

AN ANALYSIS OF IMAGINED INTERACTIONS OF FORENSIC PARTICIPANTS

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Sports psychologists have found it helpful for athletes to visualize themselves giving flawless performances before their actual performance (May & Asken, 1987). It has been suggested that mental imagery can increase self-confidence. Mental imagery after a successful performance is valuable for athletes by enabling them to focus on exceptional aspects of the performance and categorize those for future performances (Orlick, 1980). If mental imagery enables an athlete to enhance or reproduce specific physical behaviors, then mental imagery could be beneficial for forensic competitors enabling them to produce or reproduce successful communication behaviors.

Since forensics is a competitive activity that rewards the most appropriate communication behavior, then mental imagery could provide competitors with examples of ideal communicative strategies to be used in actual competition. Traditionally, forensic coaches encourage mental imagery and appropriate communication behavior by directing their students to concentrate on the upcoming round, get into character, think positively, have a winning attitude, and to evaluate one's last performance in order to improve future performances. Underlying these directives is the premise that forensic participants can cognitively evaluate the round and follow through with the most appropriate rhetorical strategy.

However, this underlying premise has not been tested. No researcher has examined how forensic competitors cognitively evaluate their performances. This research will examine the mental aspects of forensic competition. The purpose of this research is: 1) to determine if competitors utilize mental imagery in preparing and evaluating their competitive performances, 2) to determine what aspects of mental imagery enhance performance, and 3) to provide practical implications for forensic coaches in the use of mental imagery.

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Imagined Interactions

Mental imagery processes have been studied in terms of "imagined interactions" (Honeycutt, Zagacki, & Edwards, 1989). These researchers define imagined interactions as a process of cognition whereby individuals imagine themselves in an interaction with others. "Imagined interactions are an attempt to simulate real-life conversation with significant others" (Honeycutt, et al., 1989, p. 169). During imagined interactions, individuals can actually work through representations of communication events and prepare responses based on those contingencies. Mead (1934) noted that the mental activity of determining who to respond to in a social situation is critical to the development of the self-concept. According to Honeycutt and his associates (1989), during imagined interactions, individuals may consciously take the role of others, imagining how they might respond to one messages within particular situations, and test the consequences of communication strategies. For example, Honeycutt (1988) provides an account of a 21-year-old woman who reported an imagined interaction with her husband in their home. She imagines discussing his negative feelings toward her. The imagined interaction served to fulfill catharsis and rehearsal functions. The woman felt better having rehearsed the message strategy.

Imagined interactions are grounded in symbolic interactionism and Greene's (1984) action-assembly theory. Mead (1934) argues how individuals develop representations of self through imaginary conversations and cited an individual's ability to monitor social action as a distinguishing mark of human intelligence. This type of mental activity, explain Manis and Meltzer (1978), "is a peculiar type of activity that goes on in the experience of the person. The activity is that of the person responding to himself, of indicating things to himself" (p. 21). What is important about this type of mental activity is that (1) one may consciously take the role of others, imagining how they might respond to one's messages within particular situations, and thus (2) one can test and imagine the consequences of alternative messages prior to communication.

Honeycutt and his associates (1989) discuss how imagined interactions may be used as a type of simulation in preparing for expected communicative encounters. Kahneman and Tversky (1982) list five judgmental tasks in which simulation is liable to be used for problem solving: predicting a future event; assessing the probability of a specific event; assessing conditional probabilities; counterfactual assessments; and assessments of causality. These

tasks are characteristic of the forensic setting in which competitors are rewarded for appropriate communication behavior; thus, imagined interactions as a type of mental imagery should be used in forensic settings. Honeycutt and his colleagues (1988) suggest that "imagined interactions can help in predicting a future event and that by engaging in one and even rewriting it, helps an individual to assess conditional probabilities in the form of imagined outcomes for different scripts for the same imagined interaction scene" (p. 6). Thus, an individual can envision a variety of potential messages before the actual encounter.

