CROSS-EXAMINATION IN CEDA DEBATE: A SURVEY OF COACHES[1]

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At the start of each new debate course I teach I generally ask my students why they enrolled in the course. Invariably they respond that they want to improve their ability "to think on their feet." This coveted speaking trait, the capability to respond quickly and accurately to posed questions, is a speaking skill which can be cultivated. Cross-examination debate participation offers students one way to enhance their ability to think on their feet by articulating responses to posed questions during a limited time.

Although there have been some suggestions on how to conduct cross-examination (Cirlin, 1986; Ehninger & Brockriede, 1978; Henderson, 1978; Miller & Caminker, 1982; Norton, 1983; Price, 1976; Rieke & Sillars, 1984; Sayer, 1980; Sproule, 1980), researchers have not examined the goals or evaluated the techniques of cross-examination. The purpose of this paper is to assess the current practices of cross-examination in the Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) and to ascertain which cross-examination techniques are viewed more favorably by critic/judges.

CEDA grew out of a desire among some Western coaches to change the format of debating. Believing in the educational value of cross-examination debate, the founders of CEDA reintroduced cross-examination sessions into debate when the group organized in 1971.[2] As a result, each debater is given three minutes to ask questions of a member of the opposing team and three minutes to respond to questions. In a two-person debate, therefore, twelve minutes of the debate is devoted to cross-examination.[3] Since the CEDA organization has espoused cross-examination for over fifteen years, it seems appropriate to focus on that aspect of the Association.

This paper reports the findings of a mail questionnaire surveying the Directors of Debate whose schools hold membership in CEDA. Specifically, the survey was designed to answer four research questions: (1) What are the major objectives or goals of cross-examination debate? (2) How effective is cross-examination debate? (3) Which techniques of cross-examination are valued? and (4) What changes, if any, might be adopted to improve cross-examination in debate?

Survey Design

The survey instrument was designed in a series of steps. A questionnaire was distributed to coaches and students at a large California debate tournament in February 1985. Students and coaches were asked to respond to two open-ended question: What are the goals and techniques of cross-examination in CEDA debate? and How does cross-examination differ in NDT and CEDA debate?

Responses were reviewed and phrased into statements for the final survey instrument. Next, the statements were divided into three sections: statements reflecting the goals of cross-examination; statements concerning the strategies of cross-examination; and statements suggesting changes in cross-examination. A five-point Likert-type scale was used to measure most of the statements on the survey. Questions soliciting demo-

graphic information and global views of cross-examination were included at the beginning of the survey.

The questionnaire was pretested to check that the questions were understandable and adjustments were made in a few of the questions to improve clarity. Surveys were then mailed in Spring 1985 to the 273 member schools of CEDA with instructions requesting that the person in charge of debate complete the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed stamped envelope.

Overall, the return rate for the survey was good. Of the 273 surveys mailed, 135 surveys (49%) were returned.[4] An evaluation of demographic data revealed a good cross-sample. The sample included responses from all eight regions of the CEDA organization with the largest number of responses from the South Central region (26) and the smallest number from the North East region (9). The South West (23), the South East (19) and the North West (16) also had good returns. Overall, the return rate was proportional to the CEDA membership within each region.

Respondents answering the survey had considerable debate experience. Ninety-six of the 135 respondents had over eleven or more years of experience, while only seventeen had less than five years of experience.

Findings and Discussion

What are the Major Objectives or Goals of Cross-Examination Debate

Many educators have speculated as to the goals or purposes of cross-examination in debate. Fuge and Newman (1956) saw the purpose of cross-examination "To clarify an obscure point in an opponent's case, to expose factual errors or unsupported assertions" (pp. 66-70). Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) similarly wrote that the most significant goal of cross-examination "is to clarify and define the opponents' position and to force them to commit themselves" (pp. 263-279). In addition, Patterson and Zarefsky felt that cross-examination could be used to define the stasis in a controversy, to establish decision rules in a debate, to identify the deficiencies in the proof, and to advance one's own position in the debate (pp. 263-279).

