

The Ethics of Proof in Speech Events: A Survey of Standards Used by Contestants and Judges

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This study is unique in at least two ways: it is concerned with proof, rather than evidence; and it is concerned with speech events other than debate. Little has been reported in the literature about individual events, let alone about this specific topic.¹ This study is concerned with *proof* in speech events, rather than *evidence* in speech events, because there is a distinction.² Proof is that which is required to reduce uncertainty, or increase the probable truth of a claim. Proof is relative, depending on variables such as the importance of the claim, the strength of opposing claims, the credibility of the person making the claim, and others. This conception of proof is consistent with Aristotle's treatment of the three modes of proof, including *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, which clearly implies the use of non-evidentiary materials to accomplish the speaker's aims.

Evidence is a narrower concept than proof. Evidence is data, consisting of statements of fact or opinion, which may be transformed into proof through the use of reasoning. In some situations, the audience may demand evidence in order to accept a claim as being proven. There are some formalized situations in which evidence is routinely demanded, for instance, the courtroom or academic debate. In such situations, evidence is usually data attributed to a source other than the speaker.

Evidence—attributed data of fact or opinion—is not necessarily

**The National Forensic Journal*, 1 (Spring 1983), pp. 1-17.

This report was originally presented at the Southern Speech Communication Association Convention at Birmingham, Alabama, in April 1980, and it has been revised for publication here. The author acknowledges with thanks the work of the "Magic Center" word processing office at the University of Houston in preparing the manuscript.

¹Jack Rhodes, "On the Current State of Scholarship in Individual Events," *Speaker and Gavel*, 16 (Fall 1978), 13-17.

²I have elaborated upon this distinction elsewhere. See Maridell Fryar and David A. Thomas, *Basic Debate* (Skokie, IL: National Textbook Co., 1979), pp. 136-138.

required in forensic events other than debate. In some oratory contests, including the one sponsored by the American Forensic Association, contestants may not use more than ten percent quoted material, which implies that evidence is to be limited. Yet in many forensic events, *proof is* demanded even though evidence is not. The purpose of an extemporaneous event is to answer a question about current issues; persuasive speeches or informative speeches have purposes implied by their titles. If a speaker intended to influence an audience by sharing information, or by manipulating attitudes and beliefs through rhetoric, proof is necessary, whether defined by rigorous evidence rules or not.

PERSPECTIVES TOWARD ETHICS IN FORENSICS

How should we apply ethics to proof in speech events? It seems that there are three basic perspectives which may be taken.

1. We may consider forensic events as competitions, with rules designed primarily to insure fairness for all the participants. Each contestant should do his/her own preparation; there should be equal time for all; judging should be impartial. Behavior by a contestant designed to circumvent the rules to gain a competitive edge is considered cheating, or unethical.

2. We may consider forensic events as educational activities, supplementing the classroom, designed to teach students something. This is the approach taken by the Sedalia Conference: "From this perspective, forensic activities, including debate and individual events, are laboratories for helping students to understand and communicate various forms of argument more effectively in a variety of contexts with a variety of audiences."³ Ethics equals good scholarship. Cheating—such as plagiarism, or other academic violations—is equated with ethical violations.

3. We may consider forensic events as actual rhetorical situations. The person who speaks in a contest is not primarily a contestant, or a student, but rather a person using rhetoric to influence an audience. Here, the ethics of rhetoric should govern.

The contest situation, the educational rationale, and the rhetorical nature of forensic contests call forth three divergent ethical perspectives. Although there is some overlap among them, there are also important distinctions. A person's behavior could conform to the ethical guidelines drawn from one perspective, but result in possible clear violations of others. To give an analogy, suppose we

³James H. McBath, ed. *Forensics As Communication* (Skokie, IL: National Textbook Co., 1975), p. 11.

are analyzing the ethics of baseball. Would the school's star pitcher violate any rules applied to ethical scholarship if he were to throw a spitball in a varsity game? Or, suppose he were above cheating in a game, but not above copying from a classmate's final exam in their physical education class? We can see that a baseball player might be considered in ethical violation of the activity's rules by cheating in a game, without violating the ethics of responsible scholarship in a class about the game, or vice versa. Ethical rules are always understood within a context of some specific, limited arena of human conduct.

In forensic events, there are rules designed solely for the contests themselves. It is difficult to imagine an extemporaneous or an impromptu contest anywhere besides a tournament. In the tournament, contestants are expected to adhere rigidly to the rules regarding maximum preparation time and maximum speaking time. Violations of these and other rules could be considered ethical violations in a contest, but not outside the contest setting. There are also ethical boundaries set by the scholarly nature of the activity. Some rules of scholarly ethics overlap the rules of some forensic events, notably the rules governing plagiarism and fabrication of evidence. Skills of research, analysis, and composition do not vary much between a classroom and a speech contest. Recognizing that there are areas of overlap, the point remains that there is not *total* overlap between scholarship ethics and contest ethics; there are some ethical rules uniquely applicable to one or to the other.

We have suggested a third ethical context which could apply, that of rhetoric. What is known about the ethics of rhetoric? Many speech textbooks address this question, without clear consensus. Ethical principles usually involve the need for a speaker to tell the truth (or at least to avoid deliberate deception), to use sound reasoning, and to proceed from laudable motives. Yet ethical principles such as these are related to an individual's human conduct generally, not to rhetoric uniquely or specifically. In fact, these standards are related more closely to rationalism than to rhetoric. When considering rhetoric, most theorists are likely to conclude that it is amoral, being an instrument or tool available to ethical and unethical speakers alike.⁴

⁴A good, representative example is Bert E. Bradley, *Fundamentals of Speech Communication: The Credibility of Ideas*, 3rd Ed. (Dubuque: W.C. Brown Co., 1978), pp. 23-31. While recognizing that rhetoric itself may be considered amoral, Bradley goes on to outline what he considers to be ethical responsibilities of a speaker in a democratic society.

Michael McGuire, in a recent essay on the ethics of rhetoric, concluded that his search of the literature failed to disclose an ethical system for rhetoric. His analysis went beyond the attempt to impose the rules of scientific investigation, or rational thinking, upon the arena of rhetoric. Instead, keying on the work of phenomenologists, he suggested an ethical standard more suited to the enterprise of a speaker's efforts to generate audience agreement or adherence to his claims. McGuire's premise, like Aristotle's and Perelman's, is that in rhetorical matters, there is no certain truth, only probable truth. It follows, then, that the function of rhetoric is to contribute to what counts as knowledge in society: "that rhetoric is an agent for the social construction of reality."⁵ From this position, McGuire proceeded to develop an ethic for rhetoric derived from Nietzsche's *The Will to Power*. As applied to rhetoric, Nietzsche's ethical system invokes the power and responsibility to shape one's understanding of the world and one's existence in it through language which arouses both affect and cognition of the audience. McGuire concluded, "As a guiding ethic for rhetoric, the will to power judges knowledge to be moral to the extent that it enhances life's value to the individual."⁶

To the extent that rhetoric is an instrument of communication to be used for the purposes of creating knowledge and influencing an audience, there are some routine standards of judgment. First, the methods used by the speaker are subject to ethical evaluation. Lacking an absolute ethical standard for rhetoric, qualitative distinctions between a speaker's methods are subject to interpretation and purely situational considerations. Lying, for instance, violates most ethical codes when considered in the abstract; but in many situations (such as communicating with the terminally ill, wooing one's sweetheart, negotiating with an enemy, or advertising, to mention a few), lying to some degree is preferred over the unvarnished truth. Given a certain amount of leeway, we expect speakers to tell the truth rather than to tell falsehoods, without allowing the ends sought to excuse the means employed.

Second, we usually think of some motives as being more ethical than other motives. Rhetoric aimed at the interest of the audience is considered more ethical than rhetoric meant to promote the speaker's self-interest. Also, given constructive purposes, if we establish a range of seriousness of purpose, we consider a more

⁵Michael McGuire, "The Ethics of Rhetoric: The Morality of Knowledge," *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 45 (Winter 1980), 133-136.

⁶McGuire, p. 148.

serious purpose to be more ethical than a more trivial purpose.

In short, in the context of a framework of ethics for rhetoric, we judge a speech to be most ethical when it employs the best available means of persuasion, in pursuit of the noblest, grandest goals of humankind.

How are we to relate the ethics of rhetoric to forensics? There is no ethical rulebook for forensics. The American Forensic Association Code is seriously deficient in terms of ethical guidelines, even for debate. The only reference to a contestant's ethical behavior in the code is the rule against the distortion or fabrication of evidence by debaters.⁷

The National Forensic Association has gone a greater distance towards establishing a code of ethics for students to follow than the American Forensic Association has done. The "N.F.A. Guidelines for Competition" represents a two-page document which lists specific rules and procedures which are binding for competition at the NFA Individual Events Nationals Tournament. The document covers six sections, including the guidelines for determining the eligibility of materials in prepared speech events and in interpretive events; literary definitions of what constitute selections from poetry, prose, and plays; authorship of prepared speeches, interpretive events, and extemporaneous events; time limits; definition of schools (for purposes of representation at the national tournament); and sanctions to apply in case of violations of any of the guidelines.⁸ As a matter of fact, beyond the three approaches mentioned above, there may well be other potential ethical foundations for analyzing and performing in forensic events. In the absence of a commonly accepted ethical framework, any individual's code may be imposed with as much validity as anyone else's.

SURVEY OF STANDARDS IN USE

This article does not outline a system of ethical evaluation for

⁷The "AFA Code for Debate Programs and Tournaments" appears in the *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 11 (Fall 1974), pp. 76-79. Amendments to the evidence standards appear in the *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 14 (Winter 1978), pp. 172-173.

⁸"N.F.A. Guidelines for Competition," handout material provided to the author by Dr. Edward J. Harris, Jr. of Suffolk University. Although the document itself does not mention ethics, it was enacted in the context of an extensive discussion of ethical practices desired at the national tournament. The guidelines are not binding on any tournament other than the national tournament, but they are suggested for use at all tournaments designed as preliminary preparation for students who wish to qualify for the national tournament. The "N.F.A. Guidelines for Competition" are printed elsewhere in this issue.

proof in forensic events. There are varied approaches which different individuals might prefer. Studying the areas where consensus lies and where disagreements arise is the starting point for establishing a coherent ethical basis for the future.

Method: At the Auburn University Plainsman tournament held January 18-20, 1980, judges and contestants in individual events were asked to complete questionnaires related to ethics in the rhetorical events. Three instruments were used. Each respondent was asked to check off an identification as either a judge or a contestant. Contestants were asked to check the rhetorical events in which they participated (choices given were communication analysis, extemporaneous speaking, expository speaking, impromptu speaking, and oratory. The questionnaire provided to contestants and judges read as follows: I. JUDGMENT CALLS.

In these situations, how would you judge the student's behavior? Use the following scale:

NOT = This is not an ethical violation.

? = This is questionable ethical behavior.

IS= This is a definite ethical violation.

1. An extemp speaker's file contains two dozen fully prepared speeches on topics likely to be drawn.
2. Upon drawing a topic, an extemper then borrows a "brief book" from a debater on his school's team.
3. An informative speaker uses the same speech for more than one year of competition.
4. A contestant uses a rhetorical criticism written by a scholar and published in a journal.
5. In an oration dealing with sexual morality, a contestant advocates incest as a desirable act.
6. In an oration about seat belt usage, a contestant has an illustration about how his sister was horribly injured in an accident because she did not use seat belts. The orator has no sister.
7. A student presents an informative speech about a minority religious sect, without advocating it. The student is a member of the sect.

Completed questionnaires from all judges were used; completed questionnaires from contestants in rhetorical events were used. Twenty-three usable questionnaire packets were returned in the judge category, and twenty-three complete contestants' packets were returned; however, some judges completed only one or two of the three instruments.

Caution must be used in drawing conclusions based on the data, since it is taken from a relatively small sample. Yet the sample does

reflect the stated opinions of *all* the judges and contestants involved in an open invitational intercollegiate tournament who responded to the survey, who were self-identified as being involved in the relevant contest events. At the least, these data suggest that there is basis for further research along similar lines.

"Judgment Calls"

The first instrument consisted of seven statements which describe a contestant's behavior in a situation. Respondents were asked to check whether they regard the behavior as "not an ethical violation," "questionable behavior," or "a definite ethical violation." The resulting data are displayed in Table 1, "Judgment Calls," showing the number and percentage of responses by judges and contestants. Additionally, a chi square test was applied to the differences observed on all items to locate the opinions held most strongly by the respondents. Significant findings are also indicated in Table 1.

TABLE 1
"Judgement Calls"

ITEM	NOT		?		IS		BLANK		.05 ^a	.01 ^b
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
1C	4	17.4	5	21.7	13	56.1	1	4.3	X	
1J	4	17.4	8	34.8	11	47.8				
2C	5	21.7	8	34.8	8	34.8	2	8.7		
2J	8	34.8	12	52.2	3	13.0				
3C	5	21.7	4	17.4	14	60.9			X	
3J	3	13.0	0	0	20	87.0				X
4C	2	8.7	1	4.3	19	82.6	1	4.3		X
4J	0	0	0	0	23	100.0				X
5C	13	56.5	8	34.8	1	4.3	1	4.3		X X
5J	17	73.9	4	17.4	2	8.7				
6C	3	13.0	10	43.5	10	43.5			X	
6J	1	4.3	10	43.5	12	52.2				
7C	19	82.6	2	8.7	2	8.7				X X
7J	21	91.3	2	8.7	0	0				

"C" refers to Contestant responses; "J" refers to Judge responses.

Chi Square 2DF

^a5.591 = .05

^b9.210 = .01

"Rank Order"

The second instrument consisted of a list of the five rhetorical events studied. Respondents were asked to rank order these five events according to the event's "ethical implications" for the contestant. The questionnaire provided to contestants and judges read as follows: II. RANK ORDER: Rank these forensic events. The event with the

most ethical implications for the contestant should be ranked 1; the event with the *least* should be ranked 5. Give tie ranks only as a last resort.

- _____ Communication Analysis
- _____ Expository (Informative) Speaking
- _____ Extemporaneous Speaking
- _____ Impromptu Speaking
- _____ Oratory (Persuasive Speaking)

The resulting data are displayed in Table 2, "Rank Order," showing the sum of ranks, mean rank, and mode rank, for all five events, by judges and by contestants. No statistical tests are applied to this set of data.