Edwards and her associates (1988) propose that as individuals have imagined interactions, "they activate (and perhaps reconstitute) procedural records which may inform behavior related to specific situational exigencies" (pp. 25-26). The research findings reported by Edwards et al. (1988) and Honeycutt et al. (1989; in press) on imagined interactions indicate: 1) that individuals vary in the activity or how often they have imagined interactions, 2) that imagined interactions are often with the same person, 3) that imagined interactions perform a rehearsal function, and 4) that the self dominates the interaction. The results in previous research using the Survey of Imagined Interactions (SII) focused on the imagined interactions of individuals not engaged in a particular task (Edwards et al., 1988; Honeycutt et al., 1989; Zagacki et al., 1988). The present study expands the new body of literature on imagined interactions by examining interactions generated in a task-specific situation—a forensic tournament. This is important because message selection is based on situational constraints and audience expectations.

Imagined Interactions and Forensic Competition

Forensics is an activity that requires participants to be cognitively aware of the communication context. This awareness is evident in two areas. First, competitors are engaged in an activity that rewards the most appropriate communication behavior. For example, debaters are rewarded with the ballot when they present "good reasons," advance effective argumentative strategies, and effectively adapt to the judge. Individual events participants in prose, poetry, dramatic interpretation, and duo interpretation are rewarded with a high ranking when they communicate empathy and understanding of textual concerns. In platform and limited preparation events, participants are rewarded when they demonstrate clear understanding of their topics, advance logical reasons, and follow a clear organizational pattern.

Second, in the tournament environment, message selection is in a constant process of evaluation and reevaluation. For example, debaters are required to choose from a repertoire of potential arguments to counter opposing positions. They are required to engage in cross examination, deal with case areas that vary, and answer arguments that reflect the idiosyncrasies of the competition. As a result, debaters are required to select an argumentative strategy that they think will defend their positions and be well received by the judges.

Message evaluation is also critical for individual event participants. For example, in "After Dinner Speaking" competition, competitors are encouraged to "work" the audience. They are often rewarded for identifying and incorporating the peculiarities of the audience in their speech. In impromptu speaking, competitors are rewarded for generating fresh and intriguing insights on a quotation in less than three minutes. In platform speaking events, speakers are expected to appear spontaneous even though they may have previously delivered the same speech a number of times.

Participants also must consider the communicative environment of the tournament. This includes analyzing such variables as the acoustics of the room, audience size, position of the judge, and room furnishing. Honeycutt and his associates (in press) discuss how imagined interactions not only use verbal imagery but visual images. Some individuals imagine the scene of the encounter and are well aware of the surroundings in which the interaction takes place. Using both visual and verbal imagery, imagined interactions can enable forensic participants to mentally rehearse messages and prepare for possible exigencies. Through the rehearsal function of imagined interactions, tension may be released as the imagineer is reducing uncertainty for the anticipated round.

Imagined interaction also may serve a function of increasing self-understanding (Zagacki et al., 1988) and occur after the round is over. The participant can go back and replay what happened while making adjustments for future rounds. The imagineer can "rewrite" the imagined interaction and provide information for the self to use during real interaction (Edwards et al., 1988). This investigation assessed the relationship between imagined interaction activity for individuals engaging in actual tournament competition in order to determine what types of cognitive processes are in operation in this task situation.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Existing literature made it possible to generate some theoretically relevant hypotheses in the tournament setting. In addition, research questions were posed where no directional hypotheses could be posited. The first question deals with the principle type of competition—individual events or debate. Debate and individual events require a different orientation for the participants. Debate requires more of an evidence orientation and argumentative approach while individual events require more of an audience-centered model of adaptation and persuasion (Wilson, 1978). Thus, we ask:

RQ1: Do debaters and individual events competitors differ in the function of their imagined interactions?

The research by Edwards et al. (1988) proposed that individuals tend to have imagined interactions with the same individual. In the arena of forensics, the most discussed and contemplated individuals are the judge and opponent. Thus we ask:

RQ2: Who are the imagined interactions within forensic settings?

Imagined interactions involve encounters with a real person, the interactions provide a give-and-take dialogical exchange of ideas. Earlier research has found that the self tends to talk more in the imagined interaction compared to the other as well as initiating the conversation. Thus, the imagined interactions affords powers of conversation control (Edwards et al., 1988). Given the nature of the forensic setting in which individuals are rewarded for appropriate messages, they should plan and envision message strategies. Thus we posit:

H1: The self will talk more in the imagined interaction than the dialogue partner.

As previously indicated, mental imagery is used in sports to focus on successful performances. Therefore, forensic participants may use imagined interactions to identify strategies that lead to victorious outcomes. It is also possible that competitors may use imagined interactions to prepare for defeat in order to prepare and bolster oneself for expected "bad" news. Subsequently, we ask:

RQ3: Do forensic competitors experience more success or defeat in their imagined interactions?

