

## **Offending None, Entertaining None: Acceptable Humor in After-Dinner Speaking**

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Witnessing a truly funny after-dinner speech is a rare occurrence. The creation and use of humor can be seen as a finely-defined tightrope the speaker must walk, one side being offensive humor; the other being humor that draws blank stares. In fact, several researchers including Richardson (1999) and Hall (1999) have noted the extreme lack of creativity, originality, and—more to the point—laughter within after-dinner speaking rounds. After-dinner speeches aren't as funny as they used to be and the primary reason appears to be the fear of potentially intolerable or offensive humor. Students and coaches fear receiving last in a round because of one joke deemed "over the line." Thus, rarely does a student even come close to "the line" in an after-dinner speech. It appears that the only way to get students to try edgier, original humor is to redefine what judges see "the line" as being. For the purposes of this study, what judges do or do not tolerate will be used to determine what is or is not found to be offensive by the majority of the judging population. Through determining how judges define their line of tolerance, the study not only can allow students and coaches the chance to see what the forensics community deems unacceptable, but can also be used to show these same participants what still is considered within the realm of appropriate after-dinner speaking humor. Hopefully, defining the line of offensiveness can help students to construct speeches in a more free way, conducive to creativity and fun in an event clearly designed for both.

### **Humor Research**

Young and Frye (1966) note that "laughter is one of a few universal forms of emotional expression" but that it has rarely been addressed in communication literature. Over three decades later, the research has improved, but still is sparse when compared to the importance of analyzing humor. O'Connell (1960) was the first to categorize and define three broad humor genres: humor, wit, and nonsense. Young and Frye (1966) added a fourth dimension: sex humor. The researchers found marked differences between the way a group responded to sexual humor as compared to the other three genres.

This finding prompted many researchers to analyze the influences of other

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genres of humor. Cantor (1976) and Chapman & Gadfield (1976) addressed sexist humor; LaFave & Mannell (1976) studied ethnic humor; Suls (1977) looked at disparaging forms of humor. Clearly, a wide array of humor forms and influences were developing. Priest (1966) even analyzed political humor, finding that people's perceptions of jokes about Barry Goldwater and Lyndon Johnson ranged greatly depending on their political vantage point. Categories of humor were deconstructed into smaller categories, with Winick (1976) using eighteen genres of humor for his analysis. Winick noted that while sexual and ethnic humor dominated culture, many other forms of humor were emerging. A quarter-century later, these forms of humor have been sub-divided into even more distinct categories. More topics have become subject to jokes that were considered off-limits previously. The result is that while humor is designed to skewer societal norms, more humor is found to offend and demoralize culture. The need to analyze offensiveness ratings of humor forms has never been more needed.

### **Standards and Assessment**

In determining the formula for acceptable after-dinner humor, one must first understand the struggle to define a formula for after-dinner speaking as a whole. No individual event struggles for definition in the same manner as after-dinner speaking. The ideal balance between research and humor has been the discussion of debate for years. Andrews, Andrews, and Williams (1999) indicate that the purposes of after-dinner speaking should be to stimulate enjoyment, use humor effectively, deliver in an engaging style, and convey a meaningful message. However, anyone within the forensic community can notice that the after-dinner speaking textbook and competitive definitions are indelibly different. Scholars have attempted to find a representative criteria for after-dinner speaking (Swanson & Zeuschner, 1983; Mills, 1984; Dreibelbis & Redmon, 1987; Hanson, 1988; Holm, 1993; Billings, 1997). The studies offered insight into the variables judges claim to employ when judging a competitive after-dinner speech, yet underscored the problem inherent in contemporary after-dinner speaking: the evaluation criteria judges use for after-dinner speaking is more inconsistent than the criteria for any other individual event. Students have countered this problem by trying to be all things to all people; the prospect of such an achievement is nearly impossible.