TABLE 2
"Rank Orders"

Item	Contestants (N=23)				Judges (N=19) 4 did not rank items			
	Sum	X	Mode	Rank	Sum	X	Mode	Rank
Communication Analysis	85	3.7	5	5	37	2.1	1	1
Expository (Informative)	65	2.8	2	2	65	3.6	3	4
Extemporaneous Speaking	53	2.3	1	1	52	2.9	4	3
Impromptu Speaking	74	3.2	4	4	74	4.1	5	5
Oratory	65	2.8	3	3	37	2.1	1	1

"Your Opinion"

The third instrument consisted of eleven statements of opinion about a variety of contestant practices in the rhetorical events. Respondents were asked to check off their position on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" for each statement. The resulting data were tabulated to discover the number and percentage of responses in all five positions on the

Likert scale, for all eleven items, by contestants and by judges. Additionally, scoring the five positions on a scale of 1-5, mean scores were calculated for each statement by contestants and by judges. No further statistical testing was done on this data.

Results. The following description of results will address each instrument separately.

A. *Judgment Calls (Table 1).* Respondents were asked to express a judgment as to the ethics of a contestant's behavior in seven situations. The choices given to the respondents were:

NOT = This is not an ethical violation.

? = This is questionable ethical behavior.

IS = This is a definite ethical violation.

For purposes of tabulating and testing the results, these three cells were assumed to be independent. Given three cells per item, chi square tests were run on the data to locate and identify significant differences. Table 1 displays the data on the seven statements, for both contestants and judges.

The results of the chi square testing show that significant differences were reached for both contestants and judges on all but four instances. Significant differences at the .01 alpha level for *both contestants and judges* were found on the following items:

4. A contestant uses a rhetorical criticism written by a scholar and published in a journal. (IS a violation.)
5. In an oration dealing with sexual morality, a contestant advocates incest as a desirable act. (NOT an ethical violation.)
7. A student presents an informative speech about a minority religious sect, without advocating it. The student is a member of the sect. (NOT an ethical violation.)

Significant differences at the .01 alpha level for *judges*, and at the .05 level for *contestants*, were found on the following items: 3. An informative speaker uses the same speech for more than one year of competition. (IS a definite violation.)

Significant differences at the .05 alpha level were found on the following items:

1. An extemp speaker's file contains two dozen fully prepared speeches on topics likely to be drawn. (IS a definite violation—*Contestants'* responses only. Judges' responses failed to reach level of significance.)
6. In an oration about seat belt usage, a contestant has an illustration about how his sister was horribly injured in an accident because she did not use seat belts. The orator has no sister. (IS a definite violation—*Judges'* response only. Contestants' responses failed to reach level of significance.)

No significant differences were discovered by the chi square test for *either the contestants or the judges* on the following item: 2. Upon drawing a topic, an extemper then borrows a "brief book" from a debater on his school's team. (*Respondents'* opinions seemed relatively evenly spread across the choices: some said it is not a violation, some said it is questionable, and some said it is a definite violation.)

B. *Rank Order (Table 2)*. The results of this instrument are easiest to report of the three instruments used. There was one very striking difference noted between the contestants and the judges. The contestants ranked communication analysis fifth and the judges ranked it first (tied with oratory) on the dimension of ethical implications for the contestant.

Additionally, the contestants and judges differed on all other rankings. They were closest together on impromptu speaking; contestants ranked it fourth and judges ranked it fifth. Regarding the remaining events, the contestants and the judges ranked them as follows: Expository, contestants second and judges fourth; extemporaneous speaking, contestants first and judges third; and oratory, contestants third and judges first (tied with communication analysis).

Basically, the contestants and judges were in disagreement on all items, with closest agreement on the low ranking for impromptu speaking. They disagreed most greatly on communication analysis, as noted above.

C. *Your Opinion (Table 3)*. The questionnaire provided to contestants and judges read as follows:

III. YOUR OPINION. Mark the scale to reflect your opinion of each statement.

SD = Strongly Disagree *N* = No Opinion, *A* = Agree
D = Disagree Or Neutral *SA* = Strongly Agree

1. Orations which promote positive, universal human values (e.g., world peace) are more ethical than those which deal with narrowly focused problems and solutions (e.g., junior high school football injuries).
2. Orations which advocate specific solutions are more ethical than orations which analyze a problem without suggesting or supporting any given solution.
3. Extemporaneous speeches which furnish an unambiguous answer to the question are more ethical than those which do not.
4. It is unethical for a speaker to go much overtime.

5. It is unethical for a speaker listed in the middle of his speaking order to come late in order to speak last.
6. Orators should be held to the same evidence citation rules as debaters.
7. It is unethical for an orator to use more quoted material than allowed by the rules.
8. Fabricating evidence is the worst ethical violation a contestant can commit in a rhetorical forensic event.

TABLE 3 "Your Opinions"

ITEM	SD		N D		N N		N A		SA N		X
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1C	7	30.4	5	21.7	4	17.4	6	26.1	1	4.3	2.52
1J	5	23.8	8	38.1	6	28.6	2	9.5	0	0	2.24
2C	2	8.7	7	30.4	3	13.0	4	17.4	7	30.4	3.30
2J	1	4.8	7	33.3	2	9.5	8	38.1	3	14.3	3.24
3C	3	13.0	6	26.1	7	30.4	5	21.7	2	8.7	2.91
3J	2	9.5	12	57.1	2	9.5	4	19.0	1	4.8	2.52
4C	0	0	6	26.1	5	21.7	9	39.1	3	13.0	3.39
4J	0	0	7	33.3	1	4.8	10	47.6	3	14.3	3.42
5C	2	8.7	3	13.0	1	4.3	6	26.1	11	47.8	3.91
5J	2	9.5	5	23.8	1	4.8	7	33.3	6	28.6	3.76
6C	5	21.7	2	8.7	5	21.7	4	17.4	7	30.4	4.04
6J	4	19.4	8	38.1	3	14.3	3	14.3	3	14.3	2.95
7C	0	0	3	13.0	2	8.7	8	34.8	10	43.5	4.08
7J	0	0	1	4.8	5	23.8	10	47.6	5	23.8	3.90
8C	0	0	1	4.3	3	13.0	10	43.5	9	39.1	4.17
8J	0	0	2	9.5	1	4.8	8	38.1	10	47.6	4.24
9C	1	4.3	3	13.0	0	0	3	13.0	15	65.2	4.22
9J	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	28.6	15	71.4	4.71
10C	1	4.3	2	8.7	7	30.4	6	26.1	7	30.4	3.70
10J	2	9.5	1	4.8	8	38.1	2	9.5	8	38.1	3.62
11C	0	0	7	30.4	6	26.1	6	26.1	4	17.4	3.62
11J	0	0	3	14.3	8	38.1	6	28.6	4	19.4	3.52

X is calculated based on SD = 1, SA = 5

Contestants (N = 23)

Judges (N = 21; 2 did not complete form)

Item numbers are keyed to the questionnaire "III. YOUR OPINIONS" in the text. "C" refers to Contestant responses; "J" refers to Judge responses.

9. Student behavior motivated by the desire to gain an unfair competitive edge, such as distracting an opponent, should be considered an ethical violation.
10. A rhetorical forensics event should be regarded as rhetoric first and contest second. Topic, supporting material, and all other rhetorical choices should be aimed at enhancing the life of the individual, with the more significant considered as the more ethical, and vice versa.
11. A rhetorical forensics event should be regarded as an educational scholastic exercise first and a contest second. The only ethical standards to apply should be standards of scholarship (e.g., plagiarism rules).

The most striking result noted is the lack of clear consensus on most of the eleven items. Although over fifty percent of all respondents are in agreement (or disagreement) with the statements in seven of the eleven items, there are also substantial minority expressions in opposition to almost all of these majority opinions. Scaling the items on a 1-5 scoring system, with 3 representing neutral or no opinion, the mean score ranges from a low of 2.24 (Item 1J) to a high of 4.24 (Item 8J). Considering that over a third of all responses were either "1" or "5," and less than one-fifth were "3," this centering effect indicates a relatively strong division of opinion, rather than an overall neutral set of opinions.

Contestants and judges concur almost unanimously with Items 7, 8, and 9, each with over seventy percent of all responses in concurrence; and with Items 1, 4, 5, and 10, each with over fifty percent of all responses in concurrence.

Most respondents *disagree* with this statement: 1. Orations which promote, positive, universal human values (e.g., world peace) are more ethical than those which deal with narrowly focused problems and solutions (e.g., junior high school football injuries).

Most respondents *agree* with all the following statements:

4. It is unethical for a speaker to go much overtime.
5. It is unethical for a speaker listed in the middle of his speaking order to come late in order to speak last.
7. It is unethical for an orator to use more quoted material than allowed by the rules.
8. Fabricating evidence is the worst ethical violation a contestant can commit in a rhetorical forensic event.
9. Student behavior motivated by the desire to gain an unfair competitive edge, such as distracting an opponent, should be considered an ethical violation.

10. A rhetorical forensics event should be regarded as rhetoric first and contest second. Topic, supporting material, and all other rhetorical choices should be aimed at enhancing the life of the individual, with the more significant considered as the more ethical, and vice versa.

On the four remaining items, viz., Items 2,3,6, and 11, less than a majority of all respondents are in either agreement or disagreement, although there are fairly clear tendencies on them. These items read:

2. Orations which advocate specific solutions are more ethical than orations which analyze a problem without suggesting or supporting any given solution. (Over half of *judges* agreed.)
3. Extemporaneous speeches which furnish an unambiguous answer to the question are more ethical than those which do not. (Over half of *judges* disagreed.)
6. Orators should be held to the same evidence citation rules as debaters. (Over half of *judges* disagreed.)
11. A rhetorical forensics event should be regarded as an educational scholastic exercise first and a contest second. The only ethical standards to apply should be standards of scholarship (e.g., plagiarism rules.)

Possibly, some of these four items failed to achieve a majority of opinions because of large numbers of "Neutrals" marked. Twice as many disagreed with Item 2 as agreed with it; twice as many agreed with Item 11 as disagreed with it.

Discussion of Results. This article focuses on the implications of these findings for establishing an ethical framework for evaluating the proof used in speech contests.

It should be apparent that the specific items selected for the "Judgment Calls" and the "Your Opinion" instruments reflect contestant behavior within the three ethical contexts discussed in the initial sections of this article. That is to say, some items relate to an ethic of contest rules; some items relate to violations of academic scholarship; and some items relate to the ethics of rhetorical practices generally. What can be generalized about the findings within those three perspectives?

1. Contestants and judges alike subscribe to a *contest-oriented* ethical system, in both of the instruments used in this study. For instance, according to "Judgment Calls," all respondents feel that it is a definite ethical violation for a student to use the same informative speech for more than one year; and contestants especially feel it is a definite ethical violation for an extemp file to contain prepared speeches on topics likely to be drawn. These

opinions are consistent with the "N.F.A. Guidelines for Competition," which specify that, "No student may use the same speech or substantially similar speech for more than one school year," and that in extemporaneous events, "A student may not perform a memorized work, either of his own or another's authorship, in an extemporaneous event."

Within this contest-oriented perspective, the "Your Opinion" data also seem to reflect adherence to a competitive ethical framework. Highest agreement of all is on the sentiment that "Student behavior motivated by the desire to gain an unfair competitive edge . . . should be considered an ethical violation." High levels of agreement are also noted on the unethical nature of such practices as going overtime, coming in late in order to gain the final speaking position, and using more quoted material "than allowed by the rules." All of these behaviors appear to be bound to the contest situation. In another context, such actions might not be considered unethical at all.

Keep in mind that the ultimate criterion for evaluating performance within a competitive framework is pragmatic success, i.e., winning. Although a majority of respondents in this study agree that unsportsmanlike conduct of various types is unethical, a minority disagrees. Notice that 17 percent of the contestants actually disagree with the statement that behavior designed "to gain an unfair competitive edge" is unethical. Apparently for that group, gaining a competitive edge outweighs the consideration of fairness. Is there any doubt about how such a minority would treat a code of ethics?

2. Contestants and judges alike also seem to subscribe to an ethical system based on the rule of *academic scholarship*, though not always. On the "Judgment Calls" instrument, everyone condemns the contestant who uses a rhetorical criticism written by a scholar and published in a journal. This opinion is consistent with the "N.F.A. Guidelines for Competition," which specifies that, "A prepared speech must be authored by the student using the speech in competition. No student may perform a speech written by another student. No student may perform a work, essay, editorial, etc., from any other source as his own." On the direct issue of proof in the speech events, on the "Your Opinion" instrument, a large majority agree that fabricating evidence is the worst ethical violation a contestant can commit. In keeping with this sentiment, nearly all respondents feel that it is either questionable or a definite ethical violation for an orator to fabricate an illustration about a non-existent sister in a speech. Probably more would have agreed with Item 11 in the "Your Opinion" instrument, that "A rhetorical

forensics event should be regarded as an educational scholastic exercise first and a contest second . . ." if it deleted the part about "The only ethical standards to apply should be standards of scholarship . . ." At least one judge noted that he would have agreed with the first but not the second statement in the item, because after all, there are other ethical standards that also apply.

Yet some of the items related to academic ethics seem to attract little support. Over half of the judges *disagree* that orators should be held to the same evidence citation rules as debaters. (It is a fact, though not indicated on the questionnaire, that the AFA Code requires written evidence citations to meet the standards given in the MLA style guide for footnotes.) And, although over fifty percent of judges feel it is "questionable ethical behavior" for an extemporaneous speaker to borrow a debater's brief book after drawing the topic, *no* significant preference is indicated by the contestants on that item (Item 2J, "Judgment Calls").

3. Not much support is given to an ethical framework emanating from *rhetoric itself*. On the "Judgment Calls" instrument, contestants and judges felt strongly that it is not an ethical violation for an orator to advocate incest (Item 5). "Incest" was chosen as the object of this item because it is difficult to imagine a more universally repugnant type of human behavior. Of course, *advocacy* of incest is certainly not the same as *performance*; possibly respondents applied the American protection of free speech even to the advocacy of unethical behavior. Nevertheless, an oration advocating incest would seem not to enhance the quality of human life or its values (as explained by McGuire above), regardless of any legal right to free speech.

Also, on the same item about advocating incest, there were probably some respondents who do not believe that topics, ideas, or speech content generally have ethical relevance. In their view, rhetoric is amoral, no matter what is advocated.

Be that as it may, whether rhetoric is ethical or not, findings indicate a reluctance to apply ethics of rhetoric to forensic events. Although a majority of respondents *agree* with "Your Opinion" Item 10, that a rhetorical event should be regarded as "rhetoric first and contest second," they *disagree* that an oration about world peace is more ethical than one about junior high school football injuries (Item 1); and they were not clear as to whether an oration and/or extemporaneous speech should be ethically bound to provide a solution to the problem discussed/question drawn. (Judges, in particular, said yes to the former but no to the latter. Contestants were divided on both.) Apparently, appealing to the higher human values, and/or suggesting solutions to problems, do not necessarily

figure into an assessment of the ethical nature of speeches as rhetoric in forensic events.

