

Competitors' Perceptions of Questions in Individual Events Rounds

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The practice of judges asking competitors questions at the conclusion of their speeches is an area of interest in the arena of individual events competition. The practice has been most notably used in past years in rhetorical criticism at the National Forensic Association National Individual Events Tournament (NFA-NIET). The practice has undergone scrutiny a number of times. A 1984 survey of coaches found support to abolish the practice at the NFA-NIET.¹ A groundswell of support from the student ranks, who were in favor of the question period, saved the practice. Coaches again brought the issue before the NFA-NIET at the 1989 meeting held at Upsala College in East Orange, New Jersey.² The coaches voted once again to drop the questioning period; the students, once again, expressed a desire for it to remain as part of the event. This time the coaches' position carried the day. Judges' questions in rhetorical criticism were officially abolished at the NFA business meeting held at the 1989 Speech Communication Association convention in San Francisco. The students raised their concerns for the third time at the 1990 NFA-NIET, expressing a desire for the questioning process to return to rhetorical criticism. The coaches discussed the issue and decided questioning would remain in the past; the issue was not addressed at all at the 1990 SCA convention in Chicago.

A point which deserves attention is the opinion of the student competitor. The student voice was heard and considered in one instance (1984), circumvented the next time (1989) and virtually ig-

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nored the third (1990). The student voice is an integral factor which should be considered when addressing whether the question period should be part of individual events competition.

Our purpose is to provide a systematic and detailed evaluation of competitors' opinions on the question period. Rather than just focusing on rhetorical criticism, we address all of the individual events—from public address to limited preparation to oral interpretation events—commonly offered during the intercollegiate forensics invitational tournament season.

Method

Data were collected at a 30-school individual events invitational tournament held in the midwest, attracting schools from across the country. Judges had the option of asking questions during the final rounds of all events. Judges questioned each competitor after they finished their speech/performance. Surveys were distributed to the finalists at the completion of the round in order to determine perceptions of the questioning process. Students in multiple public address finals completed only one questionnaire. Students in both oral interpretation and public address finals were asked to complete a questionnaire for both finals. Basic issues addressed included opinions on questions in preliminary rounds and final rounds, and the continuation of the practice at invitational and national tournaments. These responses were close-ended and were easily tabulated based on yes/no responses.

Competitors were also asked about what they considered to be the advantages and disadvantages of the practice. Content analysis was used to establish the categorization of advantages and disadvantages. Rather than use pre-set categories, we allowed the categories to generate themselves from the data.³ Each comment was determined to be one unit of analysis. Comments were divided into public address and oral interpretation in case the combination of one large grouping of "individual events" proved counterproductive to the analysis (i.e., some categories are inherently applicable to public address and yet not applicable in oral interpretation, and vice-versa).

A preliminary classification placed the comments into as many categories as necessary in accordance with the Berelson's (1952) perspective that categories are only limited by imagination, yielding ap-

proximately 40 categories. These categories were then collapsed, resulting in a final taxonomy of 11 categories in public speaking and 10 in oral interpretation.

Two researchers independently coded the comments. An initial overall agreement of 83.6 percent was achieved. Cohen's Kappa was computed in order to take into account chance probability. Results ranged from good to excellent (advantages in public address .71; disadvantages in public address .79; disadvantages in oral interpretation .84; advantages in oral interpretation .85).⁴ After computing initial levels of agreement, the coders met and resolved disagreements to the satisfaction of both individuals.

Results

A total of 52 surveys provided usable data. The data show nearly all of the contestants were questioned by at least one judge in finals (see Table 1). Judges were less likely in interpretation events to ask questions of the competitors, while the practice was more common in public address events.

Table 1
Number of Competitors Questioned by Judges

	Public Address	Oral Interp.	Total
All Judges	17	10	27
Some Judges	9	11	20
<u>No Response</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	29	23	52

Contestants then responded to the question, "should judges be allowed to ask questions of competitors in preliminary rounds and/or final rounds?" As Table 2 indicates, competitors believe questions were not appropriate in preliminary rounds, but they liked the notion of having question periods in final rounds.

Chi square analysis demonstrates the overall significance of these findings, showing students are against questioning in preliminary rounds, $\chi^2 (2, n = 52) = 13.69, p < .05$, and an overall significance

showing students are in favor of judge questioning in final rounds, $\chi^2(2, n = 52) = 13.31, p < .05$).

Next, contestants were asked if judge questioning periods ought to occur at invitational meets and/or national tournaments. Contestants supported the idea of question periods at both types of contests (see Table 3).

Table 2
Competitors' Opinions of Appropriateness of Questions in
Preliminary and Final Rounds by Speech Type

	Public Address	Oral Interp.	Total
<i>Preliminary Rounds</i>			
Yes	7	3	10
No	17	19	36
No Response	5	1	6
Total	29	23	52
χ^2	4.31*	11.17*	13.69*
<i>Final Rounds</i>			
Yes	20	17	37
No	6	5	11
No Response	3	1	4
Total	29	23	52
χ^2	7.07*	6.30*	13.31*

*Significant at the .05 level.

Chi square analysis demonstrates the overall significance of these findings showing students would like questioning at invitationals, $\chi^2(2, n = 52) = 8.96, p < .05$, and that students would like questioning by judges at national tournaments, $\chi^2(2, n = 52) = 8.38, p < .05$. Two

issues did not achieve an .05 level of significance. Judge questioning of oral interpretation events, while receiving majority support, was not significant at the invitational or national level.

Students were then given the opportunity to discuss all advantages and disadvantages associated with judge questioning. In

Table 3
Competitors' Opinions of the Appropriateness of
Questions by Tournament Type

	Public Address	Oral Interp.	Total
Invitational Tournaments			
Yes	20	14	34
No	6	7	13
No Response	3	2	5
Total	29	23	52
χ^2	7.52*	2.17	8.96*
National Tournaments			
Yes	21	12	33
No	5	8	13
No Response	3	3	6
Total	29	23	52
χ^2	9.84*	1.08	8.38*

* Significant at the .05 level.

terms of advantages of oral interpretation, comments were placed in five categories:

1. Demonstrates competitor's knowledge, dedication, and preparation. These responses focused on the use of questions to

prove how much a competitor knows about the pieces he/she selected, and the level of dedication and hard work put into the interpretation. Examples of comments from this category include: "it helps the judges to see if the speaker really know[s] what he/she is trying to accomplish," and "you can tell if the person researched the topic and material, or just had it handed to them."

2. Allows for clarification of material. Responses in this category dealt with the role questions play in terms of making the interpretation or selection of pieces more clear to the judges. For example, "it clarifies things for judges."
3. Improves speaking skills. In this category, contestants argued that question periods help sharpen their skills of speaking in an impromptu situation. For example, "it also shows the articulation skills of the contestant."
4. Demonstrates depth of interpretation. This category comprises responses regarding competitors' abilities to interpret the literature. Examples of comments from this category include: "it can show who has really thought about their piece/character/etc, and who is just good at bringing tears up," and "finding out if comp[etitor] really knows piece, characters, etc."
5. Makes competitor work hard. The competitors also suggested that knowing that they will be questioned by judges makes them work harder and be more prepared. For example, "if competitors know that they will be asked questions, it makes them more aware of literature they choose and research it more in depth."

The advantages expressed by those in public address followed much the same pattern.

1. Allows for clarification of material. Competitors argued that the questioning period allows them the chance to explain complex issues. Examples from this category include: "clarification of topic significance," and "it's possible to clarify points and to make sure everyone understood the presentation."
2. Opportunity to defend decisions made in speech. Responses in this category revolved around the notion that strategies and topic selections could be supported during the question pe-

- Examples include: "gives the speaker a chance to show some of their inner thoughts that went into their performance," and "being able to defend decision"
3. Helps judge make rank/rate decisions. This category includes comments regarding the use of questioning to aid the role of the judge. For example, "it allows further possibility for distinction between competitors in close rounds thus making ranking easier and more fair."
 4. Stresses areas in need of improvement. Students argued that questions aid the speaker in finding weaknesses in their speeches. Examples from this category include: "makes speaker ... think about what is their speech," and "you recognize faults in your speech."
 5. Improves speaking skills. Comments in this category, like that of oral interpretation, focused on the fact that questioning helps the speaker improve upon impromptu speaking skills. For example, "for non-limited prep[aration]—teaching additional comm[unication] skills."

Table 4

Advantages in Oral Interpretation and Public Address

Advantages	Oral Interp	Public Address
1. Demonstrates competitor's knowledge, dedication, and preparation		X
2. Allows for clarification of material	X	X
3. Improves speaking skills	X	X
4. Demonstrates depth of interpretation	X	
5. Makes competitor work hard	X	
6. Opportunity to defend decisions made in speech		X
7. Helps judge make rank/rate decisions		X
8. Stresses areas in need of improvement		X
9. Requires competitors know subject area		X

6. Requires that competitors know subject area. Com-

petitors also claimed that questioning exposed those who were not familiar with the topic and encouraged speakers to be fully prepared. Examples of comments from this category include: "being forced to have thorough knowledge of event and content," "splits those who actually understand their points and those who are attempting to sound sophisticated," and "to find out that the student did the research and compiled the research themselves."