The rehearsal function, which indicates proactive imagined interactions, imagined interactions implies that a person selects appropriate messages in order to achieve a desired outcome. Thus,

having imagined interactions before the round should be related to imagined success. Furthermore, the calling up of procedural records allows one to prepare for situational exigencies. Thus, even if a real encounter is discrepant from a preceding imagined one, the experience may result in an outcome of imagined success. Support for this position has been found in journal accounts of imagined interactions (Honeycutt, 1988). For example, individuals report more beneficial outcomes in their imagined interactions when having proactive imagined interactions before an anticipated encounter. While this may not correspond to actual interaction outcomes, the experience of rehearsing is helpful. Presumably, the calling up of procedural records attunes one to the interaction. Thus we posit:

H2: Success in the imagined interaction will correspond with having proactive imagined interactions at the tournament.

If individuals use imagined interactions to generate "success" gaining strategies, then imagined interactions may occur prior to an anticipated encounter. Zagacki and his associates (1988) have discussed "proactivity" as a characteristic of some imagined interactions. A proactive imagined interaction occurs before an important meeting or encounter and involves communicative planning before the actual interaction. Conversely, some imagined interactions occur after an encounter (retroactive IIs) and involve the individual replaying what occurred, and perhaps making changes in order to prepare for future encounters (Honeycutt et al., in press).

Greene (1984) has discussed how individuals may activate "procedural records" for anticipated actions. These records represent a kind of cognitive information bank and specify certain communicative actions associated with particular interaction goals. They provide functional information about interaction goals and related behaviors. Therefore, if the individual uses imagined interactions to identify the behavior that is most appropriate in a specific situation, then we ask when do the imagined interactions occur in relation to the actual event:

RQ4: Do imagined interactions tend to occur before or after the actual round of competition?

Coaches encourage debaters to anticipate questions, answers, and arguments as well as to present the effective argumentative strategy. Individual events participants are told to get into character, concentrate, adapt to the judge, and adapt to the environment. While imagined interactions can be used in a rehearsal function, they may also represent an imagined exchange of infor-

mation between interactants. For forensic competitors, imagined interactions should perform the procedural function of identifying the most appropriate response in a specific situation. Thus, the question arises concerning the discrepancy between the imagined and real interaction.

One of the general features identified in the imagined interaction construct is concerned with the discrepancy between imagined and real interaction (Edwards et al., 1988; Zagacki et al., 1988). In addition, Edwards and her associates (1988) argue that there is a slight, peripheral relationship with having an imagined interaction before important encounters and having discrepant imagined interactions. Given the peripheral relationship discussed in earlier imagined interaction studies, the following research question was posed instead of making a directional hypothesis.

RQ5: What is the relationship between imagined interaction discrepancy and the other imagined interaction features (activity, success, proactivity) in the tournament setting?

METHOD

Subjects

The data was collected at three college tournaments. Each tournament offered competition in both debate and individual events. The colleges and universities represented at the tournaments provided a geographic mix of the United States, ranging from California to Florida and from Texas to Minnesota. The sample population consisted of 73 individuals in which 63% were male and 37% were female. In addition, 60% of the respondents primarily competed in debate, 26% in individual events, and 10% competed in both debate and individual events. In considering the breakdown for forensics experience, 38% had 1 to 2 years of experiences, 27% had 3 to 4 years of forensics experience, and 35% had 5 or more year of forensics experience (high school experience was included).

Measuring Imagined Interactions

Honeycutt and his associates (in press) discuss how investigators of imagined interactions face the same methodological problems facing cognitive researchers in general in the reliance on self-reports. Caughey (1984) has acknowledged this difficulty, noting that the only way to gather data about imagined interactions specifically is through introspection. Ericsson and Simon (1980) address the issue of using self-reports as data and offer some guidelines when retrospective verbalization is made. They indicate

that providing contextual information and prompts to respondents can aid recall from long-term memory. The survey instrument that has been used to measure imagined interaction activity is designed to contextualize respondents through prompting them to think about the concept of imagined interactions. Ericsson and Simon (1980) argue that a portion of the contents of short-term memory are fixated in long-term memory and this portion can, at later points in time, be retrieved from long-term memory. Pelose (in press) has indicated how one can find similar methods of introspective self-report used in communication and "daydreaming" research. For example, Singer (1978) has reviewed questionnaire studies of "daydreaming" which may consist of some imagined interaction episodes and indicates that questionnaires and interviews have proven to be helpful in examining special ways in which daydreaming is reflected in daily life.

