Lincoln-Douglas and NDT-CEDA policy debate - where debaters spend much of their time preparing speeches and arguments prior to the tournament (Jones, 1978; Gass, 1988; Hallmark, 1990; Jensen & Preston, 1991; Horn & Underberg, 1993; Jensen, 1996; Key, 2014; McMullen, 2019). Despite not being allowed to bring printed evidence, debaters are permitted to reference and paraphrase their notes acquired from their 30-minute preparation time. According to Key (2014), “In the original rules of the format, competitors were prohibited from even copying evidence verbatim onto their flow pads, instead being required to memorize or paraphrase their sources in the same manner as [individual event Extemporaneous speakers]” (p. 16).

Second, the IPDA framers created lay adjudication as a central tenet for the debate format. The IPDA Constitution rules explicitly calls for using lay - untrained judges - to simulate a real-world, audience-friendly debate akin to judges and jurors in a courtroom (Key, 2014; International Public Debate Association, 2021). The rationale for lay judges descended upon orations done by the ancient Greeks in front of large audiences, where the speaker’s ability to

persuade others demonstrated mastery and persuasiveness (Cirlin, 2008). As per IPDA rules, anyone can serve as a lay judge, including undergraduate students (Key, 2014; International Public Debate Association, 2021). IPDA debate tournaments typically employ several faculty members, former debaters, and friends or family members of competitors to serve as lay adjudicators at debate rounds. IPDA offers a different experience from other intercollegiate debate formats that use highly trained coaches or former debaters (Cirlin, 2008; Key, 2014; J. Rogers, personal communication, April 9, 2022).

Third, another core feature of IPDA debate involves changing debate resolutions every round. The IPDA debate framers sought to create an extemporaneous debate style where debaters prepare their case during their allotted 30-minute preparation time before the round (Rogers & Freeman, 2022). This practice prevents debaters from presenting “canned” cases surrounding topics established for the entire year - a commonplace feature in the NDT-CEDA policy debate formats (Gass, 1988; Hallmark, 1990; Cirlin, 2008; Key, 2014; Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020). According to the IPDA textbook, the IPDA debate format contains four resolutions: fact, value, policy, and symbolic (International Public Debate Association, 2021). This arrangement ensured a wide variety of topics ranging from domestic policy, pop culture, and sports to international, economic, and geopolitical issues around the world today (Key, 2014; Richey & International Public Debate Association 2020; International Public Debate Association, 2021).

Fourth, the IPDA framers established differing divisions as another core feature of IPDA debate. According to IPDA rules, there are five divisions: Novice, Junior Varsity, Varsity, Professional, and Team IPDA (International Public Debate Association, 2021). It is commonplace for IPDA debate tournaments to feature all or some of the divisions contingent

upon the tournament region and the number of entries placed at the tournament (J. Rogers, personal communication, April 9, 2022). These divisions serve to separate more experienced debaters from novice debaters at a tournament. Team IPDA is the only division to feature teams instead of individuals, where an Affirmative team of 2 speakers faces off against a Negative team of 2 speakers.

In summary, the International Public Debate Association is a unique intercollegiate debating format emphasizing an audience-friendly format geared for public audiences. First, by banning printed evidence in debate rounds, IPDA encourages speakers to focus their attention and their speaking style on their audience rather than divulging reams of evidence at warp speed. Second, lay adjudication preserves the integrity of the debate format. The IPDA framers - Cirlin, Rogers, and Gibson - sought to prevent a debate style favoring highly trained judges over lay adjudicators. Third, the diverse array of resolutions offered at each debate round prevents competitors from delivering canned and rehearsed cases prepared prior to the round. This practice encourages an eclectic array of topics for debaters to choose from at a debate round. Moreover, finally, the divisions within the debate format allow debaters to debate those within their experience level. The desire to correct the stylistic and cultural patterns observed from NDT and CEDA led the IPDA debate framers upon a crusade against precarious changes threatening the essence of intercollegiate debating - a legacy existing today.

### **IPDA's Impending Pedagogical Turn**

The history of International Public Debate Association is a phenomenon still being written. Explored further in the Research Findings chapter, change and innovation continues to exert considerable influence upon IPDA today. Cultural diversity within the forensic community has long been a contentious issue for scholars and coaches. Meares (2003) described cultural

diversity as an opportunity for “increased learning and creativity” to take shape (p. 5). Meares (2003) and Keys (2014) described how unwritten cultural norms dictate standard practices within any forensic activity. Research findings indicate significant changes and emerging trends within IPDA debate community identical to the NDT and CEDA divide observed in the latter half of the 20th century. Rogers and Freeman (2022) observed college teams from other intercollegiate debate formats – such as the National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA), Lincoln-Douglas Debate (NFA-LD), as well as NDT and CEDA – introduce a variety of debating norms and practices at tournaments antithetical to the principles set by the IPDA framers (p. 5).

Beginning around 2015, the IPDA debate community grew into new frontiers, such as the Northeast, the Southeast, and the Midwest, where new teams and associations abandoned other debate formats in favor of IPDA debate (Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; International Public Debate Association, 2021; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). In 2014, Pi Kappa Delta – one of the nation’s oldest public speaking societies – added IPDA into their cadre of debate formats offered at their comprehensive national tournament (Pi Kappa Delta, 2014). The following year in 2015, Phi Rho Pi – the national public speaking and debate organization for community colleges – also added IPDA into their national tournament (Phi Rho Pi, 2015). In 2018, the Southern and Northern Atlantic Forensic Union (SNAFU) – an association of speech and debate teams from colleges and universities along the East Coast – also added IPDA into their repertoire of competitive events (Speechwire, 2018). Gradually, these new additions significantly altered the IPDA debating landscape away from its small initial following (Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020).

The most significant change for IPDA occurred throughout the 2020-2021 competition season with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Morris & NDC-IE, 2020; Rogers & Freeman,

2022). Nationwide travel restrictions and lockdown quarantining procedures resulted in the abrupt cancellations of all national speech and debate championship tournaments in the Spring of 2020 (Holm, 2020; Morris & NDC-IE, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022).

At first, many intercollegiate teams scrambled to react to the sudden changes and challenges brought by the pandemic. However, in June 2020, members of the four major college speech and debate organizations – namely, Phi Rho Pi (PRP), Pi Kappa Delta (PKD), National Forensic Association (NFA), and the American Forensic Association (AFA) – met virtually in series of conferences comprising the National Developmental Conference on Individual Events (NDC-IE) (Morris & NDC-IE, 2020; American Forensic Association, 2021; National Forensic Association, 2021; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). The “four families” met to discuss the future of the speech and debate community in a series of virtual, synchronous, and asynchronous formats for the upcoming competition season (Morris & NDC-IE, 2020). The 2020 NDC-IE virtual conferences resulted in all IPDA debate tournaments shifting to an exclusively virtual format. According to Rogers and Freeman (2022), this transition led to a more “hyper-competitive” environment where debaters exhibited a “win at any cost mentality” antithetical to IPDA’s founding principles (p. 8). Their work illustrated the transition to virtual competition as replete with unwanted changes detrimental to the IPDA debate community.

At the time of this writing in 2023, no qualitative research explored debating norms upon IPDA following the transition to online competition. Therefore, this research project utilized a qualitative research project using in-depth interviews to investigate some of the significant cultural norms within the IPDA debate community, exposed research gaps, and describe future research recommendations. Moreover, this project aims at providing those within the debate

community with a meaningful framework for future discussions and a worthy template for new scholarly research.

## CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of debating norms impacting the International Public Debate Association. Specifically, this qualitative research study assessed the state of the IPDA debating community by exploring the various existing cultural debating norms, practices, and pedagogical styles within the IPDA debate community witnessed at virtual and in-person tournaments. In-depth qualitative interviews with students, coaches, and debate alums provided an extensive outlook on the current state of the IPDA debate format. The research questions contain the following:

- Q1. What is the current state of the IPDA debate community following the transition to online competition?
- Q2. How is the IPDA debate community evolving in relation to the rise of online competition?
- Q3. How have the recent changes with regard to virtual debate impacted the IPDA debate community?

### **Method**

The research questions sought to answer the current state of the International Public Debate Association following the transition to virtual competition. Throughout theme development and analysis, several themes emerged throughout multiple in-depth participant interviews. This research project utilized similar data analysis stages adopted by Lemon (2019).

Theme analysis performed with NVivo and Microsoft Word occurred throughout the data analysis phase.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Theme analysis performed with NVivo and Microsoft Word occurred throughout the data analysis phase. My first experience with virtual competition was far from glamorous. In fact, it resulted in near disaster. It occurred on September 2020 when I hosted the Queens College Big Apple Debate Tournament. I can vividly recall struggling with adopting Zoom's breakout room feature to create individual competition rooms. My lack of experience and insight with the platform not only delayed my tournament's schedule by nearly three hours, but had frustrated participating teams and competitors acclimating to online competition. I lost several hired and volunteer judges during a confusing array of last-minute changes and significant schedule delays. One competing university suddenly withdrew all of their entries from my tournament. My initial virtual tournament experience was a botched attempt as a virtual tournament host which left lasting impression in my ability to comprehend virtual IPDA debate competitions. Little did I know that my initial botched attempt and my involvement within the International Public Debate Association (IPDA) would shape my preconceived perceptions about the current state of the debate format today.

Merriam et al. (2015) and LeCompte et al. (1993) jointly contend a researcher's positionality and reflexivity prove essential to the qualitative research process. "Cultural context also affects the formulation of research questions as well as the interpretation of results" (p. 123). In other words, researchers and scholars who engage in qualitative research automatically retain a predisposed and biased outlook of their observable world. These biases are based on individual

upbringings, personal beliefs, preferences, and life experiences can drastically alter a research project's design, execution, and outcome (LeCompte et al., 1993; Irvine et al., 2012; Merriam et al., 2015).

According to Larsen and Wright (1986), differing worldviews and opposing perspectives enhances one's understanding about the world through symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework. In addition, narrative inquiry investigates the relationships governing human behavior and tests our knowledge about the world (Larsen & Wright, 1986; LeCompte et al., 1993; Merriam et al., 2015; Irvine et al., 2012). According to LeCompte (1993) and Gusfield (2003), the meanings of human social interactions change over time due to the differing perspectives held by individuals.

Additionally, this theoretical framework describes lived experiences as contingent “upon interpretations and it is constructed” between differing actors (LeCompte, 1993, p. 129). I align most with symbolic interactionism because my experiences with IPDA debate format have led me to embark on this research project. Founding a student-run team at Queens College and introducing them to IPDA debate proved one of the most transformative experiences in my academic journey. IPDA debate had begun making inroads within my region with a few teams sponsoring IPDA, and Individual Events swing tournaments within the Northeast. Traveling to tournaments from New Hampshire, Boston, my home state of New York to Florida and Illinois, I gained valuable personal insight about the current state of the debate community. Frequent conversations at tournament tab rooms and conference panel discussions with coaches and debate scholars would lead to protracted discussions about debate practices and differing pedagogical styles observed at tournaments.

I remember learning about the history of IPDA debate for the first time. It occurred during one of my many late-night readings of the IPDA debate textbook. Chapter 1 of the 2016 edition of IPDA debate textbook reveals the origins of the debate format. Cirlin (2016) described the rifts formed within the CEDA and NDT policy debating community. Various changes and additions to the time format displeased coaches who disagreed with the format's trajectory (Jones, 1978). Competing ideologies emerged about governing the policy debate format. Cirlin (2016) described the dissent within the policy debating community:

Let me say that the problem was not that the founders of CEDA forgot their objectives. The problem was that they lost control of their own association and could no longer maintain their objectives. In some ways they were victims of their own success. NDT programs jumped ship and joined CEDA in ever increasing numbers. They gradually took over the association...CEDA was popular and grew. At first it only attracted programs that agreed with the CEDA philosophy...Smaller, more marginal, NDT tournaments folded. That meant less cannon-fodder for the big boys and fewer NDT tournaments. All of which accelerated the exodus. It wasn't long before some of the smaller NDT programs started doing CEDA debate even though they disagreed with the CEDA philosophy. They came because of simple economics - they couldn't afford to attend enough NDT tournaments to make a decent season. So they trickled in and then flooded into CEDA bringing their debate philosophy, judges, and NDT-trained debaters with them (Cirlin, 2016, p. 4).

Upon reading this passage, many questions rushed to the forefront of my inquisitive mind. As a young coach, I did not know about the NDT-CEDA policy debate rift or the events leading to the creation of the International Public Debate Association. I distinctly remember asking my former coach about what Dr. Alan Cirlin - the co-founder of IPDA debate - meant about what went wrong within the policy debate format. My former coach described how he experienced policy debate as a competitor from Texas Tech University in the early 1990s. His personal experiences and displeasure with debating led to an aversion to the policy debate format. I also remember vividly asking veteran debate coaches during my first year of coaching

about what Cirlin (2016) meant about preventing the “deterioration of the IPDA debate format.” Tab room discussions with fellow coaches from local teams of the Northeast provided much inspiration to initiate this research project.

My own personal struggles transitioning into virtual competition during the September 2020 Queens College Big Apple Debate Tournament highlighted the significant obstacles felt by the entire forensics community at large. Nevertheless, my breadth of knowledge and experiences grew from a simple curiosity into a full-fledged academic pursuit of discovery and inquiry. My experiences with the debate community initiated a deep interest in exploring the current trends and cultural practices observed within the IPDA debate community today. I can see the power struggles between the old and new, change and stagnation, and between Southern and Northern forensic communities. I have learned and observed change is a disconcerting reality for some within the debating community. The influx of new teams and programs adopting IPDA as their preferred debate format - albeit a welcoming sign of growth - has brought significant concerns to the forefront of discussions at tournaments, tab rooms, and conference panels (Rogers & Freeman, 2022).

Differing opinions, personalities, characters, worldviews, and pedagogical styles are integral to human society (LeCompte et al., 1993; Merriam et al., 2015; Potts, 2015). Social interactions between individuals advance human knowledge and form the crux of narrative inquiry, epistemology, and ontology within phenomenal qualitative research (Potts, 2015).

I have chosen to incorporate symbolic interactionism into my qualitative research. By adopting an emic perspective, this project consists multiple personal interactions and interviews with coaches, students, and former debaters within the IPDA debate community. As a debate

coach and educator, I devised a research project valuing my experiences and participants by adopting in-depth interviews. Analyzing and reviewing recent emerging trends from various perspectives and backgrounds offers a comprehensive understanding of what is currently happening to the International Public Debate Association. While this project builds upon a substantial amount of extant literature - especially Key's (2016) thesis and Roger and Freeman's (2022) article about IPDA debate - I conclude by offering insight as to where the IPDA debate community is today.

From a personal vantage point, narrative inquiry surrounding the origins of IPDA debate has opened my eyes to observing changes within the IPDA debate community. Throughout various virtual competitions from September 2020 to this writing in February 2023, I have observed new, and emerging programs adopt IPDA debate at local and national tournaments.

Conversations with coaches about the current state of the IPDA debate community have revealed various responses contingent upon differing geographical and regional differences. Initial research findings demonstrated some individuals expressing optimism about the current state of the debate community. Others echo Cirlin (2008), Key (2014) and Rogers and Freeman's (2022) frustrations by lamenting new changes to the format as a corruption of the ideals established by the IPDA debate framers. And others - like myself - are simply too unsure to make sense of what is happening within the community. They are either too new or inexperienced to ascertain any changes to the debate format.

As revealed in the Discussion chapter, change is an uncomfortable reality for many coaches and competitors within the International Public Debate Association today. The complexities of deciphering the current state of the International Public Debate Association is

personal. Confronting the changes brought by virtual competition at the Big Apple Debate Tournament felt surreal to me. Upon entering this research project, I did not know what information or discoveries my research would find. Nevertheless, I learned my experiences as a debate coach from a student-run team in New York City shaped and guided the findings of this research project, and will continue to do so in future research projects following the conclusion of this study.

### **Data Collection**

In-depth, qualitative interviews with research participants provided the primary data collection method for this study. Data collection lasted nearly seven months with 14 respondents participating in this study. First, this process began with a pilot bridling exercise by testing out a semi-structured research interview guide with a colleague in October 2021. The pilot exercise contained an interview guide with suggested questions and conversation starters. The preliminary exercise yielded helpful interview suggestions and revisions which were implemented during the data collection phase. Additionally, the initial interview guide was revised further during the human subjects approval process at my university's institutional review board.

Next, data collection began in earnest after fully developing this study's research methodology and primary research questions. Participants joined this study by a variety of personal and professional connections, email invitations, and word-of-mouth recommendations. Individual invitations were emailed via the "IE-L" listserv – an email listserve for forensic coaches across the nation. Many interview participants were word-of-mouth personal and professional contacts gathered throughout my participation at past IPDA debate tournaments.