As can be seen, the purposes of cross-examination listed in selected textbooks show threads of similarity. Results from this survey also show a strong consensus that cross-examination has multi-purposes and that the predominant function of cross-examination emphasizes clarification (See Table 1). The statement receiving the highest percentage of strongly agree and agree responses was "Cross-examination should clarify arguments in the debate." Ninety-seven percent (131) of the respondents viewed this objective as important in cross-examination. Fairing equally as well was the statement "Cross-examination should set up arguments for discussion later in the debate." Over 94% (127) of the respondents evaluating this statement marked either the strongly agree or agree category. Three statements "Cross-examination is an effective tool for discovering contradictions in an opponent's arguments," "Gaining information about an opponent's case/argument is facilitated by cross-examination," and "Cross-examination gives participants an opportunity to find and expose logical fallacies in an opponent's arguments" also received favorable marks. Over 90% of the respondents marked these statements either strongly agree or agree.

On the other hand, four statements were not rated as highly. The statement "Cross-examination permits the discovery of

TABLE 1 Purpose of Cross-Examination

STATEMENT	STRONGLY AGREE (RANKING)	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	STRONGLY AGREE/AGREE PERCENTAGE (RANKING)
1. Cross-examination should clarify arguments in the debate.	104 (1)	27	4	0	0	131 97% (1)
2. Cross-examination should set up arguments for discussion later in the debate.	103 (2)	24	6	1	1	127 94.1% (2)
3. Cross-examination gives participants an opportunity to find and expose fallacies in an opponent's case.	88 (3)	35	7	4	0	123 91.9% (3)
4. Gaining information about an opponent's case/argument is facilitated by cross-examination.	69 (4)	55	7	4	0	124 91.8% (4)
5. Cross-examination is an effective tool for discovering contradictions in an opponent's arguments.	59 (5)	64	8	4	0	123 91.8% (5)
6. Cross-examination permits the discovery of missed issues following a speedy constructive speech.	30 (6)	70	15	17	3	100 74.1% (6)
7. Cross-examination is an effective tool for evaluating evidence.	26 (7)	61	31	14	3	87 64.5% (7)
8. Cross-examination facilitates humor in debate.	13 (8)	44	55	15	8	57 42.2% (8)

missed issues following a speedy constructive speech" received only 74% (100) strongly agree or agree marks. Discovering missed issues, therefore, plays a less prominent role in cross-examination.

Surprisingly, the evaluation of evidence seems less consequential as a strategy in cross-examination. Only 64% (86) marked strongly agree or agree when evaluating the statement "Cross-examination is an effective tool for evaluating evidence." One explanation for this finding might be that evidence evaluation is a means of clarifying an argument and not a goal of cross-examination. Rather than being an end goal, evidence evaluation may be a technique for making the issues more lucid in a critic/judge's mind. Evidence evaluation, therefore, is an important but a less pronounced objective than clarifying the issues in the debate or exposing the weaknesses in an opponent's arguments.

Another explanation for the lower rating might rest with some of the respondents viewing cross-examination in CEDA as different from cross-examination in National Debate Tournament debate (NDT). Frequently, NDT debate emphasizes reading large amounts of evidence rather than the evaluation of values supporting an argument. Evaluating evidence in cross-examination, thus, may be a more critical strategy in NDT than in CEDA. In fact, data from the survey supports this claim. Some respondents when completing an open-ended question on the differences between CEDA and NDT made comments such as "NDT usually questions evidence, CEDA tends to evaluate ideas and more often compares them" and "[CEDA] usually [has] less questioning of sources." Therefore, a stylistic

difference between NDT and CEDA cross-examination appears to be that NDT emphasizes more evaluation of evidence while CEDA focuses on the values and issues.

When first started, CEDA debate was designed as audience oriented debate and the use of humor was one means by which debaters could involve an audience and possibly enhance his/her credibility. Humor in cross-examination, however, was not evaluated highly on the survey. Only 42% (57) of the respondents marked either strongly agree or agree when evaluating the statement "Cross-examination faciliates humor in debate." Although humor is viewed as a valued objective in cross-examination by some of the respondents, the largest number of disagree and strongly disagree marks were given to this statement. Seventeen percent of the respondents felt that cross-examination did not facilitate humor.

Collectively then, debate educators agree that cross-examination should serve as a means to clarify issues in the debate. A cross-examination session should set up arguments for discussion in subsequent speeches by allowing debaters to expose fallacies, question evidence, and gain information about an opponent's case. Finally, discovery of missed issues and the evaluation of evidence should play a less dominate role in the cross-examination session.

How Effective is Cross-Examination Debate?