Instrumentation

The investigation utilized a slightly revised version of the SII developed by Edwards and her associates (1988). The SII is a multidimensional instrument containing eight factor scales reflecting various features of imagined interactions. Subjects respond to 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1) "very strong disagreement" to 7) "very strong agreement" in response to items measuring general characteristics and features of imagined interactions. Items reflecting five dimensions of imagined interaction features were chosen for analysis. The five imagined interaction indices were activity, discrepancy, retroactivity, proactivity, and success. These dimensions were chosen due to the kinds of research questions posed in this study. The revised version reduced the number of questionnaire items from 67 to 24. The questions were also reworded to reflect the terminology shared by forensics participants.

Activity is a four-item index that represents the frequency or how often individuals report having imagined interactions (e.g., "I have imagined interactions all the time."). The discrepancy index contains seven items measuring how discrepant an imagined interaction is from a real one (e.g., "In my real conversations, I am very different than in my imagined ones."). Retroactivity is a three-item dimension in which imagined interactions occur after an important encounter has taken place (e.g., "After important meetings, I frequently imagine them."). Proactivity also is a three-item index and reflects those imagined interactions occurring before important meetings (e.g., "Before important meetings, I frequently imagine them.") Finally, success in the imagined interaction was a

three-item index and was defined as the degree to which the respondent reporting feeling successful in their imagined interactions (e.g., "I imagine more success than defeat."). Reliabilities of these indices were stable as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha: activity (.80), discrepancy (.76), retroactivity (.61), proactivity (.72), success (.80).

Statistical Analyses

Correlations were used to examine the relationship between activity, discrepancy, retroactivity, proactivity, and success. Individual contrasts were used to test mean cell differences between debaters and individual event participants. A discriminant analysis was utilized to identify differences between debate and individual events. Discriminant analysis yields a linear combination of variables that maximally distinguishes between groups (Pedhazur, 1982). A key component of discriminant analysis is its ability to produce classification accuracy estimates based on prior probability due to group size. Thus, knowing someone's scores on the discriminant function can result in differential accuracy in classifying them as a debater or individual events participant.

RESULTS

The first research question concerned whether the imagined interactions of debaters differed from those of individual events participants. For this analysis those that competed primarily individual events and those that competed in both debate and individual events were combined to form the individual events group. This was done because the responses given by individuals that competed in both debate and individual events corresponded more closely with the individual events group. The discriminant analysis revealed a significant function (Wilk's Lambda = .84, canonical $r = .40$, Chi Square (2) = 11.08, $p = .004$). Given the small sample size here, it was necessary to establish homogeneity of group covariance. The Box M statistic revealed homogeneity of group covariances (Box M = 6.19, Approximate F = 1.99, $p = .11$) thus indicating that the multivariate discriminant solution could be interpreted. Table 1 reveals the discriminant function weights in which activity and proactivity loaded on the function. Examination of the group centroids revealed that debaters compared to individual event participants had more imagined interactions and that their imagined interactions were liable to occur before the round. The overall classification for the functions was 67.65%. The function was most accurate at classifying debaters (81.4% accuracy) and not very accurate in classifying individual event participants

(44% accuracy).¹ Part of this differential accuracy could be due to the mixing of debate with purely individual events for the "individual events" group. Univariate contrasts also revealed that debaters had more imagined interactions than individual events competitors. Table 2 presents the univariate contrasts for each index.