Third, all participant interviews occurred virtually over Zoom. Interview transcription took place via Zoom's closed-captioning feature, which documented participant statements along with the audio and video recordings. The 14 in-depth interviews resulted in 743 minutes or 12.3 hours of Zoom video and audio recordings, translating into 217 pages of text. Additionally, the average interview length lasted 53 minutes. The shortest interview lasted only 32 minutes, and the longest, at nearly 2 hours, lasted 117 minutes long. All participants shared in-depth accounts of their own experiences, sentiments, and attitudes about the International Public Debate Association. **Table 5** briefly illustrates theme analysis resulting from the research participants who contributed to this study.

**TABLE 1. STEP-BY-STEP DESCRIPTION OF NVIVO AND MICROSOFT WORD THEME ANALYSIS**

Stage	Action	Analysis Description	Actions:
1	Listening & reviewing the data	Conducted interviews with research participants. Transcribed via Zoom’s closed-captioning feature. Checked transcripts for inaccuracies prior to importing corpus into NVivo.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Interviewed 14 participants.</li> <li>● Reviewed 217 pages.</li> <li>● 12.3 hours of audio/video recordings of interview transcripts.</li> <li>● 14 participants.</li> </ul>
2	Coding & transferring the data	Coded key sentences into recognizable search terms. Next, compiled codes transferred and exported first to MS Excel, then into MS Word for sorting by category.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analyzed data corpus into codes.</li> <li>● 256 codes emerged.</li> <li>● Codes labeled into 5 categories: benefits, negatives, observations, sentiments, and improvements.</li> <li>● Codes then exported from NVivo into MS Excel, then into MS Word.</li> </ul>
3	Collapsing codes	Sorted and categorized codes. Merged, collapsed, and sorted similar codes together on MS Word into the following categories: benefits and negatives, observations, sentiments, and improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Codes labeled and sorted within their own category.</li> <li>● Similar codes collapsed together.</li> </ul>
4	Clustering codes	Conducted theme development by clustering labeled codes into themes to observe trends in MS Word. Conducted data analysis by refining further codes. Organized themes into each research question based on relevance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All 256 codes assigned to each of the three research questions.</li> <li>● 12 initial themes emerged.</li> <li>● Codes referenced by at least 3 or more participants placed at the top of the list; those with less either merged with similar codes or eliminated.</li> <li>● Eliminated irrelevant concepts.</li> </ul>
5	Observing emerging trends	Reviewed codes on MS Word to uncover hidden emerging trends under each research question. Summarized the findings to arrive at the essence of the phenomenon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 225 codes removed and/or merged into theme subpoints.</li> <li>● 5 prominent themes emerged: in-person competition, healthy state, mixed observations, change, cultural norms and differences.</li> <li>● Performed trustworthiness checks by utilizing Lemon’s ethics processes.</li> <li>● Reported the essence of the research findings by featuring the most prominent themes in each research question verified by several participants.</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2. PARTICIPANT TABLE**

<b>Participant #</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Years w/ IPDA</b>	<b>Length of Interview in Minutes</b>	<b>Transcript Pages</b>
1	John	Graduate Teaching Assistant	Southeast	7	50	5
2	Martin	Dir. of Debate	Northeast	20+	60	5
3	Alex	Dir. of Forensics	Southeast	25+	38	12
4	Samuel	Dir. of Debate	Northeast	5	43	9
5	Ariel	Student	Northeast	3	35	9
6	Jennifer	Graduate Teaching Assistant	Midwest	1.5	60	17
7	Kendall	Director of Forensics	Midwest	5	46	14
8	Remy	Student	Northeast	2	43	14
9	Tara	Director of Forensics	Northeast	5	45	12
10	Moe	Former Competitor	Northeast	3	32	14
11	Carl	Former Competitor	Southeast	5	117	45
12	Kenneth	College Administrator	West	25+	59	21
13	Martha	IPDA Coach	Southeast	25+	68	20
14	Mark	Director of Forensics	West	11	47	20

## **Data Analysis**

As shown on **Table 1**, the first phase involved listening and reviewing the data. Utilizing data analysis methods provided by McCracken (1988), videos and audio recordings served as valuable reference points in rectifying text inaccuracies and unintelligible conversations from Zoom's closed-captioning feature. Each transcript underwent a thorough text examination to accurately reflect the participant's perspective.

The second phase involved transferring the text corpus into NVivo to initiate coding. The initial data extraction on NVivo resulted in 256 word-sentence concepts and 12 initial themes. These coded concepts featured specific word phrases from respondent interviews conveying thoughts, opinions, and observations related to the five categories of "benefits," "negatives," "observations," "sentiments," and "improvements." Any thought, opinion, observation, or sentiment speaking favorably of the current state of the IPDA debate community, its evolution, and about the virtual competition labeled as "benefits" to indicate the benefits observed within the debate format. In addition, varying sentiments, thoughts, and participants observations contributed to the differing responses to interview questions. These concepts were categorized as "negatives," "observations," and "sentiments." After successfully labeling the concept list, all codes transferred from NVivo into Microsoft Excel, resulting in further analysis and refinement within Microsoft Word.

The third phase involved collapsing similar codes together. The initial code list was refined further by collapsing similar codes on Microsoft Word after exporting them from NVivo. Qualitative researchers must "clean" up the initial concept list by merging similar codes or omitting irrelevant codes unrelated to the research subject. Once again, individual codes merged

into other similar codes within their respective categories of “benefits,” “negatives,” “observations,” “sentiments” and “improvements.”

The fourth phase involved clustering similar codes from other categories together. This stage marked the beginning of theme development. Here, codes were assigned a particular theme. Each research question featured themes based on relevance. From the initial concept list containing 256 codes, 12 initial themes emerged. Codes referenced by at least three or more participants were placed at the top of the list. Less referenced codes either merged with similar codes or eliminated from the list. Irrelevant codes unrelated to the three research questions were also eliminated.

The fifth and final phase involved observing emerging data trends and crystallization. As previously mentioned, codes were assigned to related themes, which formed a primitive outline for inductively deducing patterns and trends from the data by previous qualitative research (LeCompte et al., 1993; Guest & MacQueen, 2008; Irvine et al., 2012; Merriam et al., 2015). Here, this research project incorporated phenomenological reduction – a practice of continually revisiting the data within the Word document outline to determine emerging trends and practices within the debate community (Merriam et al., 2015; Lemon, 2019). According to Merriam et al. (2015), phenomenological reduction is a necessary process of theme development, where the researcher inductively uncovers discoveries to arrive at the phenomenon's essence.

In summary, the remaining sections of this research project presents research findings, discussion, research limitations and recommendations for future study. The research findings and discussion sections discuss the essence of the research findings following this chapter. The findings section also illustrates the themes assigned to each research question. The discussion

section explores two implications of the current state of the International Public Debate Association. Finally, the conclusion highlights research limitations and recommendations for future research.

### **Summary**

This chapter illustrated the design of the research method employed in this study. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews with research participants occurred exclusively over Zoom. This research study aimed to examine the current state of the International Public Debate Association following the transition to virtual competition. The sample population consisted of 14 participants featuring IPDA students, former debaters, coaches, and historians. The next chapter explores research findings that emerged from the data collection process.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Chapter 4 identifies the findings emerging from data collection. This research project explored the state of the International Public Debate Association following the 2020 transition into online competition. By utilizing qualitative in-depth participant interviews, 14 individuals participated in this study. This section answers the three research questions presented in the Methods section. Moreover, this section provides a brief overview of the answers to each research question before exploring themes gathered from the research findings. This section presents the research questions mentioned earlier in the Methods section with the following:

RQ1. What is the state of the IPDA debate community following the transition to online competition?

RQ2. How is the IPDA debate community evolving in relation to the rise of online competition?

RQ3. How have the recent changes with regard to virtual debate impacted the IPDA debate community?

This chapter summarizes the results emerging from the 14 participant interviews. I explain those findings in three parts by detailing the themes associated with each research question. First, I address the conflicted status of the International Public Debate Association. The theme under Question 1 explores the complexities in ascertaining the current state of IPDA today. Second, I explore the evolution of the IPDA debate community. The two themes under

Question 2 highlights the impact of virtual tournaments and IPDA’s growing community. Third, I review the recent changes observed within IPDA debate. The final theme under Question 3 illustrates how regional differences, cultural norms and practices, and unethical debaters have impacted the debate format. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary of all research findings uncovered during the data collection phase.

**TABLE 3. LIST OF THEMES & SUBTHEMES UNDER EACH RESEARCH QUESTION**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Subthemes</b>
<b>UNDER RQ 1</b> 1. CONFLICTING OPINIONS ABOUT THE STATE OF IPDA TODAY	A: The Current State of IPDA Seen as Negative B: The Current State of IPDA Seen as Optimistic C: Uncertain About the Current State of IPDA
<b>UNDER RQ 2</b> 2. BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF VIRTUAL COMPETITION UPON IPDA	A: Benefits of Virtual Tournaments B: Drawbacks of Virtual Tournaments
<b>UNDER RQ 2</b> 3. EVOLUTION OF IPDA’S EXPANSION AND GROWTH IN REGIONS ACROSS THE NATION	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>None</b></p>
<b>UNDER RQ 3</b> 4. VAST CULTURAL NORMS, UNWRITTEN RULES & REGIONAL DIFFERENCE ABOUND IN IPDA DEBATE	A: Preference Towards a Diversified Tournament Judging Pool of Expert & Lay Judges

**Question 1: What is the State of the IPDA Debate Community Following the Transition to Online Competition?**

This section begins by illustrating participant accounts of the current state of the International Public Debate Association. Research findings illustrate IPDA debate community's status as conflicted between optimism and uncertainty about the future. The responses from interview participants detail the complexities in ascertaining the current state of the IPDA debate community today. Theme 1 of Question 1 demonstrates the variety of responses expressed from participant interviews.

**TABLE 4. THEME AND SUB-THEMES TO RESEARCH QUESTION 1**

THEME 1	SUBTHEMES
<p>CONFLICTING OPINIONS ABOUT THE STATE OF IPDA TODAY</p>	<p>A: The Current State of IPDA Seen as Negative            B: The Current State of IPDA Seen as Optimistic            C: Uncertain About the Current State of IPDA</p>

**Theme 1: Conflicting opinions about the state of IPDA today**

The conflict between tradition and evolution within IPDA manifested throughout the varied and conflicted responses given by the participants. Participants gave conflicting opinions about the current state of the IPDA debate community today. Several participants conveyed hope and optimism about IPDA’s overall trajectory by noting its growth, camaraderie, and increased accessibility to debate programs following the transition to online competition. Two participants – Moe and Ariel – described IPDA’s overall trajectory as unfavorable. Five participants spoke favorably about IPDA’s current state, while others conveyed uncertainty about the status of the debate format. Tara’s comments best described the current situation succinctly. “IPDA is

currently undergoing an identity crisis of those who want the debate format to stick to its roots and those who welcome change” (Interview, 16 February 2022). The theme under Question 1 expands upon IPDA’s ongoing identity dilemma further.

**Subtheme A: The current state of IPDA debate seen as negative**

First, both Moe and Ariel - who competed in IPDA within the past two years - saw IPDA’s current trajectory as unfavorable largely due to unethical debaters, poorly worded resolutions, and unqualified judges. During the interview, Moe recalled his experiences competing in IPDA at various tournaments with his student-run team. Moe criticized the current state of IPDA as a debate format antithetical to the principles established by the IPDA framers.

He stated:

To summarize, I'm just frustrated with certain debaters who are coming into this format really soiling it [for everyone] instead of making it like a happy, friendly debate. They're just gonna cite some absurd rule and claim that they won the round...I feel [that] a lot of debaters from different formats, especially from policy [debate], are changing the metrics of IPDA debate. [They] are really abusing the hell out of the format in order for them to win cheap points even though they may not” (Interview, 21 February 2022).

Moe lamented against unethical competition by describing several occasions where he encountered unfair and unethical competitors at debate rounds. He believed the debate format should return to its audience-friendly roots by stating:

Don't spread. Don't include kritiks. Try to actually debate. Honestly, rather than essentially abusing your opponent's position, such as rewarding or challenging the definition of “vulnerable” and introducing a framework of “grammatology,” debate [should be] for everybody. It's for the entire community at large (Interview, 21 February 2022).

In addition to unethical debaters, Moe also shared instances of lopsided AFF-weighted resolutions placing him at a disadvantage. A resolution at a state championship tournament once

read, “Sanctions are better than negotiating.” Another resolution read, “Michael Bloomberg will be the DNC 2020 candidate.” At various local and regional tournaments, Moe also encountered a variety of poorly worded and convoluted resolutions. According to Moe, lopsided, tautological, and poorly worded resolutions severely limit the grounds for competitors to debate equitably. Lastly, Moe believed some lay judges differ from experienced judges by not being able to grasp key arguments presented within the round. Consequently, Moe’s negative experiences with unethical debaters, poorly worded resolutions, and lay adjudicators deterred him from competing at IPDA debate tournaments during his senior year.

Ariel, Moe’s teammate, shared his negative experiences as an IPDA competitor. He presented a more pointed response about what he saw within the IPDA community. When asked about the current state of the IPDA debate community, Ariel said:

I think [the current state] differs from the original IPDA principles. And I say this because, from my understanding, the founders wanted an [audience-friendly] format. More focused on rhetorical speaking...And I feel like that goes against the purpose of IPDA because now we’ve trained these lay judges who - no offense - aren't qualified. They don't really read the news every day. They're not high-news junkies (Interview, 21 February 2022).

While Moe spoke about unethical debaters and poorly worded resolutions, Ariel talked at length about the drawbacks of lay adjudicators at various in-person and virtual IPDA debate tournaments. Ariel recalled his frustration at receiving ballots from judges who favored his opponents who spoke faster and gave more evidence within a debate round. Like Moe, Ariel witnessed lay judges with limited knowledge of current events and unfamiliarity with the debate format as unqualified to adjudicate debate rounds. By describing unqualified judges as “not high-news junkies,” Ariel conveyed dissatisfaction with an integral feature meant to preserve IPDA as

an audience-friendly debate format. According to Moe and Ariel, the current state of the IPDA debate format contains unethical debaters, poorly written resolutions, and unqualified judges who negatively affect the competitive experience at virtual and in-person tournaments.

### **Subtheme B: The current state of IPDA debate seen as optimistic**

Kenneth, Alex, Martin, and Remy contrasted Moe and Ariel's sentiments by each giving reasons for conveying hope and optimism for IPDA's future. These reasons include its recent growth, camaraderie, and cultural differences. When asked about the current state of the IPDA debate community, Kenneth said: "I've got a lot of hope...[I'm] very refreshed about where the community is right [now]" (Interview, 1 September 2022). Kenneth is a college administrator from the West coast who has witnessed the genesis and growth of the IPDA debate format from its inception. During the interview, Kenneth reflected upon the shared collaboration of ideas among students and coaches within the community. He recalled his recent experience working with students at a summer debate camp. Kenneth stated:

When I've worked with the students themselves in the summer camps...[what] I find I lecture on what I believe IPDA should be and what it's stylistic approach should be, [the students] are hungry for that. They're drinking it in like a sieve. They're asking relevant questions...This is still a very strong, very intellectual, very capable community [of people utilizing IPDA] to enhance their lives (Interview, 1 September 2022).

According to Kenneth, the future of IPDA remains bright. The competitors best represent the current state of the IPDA community. They represent the future teachers and educators who will eventually pass on the legacy of IPDA debate to the next generation of competitors. In essence, the current state of IPDA demonstrates its growth and appeal to those from different forensic organizations.

Alex also echoed Kenneth’s optimism for the future. When asked about the current state of the IPDA debate format, Alex stated “our numbers are extremely strong” (Interview, 2 February 2022). Like Kenneth, Alex viewed IPDA’s future trajectory as bright. He shared instances of camaraderie and professionalism within recent competitions. During his recent experiences at various in-person and virtual debate tournaments, Alex described the camaraderie among coaches and students from across the nation as conducive to fostering mutual collaboration and healthy competition at tournaments. “One of the biggest things of IPDA debate has always been the camaraderie that happens between schools” (Interview, 2 February 2022).

Alex continued:

Alex: Now, [there are always] wins and losses that bring up some heated moments. But nothing that ever reaches the level of anything that I've ever seen in any of the other organizations as far as animosity or arguments that actually take place. There's going to be an argument, at any point, when you have people that are involved in debate, but I've never seen one that wasn't handled and wasn't dealt with professionally.