Although there appears to be consensus on the purpose of cross-examination, the achievement of these objectives is difficult. Responses to the question "Overall in CEDA debate, how would you rate the effectiveness of cross-examination" revealed that cross-examination, as currently practiced, is not very effective. Over half of the respondents awarded the activity a good rating while only 20% of the respondents marked the excellent or the superior category. Respondents were overwhelmingly in disagreement that "Debaters know how to use cross-question effectively" while only 5% (7) of the respondents agreed with this statement.

Part of the blame for the low evaluation falls on the debaters' shoulders, but coaches must also assume some responsibility for the problem. In part, the low evaluation might be due to the debater's attitude or a coach's lack of attention to cross-examination. Survey results would support both of these conclusions. Respondents felt debaters did not take cross-examination seriously. Only 18% of the respondents agreed with the statement that "Cross-examination is taken too seriously by students." Rather than seeing cross-examination as a skill that influences who wins or loses a debate round, debaters misuse the cross-examination session frequently by asking any question in order to give their debate partner more preparation time. This idea is confirmed by the responses to the question "Cross-examination gives a team three more minutes of preparation time." Sixty percent (79) of the respondents marked agree or strongly agree when responding to this statement.

Not only are students at fault for abusing the cross-examination session, but coaches are at fault for not drilling students on the strategies of cross-examination. Over 85% (114) of the respondents felt that "Coaches do not spend sufficient time teaching cross-examination techniques to their students."

If CEDA educators agree on the behavioral objectives of cross-examination why then do they collectively criticize the coaching that students receive? Perhaps one explanation for this finding is that educators have trouble teaching cross-examination. Research on teaching techniques is scarce, and

good teaching probably is both time- and labor-intensive. So what can be done to teach the techniques of cross-examination? Educators need to collect pedagogical techniques from those coaches who are training their students in effective cross-examination methods and make those materials available to the debate community.

Besides collecting teaching strategies, the use of modeling to teach cross-examination should be pursued. Perhaps one of the more effective ways to teach cross-examination might be to study various models of cross-examination. The techniques of cross-examination can be and probably are learned by debaters at tournaments as they watch other individuals debate. One such model might be to study debaters' use of questions. The proper use of questions can give debaters more power in a debate (e.g., the use of direct and leading questions versus open ended questions). Likewise, the more powerful speaker generally commands more speaking time. Watching how debaters use questions and answers to command floor time would be useful to a debater.

Another explanation for the deemphasis of cross-examination by coaches might be found in the opinions of critic/judges on how the cross-examination sessions should be used in decision making. Some critic/judges have indicated that cross-examination is not a major factor in decision making while others have claimed that they rarely vote on what happens in a cross-examination period. Similarly, some critic/judges believe admissions in cross-examination are not binding (i.e., the person making a statement must stick to the admission throughout the entire round) or that admissions in cross-examination do not enter into their decisions unless introduced in a subsequent constructive or a rebuttal speech.

Collectively the above statements appear to devalue the usefulness of the cross-examination session for decision-making. However, results of this survey imply the opposite--that cross-examination does weigh in the outcome of many debates. Respondents were asked "How often do you award a decision in CEDA debate based on a team's performance in cross-examination?" While only 5% (7) of the respondents marked the "frequent" category, 74% (97) felt that they "sometimes" award decisions in debates because of the cross-examination sessions. Twenty one percent (23) marked the "never" category. Debaters should be aware that many critic/judges do consider cross-examination when making their decisions.

Additionally, a majority of respondents supported the notion that cross-examination questions should be binding. Responses to the statements "Points made in cross-examination should be binding in the debate" and "Points made in cross-examination should be binding only if brought into subsequent speeches during the debate?" indicate that cross-examination is binding for close to two-thirds of those responding. Sixty-nine percent (92) of the respondents answered either strongly agree or agree on the first statement while 68% (91) marked the strongly agree or agree category on the second statement. For a majority of coaches, then, admissions in cross-examination are binding regardless of whether they are introduced into subsequent speeches. Even so, many coaches prefer that the admissions be noted in later constructives or rebuttals.

Finally, does an affirmative or a negative team have an edge when cross-examining? Responses to the question "Generally, which side do you think cross-examination favors in CEDA debate?" revealed that 72% (96) felt both sides were affected equally. Seven percent

(9) of the respondents thought cross-examination favored the affirmative and 21% (28) believed that the negative held an advantage.