Table 1
Stepwise Discriminating Imagined Interaction Dimensions

Step	II Dimension	Wilks' Lambda	Rao's V	Change in Rao's V	p	Function Coefficient
1	Activity	.94	4.46	4.46	.034	1.89
2	Proactivity	.84	12.26	7.80	.005	-1.51

Group Centroids: Individual Events = -.56 Debaters = .32

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics and Results of Individual Contrasts For Imagined Interactions (II) Characteristics

Imagined Interaction Characteristics*	M	S.D.	t**
Activity Dimension:			
Debate Group	17.37	5.09	-2.11**
Individual Events Group	14.60	5.44	
Proactivity Dimension:			
Debate Group	17.05	5.85	-.32
Individual Events Group	16.60	4.81	
I.I. with the Judge			
After the Round	3.2	1.6	2.00**
Recurrent judge	3.7	1.6	
Dominates the Interaction			
Self	5.0	1.4	6.93***
Other	3.2	1.2	
Success in I.I.	5.5	1.4	6.97***
Defeat in I.I.	4.3	1.6	
Retroactivity	11.6	3.0	3.51***
Proactivity	10.9	3.6	

*Scale Range: Activity (4-28), Proactivity, Retroactivity (3-21), I.I. with Judge, Dominance, Success, Defeat (1-7)

**p < .050

***p < .001

RQ2 asked if the judge or opponent was the dialogue partner in the imagined interactions. Table 3 presents the results of coding of responses to an open-ended question asking who the imagined interactions in tournament competition were with. There was a significant difference between the number of respondents reporting opponents as opposed to other individuals. Respondents indicated that the principal other in their imagined interactions were mostly opponents as opposed to judges, (Chi Square (4) = 10.3, $p = .03$). However, when the judge ($M = 3.2$) was the other in the imagined interaction, the respondents reported that they had imagined interactions with a recurrent judge ($M = 3.7$, $t = 2.00$, $p = .05$, testwise $\alpha = .05$, experimentwise $\alpha = .008$).

Table 3 Dialogue Partners in the Imagined Interactions

Partner	Partner
Opponent	17
Teammate	11
Coach	10
Judge	5
Missing Data*	<u>25</u>
Total	73

Chi Square (4) = 10.3, $p < .03$

*These individuals failed to indicate who their dialogue partners were.

H1 posited that the self would talk more in the imagined interaction than the dialogue partner. This hypothesis was supported. Individual contrasts revealed that the self ($M = 5.0$) dominated the interaction compared to the other ($M = 3.2$, $t = 6.93$, $p = .001$).

RQ3 asked if individuals experienced more success or defeat in their imagined interactions. Respondents experienced significantly more success ($M = 5.5$) than defeat ($M = 4.3$, $t = 6.97$, $p =$ support indicating that the more individuals were successful in their imagined interactions, the more proactive imagined interactions they had. Table 4 reveals the positive correlation ($r =$ imagined interactions indicating that respondents who experienced imagined interactions before the round tended to report more success in their imagined events. On the other hand, retroactivity did not significantly correlate with success. It is also noted that proactivity was strongly related to the frequency of having imagined interactions.

Table 4
Intercorrelations of Imagined Interaction Variables

II Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1) Past Success	—						
2) Activity	-.05	—					
3) Dominance	-.05	.20*	--				
4) Discrepancy	-.20*	-.26**	.23				
5) Retroactivity	.04	.39***	.18	.08	—		
6) Proactivity	-.05	.83***	.18	-.19*	.33**		
7) II Success	.16	.30**	.39***	.03	.12	.29**	

Note. Testwise alpha = .05, Experimentwise alpha = .002

*p<.05

**p<.01

***p<.001

RQ4 asked if imagined interactions precede or follow the actual round of competition. The data revealed that respondents had significantly more imagined interactions after ($M = 11.6$) the round than before ($M = 10.9$, $t = 3.51$, $p = .001$) the round.

RQ5 was concerned with the relationship between having imagined interactions that are discrepant from real interaction in relation to the other imagined interaction variables. The data revealed a number of interesting patterns. As reports of past success increased, discrepancy decreased ($r = -.20$, $p < .05$). Second, there was a negative correlation between activity and discrepancy ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$). The more imagined interactions experienced, the more accurately they correspond to reality since they were less discrepant. Third, there was a slight correlation between proactivity and discrepancy ($r = -.19$, $p < .05$). This suggests that the more frequently that imagined interactions precedes the actual round, the less discrepant the imagined interaction.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide some useful insights into forensics and the role of imagined interactions. First, forensic competitors do experience imagined interactions, but the role of the interactions differ as a result of the forensic task (debate and individual events).

The debate group had significantly more imagined interactions than the individual events group. The explanation could be linked to the nature of the events. The debate event requires participants to assume an active role in the communication process. Debaters are required to interact directly with the specific constraints of the environment. Debaters must adapt to the issues, the opponents,

and critic. On the other hand, individual events participants cannot assume as active a role in the communication process. Individual events function in such a way that participants use the same speech and literary cutting throughout an entire forensics season.