Randy: Okay.

Alex: Whereas, you can't say that everywhere else. So the organization itself I think is strong. Now, in relation to the original intent, I think most of it is still there. Lay judges are still very much in this area the predominant judge that we face especially in the in-person format (Interview, 2 February 2022).

Alex is a coach from the Southeast who witnessed the IPDA debate format from its inception in the late 1990s. According to Alex, the increasing adoption by teams from other debate formats and by the camaraderie witnessed at tournaments represent the current state of the IPDA debate community. In his eyes, the camaraderie of coaches and students collaborating at tournaments represents the current state of IPDA.

Martin echoed Alex’s sentiments by describing virtual tournaments as a “professionalized” debate format. Martin described this sort of professionalism as a debate

format fostering “better argumentation, better clashes and refutations and higher levels of research within debate rounds” (Interview, 2 February 2022). Martin is a coach from the Northeast who taught Lincoln Douglas debate before migrating into the IPDA debate format several years ago. In addition, Martin echoed Alex’s sentiments about the importance of camaraderie at tournaments. While reflecting upon the recent debate tournaments in his region, Martin believed IPDA’s initial origins from the Southeast had facilitated cultural and regional stylistic differences in regions throughout the nation. According to Martin, the professionalized and regionally diverse debate community best represents the current state of IPDA, which has sustained the activity since the transition to online competition.

Remy also described the current state of IPDA as positive. During our interview, Remy reflected upon his own debate experiences with fondness when asked about the current state of IPDA. “Overall, my experience with the IPDA debate community has been positive. I’ve liked what I’ve seen. [The community] is very supportive even though it’s competitive” (Interview, 11 February 2022). Remy continued by stating:

Nine times out of 10 at [virtual] tournaments, I would say like 99.9% of the time people are very supportive. [You can lose the round] and after the round ends, they'll shake your hand. They will smile and say, “Oh my god, you did so well!” They're so respectful and humble at the end of the round. They're passionate about what they do. But they don't let it get to their head. (Interview, 11 February 2022).

Remy is a former competitor from the Northeast who witnessed the 2020 transition to virtual competition. Although Remy encountered unethical and unprofessional debaters at various times, he spoke at length about his positive experiences at virtual and in-person tournaments. His comments resemble Alex and Martin’s comments about camaraderie at debate tournaments. While debaters desire to win, IPDA competitors remain cordial and professional even to those

who lose the round. Moreover, according to Remy, the current state of the IPDA community is best represented by the positive and cordial interactions with competitors at debate rounds.

### **Subtheme C: Uncertain about the current state of IPDA**

In contrast to Alex, Kenneth, Martin, and Remy, five participants conveyed uncertainty about the state of IPDA today. These participants – five in total – gave a variety of reasons illustrating their responses. Their responses illustrate a lack of uniformity and demonstrate the complexity of ascertaining the state of IPDA debate.

Samuel expressed uncertainty when asked about the IPDA debate community's status. He first commented about IPDA's growth within the Northeast in recent years but also acknowledged the difficulty of ascertaining clarity about the debate format's overall trajectory. His response stated the following:

It really is the judging [aspect] that makes it difficult to say. Because even if you've got a group of judges that are supportive of the principles, they - because they have experienced and some expertise in doing this - will bring to bear some preconceived notions about what the students should be doing (Interview, 2 February 2022).

Like Martin, Samuel is a former Lincoln-Douglas debate coach from the Northeast involved in the IPDA debate format for several years. In essence, the judges who adjudicate debate rounds at tournaments make it challenging to assess the current state of the IPDA. Samuel observed IPDA judges – especially those from other debate formats - upholding conflicting beliefs and customs, undermining the audience-friendly debate format. These beliefs reinforce behaviors favoring a more technical debate format. According to Samuel, judges who embrace technical debate “totally flies in the face of what IPDA set out to do” (Interview, 2 February 2022). In essence,

the current state of the IPDA debate format is difficult to ascertain, given its potential for growth on one side and its conflicting array of judges on the opposite side.

Martha expressed uncertainty when asked about the IPDA debate format's current state. When asked about the state of the International Public Debate Association, she stated: “That’s a broad question! There are so many wonderful things, and there are a few things that concern me...there’s a yin and yang to that” (Interview, 2 September 2022). In describing the positive attributes of the IPDA debate community, Martha commented on the growth of IPDA throughout her region and across the nation. She stated:

One of the wonderful things is that we’re expanding and there are other regions of the country besides the Southeast...that are embracing this style of debate. We’ve worked hard to expand this organization. But there’s a yin and yang to that. The yin is great. We’re growing. The yang is a lot of people since they are not here in the South doing tournaments. [They are not] being mentored into the IPDA debate format. There are a lot of CEDA and parliamentary concepts, techniques and procedures that are kind of creeping into some of the new programs” (Interview, 2 September 2022).

Martha has been with the IPDA debate format since its inception in 1997. Like Kenneth and Alex, she also witnessed the growth of IPDA in recent years. However, by her own account, the uncertainty about IPDA’s current state rests upon its expansion across differing regions.

According to Martha, IPDA’s growth is a double-edged sword. Its growth has allowed many teams from other debate formats to adopt IPDA. Nevertheless, she believes this growth is also intrinsic to a general lack of community mentoring and guidance of new programs joining the IPDA community. Therefore, Martha believes more should be done to aid new IPDA community members by reinforcing core IPDA principles and practices at debate tournaments. Moreover, according to Martha, mentorship and guidance are the gateways to IPDA’s success in the future.

Carl also conveyed uncertainty and conflict about ascertaining the current state of the IPDA debate format. He commented upon IPDA's current state as one with "a lot of pros and a lot of cons" (2 March 2022, Interview). Carl first described the positive attributes of IPDA's expanding community before lamenting against its national leadership. Carl stated:

The pros are that it's growing rapidly. It continues to pull in more schools. And I think it does that because it's an easy style to learn... That's appealing to a lot of schools who are kind of dealing with other fractured programs or [debate] styles such as NPDA. A lot of IPDA is picking up the NPDA folks... (Interview, 2 March 2022).

Despite its recent growth, Carl criticized the national leadership of the International Public Debate Association. According to Carl, the poor handling of grievances at the National IPDA Tournament represents the negative attributes of IPDA's leadership. He stated IPDA's national leadership has much room for improvement by describing them as "very political" (Interview, 2 March 2022). Carl believed the centralization of power of the IPDA executive committee, in conjunction with its handling of grievances at the National IPDA Tournament, negatively affects the debate format. As a former competitor at the National IPDA Tournament, Carl witnessed the national committee at work when he falsified evidence at a debate round. He stated the national IPDA debate committee must do more to streamline its debate grievance procedures and should become more flexible in considering reforms reflecting its growing community. Moreover, Carl's conflicted sentiments about the status of IPDA are best represented by the drawbacks of its national leadership on the one hand and its potential for growth on the other hand.

Tara gave a different perspective on IPDA's current conflicted status. She described the current state of IPDA as an organization undergoing a change in its history - a tug-of-war of

conflicting traditional and contemporary ideas. One example she gave centered upon the dilemma of poorly constructed resolutions at various IPDA debate tournaments. Tara stated:

I think that there are definitely some people who want it to go back to its roots... [Those who want] to go back to having these things you don't need to having specialized knowledge. Or do a ton of research in order to access [the ballot]. And that it's more delivery-focused. But you also see other people on the other side. There's also that 'messy middle.' But there's people on the other side [that are saying], "No, let it evolve"...I think that there's a little bit of an identity crisis that's happening" (Interview, 16 February 2022).

Tara entered the IPDA debate format after migrating from National Parliamentary Debate (NPDA). According to Tara, the internal conflict between tradition and the future represents the current state of IPDA. Unlike Martha and Carl, she illustrated the conflict as a pedagogical and ideological clash between the past and the future - namely, tradition and evolution - by community members. Reflecting upon her own experiences, Tara described the state of IPDA as an identity crisis based upon a clash of conflicting traditional and contemporary ideas. Moreover, the current trajectory of the International Public Debate Association is undergoing an important crossroads in its history. The clash between old and new ideas – namely, tradition and evolution – is where the IPDA community must contend with confronting essential questions vital to the debate format's existence. These crucial questions are explored further in the next chapter in the Discussion section.

During our interview, Kendall expressed uncertainty about the state of the IPDA debate format. I asked her to look back upon her recent tournament experiences. After a long pause, she gave her answer. She stated:

When the world's on fire, you're just throwing water on it. And so I kind of feel like I can't say that it's positive or negative if we're heading in the right direction because we're still on fire. And so, it's hard to know what's going to happen when the fire goes out. Are we going to go back to the way things were? Are we going to take some of the positives we've learned from virtual tournaments and implement them? I would say that I think if we completely go back to the way things were without taking any life lessons from the last two years, then we're missing an opportunity (Interview, 10 February 2022).

Like Samuel, Kendall described the difficulty in ascertaining the current state of the IPDA debate community. Kendall – a Director of Forensics from the Midwest – reflected upon the difficulty her small team faced during the pandemic. Faced with significant budget cuts, travel restrictions, and coaching burnout, Kendall recalled her experience with “a lot of weight [placed] on my shoulders” (Interview, 10 February 2022). While juggling administrative team duties, coaching, and travel while maintaining a full-time faculty teaching overload position at her university, she described the last two years with the IPDA debate format as a period of great trial and hardship. According to Morris (2020) and Holm (2020), Kendall is hardly alone. Many coaches faced similar predicaments following the Fall 2020 transition to virtual competition. Collectively, the forensic community faced many challenges as it transitioned to virtual competition following the abrupt cancellation of all national tournaments during the COVID-19 lockdowns. Despite these obstacles, Kendall believed challenges and adversity represent an essential opportunity for internal reflection and growth. Moreover, the current state of the IPDA debate community is represented by uncertainty about the future while reflecting upon the lessons learned from the past.

### **Theme 1 summary**

The responses from participants under this theme illustrate the conflicted status of the International Public Debate Association. The clash between optimism and uncertainty about the

future provided an in-depth outlook of the attitudes surrounding the IPDA debate format. Two participants described the current state of IPDA as being negatively impacted by unethical debaters, poorly worded resolutions, and unqualified judges. Four participants conveyed hope and optimism for IPDA's future due to the camaraderie of debate community members and the students who compete in it. Lastly, five participants expressed uncertainty about the status of IPDA. Moreover, these responses illustrate the complexities of ascertaining the current state of the International Public Debate Association today.

### **Question 2: How is the Debate Community Evolving in Relation to the Rise of Online Competition?**

The responses from interview participants highlighted two integral features of the evolution of the International Public Debate Association. The answer to Question 2 is twofold: first, virtual tournaments significantly altered the IPDA community; second, virtual tournaments increased accessibility for IPDA's growing and diversifying community. First, research findings demonstrate the International Public Debate Association's evolution toward a diverse array of virtual tournaments. Participants discussed the impact of virtual competitions following the Fall 2020 transition to virtual tournaments. Second, research findings also illustrate the growth of IPDA across the nation. Participants discussed IPDA's expansion and its increased accessibility in virtual competition. Therefore, this section is devoted to exploring the evolution of the International Public Debate Association through the themes emerging from the data analysis stages. Moreover, the answer to Question 2 highlights the evolution of IPDA first by illustrating the adoption of virtual tournaments and second by examining its growing and diversifying community which has sustained the debate format since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**TABLE 5. THEME AND SUB-THEMES TO RESEARCH QUESTION 2**

THEMES 2 & 3	SUBTHEMES
BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF VIRTUAL COMPETITION ON IPDA	A: Benefits of Virtual Tournaments B: Drawbacks of Virtual Competition & A Desire for In-Person Competition
EVOLUTION OF IPDA’S EXPANSION AND GROWTH IN REGIONS ACROSS THE NATION	None

**Theme 2: Benefits and drawbacks of virtual competition upon IPDA**

Upon transitioning to online competition, Martha felt hesitation about the change. As an educator of 35 years, she could hardly imagine a future without in-person tournaments and seeing the many familiar faces within her region. Anxious and uncertain about the future, Martha’s initial reaction stated, “I can’t do that! This is public speaking. This has to be face-to-face!” (Interview, 1 September 2022). According to Holm (2020), Morris (2020), and Rogers and Freeman (2022), Martha was not alone. The forensic community scrambled to adjust to the challenges of transitioning to virtual tournaments. Travel restrictions and pandemic lockdown procedures - in conjunction with significant budget cuts and coaching staff layoffs, travel restrictions and pandemic lockdown procedures severely limited forensic teams across the nation (Holm, 2020; Morris & NDC-IE, 2020).

Today, online competition provided sustenance for forensic programs since 2020. They have also provided an essential lifeline for threatened programs unable to travel and compete at in-person tournaments. It also facilitated the evolution of virtual tournament platforms such as

Zoom, Yaatly, and 8x8/Jitzi to take shape within the forensics community. Virtual debating platforms increased accessibility for many teams threatened with budget cuts and coaching staff eliminations. According to Holm (2020) and Morris (2020), the transition to online competition facilitated the rise and evolution of multiple online tournament platforms and modalities providing a diverse array of forensic tournaments. The forensic community transitioned to virtual competition with various asynchronous, synchronous, and hybrid tournaments serving teams competing in Individual Events and across different debate formats. Research findings illustrate the impact of virtual tournaments on the International Public Debate Association. Multiple individuals mentioned the benefits and drawbacks of virtual competition. This section is devoted to illustrating the evolution of virtual competition by illustrating its benefits and drawbacks observed by research participants.

### **Subtheme A: Benefits of virtual tournaments**

During our conversation about virtual competition, Moe, Ariel, Carl, Jennifer, Kendall, and Tara talked at length about the impact of online tournaments on their respective teams. First, according to Moe, virtual tournaments increased accessibility for teams unable to travel. “I am for one in favor of virtual debates. In part because it's much more accessible for a lot of people who otherwise wouldn't be able to afford to go to tournaments and travel as frequently” (Interview, 21 February 2022). Witnessing the importance of virtual tournaments in his team, Moe observed virtual tournaments as an essential lifeline for his student-run team. While facing budget eliminations, low team morale, and nationwide travel restrictions, virtual competitions allowed Moe and his teammates to participate remotely in regional and national IPDA tournaments.

Ariel echoed Moe's sentiments about virtual competition. He described the importance of virtual tournaments by explaining how online competition benefited his program. Ariel stated:

Virtual tournaments are basically THE program...From what I've heard, a lot of teams have had their budget cuts. Coaches have moved on and this and that. And there are not a lot of in-person tournament options. Unfortunately, it's become a Catch-22. If you want to go [to an in-person tournament], you have to have money...Virtual tournaments are basically everything. And it's sad. I would like my whole portfolio of tournaments that our team goes to be entirely in-person, but that's [not] the reality that we have (Interview, 3 February 2022).

Stories like Ariel's are hardly unique. They illustrated the significant obstacles faced by under-resourced and threatened programs across the nation negatively affected by the pandemic. Ariel and Moe were both teammates from a small team. Their team competed at in-person tournaments until pandemic travel restrictions and lockdown procedures eliminated their team budget.

According to Ariel, virtual tournaments provide support and are a way to keep one's "skills sharp." Ariel continued:

It's important to keep your skills sharp. You can't just go into hibernation. Hibernation really does not exist for debaters at all. After a certain point, just one or two weeks if you're not debating, you become rusty. It's almost like brake rotors, honestly. They rust so fast if you don't use them. You have to use them as soon as possible. And that's basically people's debate skills. Virtual tournaments, even though I don't like them, are important in keeping some of these public speaking and debate skills really sharp (Interview, 3 February 2022).

Ariel saw virtual tournaments for exercising and retaining debate skills while competing remotely. While preferring in-person tournaments over virtual competitions, Ariel acknowledged the importance of online competition to his team. It has allowed his team to compete while

retaining its competitive edge. According to Ariel, the rise of virtual tournaments upon threatened teams best represents the evolution of IPDA.

Carl also noted the impact of virtual tournaments. He echoed the importance of virtual tournaments for financially strapped forensic programs. When asked about the role of virtual tournaments in his team, Carl stated:

Carl: I think there are a lot of pros that come out of [virtual tournaments]. I know that this is true for programs, including our own, that struggle with funding. Because the average tournament costs throughout the year...an average [of] \$1,500 depending on how many students you're taking. Whereas for a virtual one - a lot of times - they're free. That's a huge difference especially if you're trying to go to 10 tournaments throughout the year (Interview, 2 March 2022).