To the extent that speech contests are actual samples of rhetoric, some tournament rules may inhibit the fulfillment of rhetorical ethics. The rule that a persuasive speech may not contain more than ten percent quoted material means that, in effect, the speaker must invent ninety percent of the oration from his own opinion and personal experience, which may or may not be the best available materials for persuasion. The rule that a contestant in extemporaneous speaking must prepare his speech on a current event within thirty minutes means that often the speech can be no more than superficially documented and analyzed. This is so because of the broad nature of some topics, and the inadequate level of the contestants' prior preparations to speak on any and all current events issues. There are other examples where ethical inconsistencies may be seen. In short, if forensic events are viewed as actual rhetoric, then the contest rules invite examination and revision to encourage the most ethical approach possible.

4. Contestants and judges demonstrate widely contrasting views about the ethical implications of the different forensic events. Coaches and their students especially need to have a talk about communication analysis. A likely explanation for the wide gulf between judges and contestants here is that contestants do not know what communication analysis or rhetorical criticism is. Contestants in the event should be aware that judges hold it in very high ethical esteem, contrary to their own view of it.

CONCLUSION

This has been a modest endeavor to find and articulate some of the basic principles governing the ethics of proof in forensic events. Admittedly, the discussion has ranged beyond the topic of proof in the events to a broader consideration of the events themselves. The findings suggest that any future code of ethics would probably gain wide acceptance if it began with a codification of contest rules. Applying scholarly objectives to contest rules would probably also be fairly well received. Finally, attempting to tie contest rules to a system of ethics of rhetoric would probably be misunderstood, and not very widely accepted. This is true because forensic events are primarily contests, and/or educational exercises to the contestants and judges who responded to this study. Considering contest speaking as actual rhetoric seems to be confusing or even unacceptable when it comes to applying ethical standards of judgment.

Two recommendations are suggested for future research in this

area. First, in view of the divergence of opinions among judges, among contestants, and between judges and contestants, individual events tournament directors should experiment with a judging philosophy booklet similar to the one produced for the National Debate Tournament and its regional qualifying tournaments. It might prove to be useful for contestants to have written statements of each judge's philosophy prior to competition.

Second, and more importantly, forensic educators should take a closer look at the paradigms and educational rationales underlying the practice of individual events. To pursue this objective, the National Forensic Association should consider a summer conference similar to the Sedalia conference or the more recent Alta conferences. On a less ambitious scale, but still an effective idea, seminars and workshops should be held at conventions and tournaments.

As long as forensic events are seen simply as competitive events, we should not expect the forensic community to advance towards establishing a practice, let alone a code, based on elevated rhetorical ethics. The only practical impact of ethics within a competitive perspective is to penalize contestants, such as subtracting speaker points or disqualifying a speaker for breaking contest rules in order to gain an unfair competitive edge. There is no corresponding reward for the speech contestant whose rhetoric enhances the quality of human life. In other words, being more unethical than others can cause a contestant to lose; but being more ethical than others does not necessarily help a contestant to win.

This situation must give forensic educators a measure of serious concern. Forensic education exists, and is supported by departmental budgets on the basis that the activities are somehow valid mechanisms for the study and expression of rhetorical skills.⁹ If this is not the aim of forensic activities, then what is? If this aim is not fulfilled, forensic educators must expect individual events to be submitted to the same critical scrutiny as debate, to justify receiving academic and fiscal support.

⁹This article focuses on specific original speaking events of a decidedly rhetorical character. These concluding remarks are not aimed at the dramatic, literary, interpretive reading events which have other educational rationales. My survey did not ask the respondents for their opinions on contest events other than those mentioned, and I take no position on the ethical aspects of oral interpretation, etc. here.

Judging Standards in Forensics: Toward a Uniform Code in the 80's

NORBERT H. MILLS*

Most directors of forensics have, at one time or another, been confronted by their students with statements concerning the lack of quality and the nature of judgments rendered them. Given the competitive nature of intercollegiate forensics, it seems safe to assume that this type of reaction will surface in students from time to time. Most forensic students strive hard to do the best they can, so a ballot of "6-70" or "4-Poor" is a bit difficult to accept. One of the educational benefits to be derived from intercollegiate forensic activities is the ability to receive, adjust to, and learn from criticism. Often the coach's response to the charges leveled by students is designed to placate the student. The end result is that the student is unhappy and the coach is not sure if anything has been learned.

Yet another insight into the above-mentioned student reactions is possible. Based on past experiences, this writer is forced to conclude that, in many cases, the students seem to have a legitimate claim in their charges. Comments on ballots are often unclear and incomplete. It does appear that judges don't understand the concepts of the speeches. How, it is asked, can a particular judge have missed such an obvious point? Why wasn't something written on the ballot? Situations like this lead to frustration for everyone involved. The question becomes "what do we have to do to satisfy all these people"? The answer is the old cliché "you can't please all of the people all of the time." While this conclusion has a degree of inevitability to it, we should never lose sight of the fact that "the critic-judge has the responsibility to insure that the decision rendered and the criticism promote the objectives of the activity."¹

NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Evaluating another's oral performance is difficult at best. It is a unique characteristic of man that he views things from his own set

**The National Forensic Journal*, 1 (Spring 1983), pp. 19-31.

¹James H. McBath, ed., *Forensics as Communication* (Skokie, IL: National Textbook Co., 1975), p. 25.

of perceptions. These perceptions are formulated by the individual's background, education, and experiences. No two forensic judges come from the same mold. Things will be reacted to differently, varying degrees of understanding/misunderstanding, emotion-alism/rationalism will appear on critique forms from different judges. This aspect of judging cannot be changed and surely should not be changed if we value the concept of audience adaptability. Further, this area is not the major area of concern regarding uniformity in judging forensic activities.

Most forensic coaches would agree that the forensic judge, whether trained in forensics or not, should have these minimum characteristics: honesty, a sense of responsibility, and an ability to suspend judgment on the subject matter being considered.² Judges possessing these traits, be they forensic coaches or lay people, are to be commended. It is probably safe to conclude that the vast majority of judges used in tournaments do, in fact, exhibit these characteristics. Unfortunately, this may not be enough. William D. Brooks commented on the importance of evaluation in forensics thusly:

An integral part of learning is evaluation and feedback. In the educational process we assume that evaluation is a rational act involving systematic analysis and judgment based on relevant criteria, and that evaluation should be fed back to the learner so that appropriate understanding and behaviors are positively reinforced and erroneous understandings and behaviors are corrected.³

The importance of Brooks' statement rests with the idea of relevant criteria. Faules, Rieke, and Rhodes further substantiate this importance when they observe that "the validity of a judgment depends largely upon the ability of the judge to understand what is being judged. This means that the judge must have knowledge about the criteria that he/she uses to arrive at the decision."⁴ If any degree of uniformity is to be realized, the area of judging criteria must become a major concern in forensics.

Reasons for differences in criteria for judging forensic events understandably exist. Certainly different measures of judgment are needed for each of the various classes of events. The three classes generally agreed upon in individual speaking events are: interpretation events, limited preparation events, and prepared

²McBath, p. 30.

³William D. Brooks, "Judging Bias in Intercollegiate Debate," *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 7 (Winter 1971), p. 197.

⁴Don F. Faules, Richard D. Rieke, and Jack Rhodes, *Directing Forensics: Contest and Debate Speaking*, 2nd. erf. (Denver: Morton Publishing Co., 1978), p. 249.

events. This article is concerned with the prepared events, namely: after dinner speaking, informative speaking, persuasive speaking, and rhetorical analysis.

The first area of concern in which basic differences emerge is in an individual coach's/judge's philosophy of what a particular event is supposed to accomplish. For what ends do each of the event categories exist? Based upon individual educational background, Coach A may have a different philosophical framework than Coach B regarding what persuasive speaking should be. Coach A may insist on much evidence (an argumentation approach) whereas Coach B may be more inclined to look for emotional appeals (a persuasive approach). The potential problem for the forensic student is clear. A contestant may score extremely well in one round and end up at the bottom of the next round, primarily for philosophical reasons over which the contestant has little control and probably no understanding.

The second area of concern is an offshoot of the first. In an effort to allow latitude for judges with varying philosophies, a "less prescriptive" ballot is frequently employed. This ballot asks the judge to do little more than rank and rate the speaker and offer whatever comments might be deemed appropriate. The result has been one universal ballot which is applicable to all events, regardless of the form of the event. While the original intent of this type of ballot is understood, judges often fail to apply their comments to their perceived purpose of the particular event. Thus, the learning experience is less than meaningful to the student.

Regional differences in what should be included in prepared events is a third area of concern. Several causes could probably be traced as to the reasons for this phenomenon. The fact that differing philosophies exist is one possibility. Another very practical reason is that tournament directors want to allow a degree of latitude in interpreting the nature of various events. Seemingly, this will allow for more creativity within a particular event category. Problems arise, however, as teams travel from region to region throughout the country. The ability to adjust from week to week in an effort to meet varying rules is difficult and frustrating when not accomplished. Compounding this problem has been the advent in the last ten years of the National Forensic Association and American Forensic Association national tournaments with their differing set of rules.

Evidence of the aforementioned regionally-oriented problems can be found by examining sample event descriptions as they appear in tournament invitations. Each of the previously cited prepared event will be scrutinized independently.

AFTER DINNER SPEAKING

According to Howe and St. Clair, this category was offered in 158 tournaments during the 1979-80 year.⁵ The event was described under four titles. This, in itself, presents no particular problem. The primary problem, as viewed by this writer, is the confusion surrounding what this particular event should entail. "Although most coaches would probably agree that he (the speaker) should entertain in some manner, they might well disagree on how the entertaining should be accomplished."⁶ The following are typical descriptions from tournament invitations:

After Dinner Speaking (5 to 8 minutes): Each contestant will present an original memorized speech which develops a significant serious point through the use of humor. An after dinner speech is not a string of jokes, even when the jokes are unified thematically. Wit and creativity are to be emphasized.

(Morehead State University,
Morehead, Kentucky: 1979)

After Dinner: Each contestant is to deliver an original speech to entertain. The speech should have a central idea and be more than a string of one-liners. It can be memorized or extemporized from notes. With or without visual aids. *Time Limit*: Five (5) to eight (8) minutes.

(Bowling Green State University,
Bowling Green, Ohio: 1979)

After Dinner Speaking: A speech designed to meet the criteria of good rhetoric appropriate to typical humorous speaking situations. Contestants should exhibit sound speech composition and direct communicative public speaking principles. Speeches which are essentially "presentational" rather than communicative are to be discouraged. The speech should not resemble a night club act or a popular television monolog. It should fit the criteria of "light, entertaining, and incisive" in composition, tone, and presentation. Any subject may be used, if it is in good taste. Maximum time limit is 8 minutes.

(University of Utah,
Salt Lake City, Utah: 1979)

After Dinner Speaking: Each contestant is to deliver a 7-10 minute speech designed to entertain. The speech should have

⁵Jack H. Howe and James St. Clair, ed., *Intercollegiate Speech Tournament Results*, 19 (Long Beach, CA, 1980), p. 98. ⁶Faules, Rieke, and Rhodes, p. 221.

a central unifying idea which may be stated early or which becomes apparent in the development of the speech. Wit and creativity are to be emphasized; the speech must not be simply a string of jokes. The speech must not have been used in competition prior to this school year.

(Appalachian State University,
Boone, North Carolina: 1979)

Perusal of the descriptions reveals several things: (1) the time limits vary from five to eight minutes in length to seven to ten; (2) the speech is to be original and not a string of one-liners; (3) wit and creativity are to be emphasized; and (4) the humor employed should be in good taste. Each of these rules seems simple enough until we try to define them. What is something that is original? Can no ideas be borrowed to enhance a point? What is good taste? If another judge is offended by a particular point, does that mean that I should also be offended or may my "warped" sense of humor reduce me to hysteria? One would be remiss if the question of what constitutes a monologue didn't surface for discussion. Webster defines monologue as "a long speech monopolizing conversation." For some reason, the concept of a monologue isn't supposed to apply to after dinner speeches, but isn't that exactly what a five to ten minute speech is? If we mean that the speech shouldn't take on characteristics of a Bob Hope or Johnny Carson presentation, then this should be clearly stated.

Without doubt, there are many answers to the questions raised and to many other issues not mentioned here. The point being emphasized here is that clarification regarding several points of the after dinner speaking category are needed. The forensic community can achieve a greater degree of uniformity in judging after dinner speaking only after it arrives at a clearer understanding of what the event should entail.

INFORMATIVE SPEAKING

This was the fourth most popular event during the 1979-80 season. It appeared in 190 tournaments.⁷ The informative speaking category also presents fewer problems than the other prepared events. Most of the descriptions are easily enough understood. Sample descriptions are:

Expository Speaking: An original, factual speech on a realistic subject to fulfill the general aim to inform the

⁷Howe and St. Clair, p. 97.

audience. Visuals may or may not be used to supplement and reinforce the message. Minimal notes are permitted. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes.

(American Forensic Association,
National Tournament: 1980-81)

Expository: An informative speech—with or without visual aids—which is intended to instruct an audience. 8-10 minute time limit.

(California State University,
Los Angeles: 1979)

Informative Speaking: (1) Each contestant will present a 5-8 minute original speech designed to inform the listener. Emphasis should be placed on a clear and interesting development of the speaker's central idea. (2) The speech should be delivered in an extemporaneous manner of speaking using limited notes. Visuals may or may not be used.

(Bradley University,
Peoria, Illinois: 1979)

Informative: Each contestant presents an original, factual speech which increases the listener's store of relevant, meaningful information. Sorry, no movie reviews or magazine-article condensations. Notes are permitted; visual aids encouraged. This should not be the "problem" stage of a persuasive speech. No more than 10% quoted material. Time limit: 6-8 minutes.

(Youngstown State University,
Youngstown, Ohio: 1979)

While this event presents noticeably fewer problems in judging, there are at least two areas of concern that must be acknowledged. The first area of concern is the difference in time limits. The times listed in the sample invitations range from five to eight minutes to a maximum of ten minutes. The differences in time limits can probably be traced to national tournament affiliations (American Forensic Association, National Forensic Association, Phi Rho Pi, etc.) or to other regional groups which influence a particular tournament host. Perhaps this presents no great problem, but why should a student go to great lengths to prepare a ten minute speech for the American Forensic Association National Individual Events Tournament (NIET) or for the Phi Rho Pi National Junior College Tournament and then be forced to cut the speech in order to make the eight minute time limit for the National Forensic Association Individual Events Nationals Tournament (I.E. Nationals)? If the

contestant chooses to give the same speech and goes overtime at the N.F.A. tournament, the contestant will very likely be penalized. Why can't the forensic community have uniform time limits? This would appear to be a minor point. If uniform judging is desired, uniform regulations for events are needed.