Competitors also found several disadvantages with judge questioning. In oral interpretation, the disadvantages were placed in five categories:

1. Increases anxiety and stress. Comments in this category indicated that students felt pressured by judge questioning, and that such pressure created a great deal of stress. For example, "if we are nervous, some very good competitors could be hurt," "puts the already nervous and paranoid speakers in a serious bind," and others simply stated, "too much stress," and "it's very nerve racking."
2. Time. Students also believe a problem was the time involved; rounds would last longer and the tournament would run longer as well. Students simply commented, "takes up a lot of time," and "time consuming."
3. Question problems. A variety of comments centered around the idea that questions could be too complex, not very good, or that not all competitors were asked the same type or level of question. For example, "not all judges ask questions which are really good for providing insight into how well-prepared the interpreter is," "some questions didn't pertain to [the] story and it was frustrating to try and answer them when I didn't see the relevance," "not all are asked the same questions," and "some competitors are given easier questions and thus an advantage."
4. Not needed for oral interpretation. Comments in this category dealt with the belief that questioning was not appropriate for oral interpretation events: "forensics is the competition of acting. How good you are—not how you can deeply decipher [sic] a piece," "shouldn't ask them in duo or prose or DI [dramatic interpretation] but in events where students wrote

impromptu, people tend to use examples with which they are only marginally familiar—the threat of questions may discourage them from using that evidence therefore limiting the types of evidence used. Being able to draw on knowledge seems to be one of the most important skills—limiting that pool of knowledge seems to be a problem."

Conclusions

The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from this study is that students believe judges ought to be allowed to ask questions of final round competitors. We suggest the questioning experience ought to be offered at more individual event tournaments in order to further explore its potential and ought to encompass both oral interpretation and public address events. Invitational tournament directors could experiment with questions in preliminary and/or final rounds and in public address and/or oral interpretation events. The implementation of questions at invitational tournaments would allow for procedural issues to be refined before advancing the use of questions to the national level.

A more striking conclusion is that the forensics community ought to listen to its most important members—the students. Forensic activity exists to provide an environment for students to learn and gain experience in the art of communication. Since the activity exists for students, we should listen to ways they believe their experience could be strengthened. Although coaches/forensic educators may have a stronger voice and, for whatever reasons, may not like the idea of judge questioning, students—as the principle reason for the activity—ought to have input in the decision-making process.

The disadvantages, however, of judge questioning need to be addressed. A set of standards and guidelines would make it possible to diminish the "question problems" and "judge superiority" problems articulated by the students. These standards and guidelines could be developed through the same invitational tournaments mentioned above. Tournaments will need to build in more time for questions during final rounds, and tournaments may go longer as a result; however, we found questioning took no more than half an hour of additional time. Finally, once students get accustomed to the process, the anxiety and stress may diminish or be used to their advantage.

While this study provides evidence that students approve of judge questioning, one limitation should be noted. The sample size was small, given the experiment was only tested at one invitational tournament. We hope this study will provide an impetus for others to experiment with and survey additional students, which will then confirm or deny the results of this study. One possible avenue of research could focus on all competitors in a tournament to determine if a difference in perception exists between those who make the final round and those who do not advance.

A student in this study remarked, "There are questions on ballots I never get to answer." Our study allowed this student to express an opinion and to have it shared with members of the forensic community. Rarely have student competitors been given this chance. We listen to students in rounds, now it is time to start listening to them outside the rounds.

Notes

¹This issue was addressed in the National Forensic Journal.

²David Levasseur and Kevin Dean address the implications of this decision on the need for questioning in rhetorical criticism in the fall 1989 National Forensic Journal.

³The development of the categories in this study followed Berelson's (1952) definition of "what is said," specifically a subject-matter orientation.

⁴Results of Cohen's Kappa is based on the guidelines provided by J. R. Landis and G. G. Koch.

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Academic Debate and Critical Thinking: A Look at the Evidence

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Competitive debate and the study of debating occupied Americans involved in higher education before America became an independent nation (Greenstreet, 1989). However, despite the longevity the activity has enjoyed, little empirical evidence exists to support the notion that debating is of value to participants. While it is true that every now and then a public figure provides an unsolicited testimonial to the value of debating or a survey of former debaters reveals support for the educational value of the activity, this irregular stream of testimonials is neither sufficient to convince the unbelieving nor an acceptable substitute for reliable data that debate moves practitioners toward desired objectives. Such data should be gathered by any group of professionals concerned with assessing the worth of their endeavors. It should certainly be available in a field so thoroughly focused on the uses and abuses of evidence as debate. Unfortunately, while most contemporary debate texts claim study of and/or experience in debate enhances the critical thinking skills of practitioners, little empirical evidence exists in support of that claim.¹ Most of the evidence cited as support for debate in contemporary texts fails to meet the standards for evidence reflected in those very texts. This paper (1) explores the frequently proposed claim of currently available texts in debate and forensics that debating enhances the critical thinking skills of participants, (2) examines the evidence on which such claims are based,² and (3) concludes there is little support for the widely espoused belief that study of or participation in debate enhances a student's ability to think critically. This paper does not challenge the claim itself, but it does reject the validity and/or reliability of the empirical evidence cited to support it.

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This paper focuses on currently available texts for several reasons. Initially, many of the texts reviewed have been available for some time. Several are revisions and, as such, should represent a distillation and clarification of the author's best work. Further, debate has changed a great deal in the past two decades. The changes have been substantial and have resulted in debate-1992 bearing only marginal resemblance to debate-1965. Intercollegiate forensics directors commonly refer to the "theory explosion" of this time period, an explosion which has tremendously expanded both affirmative and negative options in debating policy propositions. Still more basic is the shift to cross-examination in all forms of debate. In addition, more than 330 colleges and universities annually debate propositions of judgment through the Cross Examination Debate Association, an option only sporadically available prior to this period. Earlier texts would not be expected to consider non-policy proposition debating; for a contemporary text, ignoring such debate would represent a serious oversight.³ Lincoln-Douglas debate over propositions of judgment has become commonly accepted and nationally endorsed on the high school level during this time. While prior to the period in question a researcher could reasonably assume some similarity of experience shared by all debaters, such an assumption today would be true only on the most rudimentary and fundamental level. Finally, debating today is wholly different due to the tremendous proliferation of summer institutes and pre-season analysis clinics, and the widespread acceptance of and reliance on handbooks, externally prepared briefs and cases, and prepackaged evidence. This paper will not assess the worth of these changes. They are noted as indicators that a contemporary debater experiences a substantially different world from that which prevailed only two decades ago.

The Claim

Many contemporary authors claim debating helps students think better. Several find this claim so apparent as to require no evidence to support it. Patterson and Zarefsky (1983) assert, "The development of arguments...encourages critical thinking because it consistently demands the questioning, examining and restructuring of knowledge according to the laws of validity and warrant" (p. 313). Sanders (1983) feels debating allows participants to more clearly see

both sides of an issue, thus opening the mind (p. 2). Sheckels (1984) not only agrees with Sanders, but adds that debate teaches important thinking skills, including investigating and solving problems, analyzing and scrutinizing argumentation, and forceful but rational challenging of others' arguments (pp. 3-4). Bartanen and Frank (1991) claim:

Debate is a form of critical thinking, a way of gathering and interpreting information. A debater learns not to trust assertions. A debater knows how to appreciate and overcome objections to a position and appreciate that problems and issues have more than one side (p. 12).

Ziegelmueller, Kay and Dause (1990) extend Bartanen and Frank's claim as they assert:

It is ironic that over the past ten years as various educational reports and commissions have called for more systematic training in the processes of critical thinking and logical problem solving, some writers in philosophy and rhetoric have de-emphasized the inquiry aspects of argumentation and focused almost exclusively on argument as persuasion. We believe strongly in the dialectical function of argumentation, and we also believe that instruction in argumentation is an excellent means of teaching critical thinking (p. vii).

Wilbanks and Church (1991) not only endorse the previous conclusions, they also expand the benefits of debate relative to time.

We view learning argumentation and participating in debates...as extremely valuable....The usefulness of developing abilities such as analysis, problem solving, critical thinking, organizational proficiency, research prowess, and confidence in presentation is enduring. Long after the course is over, the student will continue to benefit from these skills (p. vii).

Fryar and Thomas (1980) assert the skills learned in debate "transfer directly out of the academic world into the everyday experiences of our society" (p. i). Pelham and Watt (1989) assert debate participants' gains in rationality are fundamental to the continued well-being of our society. They claim, "In order for this society to effectively meet the political, legal, economic, social and religious challenges facing it, citizens must be capable of effective public debate" (p. 4). None of the authors cited in this paragraph cites a reference

where a curious reader might locate the support upon which such claims are built. These claims may represent personal testimony based on years of coaching and debating experience; they may result from the experience of returning alumni who testify to the value of experience in argumentation and debate training; they may have resulted from unreported research. The claims appear to be statements of personal belief, testimony to the authors' experiences and/or attitudes toward debate. These claims may be true, but they are unsupported in the texts.

While none of the authors cited in the preceding paragraph follow the debater's maxim "he who asserts must prove," several other authors reveal the source(s) for their claim that debate improves the critical thinking ability of the participants. Foremost among the authors who build an extensive case for the benefits a participant may derive from academic debate is Austin Freeley (1986, 1990). Among the seventeen separate values to be derived from participation in debate are three of interest to this paper (Freeley, 1990, pp. 19-27). Freeley (1990) contends debate develops (1) proficiency in critical thinking and (2) the ability to make prompt, analytical responses, while (3) encouraging mature judgment (pp. 21-25).⁴ The cited source for Freeley's claims is a study by Huseman, Ware and Gruner (1972) which will be discussed below. Like Freeley, Norton (1982) contends debate develops critical thinking ability (pp. 32-33). Norton argues that, by analyzing problems, selecting and examining evidence, interpreting data, determining logical relationships, testing reasoning and reaching conclusions, the participant necessarily becomes a more complex and critical thinker (p. 33). As is the case with several other authors, Norton feels the relationship between debate and critical thinking ability is causal and linear. He contends "research over four decades" proves "critical thinking ability is significantly improved by courses in argumentation and debate and by debate experience" (pp. 33-34). Norton actually cites only a study by Gruner, Huseman and Luck (1971) which is essentially similar to the article on which Freeley depends and which will also be discussed below. Sayer (1980) bases his claim that debate improves critical thinking ability on the Huseman, Ware and Gruner (1972) article Freeley cites (p. 19), and he extends the claim by also contending debaters' improved critical abilities result in better decisions

(pp. 53-54). Pfau, Thomas and Ullrich (1987) contend, "You will be a less dogmatic thinker, even while your powers of analysis and critical judgment are sharpened by the training and discipline inherent in debate" (p. 15). They argue debate improves participant critical thinking, evaluation and decision-making skills, claiming, "Curricular offerings in debate and argument, as well as collegiate and high school co-curricular programs in debate, are among the most effective vehicles to enhance these skills" (Pfau, Thomas and Ulrich, 1987, p. i). These authors cite a report by Colbert and Biggers (1985) as support for their nine independent benefits of debating (Pfau, Thomas and Ulrich, 1990, pp. 12-15).