Carl talked about the “pros and cons” of virtual tournaments. However, like Ariel, Carl witnessed the impact of budget cuts and travel restrictions on his team. Virtual tournaments helped his team compete at tournaments during the height of the pandemic. Jennifer also shared Carl’s sentiments. Reflecting upon her experiences, Jennifer talked at length about the financial difficulty for programs to attend an in-person tournament. She stated:

Jennifer: The fact that we need to be in the pro division [of IPDA debate] means it's an expensive trip. When we went to Louisiana, it was 12 hours. We have to stay in a hotel. On the way back--- on the way down, we drove straight through. But we had to take two cars. So it's like I personally drove 12 straight hours. It was a very physically hard weekend. But it still cost us like \$4,000. It was ridiculous. So I can't— we can't afford that (Interview, 9 February 2022).

Attending an in-person tournament placed a significant financial burden on Jennifer’s team. As a graduate teaching assistant, Jennifer viewed virtual tournaments as an enormous benefit to her team, which faced significant budgetary restrictions due to the pandemic. She later

commented upon the diversity of virtual and in-person tournament offerings sustaining her team throughout the past two years. “I love seeing when there are choices. One weekend you can go in-person. [And on the other weekend], you can go virtual. Having a bunch of tournaments every weekend to choose from– I love that” (Interview, 9 February 2022). According to Jennifer and Carl, the evolution of virtual IPDA tournaments resulted in a variety of tournament offerings serving many forensic programs negatively affected by budget cuts and travel restrictions.

Kendall mentioned her team's financial burden during the transition into virtual debate competitions. Facing increased teaching responsibilities from her department and limited team resources, Kendall also described the complexities of managing her teaching and coaching obligations. Virtual tournaments provided an essential lifeline to her program. She stated:

And so last year, because of the benefits of virtual [tournaments] having to pay for travel, we had an extremely limited budget when I came to the University. I took advantage of virtual tournaments and I threw my students in everything. This year, we did nine tournaments in the fall semester (Interview, 10 February 2022).

Echoing Ariel, Carl, and Jennifer’s sentiments, Kendall viewed virtual tournaments as a benefit and an essential lifeline sustaining her program throughout the past two years. Remote competitions enabled her to save the team’s limited financial resources to attend the 2022 Pi Kappa Delta National tournament at the University of Central Florida. According to Kendall, the evolution of virtual tournaments has provided great relief to her team, which is currently facing an uncertain future.

The evolution of virtual tournaments not only benefited financially strapped forensic programs, but according to Tara, it also helped competitors individually. She observed virtual

tournaments benefiting busy students with job responsibilities. Reflecting upon her experiences, Tara stated:

I think that there are things that were really good about the virtual environment. Students who couldn't take an entire weekend to travel could suddenly compete on Saturday and take Sunday off and work, you know. So there were definitely a lot of other things that [provided] benefits [to students] (Interview, 16 February 2022).

Like many stories featured here, Tara's program faced significant budget cuts during the pandemic. However, online tournaments allowed her students to compete in tournaments remotely. The evolution of virtual tournaments facilitated increased flexibility for her students who held jobs. Working students who could not compete for an entire weekend could compete asynchronously or partially during a weekend swing tournament. In addition, Tara observed virtual competition as a cost-effective option for those who lacked access to tournament business attire. "You just need to have a nice top on in order to compete, which is a very different thing...that a virtual space provides [whereas an in-person] space does not" (Interview, 16 February 2022). Virtual tournaments provided increased accessibility and an essential platform for financially under-resourced programs and competitors to participate remotely.

Moreover, the evolution of virtual competition has profoundly affected the forensic community. It supported threatened programs, increased accessibility for students, and provided relief to teams facing budgetary and travel restrictions. The next section of this chapter explores the drawbacks of virtual competition in detail.

## **Subtheme B: Drawbacks of virtual competition & desire for in-person competition**

While several participants noted the benefits of virtual competition, several participants also noted the drawbacks of online competition. Many of the participants featured in this section provided their observations of the advantages of virtual competition while mentioning its apparent drawbacks. Six participants gave various reasons regarding the drawbacks of virtual competition and a desire for in-person tournaments. These reasons included the lack of face-to-face communication, the loss of team collaboration, zoom fatigue, and the missing cultural exchange of ideas between coaches at tournaments. This section explores the drawbacks of virtual competition based on participant responses in detail below.

First, several of my research participants indicated the importance of face-to-face interactions commonly missing from online competition. Ariel described the absence of conversation among competitors at virtual tournaments. When asked about the drawbacks of virtual tournaments, Ariel said:

How can you really talk to somebody? That's basically what is [happening in] IPDA on Yaatly. You're not going to socialize with your opponent unless you have 15 minutes [to spare], your judge was late, or you are insanely early [to a competition round]. When people don't talk to each other as much - especially outside the debate sphere - I think bad things can happen (Interview, 3 February 2022).

While virtual tournaments increased accessibility for forensic programs, Ariel noted the lack of interpersonal interactions throughout online competitions. Virtual tournament platforms are quite challenging to facilitate conversations with competitors. Competitors in online tournament platforms like Yaatly, Zoom, and 8x8/Jitzi frequently do not interact with other competitors from other teams outside of their virtual competition rounds. During our conversation about the impact

of online competitions, Ariel spoke at length about the benefits and drawbacks of his tournament experiences. He recalled a variety of IPDA debate tournaments on the Yaatly tournament platform occurring during his junior year. In our interview, Ariel demonstrated a desire to return to an in-person competition where he could interact with competitors from the neighboring teams within his region as he did before the pandemic. According to Ariel, the lack of interpersonal interaction at tournaments can lead to the “deterioration of people’s relationships” with competitors from differing teams within the forensic community. Moreover, he saw the lack of face-to-face interactions as a limitation leading to less collaborative relationships within the forensic community.

Similarly, Carl echoed Ariel’s sentiments by addressing the lack of face-to-face interactions among team members at virtual competitions. While Ariel spoke about the lack of interpersonal interactions with neighboring teams within the forensic community, Carl addressed the lack of interpersonal collaboration among team members at virtual tournaments. When asked about the drawbacks of virtual competition, Carl provided a twofold response first by addressing the limitations of hybrid tournaments before addressing the loss of inner-team collaboration at virtual tournaments. He stated:

Carl: Whereas virtually, [debaters] usually can't [travel]. So there's just so much that I think a hybrid setup will be very valuable, because I do think there are things that you lose in the virtual setup, you know. You can speak well over a camera. But can you command a room?

Randy: Well, excellent. So what is missing or lacking within the virtual IPDA debate community? So we talked about the positives. What are the cons? What's missing or lacking?

Carl: I think, for some schools you know what happens is that they go virtual. But they don't have the space on their own campus. And so they lose a lot of the inner-teamwork that goes on during prep and community... You miss some of the physical elements that I think are important in how you prepare yourself as a professional communicator (Interview, 2 March 2022).

First, Carl saw the inclusion of virtual and hybrid tournaments as a benefit to teams unable to travel to in-person tournaments. The forensic community's adaptation of virtual tournaments is not without its drawbacks. Carl provided two functional limitations of virtual tournaments. First, Carl stated, "You can speak well over a camera. But can you command a room?" He saw virtual competition as an opportunity for virtual competitors to lose valuable skills enabling them to captivate audience members at in-person tournament rounds. Competitors adapted their presentation and delivery styles toward a virtual audience. This practice can lead to a loss of a competitor's ability to adapt their presentation to a public audience at in-person tournaments.

Second, Carl believed virtual tournaments cultivated less inner-team collaboration among team members at competitions. He shared experiences at past in-person tournaments where non-competing team members collaborated with their competing debaters during debate preparation. Carl saw debate preparation as a vital opportunity for team members to collaborate, share information, gather evidence, prepare arguments, and provide last-minute consultation for their teammates about to enter the debate round. Once again, Carl saw the limitations of virtual competition as a loss of "the physical elements" commonly observed in an in-person tournament.

Like Ariel, Carl expressed a return to in-person competition where team members could collaborate freely with those competing at debate rounds.

Martin provided a different explanation regarding the limitation of virtual tournaments. Like many participants in this study, Martin observed the impact of virtual tournaments within his team following the transition to online competition in the Fall of 2020. He first spoke about the prevalence of zoom fatigue resulting from prolonged exposure to computer-mediated communication. Martin said:

Randy: Are there any negative aspects of the virtual IPDA debate community that come to mind? If so, please explain.

Martin: One negative aspect of virtual competition is ‘zoom fatigue.’ [Virtual tournaments are good], but they are no substitute for a regular in-person tournament. There is a lack of person-to-person (face-to-face) interaction within virtual tournaments. And so is the loss of travel opportunities for the students (Interview, 2 February 2022).

Martin gave a threefold response. First, he noted the impact of zoom fatigue upon virtual competitors. Hogan and Ngian (2019) noted the adverse effects of zoom fatigue following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. They described zoom fatigue as a form of “mental exhaustion or burnout as a result of using Zoom [or any other video conferencing platform]...[leading] to a variety of negative health impacts” (p. 2). Martin’s observation about zoom fatigue illustrated a significant burden affecting many debaters at virtual competitions. As previously stated, many forensic programs faced challenges while transitioning into virtual tournaments nationwide during the Spring and Fall of 2020 (Holm, 2020; Morris & NDC-IE, 2020).

Second, Martin viewed virtual tournaments as a benefit to many forensic teams. However, he believed virtual tournaments could not replace in-person competitions. Martin saw in-person tournaments as essential to developing forensic teams by fostering mutual

collaboration and collegiality among competitors. Third, Martin saw the loss of travel opportunities negatively impacting the availability of in-person tournament options for forensic teams. Echoing Martha's sentiments - explored later in this section - Martin observed limitations with virtual tournaments not present in an in-person tournament environment. According to Martin, limitations such as the prevalence of zoom fatigue, the lack of face-to-face dialogue between coaches and students, and the loss of in-person tournament travel illustrate the drawbacks of online competition.

Remy addressed the limitations of internet connectivity issues negatively affecting the online tournament experience. He prefaced his response by speaking at length about the positive attributes of virtual tournaments before listing the drawbacks of internet connectivity problems faced by online competitors. Remy stated:

Not everyone's internet connection is the same. Through no fault of their own, [competitors] lag out; they disconnect. Sometimes, their audio is sped up even though they're not speaking faster. It's [sometimes] hard to hear them [when] the audio is garbled (Interview, 11 February 2022).

The crux of Remy's statements focused upon the difficulty of hearing competitors with internet connectivity issues. He recalled participating in debate rounds where his opponents encountered connection problems during the round. Competition rounds fraught with internet lag, audio distortion, weak connectivity, and low video resolution negatively impact the online tournament experience for all involved. Therefore, the prevalence of connectivity problems illustrates the limitations of virtual tournaments, which are not present in online tournaments.

Alex also addressed the limitation of communicating with individuals at virtual tournaments. He spoke about the difficulty in collaborating with forensic colleagues and coaches within his region. Alex stated:

Alex: Well, the problem with virtual is that us as coaches have a harder time talking about things that are happening in-house. [It's] because we're not seeing each other after rounds. We don't really meet in the lounges and things of that nature that would happen in-person. So, my biggest thing that I miss and that I think is missing from virtual IPDA versus in-person is the ability for coaches to talk to each other about what we're seeing, and what we're hearing that negatively affects debate and start to put an end to [the problematic cultural norms within IPDA debate] (Interview, 2 February 2022).

Alex's response shared a common frustration among many forensic coaches in regions across the nation. It is customary for many in-person tournaments to feature a "judges lounge" - a meeting place for tournament judges and forensic coaches to congregate over coffee, light refreshments, and light-hearted conversation. According to Alex, these meeting spaces served an essential and functional purpose where coaches congregated to discuss important matters concerning the IPDA debate format. However, the advent of virtual tournaments meant the elimination of meeting spaces for coaches to collaborate interactively. Removing these meeting spaces eliminated opportunities for coaches to interact and discuss problems affecting the IPDA debate community.

Samuel also noted the drawbacks of virtual competition. He spoke at length about the loss of standard non-verbal communicative features within in-person tournaments. According to Samuel, virtual competition makes it difficult to assess the judge's feedback during a virtual debate round. He said:

Samuel: And the other aspect that I think you missed is the non-verbals. Like teaching students to be watching the judge very, very carefully. You're not able to do that so much online. So there are definitely some downsides to the online debate (Interview, 2 February 2022).

The crux of Samuel's sentiments about the limitations of online competitions centered upon the loss of non-verbal communication at virtual tournaments. Epping and Labrie (2005) described non-verbal communication as an integral feature practiced at in-person forensic tournaments. It is a commonplace practice for competitors at forensic tournaments to rely upon non-verbal communication to assess the audience and judge feedback. Non-verbal communicative features such as head nods, eye contact, and gestures allows performers and debaters at in-person forensic tournaments to assess their performance during tournament rounds (Epping & Labrie, 2005). As Epping and Brie (2005) note, Samuel stated forensic competitors are trained to evaluate judging and audience feedback which helps them adapt their speeches to a variety of audiences and to rectify past mistakes. The elimination of non-verbal communication at virtual tournaments makes it difficult for competitors to assess their performance within their rounds. Therefore, Samuel believed in-person tournaments allow students to assess judging and audience feedback patterns not replicated in a virtual debate round.

Like Martin, Martha saw no replacement for in-person competitions. The value of face-to-face interactions is evident throughout her many interactions at virtual tournaments. In-person tournaments preserve the integrity and ideals of an audience-friendly debate format. Martha said:

As long as IPDA maintains the face-to-face tournament and promotes the national competition true to its former style, its preferred pedagogy and procedures, we will probably be able to stay away from any real negative impacts from [debate practices from other debate formats] (Interview, 1 September 2022).

Martha emphasized the importance of in-person tournaments when she recalled her initial encounter with an online tournament. Martha initially felt reluctant about the switch to online competition in the Fall of 2020. Eventually, she began to value online debate tournaments as

they gained prominence within the forensic community. Like all participants in this section, Martha noted the various benefits virtual tournaments have provided to forensic teams in her region. Nevertheless, she believed the International Public Debate Association should be independent of virtual competition. Martha talked at length about the recent qualification procedures passed by the national executive board of IPDA. According to Martha, IPDA debate teams can count points earned from only two virtual tournaments toward their team's season-long sweepstakes standing. These season-long points are then calculated and awarded to the team with the most points at the National IPDA Tournament each April. Martha viewed this rule change incentivizing the return of in-person tournaments within the IPDA community. Therefore, she believed the lack of face-to-face interactions at virtual competitions and the new qualification procedures are reasons to embrace in-person tournaments over virtual competition.

### **Theme 2 summary**

The responses under this theme illustrate the first answer to Question 2. Adopting virtual tournaments led to the evolution of various virtual tournament hosting platforms and modalities. Since the Fall of 2020, virtual tournaments supported many endangered and threatened forensic programs within the International Public Debate Association. The impact of virtual tournaments on the forensics community manifested throughout the responses given by participants. The lived tournament experiences of participants revealed several significant benefits and drawbacks of online competition. While virtual tournaments provided several benefits, their apparent drawbacks provided reasons for returning to in-person competition. The next theme explores the second answer to Question 2 by illustrating IPDA's growing and diversifying community.

### **Theme 3: Evolution of IPDA's expansion and growth in regions across the nation**

While responding to Question 1 regarding the current state of the IPDA debate format, Martha commented about the growth of the International Public Debate Association. "One of the wonderful things is that we're expanding and there are other regions of the country besides the Southeast...that are embracing this style of debate. We've worked hard to expand this organization" (Interview, 2 September 2022). Martha is one of three interview participants who witnessed IPDA's birth and has seen the expansion of the IPDA community. The growth of IPDA has been well documented by Key (2014), Richey (2020), the International Public Debate Association (2021), and Rogers and Freeman (2022). The timing for this research project is most opportune. 2022 marked a quarter century of growth and expansion for the International Public Debate Association since its founding in 1997 (Rogers & Freeman, 2022). The interview responses in this section addresses IPDA's increasing adoption by teams migrating from other debate formats. Participants also noted Lincoln-Douglas debate (NFA-LD) and the National Parliamentary debate (NPDA) within interview discussions. Four individuals - Martha, Alex, Carl, and Samuel - shared their own observations about IPDA's growth in recent years. Therefore, the research findings featured under this theme under Question 2 elucidate the expansion of the International Public Association as witnessed by research participants.

When Dr. Alan Cirlin proposed founding a brand-new debate organization, Martha felt intrigued. At that point, Martha coached policy debate for several years, where her team tried Cross Examination Debate (CEDA) and Parliamentary debate. Nevertheless, Dr. Cirlin's novel idea seemed different. "We used to do CEDA debate, and then we tried Parli debate. But when IPDA came along, we knew that we had found our home" (Interview, 2 September 2022).