Within the attempt to fulfill increasingly broadened judging criteria, after-dinner speeches have suffered in many ways—none more than humor. In a pair of papers exacting the problems with being funny in an after-dinner speech, Richardson (1999) and Hall (1999) argued that the implied after-dinner success formula was too stringent and placed humor and originality low on a relative scale of importance. Richardson (1999) writes that after-dinner speaking should offer creativity that no other event can match:

It is forensics outside the box, ideally. Unfortunately, current trends in the event threaten to stifle the very creativity that makes after-dinner unique. Narrow judging paradigms and paint-by-number, cookie cutter approaches reward imitation over imagination. Forensic convention is forcing ADS inside the box. (p. 1)

Also noting humor-related problems in after-dinner speaking, Hall (1999) notes that irony and other more subtle forms of humor are undervalued. Writes Hall:

Although we vehemently deny that after-dinner speaking resembles stand-up comedy, we do little to encourage the distinction. We call it whatever we want to ... but the only real difference between this year's national ADS champion and Denis Leary is that one uses biting, driven humor and one cites the *Wall Street Journal*, (p. 1)

Clearly, part of the reduced humor in after-dinner speeches can be attributed to an increasingly sensitive public, monitoring what is or is not acceptable humor. The age of political correctness alters the way students construct speeches, opting for safe humor over edgy humor, impeding creativity and the no-holds-barred nature of humor itself. As Richardson (1999) argues, "We don't necessarily tell the same jokes year after year. We tell the same kind of jokes" (p. 6).

Pinpointing what goes into a model after-dinner speech has been the focus of scholars for years. Many researchers have made attempts to ascertain so-called after-dinner speaking "formula." Mills (1984) notes content and style as the main categories of judging criteria that should be employed. The fact that Anderson and Martin (1983) argue that the implied definition of competitive after-dinner speaking was a speech that makes a humorous point implies that the overall purpose of the speech should be persuasive in nature. Yet, these scholars differed as to what the added criteria should be for the ideal after-dinner speech.

Billings (1997) conducted the most recent survey of attitudes regarding after-dinner speaking. Using the responses from 115 coaches and students, Billings noted several important findings. First, humor and research were found to be almost equally important in constructing the proper after-dinner speech balance. Thirty-five percent of all students and coaches surveyed noted humor is the most important element for success; 28% argued that research is more important; 37% argued they are equally important. Additionally, Billings found that overdone topics were a significant concern of 96% of all respondents. The study also found students particularly concerned with the lack of uniform judging criteria; 35% of all students surveyed listed it as the biggest problem facing after-dinner speaking. Billings concluded that attention should be paid to noting the difference between a set of event *criteria* and a judges' *formula* for a successful speech, arguing that the guideline of "a speech that makes a point through the use of humor" should be a common criteria, but that judges should abstain from invoking their own success formulas on each after-dinner speaking contestant. Writes Billings:

One of the strengths of after-dinner speaking is its lack of a "success formula." A final round can witness a speech with two sources followed by a speech with twenty. Speeches can employ different types of humor, from slapstick to deadpan. While preferences for certain humor formats will always be a matter of taste, this diversity makes the event stronger, (p. 48).

### Research Questions

Thomas (1980) argued that forensics should serve as a laboratory for the study of real-world communicative settings. Thus, the study of potential offensiveness of humor forms has special significance beyond the realm of individual event competitions. Using the forensics as laboratory paradigm, humor that is found to be offensive or intolerable could apply not only to forensics, but also to many realms of society.

Still, most noted by the large majority of after-dinner speaking researchers is the problem with the lack of studies that address issues pertaining to the event. Because scholars have never attempted to rate potential offensiveness on a semantic differential continuum, the results of the study could not be hypothesized. Instead, three over-arching research questions were formulated:

RQ1: What genres of humor are not tolerated in after-dinner speaking?

RQ2: What genres of humor are moderately tolerated in after-dinner speaking?

RQ3: What genres of humor are generally tolerated in after-dinner speaking?

### Method

Focus groups were used to determine forms of humor potentially judged to be intolerable by segments of the forensics judging community. Three groups of four identified humor genres used in after-dinner speaking. Each group consisted of one forensics coach and three individual event competitors. These groups then narrowed the list of humor genres by determining which forms of humor fit most closely with questions of potential offensiveness. Based on the findings of these groups, a total of 16 humor genres were deemed to be valid areas for measurement of potential offensiveness. All sixteen items were placed into semantic differential format, with the sentence: "I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of \_\_\_\_\_ humor in after-dinner speeches." Semantic scales ranged from (1) agree (tolerant), to (7) disagree (not tolerant). Respondents were also asked to indicate what form of humor was the most offensive to them, as well as any forms of humor they perceived as offensive that were not mentioned within the sixteen items. Judges were also asked to indicate how many tournaments they judge per year, in order to evaluate how experienced the respondents were in answering these questions. A full list of survey items can be found in Appendix A.