The essence of the claims cited in support of academic debate as an educational activity is that *a strong and causal relationship exists between study of argumentation and debate, participation in competitive debate, and improved critical thinking ability*. Empirical support for this claim demands that the experience of debating and/or the experience of studying argumentation and debate in a formal course be isolated as a causal agent. It further requires debaters demonstrate an increase in critical thinking ability after exposure to debate experience and/or coursework. As we shall see in the next section of this paper, those conditions have not been met by the studies cited.

The Evidence

The authors who endorse the causal relationship between debate and improved participant critical thinking ability cite one of three sources in support of that claim: Gruner, Huseman and Luck (1971); Huseman, Ware and Gruner (1972); and Colbert and Biggers (1985). Each of these articles attempts to explore the relationship between critical thinking ability and academic debate by measuring the critical thinking abilities of participants in debate or of college students exposed through coursework in argumentation and debate.

Probably the most significant study, at least in terms of the frequency with which it is cited in other works, is the one conducted by Huseman, Ware and Gruner (1972).⁵ This study is most frequently cited to support the claim that participation in debate improves students' ability to reason critically (Norton, 1982; Sayer, 1980; Freeley, 1986, 1990). The study compares high school debaters' scores on

the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Test (now the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal [WGCTA]), and discovers students perceived to be excellent debaters outscore those perceived to be much less effective debaters on this test. The WGCTA offers a reasonable (though apparently not spectacular) level of reliability, as it assesses critical thinking through reading and selection from multiple choice responses (Mitchell, 1985; Woehlke, 1985).⁶ The use of the WGCTA for purposes of attempting to link critical thinking with another behavior on the basis of group scores appears entirely consistent with the nature of the instrument (Woehlke, 1985, p. 683). Further, the WGCTA appears to be the best instrument available to assess the complex construct of critical thinking (Woehlke, 1985, p. 685; Berger, 1985, p. 1693).⁷ This study supports only the notion that excellent debaters score highly on this test of critical thinking ability. It does not support the claim that coursework or participation in debate causes a difference in the students' critical thinking ability, or to demonstrate any improvement by participants in the study. Huseman, Ware and Gruner (1972) argue a reasonable interpretation of their study to be that high achievers in critical thinking are more likely to be successful in debate (p. 265). McGlone (1974) explains, "There is a rather large number of investigations which demonstrate that debate improves certain cognitive abilities and a large body of criticism of these studies which points out that people who have these abilities are simply attracted to debate" (p. 140). The inability to resolve this chicken/egg question continues to plague research investigating the relationship between debating experience and critical thinking ability. An unmentioned but underlying concern is that improvement in cognitive abilities is the thrust of a student's education. To claim any single activity or course of study achieves that effect by itself is simply inappropriate (if only because that activity or course occurs in a context of similarly targeted activities and courses).

Gruner, Huseman and Luck (1971) studied high school students participating in a summer debate institute. As in the previously discussed study, debaters completed the WGCTA on the first day of the workshop, and after the workshop those who had coached or judged the debaters rated the subjects according to perceived debate ability. Scores on the WGCTA were compared with perceived debating ability. Higher rated debaters performed better on the WGCTA overall

and in all five subcategories (Gruner, Huseman and Luck, 1971, pp. 64-65).⁸ As with the previous study, it is impossible to demonstrate a causal link between debate and critical thinking or to claim improvements in critical thinking ability. What this study appears to demonstrate is that better critical thinkers are perceived as more effective debaters. McGlone (1974) commented, "It may be that critical thinking is a characteristic already possessed by debaters, rather than an affect [sic] of debate training" (p. 143).

The remaining piece of evidence cited by authors of contemporary debate texts, a report by Colbert and Biggers (1985), is actually a survey of the literature rather than a scientific study. The claims for improved critical thinking ability are referenced to Norton (1982), who the reader will recall bases his conclusions on Huseman, Ware and Gruner (1972). While citation of this article represents an interesting piece of documentary circumlocution, the claim remains subject to evidentiary concerns raised in the previous two paragraphs.

Other Evidence

While hard empirical evidence supporting the claim that debate enhances critical thinking abilities is lacking, there appears to be an abundance of other support. Even a casual reader may reasonably conclude the authors cited above endorse the validity of the claim. As these authors include some highly regarded names in both forensics and the field of speech communication, such endorsement might be considered expert (if biased) testimony. There is also considerable solicited and unsolicited testimonial evidence, often (but not always) from surveys.

Both solicited and unsolicited testimony are quoted with abandon in texts and articles purporting to endorse the value of debating. Several sources cite a survey published by Union and Freedom magazine in 1960 (Freeley, 1986; Klopf and Lahman, 1973; Colbert and Biggers, 1985). This survey reports "a very high percentage of persons who have achieved leadership positions have had school or college debate experience, and they regard that experience as a significant factor in their attainment of those positions" (Freeley, 1986, pp. 19-20). Future debate texts and opinion pieces may well replace the now-dated Union and Freedom survey with a survey conducted by Matlon and Keele (1984). This survey is limited to participants in

the National Debate Tournament between 1947 and 1980.⁹ Of the 703 respondents, nearly forty percent had earned law degrees and more than twenty percent held doctorates. Six hundred and thirty-three of 703 had at least one advanced degree, with 209 holding more than one (Matlon and Keele, 1984, p. 195). Clearly, these respondents continued the level of achievement they attained in intercollegiate debate. The respondents also list a number of advantages to participation in debate, including improved critical thinking, organizational abilities, the ability to think quickly, and improved open-mindedness/objectivity (Matlon and Keele, 1984, p. 197). Respondents to this survey clearly feel they benefited significantly from their intercollegiate policy debating experiences. Hill (1982) provides a refreshing use of survey data, albeit on a limited scale, as he seeks reasons students participate in debate. He surveyed students at three tournaments in the Southeastern U.S. to find out what draws them to debate. Their answers may not be applicable everywhere, but they are enlightening nonetheless. Reasons listed by a large proportion of the respondents include improved analytical skills, opportunity for educational/learning experiences, and improved argumentation skills (Hill, 1982, p. 82). This survey provides an indicator of typical student expectations from debate. It also reflects student perceptions of the outcomes they are experiencing as a result of participation in competitive debate.

Unsought testimonials from former debaters abound. Freeley (1986) quotes John F. Kennedy, who says "I think debating in high school and college a most valuable training for politics, the law, business, or for service on community committees such as the PTA and the League of Women Voters" (Freeley, 1986, pp. 19-20). McBath (1975) includes a number of ringing testimonials to the value of debate, including this frequently-cited excerpt from Helen M. Wise, former president of the National Education Association:

No college freshman can project twenty-five years to decide what he needs to learn — subject matter is easily forgotten and in today's world, the knowledge explosion makes constant learning an inevitability. But all adults today need to be able to communicate with clarity, to articulate ideas, to reason, to separate key facts from the barrage of ideas we all are exposed to every day. No single activity can prepare one better than debating —

the ability to think on one's feet, to form conclusions rapidly, to answer questions logically and with clarity, to summarize ideas are all processes which forensic activities develop and develop well (p. 82).

McBath (1975) also includes testimonials from individuals who attribute their success to debate experience, as in the following from Richard Markus, past president of the American Trial Lawyer's Association:

While the skills of oral presentation were necessarily developed during my forensic training, I consider those skills clearly secondary to the skills of organization and analysis which were finely honed during that training. They involved the ability to evaluate a general topic with minute care over an extended interval, followed by the ability to organize a concise persuasive argument on that subject, followed by the ability to apprehend and organize material presented by an adversary in a short time, followed by the ability to respond in a tightly knit and well-supported structure in a similar short time interval (p. 100).

A tremendous variety of former high school debaters attest to the value of debate training on their thinking as well as their communication abilities. Even Lee Iacocca (1984) jumped on the bandwagon in his autobiography. Testimonial and survey support appear consistent that debate experience equates with positive changes in participant thinking behavior.

Discussion

Former debaters and debate coaches and judges alike appear convinced debate provides students an exceptional educational opportunity, one which integrates what they have learned while forcing them to learn more broadly and in greater depth than they would otherwise. The competitive challenge of creating, defending and attacking arguments appears to separate debate from any other educational exercise as a tool for enhancing the student's critical thinking skills. Why is there no scientifically-gathered data to support the claim that debate does indeed enhance critical thinking ability?

One reason is that the variable (debate) is usually experienced during long periods of time (typically the academic year), while the subjects to be studied (debaters) are exposed to a great many phe-

nomena, some of which are also designed to improve their critical thinking abilities. Pre- and post-tests of students enrolled in argumentation and debate courses or participating in competitive academic debate would lead to no more valid conclusions than the Ware, Gruner and Huseman (1972) or Huseman, Gruner and Luck (1971) studies previously discussed, unless debate or the course were the only stimulus to which the student were exposed during the time the study was conducted.¹⁰ For similar reasons, the concept cannot be studied over a period of years. A student would normally be expected to mature in critical thinking (along with a host of other physical, social, moral and mental variables) as a result of exposure to education and as a normal part of growing up, of coming of age.