Reflecting upon IPDA's initial beginnings, Martha illustrated IPDA's recent growth as a double-edged sword.

First, the transition to online competition resulted in increased access to virtual tournaments by teams unable to travel. "We are expanding in other regions of the country...that are embracing this style of debate" (Interview, 2 September 2022). She believed the addition of new teams in new frontiers across the nation galvanized the strength of the IPDA organization. Martha viewed IPDA's expansion outside the Southeast optimistically but with a caveat. Second, she expressed concern about the prevalence of opposing debate customs and norms infiltrating into IPDA. She stated, "There are a lot of CEDA, parliamentary concepts, techniques and procedures that are kind of creeping into some of the new programs" (Interview, 2 September 2022). These opposing debate norms and customs are explored further under Question 3 in the next section. Martha believes IPDA's growth has proved beneficial, but more must be done to guide and mentor new programs migrating from other debate formats into IPDA.

Alex shared his observations about the growth of IPDA in the Southeast and across the nation. Like Martha, Alex believed the expansion of the International Public Debate Association had strengthened the organization. "The [IPDA] community itself, as far as numbers, is extremely strong. We are growing. I think the last check that we did, we are easily the fastest growing [forensic] organization in the country" (Interview, 2 February 2022). Alex expressed optimism about the status of IPDA by explaining the organization's expanding community and camaraderie among forensic programs nationally. According to Alex, the positive interactions between students and coaches from different regions demonstrate IPDA's growth. Moreover, he saw IPDA's growth as a positive outlook for the debate format.

Similarly, Samuel also witnessed IPDA’s growth into new frontiers. During the interview, he shared his thoughts about IPDA’s recent growth in the Northeast. He stated:

Samuel: In the Northeast, [IPDA is] gaining ground for sure. There's more people involved in it. It's impressive. From what I understand the— I forget the acronym. But there's one league here in the Northeast that had I.E. [Individual Events] tournaments traditionally, but now they're having—

Randy: SNAFU [Southern and Northern Atlantic Forensic Union].

Samuel: What's that?

Randy: SNAFU.

Samuel: The SNAFU. Right, right. I think that IPDA is becoming fairly institutionalized within this SNAFU group. And so, I would say it's growing in the Northeast for sure (Interview, 2 February 2022).

Samuel noted the expansion of IPDA debate within the Southern and Northern Atlantic Forensic Union (SNAFU). SNAFU is an alliance of college forensic programs hosting a variety of forensic tournaments along the East Coast annually within the states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina. In November 2018, SNAFU instituted a trial run of IPDA debate at its annual Charity Ball Tournament (Speechwire, 2018). The organization officially integrated IPDA debate into its program during the 2019-2020 season. By witnessing the integration of IPDA debate at SNAFU tournaments, Samuel surmised the debate format’s expansion along the East Coast, thereby creating a host of new opportunities for programs to experience IPDA debate firsthand.

Carl also noted IPDA’s rapid growth nationally. Its intuitiveness and ease of use bolstered the expansion of the debate format. He stated:

[IPDA is] growing rapidly. It continues to pull in more schools. And I think it does that because it's an easy style to learn...It's easy to learn compared to other [debate] styles. And so, I think that's appealing to a lot of schools who are kind of dealing with other fractured programs and styles such as NPDA. A lot of IPDA is picking up the NPDA folks. I don't know what is going on with them but I've noticed that. [Also], a lot of people who did Lincoln Douglas in high school [are joining] (Interview, 2 March 2022).

According to Carl, many former NPDA and Lincoln Douglas debaters migrated into the International Public Debate Association. He viewed IPDA's expanding community as a benefit, solidifying the organization's influence on forensic programs nationwide. In essence, he believed IPDA's audience-friendly, public-oriented debate format appealed to programs seeking a change from technical debate standards commonly observed in NPDA, NDT, CEDA, and NFA-LD. Carl described the other debate formats as "fractured programs" existing with much discord and division. Moreover, the expansion of the IPDA community is correlated to programs migrating from other debate formats desiring a return to public-oriented debate.

### **Theme 3 summary**

The narratives held by the four participants illustrate a theme depicting IPDA's expansion in new regions across the nation. These four participants observed the expansion and growth of the International Public Debate Association in recent years. The adoption of IPDA by migrating programs from other debate formats and its expansion in regions demonstrates a growth trend. Furthermore, this growth trend highlights the second answer to Question 2, which provided an in-depth outlook of the organization's expansion.

**Question 3: How Have the Recent Changes with Regard to Virtual Debate Impacted the IPDA Debate Community?**

The responses to Question 3 illustrate one central underlying theme about the recent changes impacting the International Public Debate Association. Research findings demonstrate vast cultural and regional differences abound within the IPDA debate format. The answers to Question 3 rest upon the information given by interview participants. This theme features one corresponding theme and sub-theme. Participants spoke at length about the impact of cultural norms, unwritten rules, a diverse judging pool, and regional differences in the debate format. Multiple participants shared experiences of unethical debaters negatively affecting debate rounds at tournaments. Analyzing the impacts of cultural and regional differences would not be possible without mentioning the impact of expert judges and lay adjudicators within IPDA. Therefore, this section will explore the impact of cultural and regional differences first by analyzing unwritten cultural norms and types of cultural differences, and second, by examining a general preference toward a diverse array of expert and lay judges at tournaments.

**TABLE 6. THEME AND SUB-THEMES TO RESEARCH QUESTION 3**

<b>THEME 4</b>	<b>SUBTHEME</b>
<p>VAST CULTURAL NORMS, UNWRITTEN RULES &amp; REGIONAL DIFFERENCES ABOUND IN IPDA</p>	<p>A: Preference Towards a Diversified Tournament Judging Pool of Expert and Lay Judges</p>

#### **Theme 4: Vast cultural norms, unwritten rules & regional differences abound in IPDA debate**

Near the end of our interview, Alex spoke at length about the impact of cultural and regional differences within the IPDA debate format at virtual tournaments. Compared to the other responses featured in this section, Alex expressed uncertainty about why regional differences exist. He stated:

I think that the biggest thing is when you're doing the research, just remember that there is a major difference between the different regions of the country in the way that the debate is done. Why that is? I'm not 1,000% certain. I don't know if it's because the-- the good old folks that have been around for forever are mainly concentrated in the South. And the geographical distance between everybody else kind of keeps us from being on the same page. I don't know if it's because IPDA [is] fairly new in the Northwest and people [are now] jumping on board. But, they [are] kind of doing things the only way that they knew how. I don't know why the differences are the way that they are. But just remember that regional differences probably are playing a big role in some of the things that you're going to find (Interview, 2 February 2022).

Alex concluded our interview by reminding me of the regional differences existing within the debate format. Although he expressed uncertainty about why differences exist within the debate community, he acknowledged its impact on the variety of cultural norms and practices observed within IPDA tournaments. During our interview, Alex described various regions including the Southeast, the Northwest, the Midwest, and the Northeast. IPDA's growth facilitated the expansion of new programs into the debate format. Our discussion about regional and cultural differences centered upon disclosure within debate rounds. In essence, Alex's response acknowledged the existence of regional differences without stating where those differences originate.

Kenneth provided an assessment of the regional differences within the IPDA debate format at virtual tournaments. He described it as a phenomenon varying from state to state, region to region, and from one national tournament to another. Kenneth stated:

When you explain collegiate debate to somebody who doesn't have a background, it's really hard. There's literally half a dozen viable competitive collegiate debate organizations out there. And within those organizations [there are differing] subsets. There's the PKD version of IPDA versus the [parent] organization itself and what they do at their tournament. And so, you're constantly being bombarded by those influences (Interview, 1 September 2022).

Unlike Alex, Kenneth's explanation provided a viable reason for the regional and cultural differences presently affecting IPDA at virtual and in-person competitions. He observed differences between the International Public Debate Association and other partnering forensic organizations adopting the IPDA debate format.

During our conversation, Kenneth spoke at length about one partnering organization - Pi Kappa Delta (PKD). PKD is among the largest and oldest comprehensive forensic organizations in the nation. According to L.E. Norton (1982), Pi Kappa Delta is a national fraternal and honorary forensic organization founded in 1913 at Ottawa University. Each year, PKD alternates between hosting its National Comprehensive Tournament and its biennial national convention for affiliated forensic programs within its membership. In 2014, PKD adopted IPDA debate within its cadre of events offered at the PKD National Comprehensive Tournament (Pi Kappa Delta, 2014). Due to its extensive history and popularity among national forensic programs, Kenneth believed the IPDA format observed at PKD national tournaments, and its conventions deviate from the customs set by the International Public Debate Association. This is because the PKD membership is comprised of a diverse array of forensic programs participating in a variety

of events, including Individual Events (I.E.), Parliamentary debate (NPDA), Lincoln-Douglas debate (NFA-LD), Public Forum debate (PF), British Parliamentary debate (BP), and Student Congress (SC) in addition to IPDA debate. Not all forensic programs are created alike. Other forensic organizations featuring IPDA debate, like the International Forensic Association (IFA), Phi Rho Pi (PRP), and the Southern and Northern Atlantic Forensic Union (SNAFU), structure their IPDA divisions and pairings differently from the International Public Debate Association. In summary, Kenneth viewed regional and cultural differences as a manifestation of forensic organizations offering IPDA debate at various regional and national tournaments.

Carl shared a different observation about the regional and cultural differences within the IPDA debate format. He described it as a phenomenon where outsiders - notably, debaters from other debate formats - perceive the IPDA debate format differently than those currently in it. Carl stated:

A policy debater is just going to debate differently...Policy debaters have a hard time wrapping their mind around [IPDA debate] when they first come in. And so a lot of times, they'll just quit...They've said that they think IPDA is stupid. There's nothing really gained from it because some of the topics at some tournaments are awful (Interview, 2 March 2022).

Since each forensic organization operates under its constitution, rules, and by-laws, it is customary for debaters to acclimate to cultural norms and practices governing their respective debate formats (Key, 2014). These cultural norms and practices include differences in time formats, length of arguments, argumentation, and refutation techniques, speaking styles, speech delivery, evidence presentation, types of debate topics covered, and tournament judges. According to Carl, policy debaters dislike the IPDA debate format due to its public-oriented and audience-centered format. By dismissing IPDA as “stupid,” Carl believed some outsiders

perceive the IPDA format as drastically different from their own community. It should be noted policy debaters in CEDA and NDT adopt various practices such as spreading, preparing, and rehearsing arguments and using large evidence files opposing IPDA's principles set by its framers.

Tara shared these outsider sentiments when she first joined the IPDA community years ago. She spent her formative years in college as a competitor in NPDA debate. During our discussion about IPDA's conflicted status, Tara described her first encounter with IPDA debate at a national tournament. She recalls dismissing IPDA as a "stupid" debate format when she observed one final round resolution at a national tournament written as "Winnie the Pooh and Piglet will always be friends." Despite the encounter, she remained in IPDA and taught the debate format to her students for several years. Tara's experience echoes Carl's comments about outsiders who dismiss IPDA as a "stupid" debate format.

As illustrated in the previous section, Martha stated there is insufficient mentorship guiding new teams, tournament directors, and debaters migrating into IPDA from other debate formats. According to Martha, IPDA's growth and expansion are concomitant with an increase in cultural norms and practices borrowed from NPDA and CEDA. She stated:

There are a lot of CEDA and parliamentary concepts, techniques and procedures that are kind of creeping into some of the new programs. For instance, I was watching a virtual tournament during the COVID shutdown. During the debate, somebody made a point. And I heard them pounding on the table like the Parli folks do. But you know what? That's fine they do that in Parliamentary. They do that in a lot of different [formats]. So I don't have a problem with that necessarily. What I have a problem with is when somebody is hosting a tournament and is [unsure about] what our best practices happen to be (Interview, 1 September 2022).

Table pounding is a common heckling practice observed in parliamentary debate (NPDA). Parliamentary debaters use it to demonstrate support for a point said by their partner in the middle of the speech. It can also be used to taunt the opposition team in deference to points made earlier in the debate round. Other forms of heckling observed in NPDA include “Hear, hear!” and “Shame!” to indicate one’s disapproval of points made by the opposition team. Debaters are also permitted to interrupt the opposition speaker mid-speech by rising from their seats with a “Point of Information” to ask questions during the round (National Parliamentary Debate Association, 2018). These cultural practices evolved from traditions passed down by the British House of Commons and from British Parliamentary debate. According to Diers and Birkholt (2011), NPDA began as an audience-centered debate format. However, as the organization grew, NPDA devolved into a more technical debate format.

While heckling is commonplace in NPDA, they represent a major infraction in an IPDA round. To heckle or interrupt an IPDA debater mid-speech is a grievous offense demonstrating impoliteness and rudeness, which can result in an automatic loss from the judge. More severe cases of repeat offenders may be forfeited from the tournament or banned from competing at the National IPDA Tournament entirely. According to Martha, individual tournament directors must uphold practices aligned with IPDA’s core values. Therefore, the onus of maintaining a public-centered debate format rests upon the coaches, tournament directors, and students who adhere to the principles set forth by the IPDA framers and the IPDA National Executive Committee.

Mark also observed differing cultural norms and practices in different regions throughout the nation at virtual and in-person competitions. He spoke about the rise of technical language employed by former forensic policy debate programs migrating into IPDA. When asked about

the current state of the IPDA debate community, Mark shared his observations about the debate format from his region in the Northwest. He said:

[Those teams] might be talking about more technical language. I would speculate we're talking about running K [kritik arguments]. And T [topicality arguments]. And other nonsense like that. Oh, maybe one of the flip sides of making a virtual impact-turn. It's accessible to all of our friends and more of our “not-friends” could come and participate in that. There are always some schools who come to IPDA for the first time. [But] that's not how we do it here, [especially] those people who show up on a cussing church like that (Interview, 2 September 2022).

According to Mark, technical language and jargon by new forensic teams entering IPDA at virtual tournaments are highly reprehensible. In regions across the country, technical language represents a significant issue of great concern. He described various cultural norms and practices commonplace in CEDA, NDT, Public Forum (PF), and NFA-LD Lincoln Douglas policy debate formats. According to Mark, policy debaters commonly employ technical language, including terms like “kritiks,” “topicality” arguments, and “impact turns.” Mark described these terms as a “cussing church” - a grouping of prohibited items antithetical to IPDA’s audience-centered mission. First, kritiks are arguments positioned to challenge a mindset or belief in the round. They are commonly used as a policy refutation technique detailing how an opponent is guilty of a certain mindset or belief the judge should reject. Second, topicality arguments are refutation techniques aimed at dismantling one’s arguments based on a lack of relevance to the debate resolution. Third, impact turns are a technique illustrating the apparent advantages of implementing or not implementing a governmental policy. If used effectively, impact turns can sway the judge toward the debater’s side. Moreover, technical language and jargon are prohibited in IPDA - a reprehensible action within an IPDA debate round (Cirlin, 2008; Key, 2014; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). Like heckling, technical language could present grounds for an

automatic loss by the judge if used excessively in a round. According to Mark, new teams entering IPDA must either assimilate and adhere to IPDA's audience-centered principles or stay away entirely.

**Subtheme A: Preference towards a diversified tournament judging pool of expert and lay judges**

Various participants noted regional differences in using lay and expert judges at virtual and in-person tournaments. Based on research findings, participants preferred a diverse array of lay adjudicators and expert judges at tournaments. Lay judging is an integral cultural practice established by the IPDA framers and codified within the IPDA Constitution and Bylaws (Rogers & Freeman, 2022). The IPDA debate framers - Cirlin, Rogers, and Gibson - desired a return to audience-oriented debate by correcting the problems commonly observed in CEDA and NDT policy debate formats (Richey & International Public Debate Association, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022).

Despite the intent of the IPDA framers, many participants featured in this section indicated support for a mix of expert and lay judges at IPDA debate rounds. Furthermore, several participants I interviewed gave their reasons why expert judges and lay adjudicators in IPDA debate rounds benefit the IPDA debate community.

Moe discussed how he valued expert judges at debate rounds. Expert judges provided insightful feedback and detailed ballots, which helped him improve. Moe stated:

[Expert judges] give me good feedback. [One time, I had] a forensics coach, and he gave me very good feedback in one debate round that he judged me. And he disclosed at the end of the round. He started giving me feedback on ways I could better structure my speeches. And then I thanked him for it (Interview, 21 February 2022).