Overall, respondents believed that cross-examination sessions needed improvement and blamed both coaches and debaters for the problem. Many critic/judges used cross-examination when deciding who won and lost a debate and a significant number of the respondents believed that cross-examination should be binding.

What Speaking Techniques are Preferred in Cross-Examination Debate?

Beginning debaters often flounder when doing cross-examination because they do not know which techniques to practice. Coaches often give beginning debaters a list of do's and don'ts when getting ready for debate. In part, this survey sought to determine which techniques are more positively evaluated in cross-examination. Respondents were asked to rate a number of cross-examination techniques using a Likert-type scale ranging from favorable to not favorable (See Table 2).

The techniques which the respondents valued dealt with the examiner's use of questions. Respondents felt a questioner should develop a sequence of question (4.64) rather than asking vague or disjointed questions (1.36). The person being asked questions should give concise answers to questions (4.59) rather than dodging posed questions (1.63).

Even so, a questioner does not have a free hand during a cross-examination period but must be careful in selecting questions and the way questions are asked. For example, questioners might think twice before limiting a respondent to a yes/no answer. The statement "Questioners should be allowed to limit a respondent to yes/no answers in cross-examination" ranked eighth and received a 2.27

TABLE 2 Questioning Techniques

STATEMENT	MEAN SCORE	RANK
Questioner develops a sequence of questions.	4.64	1
A respondent gives concise answers to questions.	4.59	2
A participant should address an audience not the opponent.	3.81	3
Debaters should start the examination immediately following the end of the previous speaker's constructive speech.	3.75	4
Sloppy and aggressive questions or answers during a cross-examination should be penalized.	3.69	5
Questioning the source qualifications of an opponent's evidence should be done during cross-examination periods.	3.57	6
Challenged evidence should be reread during cross-examination.	3.07	7
Questioners should be allowed to limit a respondent to yes/no answers.	2.27	8
A respondent asks questions instead of making statements.	2.17	9
Aggressive verbal behavior is used to project a "winning" profile.	1.96	10/11
Debaters should not be allowed to ask for evidence cards in cross-examination.	1.96	10/11
A participant interrupts the other speaker frequently.	1.70	12
A respondent dodges posed questions.	1.63	13
The questioner asks unclear or disjointed questions.	1.36	14
Questioner makes statements instead of asking questions.	1.31	15

mean score. Many of the respondents, thus, did not care for this practice. Similarly, respondents did not like debaters to project a "winning" profile by being verbally aggressive (1.96) nor did they favor constant interruptions during the examination session (1.70).[5] An explanation for these findings might rest with the philosophy behind CEDA as a communicative and polite event. Constant interruptions, demanding limited answers, and aggressive behavior are viewed as rude and are sometimes punished by critic/judges in CEDA by either giving a team a loss or lowering speaker points. In fact, critic/judges may require or expect CEDA debaters to be more polite than NDT debaters. Some respondents when asked in an open-ended question to indicate the differences between NDT and CEDA cross-examinations responded with statements such as CEDA is "less rude" and "[CEDA] better not be as obnoxious as [NDT]." The CEDA ballot even lists politeness as one criterion for speaker evaluation.

Questioning the source qualifications and rereading challenged evidence are common practices in cross-examination periods. However, not everyone responding to the survey favored these activities. Rereading evidence received a mean score of 3.07 and questioning the source qualifications received a mean score of 3.57. Quarreling with an opponent's evidence, as noted earlier, is an appropriate activity for cross-examination when it clarifies the issues in the debate but as an end in and of itself it is not as highly valued. Debaters might consider using this strategy in combination with other types of questions.

Finally, respondents were fairly conservative when advising debaters on how to ask and answer questions. They felt a debater when responding to questions should answer the questions rather than make statements. The respondents favored a strict form of dialectic in which the questioner asks a series of questions and the respondent answers the questions concisely.

There are a number of conclusions which can be drawn about the techniques of cross-examination: first, aggressive behavior is not highly valued; second, clear, precise, and in-depth questions which later can be used to further the argumentation of the debate are viewed more positively; and finally, evidence clashes should be used when it clarifies the debate.