Therefore, the nature of the event varies the frequency of the imagined interactions. Debate requires participants constantly to evaluate and reevaluate possible message alternatives in light of the constraints of the situation, thus more frequent imagined interactions are necessary. Since individual events participants are not in a position to vary their prepared speeches significantly, literary cuttings, etc., then fewer imagined interactions are experienced.

Another function significantly linked to the nature of the event was the timing of the imagined interactions (before or after the actual event). Since debate requires the interactants to pursue an active role that shapes the communication encounter, debaters tend to have more imagined interactions before the actual round of competition. For debaters, it appears that imagined interactions served more of a rehearsal process for testing and evaluating potential messages. In individual events, the participants are actors in the communication process fulfilling prescribed roles rather than shaping the communication encounter. For individual events participants, imagined interactions tended to function as post hoc analysis of the given performance.

These results suggest that if the locus of control in the communication situation is in the possession of the interactant, as in debate, then imagined interactions are more frequent and serve a rehearsal function. However, if the locus of control for significantly shaping the interaction process is outside the individual, as in individual events, fewer imagined interactions are experienced; when they are experienced, they are retroactive.

A second major finding concerns discrepancy and imagined interactions. As the frequency of imagined interactions increased, the discrepancy between imagined and real interactions decreased. Similarly, as the participants reported more past success in forensics, discrepancy also decreased. Consequently, as respondents increased their awareness of the forensic activity, through imagined interactions or actual competition, their imagined interactions begin to more closely mirror reality. These results suggest that imagined interactions can compensate for lack of experience in the forensic activity.

In the forensic activity, past success may act as a guide for future performances. Participants attempt to repeat behaviors that were previously rewarded. Imagined interactions allow participants

to rehearse behaviors and then implement the behaviors in subsequent rounds. The rehearsal function enables the inexperienced competitor to compensate for lack of experience by engaging in imagined interactions. Imagined interactions can act as a substitute for experience by allowing the individual to participate mentally in the forensic activity.

A third insight of interest relates to proactivity and the imagined success construct. When an individual experienced the imagined interaction before the actual encounter, they tended to experience more success in the imagined interaction. This may correspond with Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) self-fulfilling prophecy. Before the actual encounter, participants imagined the best possible outcome. They had a tendency to view themselves in a favorable light. This result in conjunction with the finding concerning discrepancy suggests that proactive imagined interactions assist the individual in psychologically preparing for actual competition.

Interestingly, imagined success did not significantly correlate with retroactivity. This would suggest that in the retroactive process of imagined interactions, the individual tends to focus on the shortcomings of the actual performance before knowing how he/she was evaluated by the judge resulting in a two-fold effect on the individual. First, by focusing on the inadequacies of the actual encounter, individuals could be bolstering themselves for anticipated news of low ratings from a judge. If the individual can prepare for anticipated disappointment through retroactivity, then the actual news resulting in disappointment is softened and the ego remains intact.

In addition to protecting the ego, retroactive imagined interactions can play an educational role for the participant. Through retroactivity, the individual can identify the inadequacies of the previous performance and adjust future performances to compensate. Not only can imagined interactions better prepare (proactive) the individual for the actual encounter but they can also provide psychological support after-the-fact (retroactive). Future imagined interactions research needs to explore the precise functions of proactivity and retroactivity in a variety of communication situations.

Unfortunately, this research failed to statistically establish the link between past success in competition and success in imagined interactions. The possible reason for this failure was the inadequacy of the rating scale used to determine past success. Participants were asked to provide a self-report of their past success in competitions by selecting from three possible choices: extremely

successful, somewhat successful, and not very successful. These discrete categories proved inadequate because the participants were very hesitant to rate themselves extremely successful, though their past records would indicate that they have been extremely successful.

For future research, a measure of actual success at the tournament needs to be used. The link between actual success and imagined success needs to be thoroughly examined and understood. Even though a clear link could not be statistically established for past success and imagined success, respondents did indicate that they experienced more success than defeat in their imagined interactions. This result adds to the notion that imagined interactions function in the realm of self-fulfilling prophecies.