The rapport between Moe and his expert judge facilitated a valuable exchange of information and guided him well after the debate round. This information included argumentation and refutation techniques, presentation, and delivery. Additionally, he encountered several lay adjudicators not qualified to judge debates. According to Moe, expert judges contribute to and enhance the educational benefit for novice debaters acclimating to online competition.

Carl shared Moe's sentiments about expert judges within debate rounds. Reflecting upon his past experiences, Carl illustrated his appreciation for expert judges providing valuable feedback after debate rounds. He stated:

I have had coaches judge me and I've appreciated them. [Expert] judges certainly got more value and more feedback than lay judges. Yeah, I really don't value the lay judging thing at all (Interview, 2 March 2022).

Like Moe, Carl demonstrated a preference toward expert judges over lay adjudicators. He surmised expert feedback is conducive to experiential learning, thereby developing students and reinforcing positive debate customs within rounds. Ariel echoed Carl and Moe's sentiments about expert feedback by stating, "Expert judges are absolutely, really important" (Interview, 3 February 2022). In his first year of competition, Ariel encountered an expert judge who gave valuable insight into refutation techniques. The resolution for his round stated, "The Attorney General is being too soft on the January 6th investigation." Ariel recalled his expert judge as a former prosecutor with extensive legal experience. Ariel stated:

The fact that he was sitting there was the reason why not only did I win that round, but I went to the playoff rounds in that tournament. That's why I think expert judges are really important. (Interview, 3 February 2022).

Ariel valued the interaction he had with his expert judge. Stories like Moe, Carl, and Ariel illustrate expert judges' contributions and expertise within IPDA debate rounds. Current and former IPDA competitors like Moe, Carl, and Ariel not only shared the preference toward expert judges. IPDA veteran coaches also demonstrated support for expert judges within rounds.

When asked about his sentiments on expert judges, Kenneth believed expert judges play an important role in debates. He stated:

I think the influence of the expert judge is fantastic and has its place. You know, very much like everything else, from the very first tournament to the modern tournament. Today, I would [say] it should be a perfect mix of expert judges, lay judges, and people who are somewhere in-between because the ability to adapt to whoever is in the room makes you a better debater (Interview, 1 September 2022).

By describing them as “fantastic,” Kenneth believed expert and lay judges facilitate an educational benefit to students. Expert judges serve a particular place and contribute to exchanging valuable information within a debate round. A diverse mix of expert and lay adjudicators also contributes to an educational and engaging experience for debaters. According to Kenneth, the mix of judges helps debaters adapt their delivery and presentation styles according to their experience level.

Mark mentioned the value of diverse judging pools at tournaments. Like Kenneth, Mark saw a diverse selection of expert and lay judges as a benefit to students. He stated:

I think [we should aim to] persuade people to speak to grownups. So if there was a judging panel at a Southern tournament with a defeated competitor and a graduate student like you, and a coach like me, well you've got 3 different types of judges going on there now. The fact that I have a doctorate in argumentation, maybe that would scare some people... Across every other forensics organization - every other one - judges [are required] to have bachelor's degrees. IPDA is the only one that doesn't require that [and] doesn't care to require that, and is happy to use defeated student competitors from the very same tournament. That makes us look weak (Interview, 2 September 2022).

Mark observed expert judges of other debate organizations possessing college degrees. He believed the International Public Debate Association should institute a requirement for lay and expert judges to have a college degree to judge debate rounds. By describing the IPDA organization as “weak,” Mark expressed his disdain about tournament directors using defeated student competitors to judge debate rounds at IPDA tournaments. According to the IPDA Constitution and Bylaws, tournament directors can place undergraduate students and competitors in tournament judging pools at their discretion (International Public Debate Association, 2018).

The IPDA Constitution states the following about tournament judges:

Judges: Individual judges must be at the 9th grade level. Otherwise, anyone of reasonable intelligence can be used as a judge. It is actively recommended that judging pools be made up of as wide a range of backgrounds, abilities, and perspectives as possible. Tournament directors are encouraged to use class or volunteer undergraduate students as judges” (International Public Debate Association, 2018).

The IPDA rules gives individual tournament directors wide latitude on judge selection. During the interview, Mark shared instances of defeated student competitors at tournaments outside his region. He believed regional differences provide opportunities for some tournament directors to allow student judges and others to prohibit them. Mark believed IPDA must raise its judging requirements for tournament directors to have a balanced selection of college-educated judges within debate rounds. Mark illustrated the diverse array of judges he expects to have at his team’s upcoming debate tournament in the fall semester. He stated:

I'm gonna ask some debate alums who live in Spokane to come back and help because they're available. I'm gonna ask a guy at church who graduated from the department. He has a college degree in communication, and he does some other things. I'm gonna ask an area pastor who was a friend of one of my students. He's not an argumentation guy. He's just interested in this kind of stuff. I'm going to ask a couple of colleagues because they're willing and available. I've gotten people from the toastmasters because I think they like public speaking. They will come, and they don't wish to be paid. I've asked my students, "Do you know other people in the Spokane community?" And there have been other people— moms and dads whose kids competed in high school forensics back in the day. Some have college degrees. Some don't have college degrees. So that's how I compose the judging pool of a variety of people who come in to be persuaded (Interview, 2 September 2022).

By incorporating a variety of debate alums, local church members, work colleagues, Toastmasters speakers, and local community members, Mark described an eclectic mix of expert and lay judges bolstering the debate experience for students and spectators. He believed a diverse selection of college-educated judges fulfills the principles ascribed by the IPDA Constitution and Bylaws.

Martin also indicated support for a diverse judging pool. While describing expert judges, he mentioned, "It's easier to rely on those who are more familiar with the IPDA debate format. We need expert judges to run tournaments where they appreciate arguments. Expert judges are good. They simply adapt to the activity that they're familiar with" (Interview, 2 February 2022). However, he also stated the importance of lay adjudicators as well. Lay judges preserve the audience-centered mission of the IPDA debate format. Martin stated:

Upon reading the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the IPDA debate textbook, I read a passage that asks, "How can we [survive] as a league that is resistant to change?" The lay judge is the central element in preventing unwanted changes to the IPDA debate format. Lay judges keep the debate format true to its founding mission by promoting simple language that anyone can easily understand. Having a mix of judges at tournaments could be optimal – debate alumni and lay judges – to make for a balanced judging pool that would promote debaters with a balanced set of skills in their research, cases, and presentation (Interview, 2 February 2022).

Martin echoed Kenneth and Carl's sentiments about a diverse selection of tournament judges. He believed a diverse judging pool facilitates an educational tournament experience for debaters. In the past, Martin relied upon a diverse selection of judges and alums spanning five decades ranging from the 1960s, '70s, '80s, '90s, and 2000s into today.

In addition to those expressing support for a diverse judging pool of expert and lay judges, several participants held alternative views about expert judges. According to John, Alex, Jennifer, Tara, and Martha, lay adjudicators serve an indispensable role in the IPDA format. They conveyed opinions against the use of expert judges at IPDA debate tournaments. Moreover, their responses illustrate how lay adjudicators preserve an audience-centered debate format.

First, John stated expert judges can be "good and bad." He expressed concern about the possibility of expert judges introducing debate norms and practices not conducive to audience-centered debate. John mentioned:

I think the expert judge can be good and they can be bad in terms of holding up the purity sets. Because if you have an expert judge who has done Parli [Debate] all their life but is still coaching an IPDA team, I would think that they're more likely to accept some of those abuses that we were talking about earlier. Whereas, the person who is in the governing board would probably say, "Hey, you're spreading" on the ballot. On the ballot, [the judge] would say, "Hey, you're spreading! You know, you're going too fast" (Interview, 25 October 2021).

In essence, John believed expert judges might uphold stylistic "abuses" - namely, spreading, topicality arguments, and unethical competition - observed in parliamentary and policy debate formats. John said outside teams joining the IPDA format must adhere to the principles set by the IPDA framers stated within the IPDA Constitution and Bylaws. Alex ardently supported John's position by stating lay adjudicators prevent spreading within the IPDA debate format. He said:

I'm telling you what comes from the region in the South here. And again, I know that different regions do things in different ways. The biggest core philosophies of IPDA from its original [intent] was the use of the lay judge in order to prevent tactics and spreading and things of that nature (Interview, 2 February 2022).

John and Alex are both from the Southeast, where IPDA originated. They both believe lay judges preserve audience-centered debate within IPDA. These judges serve an indispensable role in maintaining a competitive debate format accessible to all. Policy debate practices such as spreading, jargon, policy debate tactics, and cultural practices are antithetical to audience-centered debate. Although regional differences abound within IPDA, Alex believed lay adjudicators maintain IPDA's mission and principles set by the IPDA framers.

Jennifer echoed Alex and John's sentiments about the role of expert judges at IPDA debate rounds. While expert judges can provide insightful feedback, Jennifer also described expert judges as more apt to introduce debate norms from other debate formats antithetical to IPDA's founding principles. She stated:

When a judge says something like "You failed inherency," that is not an IPDA comment. That expert judge is expecting a stock issue debate. Which again, I will say that stock issues are a means to an end. Even if I'm at my dining room table arguing with my friends, [and] if my idea doesn't solve the problem, I'm going to lose the argument. But I don't say, "Solvency point A, B, C, D." I don't say, "this is inherent." Or I don't say, "this is a significant problem." I don't necessarily use those buzzwords (Interview, 9 February 2022).

Like John and Alex, Jennifer expressed concern about expert judges favoring debate practices misaligned with IPDA's mission and principles. She spoke about "inherency" arguments - an argument explaining the inherent barriers to enacting the resolution. Inherency arguments are a part of a group of arguments called "stock issues," explaining the need for the Affirmative plan and how it is implemented. Stock issues are a commonplace phenomenon employed by policy

debaters in NFA-LD, CEDA, and NDT. Indeed, Jennifer believed expert judges adept in policy debate accept customs and practices at odds with an audience-centered debate.

Tara commented on the role of expert judges at tournaments by echoing Jennifer's sentiments about the potential increase of policy debate norms and customs within debate rounds. Lay adjudicators not only preserve the audience-friendly format at debate rounds, but according to Tara, it is a way to prevent reinforcing “bad IPDA techniques” borrowed from other debate formats. She stated:

I think there should be some differentiation between IPDA, NPDA, LD and CEDA to NDT. I think all of these debate formats are wonderful, but they should not all merge into the same thing. Right? So I think that as you're seeing these things and then the judges are picking them up, those [students] win at tournaments. The judge's ballot is reinforcing [bad IPDA techniques] and [students are] seeing that as being the validation... We're not [at] kritik [arguments] yet, to my knowledge, in IPDA. But it's coming (Interview, 16 February 2022).

Tara saw the inclusion of expert judges at IPDA debate rounds as the backdoor for allowing debate norms from other debate formats to infiltrate and negatively impact the IPDA debate format. These debating norms are not only antithetical to what the IPDA framers - Cirlin, Rogers, and Gibson - wanted but describe what Cirlin (1997), McGee and McGee (2000), Key (2014), and Rogers and Freeman (2022) all jointly described as a “cancerous disease” afflicting all parts of the body - an unfortunate outcome for the IPDA community.

During our interview, Martha believed IPDA should never replace lay adjudicators at debate tournaments. Lay judges serve an indispensable role in facilitating an audience-centered debate format. Martha stated:

Never get rid of those lay judges. Those lay judges, they're going to tell you whether or not you're persuasive, logical, reasonable and professional. And the last thing is to never, ever allow your squad, or your team, to favor and value evidence and statistics over argumentation and logic. (Interview, 1 September 2022).

By embracing lay adjudicators, Martha believed the IPDA debate format would remain faithful to the audience-centered principles set by the IPDA framers for years to come. Outside teams joining IPDA must adhere to guidelines and rules stated within the IPDA Constitution and Bylaws. Moreover, Martha believed evidence and “statistics” should never take center stage in a debate round. Instead, persuasion and argumentation must take center stage to lay adjudicators within rounds.

Several participants conveyed alternative views about expert judges. Three participants mentioned expert judging at IPDA debate rounds as unavoidable. Martha mentioned there is an inherent dilemma where lay judges eventually become expert judges over time with experience and repetition. She said:

Now you know that the founder, Alan Cirlin— his absolute ideal debate tournament was going out every round grabbing people off the street that had never even heard a debate round, ever. And every round [is to be] judged by those kinds of people. Think about it. Once we run a national tournament, and your [lay] judge has judged 5 rounds of team [IPDA], and [judged] out-rounds after the individual 8 preliminary rounds. What have you got, Randy? You've got an expert judge! Okay, they might not be savvy about all the debate jargon. And they might not know about debate theory too much. But you've got a seasoned judge in one three-day tournament. People have faulted me personally for not using these judges enough. But when we're in another town and we're in another campus, there's only so many judges that I can call on from that school. I can't expect somebody on a Sunday after their spring break to bring me in 74 judges for a 4-hour stretch. At some point, do we violate our own priorities? Yeah, a little bit. And I wish we didn't. But there's no logistical way around this. At some point, we have to use the judges that are brought [to us] (Interview, 1 September 2022).

Each year in April, the International Public Debate Association hosts the national tournament attracting many forensic teams from across the nation. According to Martha, the logistics behind the National IPDA Tournament present an enormous challenge for the IPDA Executive Committee. From finding sufficient rooms and people to judge rounds, she stated it is challenging to find lay adjudicators at large IPDA tournaments. While IPDA founder Dr. Alan Cirlin designed IPDA to utilize only lay adjudicators, Martha stated it is impossible to completely carry out Dr. Cirlin's vision. Instead, the IPDA National Executive Committee must rely upon a diverse selection of expert judges, coaches, former debaters, student competitors, and faculty members to facilitate many debaters and judges in attendance. Martha believed lay judges eventually become expert judges through repetition and experience. Transitioning from lay adjudicator to expert judge presents an onerous proposition for tournament directors seeking to adhere to IPDA's principles nationwide.

The dilemma about whether or not to use expert judges is not only limited to the National IPDA Tournament. However, it extends to every tournament director hosting an IPDA debate tournament. Myself included. When asked about the use of expert judges within debate rounds, Kenneth simply said: "You can't avoid it. I mean, I've judged a lot of public debate rounds. At some point, I would consider myself an expert in that field, right?" (Kenneth, Interview, 1 September 2022). Finding lay judges to assist at a debate tournament is an onerous task often fraught with great difficulty. Tournament directors must rely upon a diverse judging pool with ample judging availability during the weekend. A shortage of judges can present a disastrous outcome for tournament managers who cannot supply sufficient judges at debate rounds. Samuel shared his difficulty implementing lay judges at his debate tournament several years ago. He stated:

That's a really difficult thing to do - to have lay judges. Logistically, it's very, very difficult. I tried to do it at my tournament because it was easier. I would have two sets of judges for the rounds so I would have an official judge, but I had enough students from my classes that I can have a student panel as well (Interview, 2 February 2022).

By pulling in students from his debate classes, Samuel avoided disaster by supplying sufficient judges for his tournament. Unfortunately, Samuel is not alone. In our interview, Martin also shared instances where he utilized students from his public speaking and debate classes and team alums to compensate for the lay judges unavailable for his debate tournament (Interview, 2 February 2022). John also confirmed these sentiments, who stated there is simply a lack of “a decent judging pull to pull from” (Interview, 25 October 2021).

#### **Theme 4 summary**

The desire to win is a universal sentiment shared by those who compete in forensic tournaments. After all, this desire serves as the impetus for various cultural norms and practices governing debate rounds. However, participant responses featured in this section illustrate a variety of practices where the desire to win usurped fairness and collegiality within the debate round. The experiences and personal encounters featured here demonstrate various concerns persisting today within the IPDA community. In summary, participant responses provided a detailed outlook of how regional differences across the nation cultivate a variety of cultural norms, unwritten rules, unethical practices, and differing viewpoints about a diverse judging pool at tournaments.

#### **Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter explored the research findings emerging from participants. Their personal stories, observations, and experiences provided a detailed outlook of the issues affecting the

International Public Debate Association today. Their contributions to this study resulted in four themes explored in this chapter.

The central purpose of this research project served a threefold purpose. First, it aimed at examining the current state of the IPDA debate community today. By utilizing in-depth interviews, this project focused on the participant's experiences and observations of IPDA debate.

Second, this project aimed to examine the impact of virtual competitions on the International Public Debate community. Examining the benefits and drawbacks of virtual competition facilitated a greater understanding of the prevailing sentiments and attitudes held by those who have been in IPDA for years and others who have just migrated into the debate format.