The second area of concern regarding informative speaking is admittedly a personal bias. It concerns the so-called "need to know." Does the topic under consideration need to be of "particular significance"? Does it have to be "deserving of greater understanding"? Most informative speeches are prepared with these thoughts in mind, and that's fine. What is wrong, however, with the student who chooses a topic only for the reason that it is personally interesting? Should all information be applicable in some significant way before it is worthy of consideration? The question becomes, should topics be chosen (and thus judged) strictly on the merits of their significance, or can students choose topics only because they are interesting and fun? The opinion set forth here is that this point needs serious consideration within the forensic community.

PERSUASIVE SPEAKING

In 1979-80 this event was offered at 226 tournaments under the title of persuasion or oratory.⁸ Most of the tournament descriptions are clear and yet a closer examination reveals potential problems.

Persuasion: An original problem-solution speech on a significant issue delivered from memory. Time limits: maximum 10 minutes, minimum 8 minutes. Limited notes permitted.

(Marshall University,
Huntington, West Virginia: 1980)

Persuasion: A speech whose purpose is to convince. A problem-solution approach should be taken. Notes permitted. 6-8 minutes.

(Niagara University,
Niagara Falls, New York: 1980)

Oratory: (Persuasive Speaking) The speech must be the original work of the student and should be persuasive or inspirational in nature. The speech should be memorized and

⁸Howe and St. Clair, p. 97.

no more than 10% of the material should be direct quotations.
Maximum time limit is 10 minutes.

(American Forensic Association
National Tournament: 1979-80)

Persuasive Speaking: 7-10 minutes. Each contestant will deliver an original speech to persuade on a significant subject. No speech may be used that has been used prior to the 1979-80 school year. Notes are permitted. Visual aids are permitted.

(Appalachian State University,
Boone, North Carolina: 1979)

Scanning the descriptions reveals that the time limits are not consistent from tournament to tournament. While each of the tournament directors probably had a viable reason for each of the different time limits, why can't a more uniform code be devised?

Further study illuminates an even more interesting problem, namely the intent of the speech. Two of the tournament invitations define the event as a problem-solution speech, the other two do not. Herein lies the biggest difficulty regarding uniformity in the event. What should the event entail? What should persuasion consist of? Which school of thought do we adhere to? Golden has said:

The college oration is a special form of public address designed for scholarly audiences and for contests for undergraduates in the art of oratory. In the main it is an advocate organizational pattern.⁹

Fifteen years ago this may have been true, but have we not modified the event in the intervening years to allow for greater flexibility? Should the event include speeches of inspiration, eulogy, or stimulation? It probably depends on how each individual coach chooses to define the category. That is precisely the point and the problem. The forensic community as a whole needs to determine more precisely what the event is intended to achieve.

The final concern is whether or not audience analysis should be a significant criterion. If recollection serves well, that is one of the teaching goals of this type of event. Who is the audience in the case of a forensic tournament round? Should the speech be geared to the judge(s) or to the other students in the round or to an imaginary audience set up in the tournament regulations? "A unique situation which confronts the persuasive speaker in forensics tournaments is

⁹James L. Golden, "Achieving Excellence in the College Oration," *The Speech Teacher*, 14 (September 1965), p. 184.

the inability to adapt the subject matter of the speech to the audience that will evaluate the speech."¹⁰

The danger of becoming too prescriptive is clear and any revisions in approaching these events should be done only after careful consideration. If we do, however, want greater latitude, then we also need to adjust the judging criteria to fit each of the possible approaches to the event.

RHETORICAL CRITICISM

It is with some trepidation that a discussion of this event is even attempted. Serious problems exist not only with the judging criteria but with the category itself. Space does not allow the investigation required, but the problems appear to be interrelated.

This event, while offered at 125 tournaments in 1979-80,¹¹ is always the smallest event in terms of the number of contestants who enter it. The difficult nature of the event is, no doubt, partly responsible. It is contended here that an equally important reason stems from the lack of clarity as to what the event is. Students and coaches alike shy away from a category which promises much work and a high degree of likelihood of being rejected anyway. In an attempt to save the concept of the event, we have altered it by changing the name to include more possibilities for analysis. Some examples are:

Communication Criticism: Each speaker will examine and analyze a speaker, speech, series of speeches, movement, or communication event or artifact (which includes cartoons, posters, movies, etc.). The purpose of the speech will be to demonstrate the significance of the communication form and analyze its structure, function, impact, etc. Visual aids may be used. The resulting speech should be a piece of criticism, not merely an informative speech on the proposed subject. Time limit: 7-9 minutes.

(Ohio Forensic Association: 1980)

Communication Analysis: Maximum speaking time: 10 minutes. The judge should give time signals, if requested by the speaker. Speeches of rhetorical analysis may be of a single speech, a single speaker, or the rhetoric of a social, political or religious movement, or a communication media; all are equally acceptable. The presentation may also include an

¹⁰Faules, Rieke, and Rhodes, p. 215.

¹¹Howe and St. Clair, p. 98.

historical or biographical examination of a published or electronically recorded (video or audio) speech or set of speeches or other communication devices, in order to contribute to an understanding of the speaker(s), speech(es), movement(s), or rhetorical method(s). Presentation may be from memory or manuscript or extemporaneously with or without notes. This event should be considered analogous to the presentation of a scholarly paper.

(Governor's Cup, California State University, Sacramento: 1980)

Rhetorical Criticism: An 8-10 minute speech which *analyzes* and *evaluates*, from established criteria, a significant speech or speeches by one person, a movement or a campaign. The content of the speech should be primarily analytical, rather than *descriptive*, with excerpts from the speech or speeches to illustrate the analysis. Delivery may be from memory, notes, or manuscript.

(Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana: 1979)

Communication Analysis: An original speech utilizing a particular method of critical analysis to analyze or explain a communication event such as a speech, speaker, movement, poster, song, advertisement, play, poem, painting, etc. Maximum: 8-10 minutes.

(California State University, Los Angeles: 1979)

Close reading of the above event descriptions raises questions too numerous to cover here, but some questions demand our immediate attention. First of all, is the event viewed as an event in criticism or analysis? Do some people view these terms as being synonymous? Is a speech which is primarily analytical also critical? Certainly the two can be the same, but are they? Are they meant to be the same?

Do we intend to expand the event to include so many things that it becomes unmanageable? The original intent of rhetorical criticism was to teach the student how to develop a critical methodology. Is that no longer the intent? If the end result is still to teach the students critical methodological approaches, perhaps we have compounded the problem by including so many communication event that it is virtually impossible to develop a satisfactory methodology (given the time frame of 7-10 minutes) that will satisfy most judges.

Along these same lines, there is no apparent agreement on what a

critical methodology is. Some judges don't accept Kenneth Burke's dramatic pentad. Others don't think that Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation is a methodology, while accepting Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis. Another question might be whether the generic movement study is a productive approach. While it is recognized that some of these issues fall under the realm of philosophical concerns, is it any wonder that students are reticent about competing in this event?

HIRED JUDGES

No discussion of judging criteria could be complete without examining the problems presented by hired judges. One forensic coach, who will remain anonymous, responded to an appeal for input for this article by saying "I personally hate to host tournaments because of judging." Those of us who host tournaments have some idea of what he refers to. In an effort to ward off some of the effects of the so-called "squirrel judge," some directors instituted the idea of using two judges per round. In theory the idea is great. But what has happened? As individual speaking events have gained popularity, so has the need for judges. Where do they come from? They are hired wherever possible. Some fit the mold of being qualified and some (too many it is argued) do not.

It stands to reason that persons not directly involved in intercollegiate forensics may not understand all procedures and events at a particular tournament. They often admit that they don't know what to look for in judging certain events. Some colleagues would argue that this is merely a way to ensure that they aren't used in future rounds. For some judges this may be true, but no one (in most cases) has forced these people to judge and certainly no one is forcing them to judge in the future if they choose not to judge. Rather than chastising such judges, which is often the case, the forensic community needs to educate them more fully to what is expected of them as judges. While there will always be differences of opinion, it makes sense that if a lay judge (who is judging with a forensic coach) and the forensic coach both possess a clearer understanding of what the event consists, then there will be a greater likelihood of uniformity regarding the reason for their decisions.

SOLUTIONS

Hard and fast solutions guaranteeing more uniformity in judging forensic events will not be easy nor will they appear magically overnight. There are, however, goals to strive for.

Nothing can ever guarantee, for example, that every forensic coach in the nation will agree philosophically as to what all the events should entail. In a very simplistic way, however, there is something that each coach can do to prepare that coach's students for the inevitable confrontation stemming from differing judging philosophies. Merely explaining various philosophical perspectives and approaches in advance of the tournament should prepare contestants to understand and perhaps more readily accept a coach's/judge's decision.

For the short-term, there is nothing preventing tournament directors from being more precise in the descriptions of the events and time limits they use. It would be helpful if the event-descriptions and time limits followed regional trends and if national tournament affiliates (American Forensic Association, National Forensic Association, Phi Rho Pi, etc.) were specified on the invitations. In this way teams that cross regional boundaries would understand the rationale behind events descriptions and time limits. There is nothing preventing directors from being more prescriptive regarding the observations and criticisms that they request on their tournament ballots. Meetings to educate hired judges could be instituted. Granted this is time consuming, but the results would hopefully warrant the time expended. Appropriate judge fees should be paid so that more qualified people (those holding baccalaureate degrees) would be encouraged to take time from busy schedules to judge.

It is also time for further research in the area of coach/judge versus the lay judge decisions. Some years ago such a study was conducted regarding debate judging.¹² A similar study is necessary to determine if lay judges are capable of judging the various individual events and what differences, if any, exist in their perceptions as opposed to coaches/judges.

Long-term results regarding uniformity in judging will demand more stringent measures. What is recommended here is the formulation of a task force committee similar to the 1974 National Developmental Conference on Forensics. The task force should represent all regions of the nation plus each of the national forensic organizations including honoraries. It should also consist of faculty and students. The function of this group would be to discuss and formulate criteria indicating the educational goals, purposes, and structural directions for each event. Once these directions have

¹²Arthur B. Miller, "Instruction of Debate Judges: A Case History," *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 6 (Winter 1969), pp. 24-26.

been determined, it would be possible to determine which form of judging ballot best reflects the criteria for each event. The criteria which would emerge from such a conference could then appear either on judging instructions or on the ballots themselves. It would be impossible for such a committee to serve in any but an advisory sense. Hopefully, however, the decisions arrived at by such a group could be filtered back to the regional, state, and local levels. Finally, national tournaments could be leaders in instituting this approach.

Many will view the above suggestions as radical and unnecessary. Others will claim that it forces too many restrictions and stifles creativity. Depending on the outcome of such a conference, this may or may not be the case. Much depends on the criteria which would emerge from the discussions. It would be necessary to alert forensic coaches throughout the country as to whom the representatives to such a conference would be. In that way, input could be offered by anyone so inclined before the conference began.

It behooves us as coaches of and participants in forensics to review the state of the field. Tremendous strides have been made regarding organizational frameworks and, in some cases, even budgets. The time has arrived to turn our attention to one of the basic ingredients of forensics—the educational feedback to be derived from the judge's ballot. If uniformity is what we seek, then the time has come to pursue a more prescriptive approach which more plausibly assures that end. The resulting uniformity would bring more clearly into focus those elements of forensics that directors, coaches, and students deem important.

SPECIAL TOPICS

Scheduling for Individual Events Nationals: The N.F.A. Experience in Developing Fairness Safeguards

DONALD F. PETERS*

During the Vietnam War era one of the many debates generated was a raucous dispute regarding what many people simply referred to as the "Draft." The nexus of the disagreement was not whether the United States needed a "Draft," but how we could best meet the "manpower" needs of our nation's military establishment.

Opponents in the debate over the draft could usually be divided into two groups: 1) those favoring a selective service or 2) those favoring a lottery system. A short historical view of the major contentions of those favoring the latter system will provide overarching principles of *fairness* and *equity* which can be applied to forensic competition, especially at the national championship level.

Those who favored the lottery system of selecting draftees opted for this position on the basic premise that everyone had an *equal opportunity* to be selected for military service based upon an item of *pure chance*, namely the individual's date of birth. Thus merging "equality of opportunity" with a "pure chance" situation was viewed as the "fairest" way to select our military personnel.

The question explored in this article is whether the same two part "system" of fairness can be applied to national level forensic competition. This author believes that the answer to that question is not only "yes" but *emphatically* "yes" when additional factors are included in the final equation. It is further argued that such fairness guarantees are the goal of the National Forensic Association's Individual Events Nationals Tournament. Finally, it is the conclusion of this article that the goal of fairness is being met.

From the contestant's point of view, there are certain equity guarantees which the tournament directors must meet and additional chance situations which remain sacrosanct. Remembering

**The National Forensic Journal*, 1 Spring 1983), pp. 33-42.

This article was originally presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, in November 1982 and has been revised for publication here.

that everyone should have the same chance to meet anyone else at a tournament, let me proceed to indicate how "total fairness" is provided at the N.F. A.'s Individual Events Nationals Tournament.

The first process which must be accomplished is the assignment of a contestant number to each competitor in each event. Each student is assigned a seven digit number for each event entered. The first three digits are always the same for each contestant and indicate the contestant's college affiliation; the last four digits indicate the contestant's specific number for any given event. The college numbers (which are never published and do not appear on any schedule other than the master schematic) are determined by the order of the receipt of the entries by the office of the executive-secretary of N.F.A. Thus, college 001 is the first to enter the tournament with the higher numbers assigned to those colleges whose registration forms are mailed later. Thus, when the entry is mailed, how long that entry takes to arrive via the U.S. Postal Service channels, and how a secretary drops the entries on the N.F.A. executive-secretary's desk determine the first three digits of the contestant number.