Another problem occurs with studies which might compare debaters with non-debaters: contamination. For example, Sendlak and Shields (1977) attempted to determine the effects of debate training in non-debate activities. They used the 1976 Bicentennial Youth Debates contests in extemporaneous and persuasive speaking as their data base, comparing judge responses to students with debate experience to the responses to those without. Problems occur as about half of the judges are forensic professionals (who would presumably use their normal tournament standards of evaluation) and experience in one competitive speaking endeavor probably contributes to behavior in another competitive speaking endeavor. Nevertheless, Sendlak and Shields (1977) conclude, "This study strongly confirms the ability of students with debate experience to achieve comparatively high ratings in analysis...and organization in activities far removed from the format of competitive school debate" (p. 195). And questions concerning the merit of studies in debate and critical thinking have been raised periodically during the past twenty years. Faules, Rieke and Rhodes (1978) are sufficiently disenchanted with the quality of such support to conclude, "While teachers of forensics can certainly point with pride to many former students who have achieved success, almost no worthwhile research has been done to establish the extent of the importance of forensic experience in success" (p. 55). Even when studies are available, and even when such studies measure data accurately, researchers have been unable to generalize from that data. Anderson (1974) decries the general lack of hard support for an activity he prizes highly. In a very thorough review of

literature to that date, he finds "very little current research" in the area of personality development and participation in forensics (Anderson, 1974, p. 151). His criticism could be extended to additional areas as well. There is simply very little empirical material out there in national or regional refereed journals or texts of the past two decades.

What is available, and in great quantity, is personal testimony. While testimony itself is not necessarily unconvincing, there are good reasons these surveys should not be used as a substitute for more objective data. Probably the primary reason is neither survey accurately reflects the scope of debater experiences today. Matlon and Keele (1984) come closer, but only by virtue of recency. But they interviewed only those who had achieved significant success in intercollegiate debate. Finally, these surveys leave unanswered the question of whether debate attracts students who are already highly motivated to achieve. Indeed, these surveys are more likely than others to invite such an indictment.

Conclusion

What is needed is a study which examines the nature of the well-established link between debate and critical thinking ability. The unresolved chicken/egg question may be researchable through the relatively recent evolution of the summer debate institute. A two-week institute offers an opportunity to pre- and post-test subjects over a short but intense period of time devoted almost exclusively to study of and practice in competitive debate. Such institutes are held throughout the nation at all levels of debating, from novice through champion. It would be possible to pre- and post-test subjects at several institutes throughout the country and generate data which would allow comparison of improvement on Watson-Glaser scores by region, size and nature of workshop curriculum, length of workshop, and level of debate experience. Such data may be expected to address the issue of causality in the relationship between data and critical thinking ability.

Freeley (1986) suggests debate demands students develop proficiency in critical thinking: (1) to create an argument, a student is required to research issues (which requires knowledge of how to use libraries and data banks), organize data, analyze the data, synthesize

different kinds of data, and evaluate information with respect to the quality of conclusions it may point to; (2) to form an argument after this process, a student must understand how to reason, must be able to recognize and critique different methods of reasoning, and must have an understanding of the logic of decision making; (3) the successful communication of arguments to audiences reflects another cognitive skill: the ability to communicate complex ideas clearly with words; (4) finally, the argumentative interaction of students in a debate reflects an even more complex cognitive ability—the ability to process the arguments of others quickly and to reformulate or adapt or defend previous positions (pp. 27-28). Is debate better than other ways a student may derive such benefits? Freeley does not claim experience in debate is superior to other methods, only that it is different. His argument is not that debate is the only way, only that it offers a unique set of characteristics which set it apart from other methods of stimulating student growth along the lines indicated above. He says, "debate is distinctive because of its unique dialectical form, providing the opportunity for intellectual clash in the testing of ideas" (Freeley, 1986, p. 27).

Finding fault with the support offered to endorse the claim that debate enhances critical thinking ability does not disprove the claim such evidence is meant to support. The *a priori* assumptions underlying the claims, the hasty conclusions of scientific studies, and the misinterpretation of such studies are merely bad support. Their problems do not support the conclusions drawn, it is true, but neither do they disconfirm those claims. No serious research doubts debate is an activity from which students may derive tremendous benefit. Unfortunately, the debate community has failed to adequately document claims of such benefit. Productive research in the immediate future should be directed toward discovering the immediate effect of participation in debate on the critical thinking ability of the participants. That a relationship between these variables exists is well supported; future research should address the nature of that relationship. Anderson (1974) warns lack of such research may soon become intolerable.

In an age of educational accountability, the forensics community is and will increasingly be called upon to tell what it seeks to do, how well it accomplishes its goals, and what other effects it has.

Surprisingly, there seems little interest in such research at this time (p. 155).

Measuring progress on definable outcomes, discovering specific behaviors and abilities, is the first step toward accountability. When we deal with what is measurable, we deal with what is possible to verify and validate. If the outcomes of debate are as incontrovertibly positive as surveys and testimony suggest, there appears to be no reason to expect empirical research not to find a causal relationship between participation in debate and enhanced critical thinking ability.

Notes

¹Indeed, most currently available intercollegiate debate textbooks do not bother to cite a source for the claim of improved critical thinking ability. Freeley (1986,1990), Norton (1982), Sayer (1980) and Pfau, Thomas and Ulrich (1987) are the exceptions.

²As this paper reports material readily available to other researchers, it relies on the most recent *Index to Journals in Communication Studies Through 1985* (Matlon and Facciola, 1987) as the primary index consulted to locate journal articles in related refereed journals.

³Several of the authors cited in this paper focus exclusively on nonpolicy debate. Among them are Bartanen & Frank (1991), Church & Wilbanks (1986, 1991), Corcoran (1988) and Pelham & Watt (1986, 1989).

⁴This latter claim results from the debater's tendency to suspend judgment as a result of an increasingly complex appreciation for the topic. This complexity, or "multivalued orientation," derives from the necessity to research and argue both sides of the proposition, according to Freeley (1990, p. 25).

⁵The use of this article to claim debate improves critical thinking ability is questionable. The authors appear more concerned with helping coaches identify potentially effective debaters. They conclude, "it would seem to follow, from a pedagogical point of view, that coaches and directors can best improve their charges' debating performance by attempting to develop in them the abilities measured by the tests in this study: logical thinking, reflective thinking and the ability to organize ideas" (Huseman, Ware and Gruner, 1972, p. 265).

⁶Some critics claim a large judgmental component on the Watson-Glaser "inference" subtest impunes the value of this standardized test (Helmstadter, 1985, pp. 1693-1694; Berger, 1985, pp. 1692-1693).

⁷Helmstadter (1985) would like to see more direct comparison with the Cornell Critical Thinking Test and the A.C.E. Test of Critical Thinking (p. 1694).

⁸The lone exception occurred in the "Evaluation of Arguments" sub-category, where third quartile (next to lowest) debaters outscored those in the second quartile (Gruner, Huseman and Luck, 1971, pp. 64-65).

⁹Matlon and Keele (1984) offer two justifications for such a restriction: (1) it was possible to locate these participants, and (2) the authors presume these subjects had devoted a considerable "proportion of their academic careers to debate" (p. 194).

¹⁰Of course, that eventuality would itself bias the experimental design, as it would negate the normal student milieu in which debate and the study of argumentation and debate normally occur.

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Is it Time for a Change in Impromptu Speaking?

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"We are all no doubt agreed that students should be given training in the expression of their convictions and in the reasoned defense of their thought positions. But the question may arise as to whether discussion and debate as at present conducted provide socially-significant experiences" (Thonssen, 1939, p. 113).

Although the nature of debate has changed, and the range of events have broadened, Thonssen's concern for whether we provide forensics students with socially-significant experiences is still relevant. This concern is particularly relevant for the present conception of impromptu speaking. This essay will focus initially on various problems and limitations of the impromptu speaking event. The essay will then offer reasoned response as an alternative to impromptu speaking.

Problems and Limitations

Impromptu speaking is one of the most frequently entered events in forensics competition. Student reactions to the event reveal that impromptu speaking is considered fun, thrilling, challenging and open to creativity. More than most events, impromptu speaking requires novice students to devote many hours of practice toward the goal of becoming competent. Faules, Rieke, and Rhodes' (1976) suggestion is still valid in that impromptu speaking is most appropriate for quick-witted students with previous experience in forensics.

However, as Preston (1990) points out, impromptu speaking provides more than an exciting form of competition for students. He suggests that "since a great percentage of our daily speaking occurs in extemporaneous or impromptu forms, these events offer important

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practical experiences to prepare students to communicate intelligently on the spur of the moment beyond the classroom into society" (p. 14). Bytwerk (1985) also indicates that although impromptu is possibly the most frequently used form of speech in daily interactions, it is the one most neglected by public speaking text book writers (p. 148).

Few, if any, would argue against the belief that impromptu speaking can offer students both a unique and enjoyable forensics activity and valuable training in critical thinking, analysis, organization and delivery for situations outside of competition. Evidence for the importance placed on proper training for impromptu speakers is found in the number of essays devoted to that purpose (Boone, 1987; Bytwerk, 1985; Dean, 1987, 1988; Preston, 1983, 1990a, 1990b; Reynolds & Fay, 1982; Sellnow, 1989, 1991).

While significant inroads have been made into understanding how impromptu rounds should be operated and how coaches can better train their students, this research has also uncovered some limitations and problems with the present conception of the event. These concerns include both microscopic problems with the functioning of the event and macroscopic issues with the conception of competitive impromptu speaking.

Sellnow (1989, 1991) has raised two issues of concern with the functioning of impromptu. In one essay, (Sellnow, 1989) he addressed the question: "From what areas do competitors draw their supportive examples in competitive impromptu speaking?" In an analysis of 1987 and 1988 NFA nationals final round impromptu speeches, Sellnow found that speakers used the following categories of examples: current events (16 examples), history (11), philosophy (11), literature (7), hypothetical (3), and personal (2).

From this study Sellnow noted that:

... successful impromptu speakers make use of topics which are commonplace in their subject area. The majority of examples from history, philosophy, and literature made reference to popular individuals. Most of these individuals are discussed frequently in college introductory courses of the appropriate subjects (p. 12).