A fourth insight provided by the data relates to the role of the dialogue partner in the imagined interactions. Rosenblatt and Meyer (1986) indicated that imagined interactions are attempts to simulate real-life conversations with significant others. The open-ended question concerning who is the focus of the imagined interaction produced the result that the opponent is the significant other. This result was consistent with both groups (debate and individual events). This finding is particularly interesting since the judge holds the decision-making power in the round.

Implications for Coaches

For forensic coaches, this research suggests that imagined interactions can play a critical role in the psychological preparation of competitors, both before and after the actual round. First, coaches need to impress upon participants that imagined interactions can be used for more than merely rehearsing or reviewing their performances. Imagined interactions represent a cognitive evaluation of communication behaviors produced in the round. For imagined interactions to be utilized as a coaching strategy, participants must imagine themselves discussing their performance with critics, opponents, and audience members. The imagined communication with others can enable the competitor to better understand the effects of their performance on the audience. Enhanced understanding can provide the contestant with a foundation for revising their performance to meet the expectations of the situation.

Imagined interactions should not be confused with internal self-talk. Howell (1986) discusses "internal monologue" as talking with oneself. According to Howell, individuals want to concentrate fully on a topic but their mind wanders. Attention is divided

between these thoughts and what the individual should be doing in the encounter. "The more intense and constant the internal monologue, the lower a person's ability to pick up cues from the environment and respond sensibly to them" (Howell, 1986; p. 114).

In contrast, imagined interactions are internal dialogue. Instead of merely responding to our conjured thoughts, we may respond to imagined remarks by the other. For example, if a debater is constantly losing a particular issue, then the debater could imagine discussing the details of the issue with a critic. The imagined discussion could better enable the debater to revise the argument to meet the needs of the judge. In individual events, contestants that are consistently informed on ballots that their selections are not indicative of their talent could use imagined interactions to address the issue and possibly revise their introductions in order to address the judging complaints. However, if contestants merely rehearse their events without cognitively evaluating the effects of the performance on the audience, the cognitive imagery will not fulfill its potential.

In order for imagined interactions to better fulfill their potential, coaches need to encourage competitors to construct imagined interactions with critics. The results of this study indicate that imagined interactions most often occur with other competitors; however, the critic is the decision-maker in the round and therefore should be the significant other in the imagined interaction. Thomas (1981) noted that the round is decided in the mind of the critic and not the perceptions of the competitors. Thus, it might be wise for a contestant to construct imagined interactions with critics.

Imagined interactions with critics could be constructed from judges' ballots, judging philosophies, actual judge interactions, and discussions with other contestants concerning various judges. From the collected information, contestants could generate imagined interactions with critics which would enable contestants to be better prepared to reproduce the behaviors that correspond to the expectations of the various judges. Obviously, this coaching strategy is most beneficial with reoccurring critics. However, such interactions could also aid the participant in constructing a foundation of judging expectations based on the collected data.

Second, coaches should encourage competitors to proactively imagine successful communication behavior. Competitors, like athletes, should mentally rehearse the behavior that is to be reproduced in competition. For example, debaters could rehearse cross examination questions and answers, first affirmative responses, case arguments, off-case positions, etc. Individual events partici-

pants could focus attention on maintaining concentration in the upcoming rounds. Whatever problems that competitors may have in competition could be minimized through positive mental imagery.

Third, coaches could utilize imagined interactions by having competitors cognitively playback the round and attempt to pinpoint exceptional aspects of their performance while trying to reproduce those aspects in future rounds. Through retroactivity, competitors could identify why they were successful and focus on repeating the successful behavior.

Finally, imagined interactions could be useful in supplementing actual practice sessions. The activity dimensions of imagined interactions indicates that the more frequently imagined interactions are experienced, the more accurately they mirror reality as well as corresponding to imagined success. In addition, the data indicates that imagined interactions can compensate for lack of experience and mentally prepare the participant for the demands of competition. Since a significant portion of forensics is in the mind, then it may be wise for coaches to encourage participants to actively imagine the rounds. If control and success in the actual rounds can be linked to concentration and dedication to the task at hand, then imagined interactions may facilitate successful competition.

NOTES

Classification accuracy in discriminant analysis is meaningful only to the extent that the prior probability of classification is considered. Based on sample size, the prior probability of classification was .37 for individual events and .63 for debate activities. Thus, the percentage of cases correctly classified was beyond chance accuracy for both groups.

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