The college's entry is entered into the master book of competitors *in the same order they are listed by the contestants' coaches on the entry form*. This listing is subsequently the main determinant in the assignment of the four digit event number for each contestant. Realizing that tournament management necessitates a certain orderliness to maintain control, such a numbering system assures an equal chance of receiving any given number while selecting that number through avenues of chance. This number assured, the contestants are now guaranteed total anonymity. Once the tournament has begun, this number removes any potential judge bias which might surface.¹ The judge does not know whether the

¹*Editor's note:* In the early years of the Individual Events Nationals Tournament the four digit contestant code was assigned *exactly* as the three digit college code was assigned. Namely, the first college's contestants (college 001) were assigned event number in sequence. Thus, if college 001 had five extemporaneous speakers (Extemporaneous Speaking being the first event of the tournament), those speakers would become 1001, 1002, 1003, 1004, and 1005. The same code assignments were made in the same order for the other eight events of the tournament. After several years with this process, it was observed that such a uniform assignment of codes across all nine events could possibly disclose a contestant's college team and had "name recognition," one could extrapolate that Duo Interpretation team 9001 was from the same team even if they didn't have "name recognition." To avoid this problem contestant codes are now assigned in order of college number; however, each event begins with a different college. Thus, Duo Interpretation 9001 might begin with the first entry from college 089 with four digit codes assigned in order to the end, then continuing from

speaker is from Michigan, Colorado, Iowa, or for that matter, from District V or District VIII (the American Forensic Association's National Individual Events Tournament also assigns four digit contestant codes; however, the first numeral of the four digit code indicates which District the contestant is from).

At this point in the scheduling process fairness criteria have been strictly followed. The next major step is to schedule the tournament events. To schedule the events, a six by six grid is used for every six sections of contestants (see Illustration 1). Given six speakers to a section, if there are 216 contestants entered in Extemporaneous Speaking, they will fit into 36 sections. Those 36 sections are broken down further into six consecutive grids.² *NOTE:* The term "grid" as used in this article refers to one six-section segment of the schematic which can accommodate 36 contestants.

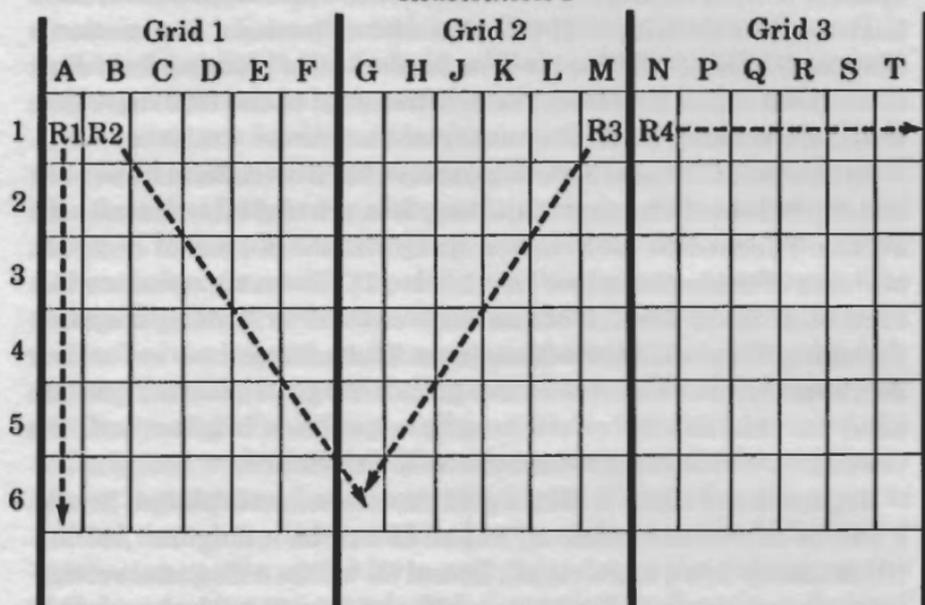
Regardless of where within a grid the contestant is placed, Round I will be the vertical section, Round II will be a diagonal section (from the top down to the right), Round III will be a diagonal section (from the top down to the left), and Round IV will be the horizontal section. Given this form of scheduling within a grid, the number of speakers from one college who can be placed in any one grid without meeting a team member is five. The following example will demonstrate this limitation:

Using the grid in Illustration 2, contestants on the same team have been placed in positions A-1, B-3, and C-5. By lining out where they will compete in all four rounds (by drawing horizontal, vertical, and two diagonal lines) only four open or free positions remain, namely, D-2, E-2, E-4, and F-4. Both E-2 and E-4 cannot be used as it would create a conflict in Round I. Both D-2 and F-4 cannot be used because there would be a conflict in Round II. Therefore, either D-2

college 001 through college 088. Thus "guaranteed total anonymity" was not entirely the case in the early years of the Individual Events Nationals Tournament. Now, however, the initial contestant code for each event begins at a different college number thus assuring greater anonymity. Finally, "name recognition" will always be a factor that mitigates "guaranteed total anonymity."

²*Editor's note:* For purposes of illustration the author has assumed that the events illustrated have been entered in increments of 36 (complete grids). Obviously, there is a one in 36 chance of this occurrence; additionally there is a one in six chance that the total entry in an event will be divisible by six. Thus, the last grid in an event is usually an incomplete grid and anywhere from one to five sections in an event will have only five speakers scheduled. These variables lead to different scheduling problems that go beyond the scope of this article. The problems created by incomplete grids and five-speaker sections have been identified and resolved to achieve the "fairness safeguards" that this author is describing.

Illustration 1



Sections are lettered always omitting I and O.

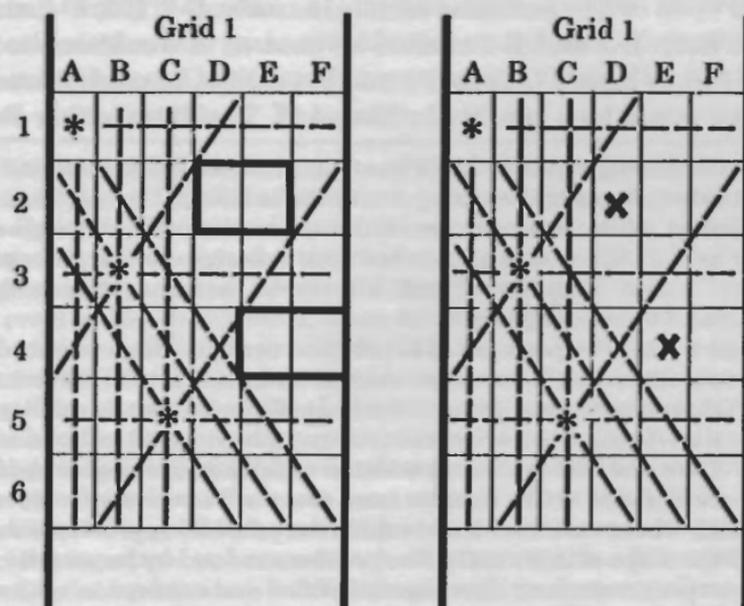
Speaker positions are numbered 1 through 6.

Grid 1 = Sections A through F

Grid 2 = Sections G through M

Grid 3 = Sections N through T

Illustration 2



and E-4 or E-2 and F-4 may be used for a maximum of five contestants per grid, per college team.

Illustration 2 indicates how five contestants from the same college can be placed in one grid without having them face each other in any of the four preliminary rounds. To place ten students from the same college in two grids, the speakers in the second grid would be placed in positions H-2, J-4, K-6, L-1, and M-3. This can be visualized in Illustration 3.

Illustration 3
Placing 10 Speakers in 2 Consecutive Grids

	Grid 1						Grid 2					
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	L	M
1	*											*
2				*				*				
3		*										*
4					*				*			
5			*									
6											*	

Returning to the original example: 216 contestants, 36 sections of six speakers each—that is exactly six grids. How then are speakers placed on that schematic? Once again, a combination of chance and procedure assures each contestant an equal chance of appearing anywhere on the grid and, thus, an equal opportunity to meet any of the other contestants, except team members, in the four preliminary rounds.

The procedure the National Forensic Association has adopted, again dictated by the need for order, is to assign the largest entry first. For example, assume two colleges have identical sized entries of 13 contestants from colleges 001 and 099. A *bunching technique* could be employed. This would place five contestants from college 001 in Grid 1 and four each in Grids 2 and 3. This would then be repeated in Grids 4, 5, and 6 for college 099 (see Illustration 4). The

Illustration 4
Bunching Technique

	Grid 1						Grid 2						Grid 3						Grid 4						Grid 5						Grid 6						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	BB	CC	DD	EE	FF	GG	NH	JJ	KK	LL	MM	
1	001 1									001 9			001 10					099 1												099 9	099 10						
2		001 4						001 6						001 12						099 4						099 6										099 12	
3			001 2											099 11						099 2												099 11					
4					001 5				001 7							001 13						099 5					099 7						099 13				
5						001 3															099 3																
6										001 8																			099 8								

For purposes of this illustration a four digit contestant code is not listed. Rather, the contestants are numbered 1 through 13.

bunching technique successfully places the two largest entries onto the schematic without any speaker from either of the colleges facing any of their team members. Upon closer examination, however, the *bunching technique* violates one of the dicta of fairness. The schematic has been so arranged that no student from college 001 will meet any student from college 099 in the preliminary rounds. This violates the criterion that each contestant should have an equal opportunity to meet every other contestant within the event.

A more equitable way of assigning contestants and a method that has been used by the National Forensic Association since its 1976 Individual Events Nationals Tournament at California State University, Los Angeles will now be explained. For want of a better name, it may be called the *spread technique*. In this process every team entry is spread as far across the schematic as is mathematically possible. Thus college 001 would have three contestants in Grid 1 and two each in Grids 2 through 6. College 099 will have two contestants in Grids 1 through 5 and three contestants in Grid 6. The assignment of three contestants from college 001 in Grid 1 and three contestants from college 099 in Grid 6 is an arbitrary decision to avoid filling Grid 1 faster than the other grids and to prevent contestants from a college with only one entry in this event from having an equal opportunity to be assigned in Grid 1. The *spread technique* schematic appears in Illustration 5. Under this system contestants from the largest entry colleges appear across the total schematic giving them (and all others) an equal opportunity of meeting each other. This process of assignment is continued with the next largest entry in the event being spread across the schematic until the entire schematic is filled and cross checked for future round conflicts. Then the process moves to the next stage, the assignment of judging panels.

The assignment of judging panels provides another way to assure fairness to contestants. Several rules are followed by those individuals assigning judges that add to the "fairness quotient."

The rules are:

1. No two judges from the same college may form a panel.
2. No judge may judge a contestant in the same event more than once in preliminary rounds.
3. No two judges may judge together more than once in preliminary rounds.
4. No hired judge may judge a student from the host college.

1. *No two judges from the same college may form a panel.* This rule should be obvious given the perennial comments about

Illustration 5
Spread Technique

	Grid 1					Grid 2					Grid 3					Grid 4					Grid 5					Grid 6																
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	J	K	L	M	N	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	BB	CC	DD	EE	FF	GG	HH	JJ	KK	LL	MM						
1	001												001						001																		001					
2	099						001						099						099						001												099					
3																									099												001					
4	099												001						099																							
5							099																		001																	
6																																										

For purposes of illustration a four digit contestant code is not listed. Rather, the contestants are numbered 1 through 13.

regional differences of emphasis in judging not to mention the perceptions (even if ill-founded) that a certain college's judges are biased against students from certain other colleges or certain other geographical regions.

2. *No judge may judge a contestant in the same event more than once.* This is an ideal which the National Forensic Association believes it has accomplished. To understand how easy this is to accomplish one need recall that Rounds II, III, and IV flow from the Round I schematic. For example, if Judge Smith judges Extemporaneous Speaking in Round I, Section M, the contestants which Judge Smith has judged will appear in Round II in Sections G through M. Thus Smith is free to judge any other section with the assurance that the same speakers will not be judged again. So, let us assume that Smith judges Section P. In Round III, Smith's Round I contestants will appear in Sections M through S and Smith's Round II contestants will appear in alternating Sections from P through Z. Smith can freely judge any other sections. The creation of an index card with arrows for Round II (six sections to the left of Round I) and two index cards with arrows for Round III (six sections to the right of Round I and sections one through eleven, odd only, to the right of Round II) permits those assigning judges the certainty that they are not violating Rule 2.

Since Round IV flows from the original Round I schematic on the horizontal, it is nearly impossible to pinpoint where the contestants Smith has judged will appear on the schematic. It is at this juncture that judges switch events and thus any Round IV problems of judge assignment are eliminated. If Smith has judged three rounds of Extemporaneous Speaking, Smith can plan on judging Prose Interpretation in Round IV. (When events are triple-bracketed as is usually the case with Informative Speaking, After Dinner Speaking, and Rhetorical Criticism, the situation is easier for those who assign judges. An individual judges the same event in Rounds I and II and then moves on to the other two events in that bracket for Rounds III and IV).

3. *No two judges may judge together more than once in preliminary rounds.* This rule is easy to follow because the master judge assignment book lists by round each event the judge has been assigned to, the section the judge has been assigned to, and the judging pair. Thus a glance of the eye on the part of the personnel assigning judges prevents the same judging panel from recurring.

4. *No hired judge may judge a student from the host school.* This rule is controversial but, this author believes, the weight of the evidence falls in favor of the rule. If contestants perceive that judges hired by the host college are: A) from the host college, or B)

know the contestants from the host college, or C) could find out who the host college contestants are, then it is best to avoid using those judges in sections where there are contestants from the host college.³ Once again, this is an easy task since all colleges have a unique three digit identification code.

When this task is completed, the schedule is ready to go to the printer but not before other safeguards to enhance "fairness" for all are implemented. Among the more salient are these fairness guidelines:

1. Typists are instructed to scramble the speaking order of contestants in Rounds II and III on the printed schedule.⁴
2. Extemporaneous Speaking topics are prepared by round by speaker position but are given to a clerical worker to determine which topics will actually be assigned to which speaker positions.
3. Impromptu topics are approved as a group in advance of the tournament. They are inserted into the judges' envelopes at the ballot desk, in full view of anyone who wishes or cares to watch. They are face down and are dealt into the envelopes randomly. Thus any contestant has the same chance to get any given extemporaneous or impromptu topic as does the next contestant.

The system utilized by the National Forensic Association for the scheduling of its Individual Events Nationals Tournament is always open to change. It was modified in 1976 at California State University, Los Angeles and again in 1981 at Western Kentucky University. This indicates that the Executive Council of the National Forensic Association is not yet convinced of the perfection of the system. Not unlike the advocates of the lottery system for the draft a decade ago, the N.F.A. is continually striving to create the best system to assure equality of opportunity or fairness to all contestants at the Individual Events Nationals Tournament. Hopefully, as members of the N.F.A., we will be the first to recognize the inadequacies of the system and the most willing to improve an already strong system into something even better.

³*Editor's note:* The majority of the judges hired by the Individual Events Nationals Tournament each year are contacted or contracted by the host college.