Although Sellnow did not discuss his findings as a limitation of the event, we suggest that they do indicate a problem with the use of generic examples in impromptu speeches. After participating in, judg-

ing, or witnessing several rounds of impromptu speeches one is likely to recognize more than the recurring example categories discovered by Sellnow. Many of the same current events, historical figures and philosophical thoughts are used as generic evidence. The consistent use, and overuse, of Adolph Hitler and the actions of Nazi Germany is the predominant example of this problem. The problem with generic examples is that they limit the student's use of analysis and invention and focus more on attempts at developing links between familiar examples and the meaning of a quotation. The inadequacy of generic examples are far less likely to appear in the final round of national tournaments. However, a review of just the NFA 1987 final round of impromptu revealed several cases of application of well-known and frequently used historical and philosophical figures (Plato, Jefferson, Shakespeare, Columbus, Marx) including Adolph Hitler. A greater concern is held for the novice speakers who become concerned with developing content for impromptu speeches at the sacrifice of developing analytical and argumentative skills.

Sellnow (1991) identified a second microscopic problem with the writing of inadequate impromptu quotations. Specifically, problematic quotations are which are excessively vague, semantically difficult, or unmanageable. Vague quotations are those which do not "offer a clear and debatable premise. Rather, it is an inconclusive comment aimed at entertaining an audience" (p. 2). Semantically difficult quotation can confuse less experienced speakers and lead to rounds which are primarily won by those who happen to know the definition of a difficult word. Unmanageable quotations are difficult to develop a concise thesis for because they are excessively long and difficult.

Aside from these more specific concerns with the event, problems of a more general nature have also been identified. The first concern, that impromptu is treated as mini-extemp, has been expressed by many during tournament conversation and more formally by Preston (1983, 1990b). In a 1983 paper, Preston conducted an analysis of impromptu and extemp ballots to determine if judges were evaluating speakers on similar criteria for both events. From his analysis of 152 ballots and a total of 1,048 comments, Preston concluded "The results indicate that judges are giving the students similar if not nearly identical feedback for extemp and impromptu speaking." In 1990 Preston reported on later studies, including his own, which indicate that judges still evalu-

ate the two events on similar merits (e.g. Harris, 1986; Preston, 1990a). Preston (1990b) added that although literature has marked a distinction between the two events, that distinction has not been assimilated by coaches and employed in their coaching and judging (p. 18).

In 1990 Greenstreet addressed the need to increase the educational value of forensics competition. Greenstreet focused on limitations which arise because of event rules and descriptions, the types of speeches presented in tournaments, and how those speeches are evaluated. The primary concern for impromptu arose in the limitations of the event rules and descriptions. "The rules for impromptu, rhetorical criticism/communication analysis, and after dinner speaking are inadequate because they are unclear, incomplete, or inaccurate" (p. 2). This inaccuracy has led to the development of expectations among judges which are not expressly stated in the event rules. Greenstreet cites, for example, that the rules of impromptu speaking do not indicate that a student should not prepare for more than three minutes. However, judges become uncomfortable when a student does spend that much time in preparation.

Finally, Bartanen (1981) offered a straight-forward observation of forensics practices which over a decade later still have relevance to the forensics community and impromptu speaking in particular. Bartanen took the view of forensics as a laboratory experience in argumentation. He demonstrated that from the beginnings of intercollegiate forensics (e.g. Baird, 1924) the activity has had a foundation in the liberal arts with an emphasis on the use of argument in communication and problem solving.

To help maintain that focus, Bartanen specified three goals which should guide individual events competition: 1) Individual events should teach effective rhetorical skills; 2) Individual events should teach audience adaptation as a particular rhetorical skill; 3) Individual events should teach the appreciation and use of a variety of forms of evidence and argument. In explaining this third goal, Bartanen stated that:

Rather than relying almost exclusively on authoritative and factual claims as are typically found in debate, the individual events speaker is expected to provide the listener with a greater variety of devices, such as motivational proofs and personal experiences

which are presumably similar to the types of proofs required in 'real life' communicative circumstances.

With specific reference to impromptu, Bartanen claimed that the practice of argumentation is de-emphasized in favor of stylistic concerns. Bartanen echoed McGucklin's (1970) concern that: "Extemp and impromptu frequently seem to stress the glib over the thoughtful..." (p. 408). Finally, Bartanen suggested that the educational focus of many individual events could be improved if they allowed for refutation or some other type of feedback. Immediate feedback is one of the "unique characteristics of argumentation." However, the structure of individual events generally does not allow for this to take place.

Among other possible concerns, researchers have identified inadequate topics, evidence, and argumentation training as limits to competitive impromptu speaking. Likewise, the fact that impromptu rules and judging are not always clear and consistent has been a concern among members of the forensic community. With these concerns in mind, it would be worthwhile to consider a modified version of the event which emphasizes analysis and commentary on more "socially-significant" issues and provides the judge with a greater opportunity to do what he or she is trained to do — teach communication skills to students. The following will describe an event which can tentatively be called reasoned response.¹ Reasoned response will offer a means to incorporate these educational goals in an event that should still be considered fun, thrilling, and challenging to students.

Reasoned Response

This event can be conducted with the same general procedures and time limits of impromptu speaking. Students would receive a slip of paper with all the information they need and they would have seven minutes to work with including the preparation and delivery of the speech. However, the contents of the preparation slip (prep slip) would be much different thereby changing the nature of the event.

As opposed to providing students with a quotation, proverb, or single word, the prep slip will include specific information on the location, speaker's role, and situation which the student should incorporate in the speech. Although this event is still going to be limited to laboratory training (Bartanen, 1981), the training will be of a much less artificial nature. Forensic students in this event would be better

trained because they will have more information to apply in the analysis and adaptation process. The remainder of this essay will describe the contents of the prep slip, and suggest the educational advantages of reasoned response.

Contents of the Prep Slip

The prep slip will include three categories of information: location, speaker's role, and situation. Location will describe either a real or hypothetical place in which the speaker is to assume he or she is at the time of the speech. For example, the location may place the student in a particular region of the country (deep south) or in a specific city (Tacoma, Washington). Another possibility for the location would be to place the student in an even more specific place such as a lawyer's office, a courtroom, or a friend's birthday party.

Regardless of which type of location is used, the speaker will be able (along with other information on the prep slip) to envision who might be in attendance at their presentation, the beliefs they hold, and the concerns they have at that time. This information should be used by the student to help determine the appropriate content of the speech and tone of delivery. The location designated for the student may be of particular importance during the tournament. For example, if a tournament had offered this event in the Spring of 1992 and Los Angeles was designated as a location, the student might have to take into consideration that the people who would attend the presentation would be knowledgeable of and concerned about the Rodney King trial and the riots following the decision.

The second item on the prep slip will be the speaker's role. This item will designate a particular role or persona which should be assumed in the speech. Students will be asked to take the role of either (1) a particular person, or (2) someone with a particular orientation toward the situation. For example, a speaker might be given the role of a famous athlete, a corporate CEO or a citizen who is angry about what was described in the situation part of the prep slip. Tournament directors, or whomever writes the prep slips, will need to make certain that the role clearly corresponds with the situation. The speaker's role should also be gender neutral. For example, a male student could not assume the role of the leader of the National Organization for Women.

Finally, the prep slip will describe the situation in which the speaker

will be speaking. The situation will provide the final information regarding why the speech is taking place. For example, the location might be a formal board meeting room and the speaker's role might include that the student is to assume the role of a junior executive. The situation would be needed to explain that the junior executive is going to advocate to senior executives making changes in production procedures in a way that will use less natural resources but increase the cost of production. The situation will help to specify the members of the audience if this has not already been done previously in the prep slip.

Educational Advantages

This essay previously addressed the problems and limitations of impromptu speaking which can be summarized as: the use of generic examples, poor quotations, impromptu is treated as mini-extemp, poor rules and descriptions, and the lack of training in argumentation. The use of reasoned response would avoid many of these concerns.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to develop generic examples with reasoned response. The speech would have to be tailored to the information on each prep slip. It would be less likely that a figure like Hitler, or an issue like the Holocaust, could be tied to the information on the prep slip. This event would probably see the same number of examples used, but there would be a greater variety in types of examples used and they would be more specific to the context of the speech.

Reasoned response would be less likely than impromptu to be viewed and judged as mini-extemp. The introduction of an audience (beyond the judge and other competitors) would give the judge a clear criteria for evaluation (audience analysis) which is not present in extemp or impromptu. The speaker must be able to adapt the content and style of delivery to the audience as well as fulfilling the purpose of the speech set out in the prep slip.

Bartanen's (1981) concerns about the teaching of argumentation skill in forensics would also be addressed with this event. With a different set of requirements and speech purposes in each round of practice and competition, students will develop stronger rhetorical skills while being coached to use a variety of types of evidence and argumentation techniques.

The use of poor prep slips could be a problem very similar to the use of poor quotations. However, specific guidelines can be offered to assist coaches and tournament directors in the development of prep slips.

1. The audience should be specified in the prep slip. The description should provide enough detail that the competitor and judge will envision a similar audience.
2. The location should also be easily envisioned by both the contestant and judge. Therefore, obscure places or locations which would possibly be unknown (i.e. a small town in India) should be avoided.
3. If the speaker's role is going to involve a specific person, generic titles should be used instead of the names of real public figures. The use of "Bill Clinton" in the speaker's role would lead the student to try to imitate or do an impression of Clinton. The use of the generic title "President of the United States" would be better.
4. If the speaker's role is to use an orientation, it should clearly specify the emotional and/or logical direction the speech should take. For example, a speaker's orientation which indicates that the speaker has philosophical differences with the situation that is being described would be difficult for the student and the judge to work with. It would be better to say that the speaker is angry with the situation or the speaker has prepared a formal response to argue against the situation.