Third and most importantly, this research project examined how recent changes - such as the switch to virtual competition - impacted the debate community. The timing for this study comes at a most opportune time for introspection and analysis. As previously mentioned, at the time of this writing on February 2023, the forensics community endured over two years of virtual competitions due to travel restrictions and social distancing guidelines caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (Morris & NDC-IE, 2020; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). These two years represented a significant recalibration and adjustment period for members of the forensics community to determine how to proceed with unexpected changes in an uncertain future. Morris (2020) and Holm (2020) jointly illustrated the forensics community's initial frustration and general apprehension as it sought to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, travel restrictions, and the unprecedented cancellation of all national tournaments during Spring 2020.

Nevertheless, in conjunction with the switch to online competition, these unfortunate events necessitated an essential re-evaluation of the IPDA community today.

First, RQ1 asked: “What is the state of the IPDA debate community following the transition to online competition?” Research findings gathered from participants demonstrate the conflicted status of IPDA along the lines of optimism and uncertainty. Responses to Question 1 ranged from optimism to uncertainty, where participants shared various experiences and personal observations. Therefore, the responses to RQ1 yielded a threefold response: first, negative sentiments about IPDA’s current state; second, optimistic sentiments about IPDA’s current state; and finally, sentiments indicating uncertainty about the status of IPDA. Moreover, their responses demonstrated the complexities in ascertaining the status of the IPDA debate format.

Next, RQ2 asked: “How is the debate community evolving in relation to the rise of online competition?” This question addressed the evolution of the International Public Debate Association by examining two external factors taking shape within the IPDA community. Research findings indicate two recent trends, such as the proliferation of online tournament platforms and IPDA’s expanding community, impacted the forensics community. The analysis of RQ2 also yielded a twofold discovery: first, the adoption of virtual competitions; second, IPDA’s growth nationwide. The first section explored how participants talked at length about the impact of virtual competitions following the Fall 2020 transition to online competition. The second section illustrated how IPDA debate had expanded nationwide. The increased accessibility of online tournaments - in conjunction with its audience-centered format - allowed outside forensic programs involved in other debate formats to adopt IPDA.

Third, RQ3 asked: “How have the recent changes with regard to virtual debate impacted the IPDA debate community?” This question explored the various trends resulting from the transition to online competition. Research findings demonstrate vast cultural and regional differences within the IPDA debate format. The analysis of RQ3 explored how regional differences cultivate a variety of cultural norms, unwritten rules, and alternate viewpoints about expert and lay judges at IPDA debate tournaments. The first section explored the expansion of IPDA into new frontiers, where several participants observed its recent growth in new regions. Participants also shared personal experiences about cultural differences and debate practices from other debate formats within IPDA debate. This section also explored firsthand accounts of various debate norms and unwritten rules affecting IPDA debate rounds. Finally, the second section explored the impact of expert and lay adjudicators at IPDA tournaments. Participants expressed views about a diverse selection of judges, while others preferred lay adjudicators. Furthermore, their responses illustrate current areas of concern and trends affecting the International Public Debate Association today.

In conclusion, this chapter identified the four themes and sub-themes corresponding to the three research questions. The responses from participants provided a detailed illustration of the experiences and encounters transpiring within IPDA following the Fall 2020 transition to online competition. The following chapter will illustrate the additional analysis of the future implications of the International Public Debate Association and address research limitations before concluding with recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Attempting a research project of this magnitude would not be without its many complexities and challenges. This project - from inception to finish - took just over one year to complete. Each research participant gave me a deep understanding of their lived experiences and personal observations about the International Public Debate format. I am profoundly grateful to them for candidly sharing their stories and contributing to this study, which helps show that the International Public Debate Association is undergoing a change in its history.

### **Implications**

The analysis presented in the previous chapter presented two critical implications regarding the current trajectory of the International Public Debate Association. Specifically, the qualitative interviews with my research participants gave me tremendous insight into the impact of virtual competition and cultural and regional differences on the forensics community. The responses from research participants provided an in-depth outlook of the current trends and issues affecting the International Public Debate Association today. Two critical implications arose upon reviewing the responses to each research question. These implications are the following: first, the natural cycle of change has guided intercollegiate debate; second, change is a benefit guiding IPDA's future.

### **Change as a Natural Cycle of Intercollegiate Debate**

As mentioned within the Introduction and Literature Review sections, change has been - and continues to be - a natural cycle of progress and innovation guiding intercollegiate debate.

The response to RQ1 illustrated the conflicted status of the International Public Debate Association. Several participants expressed optimism, while others illustrated uncertainty or concern about the current state of the IPDA debate format. Issues related to spreading, hyper-competition, using expert judges, and other issues observed within the IPDA debating community today. In RQ3, participants also noted the influx of new forensic programs joining the IPDA community. The regional and cultural differences introduced by the new forensic programs were also important areas of concern for several participants. Tara's comments succinctly summed up the dilemma within IPDA: "IPDA is currently undergoing an identity crisis of those who want the debate format to stick to its roots and those who welcome change" (Interview, 16 February 2022).

The clash of traditional and contemporary ideas is a phenomenon not unique to the International Public Debate Association. Instead, it has guided other debate formats existing well before the formation of IPDA. For centuries, the natural cycle of change, innovation, progress, and modernization guided the progenitors of modern college debate throughout vast periods of great social and political upheaval, war and famine, revolution and freedom, and through religious and social enlightenment (Nichols, 1937; Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954; Windes, 1960; Pelham & Watt, 1989; Bartenen & Littlefield; 2015). Earlier, we witnessed how the early syllogistic disputations of the Middle Ages gradually morphed into forensic disputations commonplace within the colleges of the early American colonies (Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954). We also examined how advances within American society perpetuated the rise of forensic and literary societies throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, which eventually led to the birth of

fraternal debating societies among Ivy League universities (Potter, 1954; Windes, 1960; Pelham & Watt, 1989; Bartenen & Littlefield, 2015; Woods, 2018). Furthermore, we explored how fraternal debating societies gave birth to intercollegiate rivalry and competition among colleges and universities from the late 19th century into the early 20th century (Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954). While times have changed, change, evolution, modernization, and progress remain static within our forensic heritage.

By considering the vast repository of previous scholarship devoted to change, this dilemma presents several essential questions: “How should the IPDA debate address changes within its growing community? Where should the community go as it emerges from a global pandemic? How should the IPDA organization address the influx of new teams joining the community?” Such questions demand answers. Many participants gave differing ideas of how the debate format should be oriented. In addition, many IPDA scholars also shared their thoughts about change within the International Public Debate Association.

The natural change cycle is an uncomfortable and disconcerting reality for some within the community. These sentiments - supported by substantial scholarship - caution against unwanted changes and evolution within the IPDA debate format (Cirlin, 1998; Cirlin, 2008; Key, 2014; Cirlin, 2016; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). McGee and McGee (2000) described change “as a disease” (p. 14). Cirlin (1998) and Cirlin (2016) ardently cautioned against change in his 1998 debate manifesto and within the introduction of the 2016 edition of the IPDA textbook. Key (2014), in his master’s thesis, cautioned against changes devolving the debate format into a frenzied shouting chess match involving evidence and spreading. Furthermore, Rogers and

Freeman (2022) recently gave an anecdotal cautionary tale of unwanted changes as a “ghost” haunting its victims and wreaking havoc within the community.

The year of 2022 marked a significant milestone for the International Public Debate Association. A quarter century after its founding, the IPDA community has embarked on a path toward normalcy from the pandemic with many in-person tournaments planned for the upcoming season. As witnessed by my participants in RQ3 - Martha, John, Alex, Carl, Samuel, Martin, and Kenneth - IPDA’s growth has pushed to new frontiers ranging from East to West Coast and from North to South. Within the past ten years, IPDA debate has expanded into several regional and national tournaments hosted by multiple forensic organizations such as Pi Kappa Delta, the Southern and Northern Atlantic Forensic Union, Phi Rho Pi, and the International Forensic Association (Pi Kappa Delta, 2014; Phi Rho Pi, 2015; Speechwire, 2018). This growth is concomitant with apprehension and concern among some members of the IPDA community.

According to Key’s (2014) autoethnographic master’s thesis, the IPDA debate community is not alone in feelings of concern and apprehension. It is commonplace for debate formats to come under scrutiny by community members during their lifespan. According to Key (2014), debate formats usually enter a “devolution” process where gradual changes and cultural trends erode their foundational principles. By illustrating the CEDA and NDT cultural split in the mid-1970s, Key (2014) asserted, “the lifespan of rhetoric in any debate organization is roughly 20 years” (p. 27). He continued:

NDT began in 1947 and meaningful criticism began in 1968. CEDA was born in 1973 and by the early 1990s had effectively merged with NDT. It only took 13 years for NPDA [the National Parliamentary Debate Association], founded in 1993, to be condemned as a pedagogical failure (p. 27).

At the beginning of this study, I felt initially suspicious of the changes to the IPDA debate format that Key (2014), Cirlin (2016), and Rogers and Freeman (2022) jointly described. However, research findings gathered from my participants provided compelling arguments illustrating change has benefited the IPDA format. Indeed, change has its advantages. Multiple participants described IPDA's current state as a period of rebirth and transformation in its history.

However, Key (2016) estimated that the International Public Debate Association is overdue and ripe for cultural devolution. I contacted Key for further clarification about his interpretation of the “lifespan of rhetoric” and “meaningful criticism,” but to no avail. Key did not respond to my request for additional commentary on this matter. Nevertheless, IPDA co-founder Dr. Alan Cirlin (2016) offered valuable insight into what Key’s devolution process within IPDA might look like. He wrote:

The major threat to IPDA is not an attack from without, but rather a slow, virtually imperceptible, rot from within. It’s very unlikely that IPDA will be subverted from the outside by those who mean it harm; It is far more likely to be undone from within by a whole set of quiet “improvements” that gradually undermine the activity. And the authors of IPDA’s destruction will not be hostile enemies determined to destroy an interloper; If IPDA goes the way of CEDA the death march will begin because of the well-meaning, but naive, ‘contributions’ of some of its most loyal and active supporters.

That, I believe, is and will continue to be the major threat to IPDA. Well-meaning, unsupported, untested, and very reasonable sounding calls for minor changes to “improve the quality of judging,” “bring more consistency to the activity,” “raise the profile of the organization,” “increase membership,” “make the appointment of leaders more democratic,” “improve the quality of the education IPDA provides,” etc., etc., etc... (p. 11).

Extant literature conducted by McGee and McGee (2000), Drake (2008), Key (2009), Key (2010), McMullen (2011), and Rogers and Freeman (2022) all support Cirlin’s (2016) vehement opposition against change within the IPDA format. In essence, cultural devolution leads to a gradual process of marginal improvements and amendments undermining the debate

format's foundational principles (McGee & McGee, 2000; Cirlin, 2008; Key, 2010; Cirlin, 2016; Rogers & Freeman, 2022). Many participants shared their suggestions at the end of their interview for improving IPDA. Given IPDA's rapid growth and expansion in recent years, an important question is: How can IPDA address calls for changes and alterations from its expanding and diversifying community? Once again, Cirlin (2016) recommended how IPDA should address calls for change. He stated:

So what are my recommendations?

First and foremost, be very skeptical of proposals for change - the burden of proof should always be heavily on those who bring such proposals.

Be especially skeptical of proposals which are offered unexpectedly during an IPDA meeting discussion - a hand connected to a sincere, familiar face suddenly goes up.

Never vote on a proposal at the same meeting where it is proposed - insist on having time to think, study, research and talk about the idea first.

Demand proof supporting any proposal before a vote, or even a full discussion, is allowed.

Keep in mind that all of the elements of IPDA are tremendously interactive - change anything and a lot of unexpected cascading changes are likely to follow.

Consider having a committee study all of the changes which have been approved over the years - and, if possible, undo any which are not working or causing trouble.

If an idea looks really good, then, if possible, try beta-testing it on a small scale before adopting it wholesale.

Strive for goodness and high quality - do not strive for popularity or size.

Be gentle and polite with one another - try to keep your egos out of it.

And always remember that 'no change' is better than 'a bad change.'

Well, I've said my bit. Now the rest is up to you. Good luck IPDA. May you prosper and faithfully fulfill your mission for years to come (p. 11-12).

Cirlin's recommendations for the IPDA community emboldened various IPDA scholars to resist calls for gradual changes within the debate format. His vehement position against

unwarranted changes is in sharp opposition to those who believe IPDA should do more to adapt to its growing and diversifying community.

Participant observations at recent virtual and in-person tournaments illustrated IPDA as undergoing a critical juncture of transformation and rebirth in its history. The influx of new teams - bolstered by regional and cultural differences - provided a meaningful backdrop to examine how recent changes affect the debate format. The vast array of perspectives gave me valuable insight into the current dilemma of conflicting traditional and contemporary ideas threatening IPDA's foundational values established by the IPDA framers - especially by Cirlin. IPDA must now contend with settling questions such as: "Should we go back to in-person or virtual tournaments? Should we accept expert judges? How should we confront change and evolution in our community?"

The identity crisis described by Tara illustrated can be best described as a young adult leaving the safety of home to venture out into the world and carve out their path. 2022 marked a quarter of a century after IPDA's founding in 1997 by co-founders Cirlin, Rogers, and Gibson. A quarter century in any organization is a milestone both from a historical and organizational standpoint. Undoubtedly, IPDA will continue to grow and subsist upon a diversifying community of former NFA-LD, Parliamentary debate, CEDA, and NDT teams. The conflict between traditional and contemporary ideas poses an important question: Will IPDA follow the same path as its predecessors - NDT and CEDA - or will it carve out a new path of its own?

Despite Key's (2014) and Cirlin's (2016) resistance against change, the natural change cycle is inevitable in any forensic activity - including the International Public Debate Association. It is an ever-present phenomenon of the human experience. Ideas grow, evolve, and

dissipate over time. What is important today might not be important tomorrow. What serves today's people might not serve competitors in future generations. Despite Cirlin's (2016) admonition against reforms within the IPDA debate format, change will eventually seep into the architectural framework of IPDA. It is not a matter of "if" but a matter of "when." Extant literature illustrates changing ideals and cultural norms emerging throughout centuries of progress and modernization across various debate formats (Lindsley, 1918; Holm, 1940; Dalton & Pross, 1954; Swinney, 1968; Sheppard, 1973; Cirlin, 2002; Dimrock, 2006; Duerringer, 2008; Evans, 2008; Duerringer, 2010; Diers, 2011; Key, 2010; Key, 2014; Dimrock, 2016). Moreover, I argue that change will benefit - not hinder - IPDA's future. This concept is explored further in the following implication within this chapter.

### **Change as a Benefit: Breaking the Traditional Barriers to Entry**

At the IPDA panel discussion at the National Communication Association in November 2021 in Seattle, I recall one panelist recommending an amendment to extend the first and second Affirmative rebuttal speeches up to 5 minutes each to allow the speaker additional time to respond to the Negative rebuttal. The panelist's suggestions for improvements echoed Kendall's sentiments about change. She asked: "Are we going to go back to the way things were? Are we going to take some of the positives we've learned from virtual tournaments and implement them?" (Interview, 10 February 2022). According to Kendall, IPDA must do more to consider reforms to reflect its changing and diversifying community following the transition to virtual competition. Voices like Kendall and the conference panelist reflect a diversifying community gaining prominence due to the increased accessibility for new teams joining IPDA at virtual competitions.

Change proves a disconcerting reality for some within the debating community. For those who align most with Cirlin and Key's adamant positions against reform, change must be avoided at all costs. Change is intrinsic to destruction. To them, it is a destructive force threatening the existence of the debate format. Change represents a slippery downward slope towards technical debate antithetical to IPDA's foundational principles of an audience-friendly debate format. For others like Kendall, change is necessary for growth, innovation, and vitality. To them, change is intrinsic to innovation and progress. Who is right? Who is wrong? Based on the findings gathered from my participants, there is no direct answer. The interviews with my participants revealed wide variations of mixed responses surrounding the current state of the IPDA debate format. Some participants expressed hope and optimism for the future. A few others conveyed disappointment. The rest conveyed uncertainty or conflict about the current state of IPDA.

Despite the conflicting responses regarding the status of the IPDA debate format, change has been - and will continue to be - a benefit to the debate community. The natural change cycle dismantled the traditional barriers to entry into virtual competition. As shown in RQ2, the change and evolution into virtual competition supported many forensic programs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It provided support for programs unable to travel and faced significant financial hardship. Change and evolution also introduced a variety of virtual tournament hosting platforms and modalities - such as Zoom, Jitzi/8x8, and Yaarly - for competitors to compete remotely. Multiple participants, including Moe, Ariel, Carl, Jennifer, Kendall, and Tara, noted the increased accessibility for virtual competition within their respective teams.