⁴This avoids "freezing" contestants in the same speaking order for Rounds I, II, and III. If this scrambling did not occur, there is some empirical evidence to suggest that the first and last speakers could have a decided advantage over speakers in positions two, three, four, and five. This also guarantees that the four extemporaneous speakers from the same college (see Illustration 5) do not all appear in the same speaker position, but are distributed more evenly and will receive different topic assignments.

INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Report on the Action Caucus on Oral Interpretation in Forensic Competition

HAL H. HOLLOWAY, JOHN ALLEN, JEANINE RICE BARR,
THOMAS COLLEY, CAROLYN KEEFE, JAMES A. PEARSE,
and JAMES M. ST. CLAIR*

Webmaster's note: This version includes the corrections noted in the errata section on page 148 of Vol. 1, no. 2.

An action caucus was held on November 5, 1982 at the Speech Communication Association Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, to seek common criteria for the presentation and judging of oral interpretation of prose and poetry in forensic tournaments. This report includes summaries of prepared statements made to express opinions about the status of oral interpretation performance and evaluation and encourage exploratory thinking, a precis of a following two hour discussion of problems and possible solutions, and a list of recommendations or suggestions proffered during the meeting.

PREPARED COMMENTS

"Aiming for Consistency": James M. St. Clair and Thomas Colley

The most important decision concerning oral interpretation pertains to judging philosophy: should the critic judge a presentation by what it ought to be or by what it is? A critic trained in oral interpretative reading knows that there are certain important standards in the field which are almost always violated by the most successful interpretation contestants. Is it then fair and just to judge such speakers by those academic standards, or should the performances be judged by what has become conventional in competitive interpretative reading? Until a clear and stated decision is made by or for all judges, there will continue to be inconsistency in judging. The basic cause of inconsistent judging is that there is no real agreement on how to coach interpretation. We who train the students have different approaches to the event, some of which actually violate the stated rules of the event.

Interpretation rules, even in Duo Interpretation, often specify that this is not an acting event. When we listen to the contestants,

**The National Forensic Journal*, 1 (Spring 1983), pp. 43-58.

however, we quickly discover that many coaches no longer consider that rule in preparing students. An outsider to forensics, called in to judge, quickly senses that competitive interpretation has conventions that differ from oral interpretation theory. Dr. Colley was one such outsider now active in forensics.

"Oral Interpretation in Forensics": Thomas Colley

My graduate degrees are in theatre (acting and directing), with a minor in oral interpretation. I have always viewed acting and oral interpretation as related, but different arts. The distinction, as I understand it, can best be summarized in the phrase: an actor represents, an interpreter presents. The consequence of this distinction, in performance, is essentially one of relative distance. The actor is viewed by the audience as a person to be watched, observed from the distance. The actor shows. In contrast, the interpreter is close to the audience, one of them actually. By remaining part of the audience the interpreter shares with the audience the experience of the literature. Rather than show, the interpreter suggests. The visions, the things to be seen, are all in the imaginations of the audience.

I had been teaching acting and oral interpretation for nearly ten years before I had my first experience as an oral interpretation judge at a forensic tournament. I must admit that I walked away from that first experience confused and feeling as though I needed to reexamine my ideas about oral interpretation.

The things I observed in that first experience were repeated in subsequent judging assignments. In brief, this is what I observed:

1. *Homogeneity* — The competitors all sounded the same. I have the clear impression that there is a standard vocal and physical attack that is recommended to the students. They all used a standard vocal and physical attack: the same resonant tones, the same pace and rate, the same whole body movements to support transitions, and the same head-high, sober expression, direct gaze. The only distinction from one to the other was in terms of humor or its absence. Judging was reduced to a matter of technique, degree of slickness.

2. *Distance* — Probably the thing I found most distracting was the sense of performance, or distance. While judging I have had the clear impression that the objective of the oral interpreters was to *show* emotions. The students seemed to be oriented toward demonstrating to me that they understood the thoughts and feelings in the piece and that they could experience them while reading the literature. I felt like an outsider, a distant observer

watching somebody pretending to think and feel some things for the sake of the demonstration.

3. *Memorization* — I am fully aware that memorization can occur accidentally from using the same piece of literature for several tournaments. The overwhelming majority of memorized selections, however, suggested to me that there had been an effort expended to memorize the selection(s). The manuscript in hand became a convention, a prop, a signal intended to show me that this was supposed to be oral interpretation.

4. *Acting* — When an oral interpreter is reading a piece of literature written in the first person, one of the big difficulties the interpreter faces is staying in the realm of suggestion. In the majority of the forensic selections I heard which were written in the first person, the reader either failed to avoid the mistake of literal vocal and physical impersonations or set out to read the piece in that way. In either case, the consequence was acting rather than oral interpretation.

5. *General Impressions* — Overall, I tend to come away from oral interpretation rounds with a feeling of having heard a series of contrived readings. The aim of the readers seems to be to display facility. On those grounds, the readings tend to be quite good.

The trouble is that the focus seems to have become misdirected. Oral interpretation is an art. Like any other art, it is, in essence, an act of communication. In the act of communication, the content of the message is the important thing, not the techniques used to deliver the content. Technical display is not art.

Oral interpretation is the art of eliciting in the mind of a listener the imagistic, intellectual, and emotional potential of a piece of literature through the subtle and appropriate use of voice and body. A good oral interpreter should be able to cause the listeners to build images; the good oral interpreter should be able to weave a spell without the use of vocal or physical gymnastics or devices outside the self. When I listen to oral interpretation, I am not nearly as concerned with technical skill as I am with sincerity, clarity, and sharing.

I believe that some changes should be made in the way oral interpretation events are coached. The most important thing is for the coaches and competitors to keep in mind that oral interpretation is an art. Not only that, they must keep their focus on the things that this particular art can do which other arts cannot. Fundamentally, the uniqueness of oral interpretation is that it is a co-creative experience involving the author, the reader, and the audience. Each makes an important contribution. The author provides the initial direction, the interpreter offers perceptions, and

the audience provides the stage. The unique province of oral interpretation is the imagination. The oral interpretation competitors must be coached to focus on sharing, on contributing to the collective experience of the literature with the audience by never becoming separate from that audience, by remaining always a part of the audience for that piece of literature.

"Conclusion": Hal H. Holloway

If you accept Dr. Colley's perception of what oral interpretation should be in forensics, or even if you do not accept it, I contend that you must conclude that any inconsistencies in judging oral interpretation begin with those who coach interpretive reading. A majority of judges are active coaches who presumably impress their approaches to reading onto their students. If we as coaches cannot agree about what oral interpretation should be, then we certainly cannot complain that judging is inconsistent. Consistency begins with the product itself, not the evaluation of it. There must be agreement once and for all on the issue of whether interpretive reading is to be interpretation in the academic sense, or acting with manuscript in hand. That a choice be made is even more important than what the choice is if the goal is consistent judging.

"Is Uniformity Possible in Judging Oral Interpretation?"

Jeanine Rice Barr

In order to standardize judging for the forensic events in oral interpretation, it will be necessary to determine a standard definition of terms. Considering the wide range of opinion in the field of interpretation, I wonder if this is possible. Consider the following definitions which are not meant to be a thorough literature search, but rather a sampling of the variety of definitions offered in popular textbooks used in teaching the art of oral interpretation. ". . . [interpretation may best be defined as the study of literature through the medium of oral performance."¹ "Oral Interpretation, as we are using the phrase, refers to selection, preparation, and oral performance of the written word — a process that is much richer in experience than what you may have known as 'oral reading.'² "Interpretation is the art of communicating to an audience a work

¹Wallace A. Bacon, *The Art of Interpretation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p. 6.

²Carolyn A. Gilbert, *Communicative Performance of Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), p. 1.

of literary art in its intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic entirety."³ "Interpretive reading is discovering — discovering your perceptions of the meaning in the author's recorded experience and then finding means for performing that discovery, with all its dramatic immediacy, so that the audience may feel and respond to the author's truth."⁴ *Interpretation is an artistic process of studying literature through performance and sharing that study with an audience.* The three basic ingredients of the interpretation process are: a performer (you), a piece of literature, and an audience. "⁵I ask you, is a common definition possible?

The questions I am raising come from academic training and teaching oral interpretation in the classroom setting, directing Reader's Theatre productions, and coaching oral interpretation for forensics for the past fifteen years. The state of the field cannot be ignored. The most recent books lean more and more toward *becoming* the persona of the narrator and characters. A Speech Communication Association convention panel, "*Reader's Theatre versus Reader's Theatre*," proved the point to me quite clearly. Where does interpreting stop and acting begin, or does it? I personally feel we may lose the art of interpretation completely, that loss may be unavoidable. This issue alone causes considerable confusion in forensic competition.

Another major issue that needs to be discussed is the process of interpretation in the competitive setting. While approaches vary, the majority of definitions of interpretation do include 1) the literature, 2) the performer or communicator, and 3) the audience. As I have listened to round after round of prose and poetry over the years, I have found myself wondering — are we encouraging only the performance aspect, while negating the literary study and audience participation that completes the process? How much actual analysis is involved in preparing a selection for competition? As coaches, I know we could put much more emphasis on understanding the literature. How much audience feedback is given the performer during the round? The judge is usually writing most of the time so eye contact is difficult. If there are other competitors in the room at all (so often they are running the pentathlon race), they are more concerned with their own performance than they are with

³Charlotte I. Lee and Timothy Gura, *Oral Interpretation*, 6th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), p. 3.

⁴Louise M. Scrivner and Dan Robinette, *A Guide to Oral Interpretation: Solo and Group Performance*, 2nd. ed. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1980), p. 4.

⁵Judy E. Yordon, *Roles in Interpretation* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1982), p. 12.

giving feedback. This does not give the performer much to respond to, does it?

Some schools have stopped competing in oral interpretation and have moved toward the festival concept. Edwin Cohen describes the tournament setting as a phenomenon of the 50's and 60's.⁶ Yet many of us continue to view it as valid today and encourage our students to continue competing. Can we define valid objectives for competition in oral interpretation? If so, we must communicate these objectives both in the academic discipline of oral interpretation and on the forensic circuit.

Finally, I believe we must take a good look at ourselves — as coaches and as judges. Are we qualified? Are the people we hire to judge qualified? Should standards be set for judges? Most of us who coach forensics had specific academic backgrounds in speech communication. Using my own background as an example, I have studied rhetoric, persuasion, and oral interpretation, and continue to teach these areas so I am aware of the latest insights in these fields. However, it has been twelve years since I taught argumentation and coached debate. I would not want to step into a round of C.E.D.A. (Cross Examination Debate Association) debate as a judge today. Conversely, I have talked with many debate judges who do not even like, much less understand, prose, poetry or dramatic interpretation. In the past few years, we have seen a rise in the number of students who return to the circuit as judges for their alma mater. After four years of competition many are very competent. However, I question the validity of a ballot from someone I know for a fact never competed in oral interpretation. Should judges, both coaches and former students, be screened in any way? Or should guidelines be established by the National Forensic Association and/or tournament directors?

I sincerely hope that those of us who are committed to forensics can make some decisions as a result of this action caucus. I have covered the major issues as I see them in an attempt to generate discussion. I hope we will all talk about these and other issues that need addressing: Competition in oral interpretation will only be as good as we are!

Some Questions to Generate Discussion:

1. *Can those of us who consider speech our academic discipline agree on a common definition of oral interpretation?*
2. *Is oral interpretation suggesting, becoming, or something else (the old interpreting versus acting argument)?*

⁶Edwin Cohen, *Oral Interpretation: The Communication of Literature* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1977), p. 15.

3. *How flexible are we willing to be? Are we as informed as we should be about the latest thinking in the field? Or are we rigidly clinging to our old ideas?*
4. *Is the art of interpretation served by forensic activity? How specifically? Conversely, is the tournament setting valid for the art of interpretation?*
5. *Do we as judges provide the students with the audience necessary for completing the interpretive process?*
6. *Do we as coaches encourage our students to study the literature or are we encouraging the performance skills approach only?*
7. *Do coaches have the responsibility to be academically qualified to judge all forensic events or should we specialize in our academic areas? What problems will this cause for tournament directors?*
8. *If we can define and standardize oral interpretation in the forensic setting, how do we bring those teams which are either without coaches or coached by professors in other disciplines into the mainstream?*
9. *Should we set standards for graduate student judges? (Example: They may only judge in those events which they competed in at a national tournament.)*
10. *What problems will be caused for tournament directors by the ideas we generate?*

"An Inductive Examination of Seventy-Two Ballots":
Carolyn Keefe

When discussing the matter of "Developing Common Criteria for Presentation and Judging of Oral Interpretation" it seems only reasonable to ask, "What criteria are *now* being used by the judges of oral interpretation?" One way to answer this question is to examine the ballots written for competitors on the intercollegiate forensic circuit.

My report provides the data I obtained from an inductive examination of seventy-two ballots, thirty-six from poetry readers and thirty-six from prose readers. These were selected randomly and supplied by Suzanne Larson of Humboldt State University (California), Butch Maltby of Bethel College (Minnesota), Irene Ziegler of Old Dominion University (Virginia), and myself (Pennsylvania), with equal numbers of ballots representing the West, Midwest, and the East.

Summarized below, arranged in descending order of frequency, is a categorization of the comments written by the judges. In each case the figure indicates the number of ballots mentioning that

particular category. No single category was tabulated twice for any one ballot. None of the ballots, it should be pointed out, carry any criteria mandated by a particular college or forensic association.

Vocal Response.....	50
Introduction/Transitions	39
Material/Selections.....	31
Characterization.....	30
Bodily Response, including	
Posture and Movement	22
Timing/Pacing	16
Command of Material.....	13
Character Placement/Eye	
Contact	13
Feeling/Mood	10
Theme	8
Number of Selections	4
Length of Program	4
Empathy.....	3
Acting versus Interpreting.....	3
Energy Level	2
Attire/Artifacts	2
Order of Selections	1
Poise	1
Adaptation to Room.....	1
Purpose of Author	1

Several conclusions emerge from this inductive analysis of oral interpretation ballots?

1. The judges make more than twice as many comments about vocal response than they do about bodily response, although both categories rank in the top five of the twenty categories.
2. Not all the categories are discrete. Characterization, for instance, subsumes at least vocal response, bodily response, timing/pacing, character placement/eye contact, and feeling/mood. When developing criteria it is preferable that each criterion represent a distinct behavior so that the student will be able to identify the behavior, or lack of it, that prompted each comment.
3. While acting versus interpreting is often a conversation subject at tournaments, it appears on only three ballots. If these ballots are typical, then this long-contested issue is not an important basis for judgment.
4. No category is mentioned on every ballot, not even the delivery components of vocal response and bodily response. The author's purpose, which is essential to literary analysis, appears on only a single ballot. On the average each ballot addresses only 3.5 of the above categories.