A good prep slip should have interdependent elements in the location, speaker's role, and situation. The prep slip should together create a unique set of circumstances for the student and judge. A useful test is to substitute one of the elements of the prep slip with a new item. If the meaning of the prep slip is not changed then the whole thing may need to be changed. For example, assume that a prep slip listed the location as Alabama, speaker's role as a store owner, situation as trying to sell oranges. The situation could be changed to selling apples or the location could be Boise, Idaho and the nature of the prep slip would remain unchanged.

The final concern with impromptu that researchers have mentioned is the poor rules and descriptions of the events. Reasoned response would be as susceptible to that problem as any other event.

However, Dean's (1988) suggestion for a pre-tournament workshop would help to alleviate this problem. Providing judges with written descriptions of reasoned response as well as the other events would be particularly beneficial.

Aside from avoiding many of the problems with impromptu speaking, reasoned response would also offer the benefits of teaching perspective taking, adapting to audience and situational constraints, making forensics more of a socially-significant activity and allowing for responses to judges questions. Frequently, students will be placed in a situation where they have to think about a topic in a different way than they normally would. They will also be placed in the position to speak in a role with which they are not familiar. These challenges will help the student develop stronger abilities in perspective taking. This ability will help students understand alternative points of view and adapt to foreign or difficult speaking situations. Likewise, students will become better at adapting to situational constraints. Haught (1989) described the problems of audience adaptation in forensics:

[T]he individual events audience is always a nebulous amalgam of all those who judge individual events. There is value in having students learn the high standards of form, substance, and delivery which will satisfy that audience. Still, their sense of audience analysis and adaptation must become rather myopic (p. 38).

The need to adapt to the situation is absent in impromptu speaking, but reasoned response will help students learn to analyze more than the quotation when preparing the speech. Students will get better practice at coping with constraints presented by the location. Although they will not have to deal with a room that is too large or cope with bitter cold weather during a speech given outside, the students will have to adapt to the level of formality, prevalent attitudes, and probable demographics of the audience as well as other concerns depicted by the prep slip.

This event can also help to make forensics more of a socially significant activity. Prep slips can be written to involve students in present day issues and concerns. Students can be placed in situations where they are to respond to recent election results, prevalent social concerns, or whatever is currently of importance to society in general. However, prep slips should not be written in such a way that a student

must take a polarized view of a controversial or volatile issue. For example, a student should not be expected to give either a pro- or anti-abortion speech. It is one thing to challenge students yet another to ask them to speak about an important issue in a way that is contrary to their true belief.

Finally, reasoned response can include a brief question and answer session between the speaker and judge. Bartanen (1981) has noted that "one of the major factors which undermines the laboratory value of individual events is the absence of opportunities for refutation or other forms of feedback from other competitors or the judge-critic" (p. 408). This event would include the opportunity for the judge to ask one question of the student following their presentation. The question can be directed toward further clarification of the position taken by the student or to challenge their viewpoint or rationale. In either case, the question should follow within 30 seconds of the conclusion of the speech and the response should not exceed one minute. Therefore, the speech, question and response can be concluded within 8 minutes and 30 seconds and will not disrupt the tournament schedule.

If desired, the person who writes the prep slip can also prepare a question (or questions) in advance and include it in an envelope with the prep slip. These prepared questions would have to be more general in nature in order to apply to all of the speakers in the round. Most judges would probably prefer to ask their own questions, but less-experienced judges may appreciate the opportunity to use prepared questions.

Reasoned response has been offered as a possible forensics event which would alleviate some of the concerns with impromptu speaking. The event has been developed in such a way that students could still enjoy the unique challenge and excitement of the impromptu speaking situation. This essay has attempted to be specific in outlining the event. It has been "tested" in a different form as a classroom exercise and proven to be a useful learning tool. However, if the event were adopted it would probably have to endure some modification by the forensics community.

Notes

¹The present conception of this event is an adaptation and extension of a previous version found in: Williams, D.E. (1992). Reasoned response: An alternative to impromptu speaking. Massachusetts Journal of Communication. 2, 76 - 79.

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SPECIAL TOPIC

Pragmatic Concerns on Questions in I.E. Rounds

*Larry Schnoor and Bryant Alexander**

The Developmental Conferences on Individual Event in 1988 and 1990 dealt with a variety of concerns related to the status of individual events as currently practiced. One of those concerns centered on experimentation within the context of the events as a means to strengthen the pedagogical nature of forensics. As an outgrowth of this concern, the 1991 Cornhusker Forensic tournament at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, experimented with judges asking questions of the contestants in each round of the competition.

The use of questions by judges in forensic competition may be based on the premise that the questioning within the context of rounds seeks to validate the research and analytical process that students go through in order to encode their messages, as well as the adaptive performance skills/techniques used to project meaning. In asking questions of a contestant, the forensic judge becomes an interviewer and the contestant, the interviewee. Bloom (1956) indicated that questions are basically divided into two areas: cognitive domain and affective domain. The questions which deal with the cognitive domain are those which serve to discover objective information. According to Bloom, there are six different types of objective questions: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. It is Bloom's contention that, in order to use this type of questioning correctly, one must begin with questions related to knowledge and then go through the cycle, finally ending with evaluation. Questions which deal with the affective domain are

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those which serve to discover subjective information. Subjective questions, those dealing with the affective domain, deal with feelings, attitudes and values. Thus, as an interviewer, the judge must be aware that he/she is dealing with both the cognitive and the affective domains at the same time, since it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between the information in the cognitive and affective domains.

In our observations and reactions, we will put forth both advantages and disadvantages of asking questions. Our observations and reactions will focus on the utility of questioning as it applies to "Public Address" and "Interpretation" events separately. In each division, we will approach the topic from the areas of research and analysis.

Public Speaking Events

In the public speaking categories, we believe questioning of the contestants by the judges has the potential to accomplish the following:

Research:

1. Questions would allow judges to determine the thoroughness of the student's preparation, research and knowledge as related to the topic of the presentation.

Cognitive

2. Since the time limitations imposed by tournament regulations do not allow for extensive development of a topic, the use of questions could allow for students to expound on aspects of the topic which were abbreviated or condensed due to the time constraints and for prioritization.

Cognitive

3. There may be times when a judge may not have heard something clearly. The use of questions could give the adjudicator the opportunity to clarify his/her understanding of the content and structure of the presentation.

Cognitive

4. There are occasions when the data used within the development of a presentation may need to be examined, the use of questions could give the judge the opportunity to

find out why the student chose to use/not use certain support material.

Cognitive

Analysis:

1. There are numerous times when a judge may be curious as to the motivations behind topic selection. The use of questions could give the opportunity to find out whether or not a student can justify the topic for the particular speaking situation in terms of importance/significance.

Affective

2. The use of questions could serve the purpose of revealing whether or not audience analysis had taken place. Was a "motivational link" clear in the student's mind in the development of the topic?

Cognitive/Affective

3. The developmental process used by the student in preparing the message is often of interest to the adjudicator. The use of a question could serve to discover the analytical process that a student went through in order to reach the final product.

Cognitive

Interpretation Events

Whereas questions have been used at forensic tournaments in public speaking events, they have not been used as often in the interpretation events. However, if one accepts the premise that questions are beneficial in the public address area, one should realize that the premise extends to the area of interpretation just as effectively.

We believe that the use of questions in the interpretation events has the potential to accomplish the following:

Research:

1. Almost every description of oral interpretation as a contest event will contain some reference to the "author's intent." The use of a question by the judge would allow the verification of whether a student has a firm understanding of the intent of the author.

Cognitive/Affective

2. The use of a question could serve in determining whether the student has an understanding of the historical milieu of the literature. This could include both the "time frame" and/or the "life experience" of the writer.

Cognitive

Analysis:

1. Numerous ballots give evidence to support that a criterion used by many judges is the student's understanding of the literature being performed. The use of a question would allow a judge to verify whether or not a student has completed a thorough breakdown of the literature in order to gain insight and, thus, incorporation of that knowledge into the presentation.

Cognitive/Affective

2. The questions could allow a judge to examine what method of analysis was employed by the student in the development of the interpretation. The question might address whether it was the basic "dramatistic" analysis of who, what, when, where, why and how; whether it was a basic "modal" analysis in which the student examined the relationship between the writer and speakers within the literature; or whether a "structural and transactional analysis" has occurred. In such a case, the psychological orientations and the communication strategies of characters are examined and, thus, employed in the interpretation of the selection.

Cognitive

3. If a student uses a post-structuralist or non-traditional interpretation of a particular selection, questioning has the potential to reveal his/her approach to the literature and his/her justification of interpretation/perception.

Cognitive/Affective

Performance Skills

If one accepts the basic premise that questioning within the context of rounds seeks to validate the research and analytical processes as well as the adaptive performance skills used to project meaning, then the use of questions should be considered in relation

to all of the events in forensic competition. We feel that in the area of performance skills shared by both public speaking and interpretation, the use of questions has the potential to:

1. Force students to support and clarify why certain presentation/performance techniques were used, such as placement, focal points, movement.
2. Force students to clarify the use of material selected, the use of visual aids, the content development and form of the presentation.

As we noted above, there are numerous positive advantages to advocate the useful pedagogical function of questions in forensic competition. However, there are numerous possible disadvantages of the practice that are based on a pedagogical foundation. Questions in the round have the potential to create the following disadvantages:

1. Questions could diminish the effort of the performer by evaluating and measuring the student's performance/presentation with an unrealistic theoretical yardstick.
2. The use of questions could create future animosity (tension) between the performer and the judge, and possibly between judge and coach, or even between all three.
3. The use of questions could place the student in a defensive position in which the student is defending not only his/her presentation based on research, analysis, or execution, but also his/her moral, ethical and political attitudes, beliefs and values.
4. The use of questions could place the student in a second defensive position in which the student is defending not only his/her own presentation, but also the methods employed by the respective coaches with which the student worked in the preparation of the event.
5. The use of questions could also become exhaustive, if done every round — exhaustive in terms of causing undue stress on the presenter and, possibly, the judge (since coming up with solid, effective and justified questions is not a simple task).
6. The use of questions could diminish the credibility of performers, based upon their inability to articulate ideas on the spur of the moment: the impromptu speaking dilemma.