What Changes Might be Adopted to Improve Cross-Examination in CEDA

If cross-examination is not meeting its objectives and is difficult to teach, perhaps changes in the format would be desirable. Yet respondents did not want to change the format of the cross-examination session, favoring retention of the questioning period. The statement "Cross-examination does not add substantively to the debate and therefore is a waste of time" was strongly negated. Close to 87% disagreed with this statement while only 8% (11) supported it. One of the more frequent charges against cross-examination is that questioners do not ask questions specifically about the respondent's speech when conducting an examination. A further indictment of cross-examination is that debaters do not effectively set up arguments for use in subsequent speeches. In part, this problem is caused by debaters who do not complete their own cross-examination (i.e., cross-examine right before they give their own constructive speech). Most debaters let their partner complete the cross-examination while they work on their upcoming speech supplying additional preparation time for the the upcoming speaker as noted

TABLE 3 Proposed Changes in Cross Examination

1. Speakers (except 1st Affirmative) should be required to do the cross-examination prior to their own constructive speech.	Agree 14.6%	Neutral 20.0%	Disagree 64.4%
2. The time limit in cross-examination should be increased by one minute for each speaker.	Agree 9.6%	Neutral 15.6%	Disagree 74.8%
3. Judges should be allowed to cross-examine the debaters on a limited basis. (i.e. Two minutes CX by students/one minute CX by judge.)	Agree 31.8%	Neutral 8.9%	Disagree 60.0%
4. Cross-examination should be shortened to two minutes.	Agree 11.4%	Neutral 8.9%	Disagree 80.8%

earlier. On the other hand, some individuals have suggested altering the time limits for examination.

Respondents when asked about making changes in the cross-examination session rejected all proposals (See Table 3). Close to 65% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that "Speakers (except 1st affirmative) should be required to do the cross-examination prior to their own constructive speech. Lengthening the cross-examination period also was rejected with close to 75% opposed. Shortening the time limit to two minutes also failed with over 80% of the respondents marking the disagree category.

Respondents also rejected the idea that critic/judges should be allowed to ask questions during a cross-examination session.[6] The proposal of judges asking questions might have been rejected because it redefines the role of the critic/judge from an evaluator to a presenter in the debate. Overall, respondents preferred the format of cross-examination that is currently used--three minutes per person with everyone in the debate being asked and asking questions.

Conclusions

This paper has reported the results of a survey of CEDA coaches on four research topics: the goals of cross-examination, the effectiveness of cross-examination, cross-examination strategies, and changes which might be adopted to improve cross-examination in CEDA. Although the return rate of the survey was good, the conclusions of this study need to be considered with caution. There is no magical formula for instant success in cross-examination, but we do know that there are techniques that judges prefer--developing a sequence of questions, giving concise answers to questions, not interrupting excessively, and moderate use of evidence challenges. In all cases, the questioner should have as his/her goal the clarification of arguments in the debate. The cross-examination session should be a vital part of the total debate setting up issues for discussion in subsequent speeches.

Ironically, since respondences are dissatisfied with how cross-examination sessions are conducted and yet do not favor changes in the cross-examination format, perhaps the answer to improvement rests in better pedagogical approaches. The role of modeling in teaching cross-examination might be one avenue to pursue. Regardless of whether cross-examination is viewed as a skill development activity to train students "to think on their feet" or as "three more minutes of

preparation time," cross-examination is a dynamic process and an integral part of CEDA's tradition.

Footnotes

[1] Amy Vreeland, University of Minnesota, assisted in the design and coding of this survey.

[2] The Oregon plan of debate included cross-examination sessions in 1924. The National Debate Tournament adopted cross-examination as part of its format in 1975. Cross-examination debate is now the preferred format and has grown from twenty-one tournaments offering it in the 1974-75 debate season to almost universal acceptance now (Tomlinson, 1986).

[3] Generally in CEDA, two debate teams from two different colleges or universities argue a topic selected by the national CEDA membership. In the debate, one of the teams affirms the resolution while the other team negates the resolution. Each speaker, in turn, has four opportunities to speak: a constructive speech in which his or her position in the debate is developed; two cross-examination sessions--one session responding to questions phrased by an opposing team member and one session in which an opponent is asked questions; and a rebuttal speech in which the issues in the debate or refuted or rebuilt.

[4] Kerlinger (1964, p. 414) indicates that a return rate of 40-50% is considered normal in the use of mail questionnaires.

[5] Previous research by Larson and Vreeland (1985) suggest that interruptions give debaters more power and control in a cross-examination sessions.

[6] The attorney judged tournament at San Francisco State University lets attorney/judges complete a questioning session in the debate.

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