I am convinced of the need for carefully formulated criteria that would enable oral interpretation judges to make consistent rankings and ratings and at the same time would clearly specify for interpreters the behaviors that their evaluators found wanting or not.

"Evaluating Literature-in-Performance at a Competitive Event: Can It Be Done?" John J. Allen

What is the province of evaluation/criticism, and how can we apply some flexible standards when judging competitive oral interpretation? Beverly Whitaker Long supplies this definition of evaluation as it applies to performed literature:

Evaluation may be defined as a judgment, an exercise in normative discourse . . . , noting the worth or value of a performance. Judgments appear in good, bad, or neutral "notices," citations or defamations, a win or loss . . . In a contest or a festival it is commonly a ranking or a rating . . . Ideally and foremost, an evaluation assists the student. First it identifies the performance: it clarifies what happened and then it extends the possibilities for both the performer's and the listener's engagement with a particular literary text. The immediate goal in evaluating performances is to help students understand the extent to which they have realized the experiences in particular texts. A more far-reaching goal is to indicate how students can develop further: i.e., where they can reasonably expect other performances — including their own — to lead them in experiencing literature.¹

Adopting this as a general guideline, the key phrase is "an evaluation assists the student." Similarly, Elbert Bowen wrote that criticism contributes to others' thinking, partly through discussion,² while Wilma Grimes has called the teacher of oral interpretation a "go-between" between the average reader and the literary artist,³ and Ms. Long has suggested that evaluators are arbitrators between textual understanding and delivery techniques.⁴

Beverly Whitaker Long, "Evaluating Performed Literature" in *Studies in Oral Interpretation*, Vol. 1, Esther M. Doyle and Virginia Hasting Floyd eds. (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, N.V., 1972), pp. 267-268.

²Elbert R. Bowen, "A Quarter-Century of Collegiate Oral Interpretation Festival-Going," *Communication Education*, 25 (Spring 1958), pp. 127-131.

³Wilma Grimes, "Oral Interpretation and Criticism," *Western Speech*, 22 (Spring 1958), p. 69.

⁴Beverly Whitaker Long, "Critical Reasons and Literature in Performance," *Speech Teacher*, 18 (September 1969), pp. 191-193.

Today it can safely be said that no school of interpretive thought would deny that the literature *must* come first in performance. This leads us to the position that the evaluator must know thoroughly the literature performed and, theoretically, be able and willing to discuss it with the performer. So the first requirement of sound evaluation of performed literature is that the evaluator know the literature and any reasonable performance options open to the reader. Regardless of the evaluator's school of thought, only when he knows the literature can he defend his judgments regarding how well the reader executed the text in terms of subject, theme, tone, mood, etc., as well as stylistic demands.

Long calls the known characteristics of a text its "certainties," aspects of a text which are not implied, but are.⁵ These certainties lead to knowledge of "probabilities," i.e., characteristics implied but not explicitly stated.⁶ In addition to certainties and probabilities are performance "possibilities," choices which are marginally and conditionally acceptable if they do not dilute the effectiveness of the text's certainties and probabilities.⁷ And, as logic dictates, a text may be interpreted in such a manner that the performer allows "distortions" so that the experience of the text is ultimately lost.⁸ Ms. Long encourages evaluation which aggressively endorses certainties, encourages probabilities, tolerates viable possibilities, and rejects distortions.⁹

I suggest that while Long's conditions are sound and workable in the classroom, evaluation in the competitive arena is a significantly different situation. First, the judge may not know the literature well or at all. Second, contests normally prohibit dialogue between performer and judge until all competition is completed.

Perhaps we should aim at developing such fine coaches and coaching principles that someday we all might judge the performance of an unfamiliar text trusting that the reader has become something of an expert on that text, leaving us free to rank contestants on the matter of technique alone. But even then we are confronted with another problem, namely that of the parameters of physical and vocal delivery, a matter hotly contested in many circles.

One way or another, critics must be held accountable for their estimates of performance. They must be able to defend the rankings

⁵Long, "Evaluating Performed Literature," p. 276.

⁶Long, pp. 276-277. ⁷Long, p. 277. ⁸Long, p. 278.

⁹Long, p. 281.

they assign, and this means being able to justify specific hierarchical standards which are applied to performance. Otherwise we must accept that a great deal of judgment is, alas, based on impressions only, and that such impressions are based on conjecture and opinion as much as on fact.

"A Plea for Modal Distinctions in Contest Categories": James A. Pearse

This action caucus searches to establish more "uniform criteria in the criticism and evaluation" of interpretation events in the contest situation. I believe uniformity can be achieved through adopting category designations more precise than the current, widely-used genres (i.e. poetry and prose).

In poetry, for example, attempts should be made to emphasize performance skills that demonstrate a competitor's ability to recognize and manifest poetic structure. Poetry could be divided into three sub-categories according to modal distinctions as follows:

- 1) *Lyric Poetry* — poems projecting the feeling of the persona wherein the speaker talks principally to self. In this category contestants could use sonnets, descriptive lyrics, elegies, odes, or confessional lyrics.
- 2) *Dramatic Poetry* — poetry containing a dramatized persona clearly not the poet; traditionally poems spoken in the first-person. In this category contestants could use dramatic lyrics (e.g. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"), dramatic narratives (e.g. "Wild Grapes"), dramatic monologues (e.g. "Dover Beach"), or dramatic soliloquies (e.g. "Porphyria's Lover").
- 3) *Epic Poetry* — poetry wherein the story being told holds primary focus. In this category contestants could use ballads, metrical tales, or epic poems.

By choosing to divide categories modally we could highlight literary structure and bring more credibility to categories and more integrity to judging because the performance skills required to master the more precise poetic structure of a category would be uniform. Since we are attempting to develop the skills of the interpreter to handle various types of literary structures, I believe our contest categories should reflect the pedagogical impact of the performance we encourage:

With broad categories like poetry and prose it is possible for a performer to read a short story and a narrative poem and satisfy the categorical divisions. However, the short story and the narrative poem both emphasize the storyteller and the establishment of firm control over the vantage point from which the experience is related.

Only one area of performance skill is found in two categories whose boundaries are so ambiguously defined as "poetry" and "prose." Moving to categories subdivided into modal distinctions allows for a clearer establishment of rules and guidelines for both performers and judges.

PRECIS OF DISCUSSION

Problem

We see the same sort of undesirable reading or performance behaviors repeatedly in oral interpretation competition.

We see slickness, showiness, and emphasis on technique.

We see performance, often memorized, to "show off" the reader or performer rather than an effort to share the meaning of the literature with the listeners through a reading based on a thoughtful analysis of the piece.

We see students performing, sometimes, clone-like, reflecting the influence of their instructor's style rather than developing their own.

We see too much narrative poetry read possibly because it is easier.

Discussion of Problem and Possible Solutions

Improved judging assisted by a well designed ballot could discourage undesirable reading or performance behavior.

A ballot could offer criteria or categories for evaluation while listening to an interpretive reading of prose or poetry.

A ballot could encourage consistency in judging.

A ballot could be helpful for a judge unfamiliar with interpretation theory and practice.

If presented with a list of criteria for evaluation, a judge may be tempted to look for something done in the reading that should not be done. The judge may seek after fault where there is no fault.

If an experienced judge does not notice something during a reading — if the judge has to think about it later, be guided to it by a ballot, then that aspect may be inappropriate or unimportant for a particular interpretation.

A ballot contains built-in assumptions. For example, a category may refer to willingness to engage in communication by establishing eye contact. This could be inappropriate for lyric poetry.

An inexperienced judge may automatically check off categories without adequate analysis.

Long's rubrics: certainties, probabilities, possibilities, and distortions direct attention to reading based on analysis of the literature. There is no variance to these categories. There are things that are

absolutely certain in "To His Coy Mistress" that must be represented in the reading. We cannot look for certainties, probabilities, possibilities, and distortions with a ballot.

The modal approach suggested by Pearse could be valuable. Require the reading of lyric, dramatic, or epic modes for a certain interim to assure more than narrative verse would be read and possibly encourage a closer examination of the literature by the student.

The modal approach could encourage a greater variety in oral interpretation behaviors in the forensic setting. Different types of literature require different approaches.

Problem

Judging of oral interpretation is influenced by various theories, paradigms, personal preferences, and sometimes prejudices.

There is more diversity in theory and practice in oral interpretation than in public address.

In an effort to encourage individuality and creativity, we have become so diverse in approaches to oral interpretation that it has become an almost "unjudgable event" in forensics.

There seem to be both said and unsaid conventions which influence judging. For example, a judge may wish to give first place to a reader who attempted a more difficult piece. But what do we mean by difficult? A quiet, subdued reading may be very difficult, while a histrionic performance could be achieved through ritualistic mimicry. Often a judge will indicate poor understanding of interpretation by suggesting that the student chose a piece which would "show the student off" more.

Occasionally, a judge will give a lower evaluation because the judge simply doesn't like the piece or believes that a particular type, such as Black literature, is read too often.

Discussion of the Problem and Possible Solutions

Diversity of approach is good. Diversity of reaction by judges is also good. If interpretation is communication, we must expect different reactions as we do in oratory or extemporaneous speaking. Let's not substitute homogeneity we don't like, such as slickness, with another fostered by an attempt to develop consistent criteria for the presentation and evaluation of oral interpretation.

Conventions existent in forensics such as requiring the use of a manuscript or sharply limited walking and gestures create a more restrictive environment than a classroom in which students may choose to use a manuscript, walk, gesture, or even use props and costumes according to their understanding of the literature.

Long's vocabulary which puts focus on the literature is appropriate here too. There may be diversity in both performance and

reaction to performance. But, there is no diversity in her categories.

Requiring that a particular mode of poetry be read for a set interim could contribute to application of more consistent criteria for evaluation. Ballads, lyrics, etc. each speak for certain evaluative considerations appropriate to them.

Comments by an outside expert in oral interpretation after a final round of interpretation — after the ballots had been submitted by the judges — can contribute to uniting better ideas about oral interpretation to presentation and judging in forensic contests. Such comments could create dialogue among judges, contestants, and the audience in the final round of interpretation. Such comments may indicate that, due to focus upon themselves, frequent winners are not practicing good interpretation.

Consultants are used with success in oral interpretation festivals. The major difference between festivals and forensics is that in the latter readers are ranked. Outside consultants have commented on rhetorical criticism in forensic contents. Although some had no experience in forensics, they were able to make useful observations appropriate for a rhetorical criticism bound by a ten minute limit. They have held well attended colloquies on rhetorical criticism during tournaments.

Often in novice tournaments, experts make comments on the quality of debates.

Comments by an outside critic may be superfluous. What could an outside critic offer that a judge trained in forensic interpretation could not offer?

Could not an outside critic be opposed to oral interpretation competition in forensics? Could not such a critic be opposed to established practices in forensic competition? Could not these beliefs influence such a critic's comments? Could not an outsider subtly impose personal ideas about forensics and/or interpretation in forensics through comments made about the observed performances?

Could there not be those active in forensics who would take exception to the role of the outside critic?

Problem

Often, we must judge readings of literature with which we are not familiar. Therefore, it is possible to be "carried away" by a particular reading, which, according to Long's vocabulary, could be a distortion of the piece.

Discussion of the Problem and Possible Solutions

We are intelligent folk. Even though we may not know a piece of literature, we can listen attentively and apply our past training and experience in making a judgment.

Although various of us had courses in Shakespeare, we may not feel able to judge anything read from Shakespeare. We need to know the piece.

As required for oratory in many tournaments, the selections to be read could be submitted at registration during a tournament. If a judge is going to evaluate interpretation, the judge can glance over the selections and read the unfamiliar ones. With selection in hand, the judge could discuss a reading with a student after the contest.

Pearse's suggestion of the modal approach pertains here also. If, say, proverbs were read for a particular interim, judges perform would become more familiar with them.

Requiring opening remarks whereby the student offers justification of what is attempted with the piece could foster better analysis of the literature by the student and also help the judge evaluate what the student is trying to accomplish.

The introduction should represent the student's grasp of the literature. The judge then could ask two questions. Is this analysis reasonable? Did the interpretation evolve reasonably from this analysis?

Such an introduction may prove helpful for an inexperienced judge.

We do not need such an introduction. If the reading is well done, the interpretation is clear.

What would keep such introductions from coming full cloth from books of literature?

Oral interpretation is a creative art. A pedantic introduction would be inappropriate. It is better to spend time creating the setting, the mood, starting the experience with the literature.

Problem

There are many persons judging oral interpretation who have had no training or background in this communicative art.

Discussion of the Problem and Possible Solutions

As was said at the opening of the caucus, a tournament is no better than the judging.

Forensic instructors should be asked on the invitation or registration forms what they feel qualified to judge and, if possible, placed in those categories. Thereby, a pool of qualified judges could be created.

It is very difficult to place judges in desired events. The basic problem is to get a person into a room to judge a particular event. The director of the tournament fights time as replies to invitations come in the mail or over the telephone.

To place judges appropriate to skills and abilities is especially difficult in small tournaments.

Often, potentially good judges in a fine tournament are students participating in competition. They are eliminated because they are competing.

Just how many persons are qualified to judge interpretation in contrast to those in debate or informative speaking? Has anyone investigated this?

Is it true that usually only debate coaches judge debate whereas almost anyone judges interpretation?

These difficulties do not argue against trying to place the right person in the right room to make a defensible, subjective judgment of readings.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the discussion, Jeanine Barr commented that those present had the professional responsibility to carry out some of the ideas considered as they saw fit, that efforts to improve the presentation and judging of oral interpretation should start at the "grass roots," and that outside critics would comment on the quality of interpretation after the final round during the York College Novice Tournament to take place on February 12 and 13, 1983. The following suggestions or recommendations were mentioned during the discussion and are listed for consideration:

1. Selections for oral interpretation of prose and poetry be taken from a list of twenty-five authors.
2. A mode of poetry, lyric, dramatic, or epic should be chosen for reading for a specified interim. In the discussion such terms as narrative, ballad, and the Proverbs were also used in discussing this suggestion.
3. Copies of the selections to be read should be submitted before the forensic tournament.
4. Judges should be assigned according to training and experience. A pool could be formed by asking professors active in forensics to identify their areas of expertise on the tournament invitation or registration forms.
5. Recognized scholars in oral interpretation should criticize the quality of interpretation after a final round and the judges' ballots have been submitted for tallying tournament results.
6. Students should present justification or arguments for their interpretation as introductions to their readings.