If the questions were to be used as an evaluative criterion, a decision-making factor, they could have the potential to:

7. lessen (lower) a performer's rank based upon the student's ability or inability to respond to a question, thereby shifting the focus from the prepared speaking/interpretation event to that of a minimal preparation event.
8. increase the already-subjective nature of the activity by providing the adjudicator with yet another unseen, unidentified standard by which the judge would evaluate the presentation.
9. increase the length of rounds, thereby making it necessary to alter tournament schedules to allow sufficient time for questions and answers, which could affect the length of the tournament.

In the final assessment, the use of questions and answers as part of the forensic competition in individual events has its pluses and minuses, its advantages and disadvantages. Questions may serve to reinforce the educational aspect of the activity by requiring students to "own" and justify content, form and delivery. Using Bloom's Taxonomy of questions, this can only happen if judges formulate questions in the cognitive domain. However, if questions are formulated in the affective domain, they may serve to create dissension and conflict, as well as adding yet another (subjective) evaluative criterion which may not be clear and has the potential to diminish credibility and attack individual belief systems.

We recognize that the use of questions in the context of a competitive forensic round has potential for strengthening the pedagogical nature of the activity. However, we also recognize that the use of questions could create numerous problems as well. If questions are deemed to have more advantages than disadvantages, and if a system is devised in which questions would be used, we believe that a great deal of thought needs to be put into the procedural implementation of such a plan. The following concerns should be addressed:

1. When should the questioning take place? Every round? or just in finals? After each speech or after all speeches in a round have been completed?
2. Who will ask the question(s)? The judge? Just one judge or

- all of the judges in a final round? Audience members? The other competitors?
3. Why are the questions being asked? What will be the focus of the questions? A clear definition as to the purpose of the questions should be considered. The authors of this paper offer the aforementioned definition: "The use of questions by judges in forensic competition should be based on the premise that questioning within the context of the rounds seeks to validate the research and analytical process that students go through in order to encode their messages, as well as the adaptive performance skills/techniques used to project meaning."
 4. How will the information received from the question and answer session be used? Will it be used as part of the evaluative criteria? Will it be used as a decision-making factor? To what degree should the answers impact the final ranking of a speaker?
 5. How should questions be standardized? Will judges be encouraged to ask questions equally of all contestants? Should questions deal only with the information cited—or will a judge be allowed to delve into a speaker's motivations?

Our review of the issue of questions in forensic competition has been relatively objective in its approach. We have sought to examine both advantages and disadvantages of this pedagogical method as it applies to "Public Address" and "Interpretation." The Developmental conferences on Individual Events in 1988 and 1990 have spawned a number of issues and concerns facing the educational goals and objectives of forensics. The use of questions is not a new idea, but it is an idea worth examining in an attempt to provide positive educational experiences for all involved in the activity: competitors, coaches and judges alike. We encourage further use and experimentation, but we also encourage a greater sensitivity to the varying perceptions that exist on the issue of using questions in a competitive round of forensics.

Bloom, B.F., etal. Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Handbook: Cognitive Domain. N.Y.: David McKay Co., 1956.

REVIEW OF PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Jack Kay, Editor

National Federation of State High School Associations. *Original Oratory*. Kansas City: National Federation, 1990, \$24.95.

Novice forensics students and coaches, to no one's surprise, express concern and frustration when approaching individual events. But for beginning students attempting to write and deliver original oratory, there is help. The National Federation of State High School Associations has available an instructional videotape for the students and coaches of original oratory. The purpose of this instructional tape is three-fold. The tape provides a brief overview of the different approaches to competitive persuasive speaking, explains how speakers may enhance their credibility and persuasiveness, and, finally, explores the different ways one may find a topic for a persuasive speech. Roger Aden provides the explanations and analysis for the video, while Mary Trouba, a student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and member of the forensics team, provides a sample persuasive speech. After Trouba presents her speech, Aden conducts a critique session with Mary.

The videotape is particularly suited for students or coaches who have limited experience with competitive persuasive speaking. While there are numerous approaches to the organizational formats which may be used for persuasion, Aden's discussion covers only the "praise or blame" and the "problem-solution" approaches to oratory. Aden also provides some insight into the usefulness of Monroe's Motivated Sequence as an approach to the "problem-solution" format. The tape is also suited for beginning persuasive speakers in that the discussion surrounding a speaker's credibility is limited to the speaker's ability to show concern and confidence and to use forms of support for arguments posed in the speech. Aden's explanation for where students may find potential topics for persuasive speeches is simply that students can turn to newspapers, news magazines, evening newscasts and news magazine television programs.

Students and coaches will find the instructional videotape to be particularly useful because of a sample original oratory presented by

Mary Trouba. The speech clearly follows a problem-solution organizational format that is enhanced by Monroe's Motivated Sequence. Following the speech is the coach-student critique of a student's speech.

While the content in the video is useful for beginning students of persuasion, the videotape could be improved. The authors may have oversimplified the discussion surrounding the organizational formats, credibility and topic selection. The effectiveness of the videotape could be significantly enhanced had the authors provided more in-depth explanations for why certain organizational formats are preferred over others, how students can further enhance their credibility, and why certain topics are more suited for persuasive speeches. While each of these areas was discussed in the video, the discussions lacked depth. Second, the critique session between the speaker and the moderator provides an excellent example of the ideal critique a judge may write on a ballot. However, viewers may find the session to be somewhat staged and unnatural.

The instructional videotape would be particularly useful for beginning students of original oratory. However, the video can be significantly improved by providing more in-depth discussions of the approaches to writing and delivering an oration and by using more varied examples of the different approaches to the event.

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National Federation of State High School Associations.
Extemporaneous Speaking Videotape Presentation. Kansas
City: National Federation, 1990, \$24.95.

Extemporaneous speaking is an event often avoided by coaches, students and judges. Much mystique surrounds the thirty to sixty minutes in which speakers prepare their speeches. However, there are several valuable instructional tools that can help dispel fears about the event. One of these tools is a twenty-five minute videotape produced by the National Federation of State High School Associations. Clinician Matthew Sobnosky outlines the necessary elements of an

extemporaneous speech. Mary Trouba, a former student of his, provides a sample speech. The tape concludes with a coach-student critique session based on the sample speech. Three strengths of the N.F. extemp videotape are particularly noteworthy. First, the tape distinguishes between informative and argumentative approaches to the event. Second, the tape presents a practical view of extemporaneous instruction. Third, the video is instructive for students, coaches and judges.

Sobnosky effectively distinguishes between informative and argumentative extemporaneous speaking. He notes that many speakers simply "re-hash" their research in the speech. These speakers provide a news report instead of news analysis. Sobnosky argues speakers should analyze and explain the news. That is, the speaker should break the news event into its essential parts for understanding and argument. He presents a view that allows students to gain valuable experience from the event.

A second strength of the videotape is its practical emphasis. The clinician avoids speaking in abstract terms, opting instead to provide a detailed, practical description of how to compete in extemp. Sobnosky provides instruction in how to prepare to speak, how to organize a speech, and how to deliver the speech. His discussion of organization is a point-by-point description of what the speech should accomplish. Special emphasis is put on documentation. Trouba's speech exemplifies the points stressed by Sobnosky in his previous discussion. Thus, students and coaches are able to watch Trouba's speech and understand how it conforms to the standards Sobnosky sets forth.

Finally, the videotape is an excellent instructional tool for students, coaches and judges alike. Dick Fawcett of the National Federation says in the introduction, "We hope this videotape will be of assistance to students, coaches and contest judges who will be working with the extemporaneous speaking event" For students, Sobnosky presents a step-by-step approach and Trouba provides an example students may observe and critique. While her speech is solid, it will not frighten novice extempers. There are several weaknesses to Trouba's address. Coaches may use the critique session to observe a way they may critique their own students' speeches. Most instructors probably have their own method for coaching, but Sobnosky's

critique demonstrates several helpful strategies. He is complimentary of the speaker's performance, identifying her analysis and organization as strengths. Sobnosky also allows Trouba the chance to identify what she thinks were the strengths and weaknesses of her speech. He further lets her know a limited number of items to improve on: in this case, her delivery. By identifying one or two items for improvement at the end of the critique session, a coach presents a realistic goal for the student to achieve. Judges may use the sample speech as a chance to view a solid extemporaneous speech. But the speech has room for criticism and, thus, is a good example to observe in a judging workshop.

There are several areas in which the videotape could be improved. First, Sobnosky's initial presentation on extemp may be clarified by visual aids. His discussion of organization would be clearer if the audience could see the outline of the speech. Further, an instructional booklet accompanying the tape would allow students and coaches to closely follow Sobnosky's advice as well as Trouba's speech. An outline of her speech would further illuminate a strength of her speech — organization. Perhaps an advanced extemporaneous videotape would be able to address the more intricate parts of extemporaneous speaking.

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EDITOR'S FORUM

**The Role of Forensics
when Departments and Programs
are Targeted for Elimination:
Ensuring a "Call for Support" is Heard**

*Daniel Mills, Ann Burnett Pettus, and Scott G. Dickmeyer**

Recent economic conditions in the United States are taking their toll on the educational institutions in this country. One dilemma resulting from this predicament is the potentiality a department of communication and/or a forensic program may be targeted for prohibitive cuts, or even elimination. In the fall of 1991 the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) faced such a situation. The university, mandated by legislative action, was forced to cut a specific percentage of the budget. The university decided the most appropriate venue was vertical cuts, rather than traditional horizontal cuts employed in the past. Vertical cuts entail the elimination of entire departments and/or programs; thus the Department of Speech Communication at UNL was targeted for elimination.