The natural cycle of change not only dismantled the barriers to entry into virtual competition but has also broadened IPDA's appeal to forensic programs in various regions

across the nation. As explained in RQ3, vast regional and cultural differences have emerged due to IPDA's expanding community. Virtual competitions allowed forensic teams from other debate formats to compete in IPDA tournaments from coast to coast, from North to South. It has allowed competitors from various walks of life and regions across the nation to interact at online tournaments. Although the Fall 2020 transition to online competition not only upended the forensic community, it also yielded many new changes not conceived before.

Key (2014) and Cirlin's (2016) vehement calls against change - albeit well-intentioned - may be fundamentally misguided. Although research findings within RQ3 highlighted several recent problematic changes, many changes yielded various benefits for the IPDA debate community. Moreover, these changes have made the International Public Debate Association congruent to its foundational principles of an audience-centered debate - a debating platform for everyone to participate. These foundational principles promote a culturally and regionally diverse and inclusive educational environment representing our changing society.

For centuries, intercollegiate debate valued only a select few. Founded within the Ivy League colleges in colonial America, intercollegiate college debate began as a classroom exercise and extra-curricular activity reserved only for wealthy white men from prominent backgrounds. Women, African Americans, and other minority groups were primarily excluded from the activity until desegregation efforts galvanized in the latter half of the 20th century (Potter, 1944; Pelham & Watt, 1989; Bartanen & Littlefield, 2015; Woods, 2018).

As noted by Kendall and Mark, the International Public Debate Association remained a hegemonic, insular, and traditionally white Southern male space for years - a trend continuing well into the pandemic. Kendall described the IPDA community as "an old white man's club"

(Interview, 10 February 2022), whereas Mark described it as “the Southern Debate League” (Interview, 2 September 2022). These characterizations of the IPDA community reflect dissent against the IPDA framers resistance to change. They both described the community as an organization governed by a National Executive Board harboring rigidity and inflexibility toward its growing and diversifying community. Moreover, the tension between tradition and evolution provides a significant inflection point for new IPDA debate community members to rally behind changes and reforms benefiting its growing community.

The current identity crisis affecting the IPDA debate community proves yet another manifestation of the natural change cycle within forensics. People naturally leave and join the activity as the ebb and flow of change, progress, and modernization guides the debate format. As the IPDA community expands and evolves, additional programs will join and leave the debate format. One day - long after the IPDA framers and the current generation retire from forensics - a new generation of forensic programs, students, and coaches will join the format following the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The current generation will be replaced by a new generation of forensic community members who will implement new reforms and enact changes to the IPDA format. Those adhering to Cirlin’s resistance to change will likely leave the debate format as it changes and adapts to its growing community. Furthermore, future research is needed to determine the state of IPDA concerning its identity crisis following the COVID-19 pandemic.

## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

The founding of the International Public Debate Association in 1997 began as a novel experiment to test an alternative set of new ideas. These ideas established by its framers - Cirlin, Rogers, and Gibson - provided a worthy alternative for those who desired a return to audience-friendly debate. Today, that vision has endured a quarter century of uninterrupted growth and expansion. Moreover, that vision is being tested and challenged by a diversifying and growing community of a changing society today.

The progenitors of the International Public Debate Association not only provided a great source of historical significance. However, they can also provide meaningful clues as to where IPDA is heading and provide a meaningful resource for future research and exploration. Changes within the International Public Debate Association are a part of the broader narrative of change and progress shaping collegiate debate for centuries. The changes observed within the IPDA debate format resemble its progenitors. As demonstrated earlier, the natural cycle of change led to syllogistic and forensic disputations in the literary and debating societies of the 18th and 19th centuries. The pedagogical shift into the modern intercollegiate debate during the late 19th century and early 20th century provided students with a new and exciting activity that promoted intellectual and academic rivalry among the Ivy League universities (Nicols, 1936; Nichols, 1937; Potter, 1944; Potter, 1954; Windes, 1960; Pelham & Watt, 1989; Bartenen & Littlefield; 2015). Change has not only shaped college debate for centuries but continues to exert considerable influence today and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. The recent

shift toward virtual competition allowed increased accessibility for teams unable to travel during the pandemic. Additionally, recent cultural trends within the forensics community have broadened IPDA's appeal to programs from other debate formats. This evolution proved true for NDT, CEDA, and NPDA in the last quarter of the 20th century. Therefore, the natural change cycle will continue to guide the IPDA debate community for years ahead. Each debate format evolved and changed naturally out of a need to serve the forensic community at a particular time. In essence, all who value innovation and progress should embrace change, an inevitability guiding IPDA debate for the foreseeable future.

The tension between the desire to win and the founding principles of IPDA will continue to guide discussions about the state of the debate format well after the conclusion of this project. Living through the transition into virtual competition, I witnessed the initial struggles of online tournaments during the height of the pandemic. Nevertheless, by conversing with research participants, I began to see the positive attributes of the recent changes and trends revealed during the data analysis process. Change, innovation, and progress have provided a beacon of light to IPDA during an unsettling period of great social and cultural upheaval. The recent changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic upended old ways of thinking and eliminated traditional barriers to entry. By assessing the positive attributes of online competition mentioned by my research participants, I surmise the future of IPDA still remains bright and ripe for upward change and growth for years to come.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This qualitative research study took over a year and involved the personal experiences of 14 participants. Four main limitations emerged from this research study. First, additional

research is needed to examine the state of IPDA debate in the years following the transition to virtual competition. Similar to Key's (2014) master's thesis, the results of this research project are only limited to information observed during the timing of this study. I wholeheartedly agree with Key's statement about research limitations and areas for future exploration:

Future research ought to expand beyond a singular organization in an attempt to ethnographically study the intercollegiate debate community as a whole. Rather than restricting participants to one organization, researchers ought to seek participants from a multitude of organizations including IPDA, NPDA, NEDA [National Educational Debate Association], NFA-LD, CEDA, and NDT (p. 93).

Second, this research study utilized qualitative in-depth interviews using purposive and snowball sampling techniques limited to only those within the IPDA debate community at the time of the project. Adopting a mixed-methods approach focused upon the cultural norms, practices, and participant attitudes might generate research findings differing from the results presented here. Additionally, a focused study centered upon assessing the dichotomy of IPDA coaches and competitors will enhance topical research discussions about the natural change cycle within the debate community.

Third, the results of the research findings only focused upon examining the state of the International Public Debate Association. Additional research is needed to explore the impact of virtual debate competition among non-White minority groups and participants from various cultural, ethnic, and geographical backgrounds across multiple debate formats.

Finally, future research is needed to survey whether IPDA remained faithful to its foundational principles set by its framers by assessing the state of the debate format following a complete return to in-person competition following the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, these research projects should address the dilemmas of an audience-centered debate format at odds

with a traditionally insular, white Southern male space by examining the role of women, minority groups, LGBTQ+ and non-binary individuals within the International Public Debate Association. This research idea will provide those within the IPDA community with a meaningful introspection of its future trajectory within the 21st century.

At the time of this writing in February 2023, many virtual, in-person, and hybrid tournaments took shape within the 2022 - 2023 competition season. I recently hosted the annual Big Apple Debate Tournament and the East Coast Early Bird Tournaments, which were held virtually via 8x8/Jitzi and Yaarly on the weekend of 23 - 25 September 2022. I felt refreshed being accompanied by my former coach, familiar faces, volunteer judges, and talented new debaters who participated that weekend. Albeit an incredibly long and stressful weekend of directing two tournaments, I felt delighted to have witnessed the spirit of camaraderie and community from coaches and competitors. "Certainly, there's no identity crisis here," I thought. I realize my interactions and personal experiences contrasted sharply with the views held by some of my participants, who felt the International Public Debate Association is currently undergoing an identity crisis - a clash of opposing and conflicting traditional and contemporary ideas threatening the existence of the debate format. Perhaps the concluding thought held by Key (2014) sums up what we - IPDA debate community - should value most upon our return back to in-person tournaments: "IPDA [should be] two things: fun and educational...when it stops being either, we should stop doing it" (p. 94).

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## APPENDIX A

### **Semi-Structured Long Interview Guide**

#### **Introduction and Basic Points**

Good [morning/afternoon/evening], as you may know, my name is Randy Perez, and I am a graduate student at The University of Alabama. I am working on a qualitative research project that focuses on debate norms and pedagogical practices within International Public Debate (IPDA).

Your experiences will help me understand more about these topic areas and allow me to share insights with the field of forensics (speech and debate).

*(Repeat these points if individuals have questions about the consent forms they have signed)*

- Every opinion is valuable and I only want to know your thoughts and opinions.
- Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You may choose to skip a question or stop the interview at any time and for any reason with no penalty, especially if you feel uncomfortable with the question or subject. Your information will stay secure. I will not share your personal information, including your name, with anyone else. Unless you prefer otherwise, your name will not be linked to the information that you provide during the interview.
- This interview is being audio-recorded in case I need to listen to it later to clarify something from the notes. This recording will not be shared with others and will be destroyed at the end of this research.
- The interview should take no longer than an hour.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

#### **Opening Questions**

- i. Could you tell me a little bit about your experience with International Public Debate?
- ii. How long have you been acquainted with the debate format?
- iii. How important are the mission and ideals ascribed by the IPDA Constitution and By-laws to you?

## **Assessing The State of the IPDA Debate Community**

Q1. What is the current state of the IPDA debate community?

- a. How would you describe the current state of the IPDA debate community today?
- b. Would you say that it differs from its original mission and principles? If so, explain.
- c. Are there any negative aspects of the IPDA debate community that come to mind? If so, please explain.
- d. How important are virtual tournaments to you and/or your program?
- e. How do virtual tournaments help?
- f. How do virtual tournaments either hinder or exacerbate the current challenges within IPDA debate?
- g. What is missing or lacking within the IPDA debate community (virtual/in-person)?

## **Pedagogical Stylistic Changes within the Debate Format**

Q2. How is the debate community evolving?

- a. Within the past year and a half, have you observed a pedagogical shift in IPDA debate?
- b. Would you describe this pedagogical shift as positive or negative for the IPDA community?
- c. What external norms/practices have infiltrated IPDA debate?

## **Hyper-Competition and Expert Judges in IPDA Debate**

Now we're going to talk about a few problematic norms that some say it's affecting the IPDA debate format. The first thing we'll talk about is "hypercompetition." A growing number of IPDA scholars believe that competition at virtual IPDA debate tournaments have become "hyper-competitive".

- d. Do you agree with this sentiment? Why or why not?
- e. How would you describe "hyper-competition"?
- f. Have you ever observed the use of "expert" judges at IPDA rounds (virtual or in-person)?
  - i. If yes, what are your opinions on "expert" judges?

- ii. Do you have a specific example(s) you can share?

### **Excessive Speed at Debate Rounds**

- g. What comes to mind when you hear the term excessive speed or “spreading” in IPDA debate?
  - i. Think about the last time you may have witnessed excessive speed at an IPDA debate round (virtual or in-person). Can you tell me about that specific experience?
  - ii. Have you ever witnessed excessive speed at a virtual IPDA debate round?
  - iii. If so, do you think that excessive speed has become more prevalent within the virtual IPDA debate community within the past year?

Q3. How have the recent changes impacted the IPDA debate community?

- a. How have you confronted opposing debating norms and pedagogical styles in the past?

### **Closing Questions**

- b. What are some changes for the entire IPDA debate community at large (virtual and in-person)?
- c. How can those changes be implemented (virtual and in-person)?

That’s all the questions I have. Is there anything that you feel I left out or did not ask about that would be important for me to know? Perhaps another memorable experience (for whatever reason) regarding IPDA Debate that you would like to share?

### **Closing**

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Would you be willing to be contacted again in the future should I need to conduct a follow-up interview at a later date? In addition, can I contact you once I have a preliminary report from my study to ensure your perspective is represented?

## APPENDIX B

### Informed Consent

**Please read this informed consent carefully before you decide to participate in the study.**

#### Consent Form Key Information:

- Participation in an in-depth interview of 40 mins – 1 hour.
- This research project is about IPDA Debate.
- You are free to leave this study at any time.
- All information shared during the interview will be kept secure.
- There are no anticipated risks in this study.
- This study will give knowledge to the field of forensics.

#### Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of the study is to conduct research about International Public Debate (IPDA). Since Fall 2020, IPDA has shifted to a virtual format. This shift has increased long standing problems that are antithetical IPDA's founding mission. This study will help college debate teams navigate the common pitfalls of virtual IPDA.

#### What you will do in the study:

Interviews will be the primary data collection method. This study will have about 20 - 25 people for the interviews.

Individual interviews will be conducted by the researcher. The interview will take approximately one hour. And will be conducted in person or via Zoom depending on participants' wishes.

Before beginning interviews, you will be presented with informed consent. For the purposes of accuracy, interviews will be recorded. You have the right to decline being recorded. All participation will be voluntary. And you may withdraw from the study at any time.

You will be provided with informed consent ahead of time. You can sign the form, and it will be returned you by email.

You may access the University's policies here: (<http://ovpred.ua.edu/researchcompliance/proc/> and [participantoutreach@ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@ua.edu)). All interviews will take place privately.

**Time required:** The study will require about 40 minutes to 1 hour.

**Risks:** There are no anticipated risks in this study. First, protections will prevent any potential risk to you. Second, interviews will be conducted privately. Third, the researcher will be the only person with the interview transcript.

You may withdraw from this study at any time. Even after the interview has started without penalty.

**Benefits:** This study will give knowledge to forensic educators and coaches.

**Confidentiality:** You will be presented with informed consent before the interview. You will be made aware of the PI's wish to record the interview for accuracy. All participation will be voluntary. And you may withdraw from this study at any time.

**Data linked with identifying information:**

The information that you give in the study will be handled securely. Your information will be assigned a code number. This list will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data has been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

Your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. All of the investigators' digital audio files and research notes will be stored on the investigator's password-protected computer in a locked office. The researcher will reduce risk by removing identifiers within the data.

Pseudonyms will be used.

During transcription, digital audio files and research notes will be typed and stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office. Once transcribed, the files will be deleted on the recorders and the computer.

Qualitative data will be analyzed and interpreted using N-Vivo for Windows 11. All data will be destroyed when it's no longer needed.

A master list linking codes (pseudonyms) to participant identifiers will be used throughout data analysis.

The master list will be kept until data analysis is complete. To ensure security of the master list, the file will be stored in Room 158. Reese Phifer, The University of Alabama. No one else will have access to the master list.

**Voluntary participation:** Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time, even once the interview has started without penalty.

**Right to withdraw from the study:** You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

**How to withdraw from the study:**

If you want to withdraw from the study, tell the primary researcher and exit. You are also welcome to tell the interviewer to stop the interview. There is no penalty for withdrawing.

**Compensation/Reimbursement:** You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

**If you have questions about the study or need to report a study related issue please contact:**

Name of Principal Investigator: Randy Perez  
Title: Graduate Student  
Department Name: College of Communication and Information Sciences  
Email address: rperez10@crimson.ua.edu

Faculty Advisor's Name: Dr. Benjamin S. Pyle  
Title: Director of Forensics, Alabama Forensic Council  
Department Name: College of Communication and Information Sciences  
Email address: bspyle@ua.edu

**If you have questions about your rights as a participant in a research study, would like to make suggestions or file complaints and concerns about the research study, please contact:**

Ms. Tanta Myles, the University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer at (205)-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at <http://ovpred.ua.edu/research-compliance/prco/>. You may email the Office for Research Compliance at [rcompliance@research.ua.edu](mailto:rcompliance@research.ua.edu).

**Agreement:**

- I agree to participate in the research study described above.
- I do not agree to participate in the research study described above.
- I agree to video (audio, photograph) in the research study described above.
- I do not agree to video (audio, photograph) in the research study described above.

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Signature of Research Participant

Date

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Print Name of Research Participant

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Signature of Investigator or other Person Obtaining Consent

Date

---

Print Name of Investigator or other Person Obtaining Consent

## APPENDIX C



November 22, 2021

Randy Perez  
Department of Communication Studies  
College of Communication & Information Sciences  
The University of Alabama  
Box 870172

Re: IRB # 21-09-5013: "International Public Debate (IPDA) at a Critical Pedagogical Juncture: The Dilemmas of Virtual Debating"

Dear Randy Perez:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research. Your protocol has been given exempt approval according to 45 CFR part 46.104(d)(2) as outlined below:

*(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:*

*(iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).*

The approval for your application will lapse on November 21, 2022. If your research will continue beyond this date, please submit the annual report to the IRB as required by the University policy before the lapse. Please note, any modifications made in research design, methodology, or procedures must be submitted to and approved by the IRB before implementation. Please submit a final report form when the study is complete.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved informed consent form to obtain consent from your participants.