Participants suggested a follow-up caucus during the 1983 Speech Communication Association convention. A summary of this report will be sent to officers in the National Forensic Association, the American Forensic Association, and the Speech Communication Association. Further dialogue may take place.

EDITOR'S FORUM

A New Journal Is Inaugurated

MICHAEL P. KELLEY

The origins of this inaugural edition of the *National Forensic Journal* go back at least four years. In 1979 the Executive Council of the National Forensic Association began to give serious consideration to the establishment of a journal. At the Executive Council meetings held at Montevallo, Alabama in April 1980 action was formally taken to launch the journal. At that time Professor Glen Clatterbuck, then of Miami University of Ohio, was appointed founding editor of the journal. Subsequently Professor Clatterbuck moved to Auburn University where he continued to press forward on the enterprise. Since that time, Professor Clatterbuck has accepted additional duties at Auburn University which precluded his continuation as editor. In April 1982 at Ohio State University I was appointed editor of the journal to oversee the work begun by Professor Clatterbuck and to assure early publication of the first issue. I would be remiss in my duty if I did not acknowledge with public appreciation the work of Professor Clatterbuck in establishing the journal procedures and in seeing several of the articles contained herein through the review process.

With the issuance of Volume I, Number 1 of the *National Forensic Journal*, the project that our association has planned for so long has finally seen form and substance. With the establishment of five distinct sections to the journal, direction for the future has been charted. Yet, I am reminded of the history of many of the established journals of academia as I complete the copy for this first issue. Most scholarly journals that have been in existence for any great length of time evolve into journals that obviously eclipse the intentions and circumscriptions of the first editor. Our professional journals are as mighty rivers which establish their courses for a time only to be redirected and reshaped by subsequent upheavals of nature — so too, we should expect, with the *National Forensic Journal*. It would be evidence of rigid thinking and the rejection of future scholarship if our journal were to remain in its present form decades into the future. With the issuance of this inaugural edition, it is my hope and my expectation that we have only just begun a journal that will continue long into the future to respond to the ever-changing enterprise of forensics. Truly this journal is not the journal of an editor, but of the National Forensic Association. This journal reflects the expansion of forensics into

fields of individual events as well as the dedicated professionalism of directors of forensics across the country. To those who serve forensics in education, to the membership of the National Forensic Association, to our new journal — *ad multos annos*.

The Ethics of Argumentation in Intercollegiate Debate: A Conservative Appraisal

BERNARD K. DUFFY*

Sometimes only an outsider sees clearly the problems of the insiders. A comment in a recent *Time* article about intercollegiate debate hit painfully close to the truth: "Success at on topic [debate] demands fetishistic research, note cards by the hundred gross and the rhetorical felicity of an armored truck."¹ Organized debate is so far removed from reality that its very survival seems remarkable. While intercollegiate debate teaches less about many things than we would like, least of all does it teach ethics.

By one interpretation ethics in debate involves questions such as whether or not case-scouting or introducing counterplans in the second negative constructive speech are conscionable acts.² There is, however, an entirely different sense in which the ethics of debate can be discussed. To what extent does debate make students aware of the values which underlie their choices, and to what extent does it show them the ethical differences among arguments?

Richard Weaver, whose works on rhetoric are guided by the assumption that the methods an arguer chooses reveal his ethics, provides an avenue for such inquiry.³ Weaver claims that every rhetorical use of language, because it involves intention and choice, has an ethical dimension. He illustrates this dictum through an analysis of the essential argument forms: authority, analogy, principle, and consequence.

Weaver expresses preferences among these forms of argument on the basis of their philosophical status. His is a reflection on

**The National Forensic Journal*, 1 (Spring 1983), pp. 65-71.

¹Kurt Andersen, "The Best and the Glibbest," *Time*, 15 March 1982, p. 10.

²Edward L. McGlone, "Attitudes about Debate Practices," in *Directing Forensics: Debate and Contest Speaking*, ed. Don F. Faules and Richard D. Rieke (Scranton, Pa.: International Textbook Company, 1968), pp. 346-48.

³Richard M. Weaver, "Language is Sermonic," in *Contemporary Theories of Rhetoric: Selected Readings*, ed. Richard L. Johannesen (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 163-79; *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (South Bend: Gateway Editions, 1953), especially chs. II, III. Interpretations of Weaver's views, except where otherwise noted, are based principally on "Language is Sermonic."

argumentation from which debaters would profit. The preferences he articulates are not those of most debaters. Intercollegiate debate seems almost to reverse his ideas of what ethical argumentation is. Debaters learn from experience what kinds of arguments work within the highly formalized context of intercollegiate debate, but they do not learn what separates a merely effective argument from one that has enduring value. Debate habituates students to lines of argument which teach them less about their own beliefs and values than they do about those of other people. This, however, is only part of the problem. Debate coaches have accepted what passes as reasonable argumentation in the tournaments and have fostered a type of argumentation which philosophical conservatives like Weaver would reject as symptomatic of modern, fact-oriented culture.

One need not be a conservative or a Platonist to appreciate Weaver's analysis, though it helps. He claims that arguments from definition or genus are philosophically preeminent to other forms since only they seek to establish principles and ideals. Thus, Lincoln, though a political liberal, argues like a philosophical conservative.⁴ In the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, for example, Lincoln's stand against the extension of slavery into the territories was based not on the material consequences of this act, but on a definition of the nature of humanity. At their best, arguments such as Lincoln's provide timeless *a priori*, which serve as the basis for future arguments and which illuminate some facet of the human condition. Arguing from principle requires debaters to reflect upon what ought to be, rather than on what is. It makes them think in terms of ideals and essences and so puts them closer to their own beliefs and values. One might say, it makes them think ethically.

But what is the reality of intercollegiate debate? Debaters rarely argue from their own principles. In fact, they quickly learn that debate is not a contest between the quality of ideas, but rather the volume and credibility of evidence. Debaters, even if their coaches teach them otherwise, learn from experience to place the highest premium on hard fact, rather than on nebulous propositions. Even the most noble and enduring sentiments of the constitution's framers become items of data that can be used to win arguments, rather than ideas which they can incorporate into their own thinking. For example, the principle of states' rights is frequently reduced to a stock argument which can be made against any case calling for federal encroachment on powers traditionally granted

⁴Weaver, *Ethics*, pp. 91-94.

the states. Although nominally this is an argument from principle, in practice it is more like a tactical move learned from experience. Such arguments are seen as no more or less significant than other arguments. Educational debate tends to reduce all arguments to tactics. It does not ask students to assess the ethical superiority of any given argument, only its relative potency in the mind of the judge. Since debaters cannot always predict the basis on which a given judge will decide an issue or a debate, many debaters simply make as many arguments as possible hoping that one will work. No argument, then, is accorded a higher status than others. Some arguments work and some do not. This is all most debaters seem to care about.

If debaters tend not to argue from principle, what types of arguments do they use? One that enters into virtually all debates is the argument from cause and its two subspecies, the arguments from consequence and circumstance. In debate, arguments from consequence are used to support or oppose a policy proposal because of its perceived advantages or disadvantages. Weaver would claim that although it is philosophically less important than the argument from principle, the argument from consequence certainly has its place. He points out, however, that an aberrant version of it, the argument from circumstance, does not deserve the same approbation. The argument from circumstance proposes that existing conditions demand whatever action the speaker favors. So, for example, debaters might claim that runaway inflation leaves no choice but to pass a balanced budget amendment. Weaver dislikes this sort of argument because it is completely relative. It assumes that we should respond to whatever stimulus the present supplies. It short-circuits reason. Such arguments ask the audience to act on the basis of what is rather than what ought to be. They are grounded in reality, rather than in principle. Since material reality changes constantly, the value of such arguments endures only as long as do the circumstances which gave them rise.

Arguments from circumstance appeal to a fact oriented culture in the way that sensationalistic journalism does. Intercollegiate debate manifests sensationalistic tendencies. Debaters consistently exaggerate the harms and disadvantages of the problems they discuss. Thus they might argue that the United States' lack of a civil defense program invites the spectre of nuclear war. Inevitably they do not leave it at this, but go on to describe in unnecessarily vivid detail the loss of life and suffering which would result. Their litanies of destruction sound invariably like tabloid report which under ordinary circumstances we deplore. In debate, though, sensationalism is accepted as common course.

Debaters also use arguments from analogy, although not as often as they might. Analogical arguments, like arguments from principle engage the creative faculties of debaters. They stem from perceptions of the similarities among things. A liberally educated student with an imaginative mind might be expected to produce analogical arguments. Debate as an activity which should both use and enhance a liberal arts education ought to be rife with them. Yet, rarely do they emerge.

Instead there are countless arguments from authority. Authority is fine as a source of argument as long as it is not overused and the authorities are properly selected. The excessive reliance of debaters on arguments from authority, however, makes them subservient to the opinions of others. In the ideal, debaters evaluate evidence for its credibility and its correspondence with their own beliefs. In practice, they often fail to read the context of their evidence, do not know the credentials of the sources, nor even at times understand the evidence they read with such lightening speed. An over-dependence on authority depersonalizes the process of debate. It makes it far less humane or humanizing. Debaters, to use a phrase of Weaver's, become "logic machines," programmed to match evidence against their opponents' evidence.⁵ While the process of selection and organization this involves no doubt improves debaters' logical abilities and skills in gamesmanship, it does not necessarily make them aware of their own humanness, that is, of their individual character and ethics. Ethics, after all, grow out of feeling and choice and not simply the complex operations of mind we refer to as logic.

Even among the very best debaters who habitually inquire into the credibility of their evidence, few look beyond the source's expertise in his or her area of specialty. The kind of authority preferred in debate further documents debate's removal from ethical concerns. Anonymous researchers whose objectivity is insured by the scientific method they use are perceived as more credible than great minds who have been tainted by having a point of view. On all counts testimony of fact is preferred to testimony of opinion. Yet facts are not ethical claims, and from scientists and social scientists one rarely learns how facts should be used in making ethical decisions.

The model debater is a speedy processor of factual information and a master of debate commonplaces and form. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently reported that the debate coach at Randolph Macon College has developed a computer program to

⁵Weaver, "Language is Sermonic," p. 167.

train debaters. One program teaches them cross-examination. Asked the right questions the computer will make damaging admissions to its case.⁶ Presumably, perceptive debaters intuit the computer's program to defeat it. This suggests the extreme formalism of debate. Effective debaters are not contemplative scholars willing to engage in soul searching speculative discussions. They are highly trained, conditioned agents who respond to arguments with speed and prolificity. Only by internalizing the structure of debate and its commonplaces can they react quickly enough to win a debate. The more second nature their responses become, the better they will fare. For the sake of quick response, knowing the form is all important. Like debate's emphasis on fact, its overwhelming concern with structure puts students no closer to ethics.

Nor does one detect in the language of debate any reason to rejoice at what we are teaching debaters, or at what they learn at tournaments. Though debaters are prolific in the number of points they make, they express each laconically. They speak in shorthand with truncated phrases and anagrams which would try the patience of a government bureaucrat. Their vocabulary could well comprise a computer language. It cannot be understood by those outside the inner circle. What eloquence there is in debate is ordinarily reserved for the first affirmative speech and an occasional peroration. Otherwise debate discourse comes to the audience as spurts of noise which a judge impassively transfers to a legal pad.

The disembodied language of debate may be ideal for presenting fact and logic, but not for proffering the results of ethical choice. The subjectivity of the debater is suppressed. The exigencies of debate make it impossible for him to express the ideas and feelings which make him an individual. His language strains to represent facts rather than conviction or emotion. In debate one is more likely to hear language used referentially rather than evocatively. It reveals neither feeling nor ethical choice. No wonder that it fails to move us and that contemporary debate as a whole has been criticized as being unpersuasive.⁷

Debaters' lack of subjectivity is also revealed in their delivery. Good delivery addresses the audience as emotional as well as rational beings. The nature of debate makes participants unconcerned about genuinely influencing the judge. Though they want to

⁶Zoe Ingalls, "Ideas," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 8 (September 1982), p. 20.

⁷Weaver, *Ethics*, pp. 7-8. In his analysis of the *Phaedrus*, Weaver maintains that Lysias' speech uses "the language of notation." The same might be said of debate.

win, they care little about changing the judge's mind. Their recitation of colorless fact and logic sounds like the frenzied whirl of the computer. Often no one fact or argument is vocally emphasized over another since all arguments seem to be valued equally. Rather we hear the well practiced but artificial cadence by which a torrent of words is released in a steady and uninterrupted stream. The natural rhythms of the human voice as it expresses the thoughts and individual personality of the speaker are replaced by a monotonous intonation which allows speed at the expense of reflection. If *Time* reporter Kurt Anderson was right when he called intercollegiate debate "secular self mortification," the style of debate delivery is one evidence of it.⁸

Debate at its worst is an activity which promotes self abnegation rather than self discovery. Intercollegiate debate ought to educate students in more than structure, credibility, and logical reasoning. It should teach them the effective use of arguments from definition as well as arguments from consequence, circumstance and authority. Definitional arguments, better than others, orient students toward their own beliefs and principles. Logic, fact, and authority wither without ethics, and debate without ethical judgments sounds hollow and contrived.

I am not proposing that debaters only make arguments they believe in. Students also learn from articulating the principles which underlie positions they oppose. To ignore principle as a line of argument and focus instead on mere fact and authority makes debate less effective as a method of exploring one's own preferences and values.

It might be argued that debate is not dialectic, and that my criticisms require debate to be something we cannot make it. After all the sophists, not Plato, gave birth to debate. Protagoras saw it as a lesson in sophistic relativism. If one believes in the relativism of the sophists, it would be absurd for debaters to search after principles upon which to base their arguments. Of what use, one might ask, are the eloquently expressed propositions of a bygone era to a scientific age which bases decisions on calculable fact? For today's neosophists it would be foolish indeed to think of debate as a philosophical or ethical enterprise. But in this case, why talk about the ethics of debate at all? If the term only means observing the rules of the game, it is not particularly significant. Debate should be a thoroughly ethical enterprise. It should educate students in ethics, as well as requiring them to follow the rules.

⁸Andersen, p. 10.

Ultimately, it comes down to a matter of choice. Should we as coaches and judges permit the steady dismantling of debate as a means of educating students? Ought we to praise students for making sensationalistic arguments, and for relying on appeals to authority, while ignoring arguments from principle? Should we give ballots to speakers who are the most adept at parroting back the commonplaces they have learned and to those who can read evidence with the greatest speed and the least visible understanding? Should we encourage debate as a contest of evidence rather than as a meeting of minds? No matter how much lip service is given to the educational values of intercollegiate debate, it cannot now be claimed as an activity which forces students to reflect upon or use their ethical beliefs in the formulation of arguments.