The department immediately began a massive campaign in an attempt to persuade university administrators to reconsider their position. The campaign to remove the department from the "chopping block" offered opportunities to use the very skills for which such a department is known—communication, primarily in the form of argument and persuasion. The department acted by organizing committees for specific actions, preparing a letter writing and petition signing campaign, organizing a media blitz, and contacting colleagues

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from coast-to-coast for support. This last action is the focus of this paper.

First, we will discuss the importance of collegiate support in stopping a program/department-cutting action: second, we will describe the problems encountered in the attempt to gain support: third, we will establish the current role of forensics in this process: and, finally, we will propose a specific format for forensic involvement should a department or forensics program face a similar situation to the one experienced at the University of Nebraska.

The process of establishing support from colleagues proved to be extremely important for the UNL Speech Communication Department. The first step of the campaign consisted of letters and telephone calls to administrators. Then, at the Budget Reduction Review Committee (BRRC) hearing, several of our colleagues spoke in defense of the department and program. These presentations were important because the outcry came from individuals with no direct tie to the department. Also, at these hearings the department presented resolutions opposing the proposed cuts from every major forensics organization in the nation. These resolutions provided the administration with the opportunity to see the important role forensics plays at UNL and in the nation.

While our contacts with forensic colleagues were essential in building support, the task of making these contacts proved a frustrating and time consuming activity. Initial confusion over the department being cut sent each faculty member and graduate student calling their friends and associates at other colleges and universities. The immediate result was that some people were contacted a number of times by different individuals while others were not reached at all. After three days, this problem was discovered and a procedure was established to correct it. A professor in the department collected notecards from the faculty and the graduate students which recorded names of persons called as well as other pertinent information. Staff could then check with this professor to see if someone had already been notified. This should have solved the problem. However, additional difficulties resulted. First, a time lag was involved in double-checking each individual with the professor before making the call. A grave situation such as ours does not provide for the comfortable margin of time this

procedure requires. Second, while individual duplication was avoided, duplication to a college or university was not. Often, the news was left with two or more people at the same school. Third, while certain sections of the country were covered extensively, other portions of the country received little information about the situation.

Despite general problems communicating the bad news in a short period of time, the forensics program at the University of Nebraska played a vital role in the dissemination of information related to the proposed elimination. In fact, it was the forensic staff and team which took the first steps in campaign. The news of the proposed elimination broke late on a Friday afternoon. The only individuals left in the department were the chair and the forensic staff and team, who were engaged in a Friday-Saturday retreat. The staff and team, taking direction from the chair, immediately began contacting friends and family. The initial strategy was to contact as many of these people as possible and provide them with office and home phone numbers of administrators responsible for the proposed elimination. These friends and family members were asked to "bombard" the administration all weekend, informing them they did not support the proposed elimination.

In the following weeks, the forensic staff and team made a significant contribution in gaining support from across the country. The forensic staff, calling on their multitude of colleagues from other universities, were able to demonstrate the vast support system in the activity. The forensic contacts proved to be a key ingredient in the call for support. Faculty and graduate students outside forensics were primarily familiar only with individuals housed at colleges and universities where they had done undergraduate and graduate work, and the contacts established at national and regional conferences. Forensics staff called out for assistance from the multitude of schools engaged in the activity—individuals with whom we, in forensics, come into contact on a regular, if not weekly, basis. Forensic contacts spread the word from border to border, and coast to coast. As a result, the department received resolutions opposing the proposed elimination from almost all forensic organizations, and more than half of the 1,000 letters the administration received were from the forensic community.

This broad informal contact system would appear to be sufficient;

however, problems did exist with such a process. First, as with the card system, sections of the country were more than adequately covered while others were "lost in the shuffle". Second, we often asked others to help us spread the word and, thus, we would contact people who had already been contacted. Third, the staff was responsible for the coordination of the team's involvement in the elimination process, and there was not enough time to do both duties well. (UNL has a forensic staff of one director and five graduate assistants. A program with only one or two individuals assigned to forensics would find the process even more daunting.) Finally, due to the sheer number of people in forensics, the time we spent contacting such individuals proved time consuming.

Forensics has the potential to play a significant role in requiring universities and colleges to rethink elimination both departments and programs. This potential can only be fully realized by a networking process which limits the problems discussed above. We recommend the following procedure be considered by the various forensic organizations especially the Council of Forensic Organizations, and also including the American Forensic Association, the National Forensic Association, the Cross-Examination Debate Association, Phi Rho Pi, Pi Kappa Delta, and Delta Sigma Rho-Tau Kappa Alpha. This procedure is designed to provide a smooth process for the distribution of pertinent information when a college/university department/program is targeted for elimination.

The Council of Forensic Organizations should administer the following proposal:

1. At the beginning of each academic year, the Council of Forensic Organizations distributes to each forensic school within their purview a list containing the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the nine AFA-NIET district chairs.
2. When a department/program is targeted, the forensic staff at this school contacts the nine AFA-NIET chairs and provides the AFA representatives with all the necessary information regarding the proposed elimination, and what colleagues can do to help.
3. Within 24 hours, each AFA-NIET district chair contacts and

distributes the information to a pre-selected representative within each state composing their district.

4. Within two days, the pre-selected state representative, along with other individuals from her/his state, assumes the responsibility for contacting the forensic programs within their state. We recognize this leaves each state with the majority of the work, especially in states with many programs (i.e., California, Florida, Ohio). Therefore, a state representative may choose to initiate within one's state their own networking structure. We leave this option to each state to decide.
5. Within 24 hours, individuals at each school should strive to make contact with the colleagues at their university/college to assure the news reaches all communication scholars.

A critical element in this procedure is the use of existing networking system capabilities. We choose to work through the AFA-NIET district system, not because of any preference for the AFA-NIET over other forensic groups, but because they offer the largest potential for distribution of information. The AFA-NDT system is significantly smaller in terms of participating schools. The NFA does not have a district/regional composition—all information would have to be funneled through the existing executive system, principally the office of executive secretary. This would not provide for adequate distribution as the problems that were accrued in our department are merely transferred to another individual. Finally, the forensic honorary societies' memberships are smaller than the AFA-NIET.

This procedure offers a number of advantages. First, if a program is targeted for elimination, immediate support is attainable. Second, the support received will only take nine phone calls by the targeted program rather than the dozens otherwise needed, freeing time and energies to focus on other issues for combating the proposed elimination. Third, the targeted program will know the information is being distributed to other forensic schools across the country, with only a minimal chance of major geographic regions being left uncovered. Fourth, the correct information will reach departments/programs before the "rumor mill" delivers tainted information. Finally, the targeted program can find some relief in knowing colleagues across the country are rallying to demonstrate support against the proposed elimination.

In addition to channeling communication through the Council of Forensic Organizations, individuals in forensics can be helpful in other ways. The letter writing campaign at UNL was successful, in part, due to the articulate letters written by those in forensics. Those in forensics can also utilize their oral communication skills by making the necessary telephone calls to administrators and regents. Finally, the words and show of support that our forensic staff and students received from those in forensics was something for which we are grateful.

The idea of speech communication departments actually being targeted for elimination seems incomprehensible. However, in the era of tight budgets and a weak economy, such an occurrence is not unlikely. We hope the UNL experience will provide impetus for forensic organizations to be prepared; in the future, forensics organizations could plan an even greater role in fighting against a department/program elimination than they did at the University of Nebraska.

A Brief Introduction

*Deborah M. Geisler**

This is the first issue of the *National Forensic Journal* which I have published to date, and it deserves a word of explanation. In discussion with several members of the NFA Executive Council, I decided to shift the publication dates of *NFJ* to late Summer and late Winter in order to alleviate the inevitable pressures upon working forensic coaches and program directors. I would like to use this space to make several apologies and comments to the readership of this Journal.

Deadlines and Time Pressures

This issue is late. It is late for two reasons: first, my own lack of familiarity with the journal processes, coupled with hardware and software problems, made getting this issue out on time impossible. It should have been printed and sent in late August and not in October. Second, the associate editors have found a dearth of suitable material for publication in this journal. This is not to say that we have not had some intriguing pieces submitted, just that many of them were not suitable for publication here.

The next issue will be on time. The second issue of volume XI of this journal will be published in late February. As I write, we have a number of possible articles for publication and a promising stream of submissions. The associate editors who have agreed to serve as referees for this journal have done yeomen's work and continue to review and make insightful comments on the various submissions we have received.

We welcome, as always, submissions of articles, commentary and reviews of professional resources. Please do note the submis-

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sion requirements and publication policy statements at the front of this issue.

Many Thanks

Please allow me to express in print my deepest appreciation to Sheryl A. Friedley of George Mason University for her incredible work as Editor of this Journal. She continued and improved upon the professional quality of the *National Forensic Journal* during her years as its Editor, leaving me and those editors who follow me a legacy of excellence.

I also thank Professor Friedley for her kindness and consideration in making the transition from one editor to the next very smooth. She ensured that the lessons she had learned in editing the journal were passed on to me, making my job much easier than it otherwise would have been.

I would be frankly remiss if I did not also offer a word of thanks to two people at Suffolk University for their great help in this process: first, my department chairperson, Edward J. Harris, whose support has been constant — for both me and for the forensic activity. And second, to my graduate assistant, Casper [Calvin] van Riet, whose ability to catch even the smallest errors in English usage is astounding in a non-native speaker.

Note to Authors

University mailrooms are notoriously slow moving, and ours occasionally loses or misdirects mail. Should you not receive a confirmation of receipt of your manuscript, please contact me by mail or by telephone (see Submission Requirements section, front) to verify that your manuscript was received.

Please also allow approximately two months from the time you send the manuscript before you can expect a status report. Occasionally, delays in reviewing your manuscripts mean that they must be sent to additional associate editors for comments.

If at all possible, please forward your manuscripts, upon their acceptance, on IBM-compatible computer disk using any standard IBM-format word processing package, ASCII text or Word for the Mac. Mac users, please note that disks must be IBM-formatted.