Surveys were distributed to judges at three prominent individual events tournaments in the Fall of 1999. After surveys were completed, results were calculated using SPSS for Windows 9.0 (1999). The final two items concerning the most offensive genre of humor and unmentioned offensive humor were coded using a single researcher and a second researcher was used for determining inter-coder reliability. Using Holsti's (1969) formula, intercoder reliability exceeded 99 percent.

### Results

A total of 71 surveys were completed by judges and coaches at three indi-

vidual events tournaments in different regions of the country. The respondents were composed largely of experienced, seasoned judges with the average respondent judging 6.3 tournaments per year. The gender of the respondents slanted toward men (48/67%) and toward Caucasians (58/82%). Seven of the respondents indicated they were African-American; three self-identified as Hispanic; three more indicated Asian descent. Respondents were asked to rate their tolerance of a given after-dinner speaking humor genre on a seven-point semantic differential scale. Table 1 indicates the overall means and standard deviations derived from the humor tolerance scales.

**Table 1: Overall Means of Humor-Genre Tolerance Scales**

Humor Genre	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age	2.87	1.81
Audience members	3.67	2.42
Diseases/Disorders	4.26	1.61
Forensic-related	2.81	1.95
Gender	4.24	2.09
Homophobic	4.61	2.10
Mentally Handicapped	5.09	1.96
Physically Handicapped	5.05	2.08
Political	1.98	1.23
Profanity	3.99	1.87
Racist	4.87	2.04
Religious	3.36	1.81
Sexually Explicit	3.85	2.11
Slapstick	3.09	2.00
Tangential (Off-topic)	3.77	1.74
Violence	4.38	1.65
1.0 = Highly Tolerant		
7.0 = Not Tolerant		

Table 1 indicates large differences between humor type and evaluator tolerance. Research question #1 pertained to forms of humor that are not tolerated in after-dinner speeches. Because 4.00 was a statistical center for the items, any averages of 4.01 or higher were deemed intolerable to a significant segment of judges. Seven of the sixteen items fell into this category, with two scoring above a 5.00 (humor pertaining to mental and physical handicaps). Other humor types that were generally not tolerated included racist humor (4.87), homophobic humor (4.61), violence (4.38), humor dealing with disorders such as Alzheimer's and Epilepsy (4.26) and sexist humor (4.24). Basically, most major forms of identity-related humor (gender, race, sexual orientation) were deemed intolerable for forensic competition.

Research question #2 pertained to moderately tolerable humor (humor that lies on the fine line between offensive and acceptable). Six items with means between 3.00 and 4.00 fell into this category, including profanity (3.99), sexually explicit humor (3.85), tangential humor (3.77), the ostracizing of audience members (3.67), religious humor (3.36), and slapstick humor (3.09). Interestingly, pro-

fane and sexually explicit humor fell into this second category rather than the first, and religion (a primary form of identity for many Americans) did not yield nearly as high a mean as other forms of self-identification.

The final research question pertained to fairly acceptable forms of humor (yielding a mean of 1.00-2.99). Only three items were viewed as being generally tolerable: age humor (2.87), forensic humor (2.81), and political humor (1.98). The lack of more items in this category speaks volumes about the minefield of potential offensiveness that after-dinner speaking has become. The fact that the identity-related "age" item yielded such a low mean also was interesting, as all other forms of identity-humor were much less tolerated. Moreover, the extremely high standard deviations (all but one were 1.60 or higher) indicates that large discrepancies exist within judging criteria, confirming the student-based notion that in the age of political correctness, even the most menial forms of humor can potentially offend.

Regarding the two open-ended questions, responses did have common characteristics. The first question asked respondents what form of humor they find most offensive. In correlation with the tolerance scales, humor about physical and mental handicaps, often listed as a pairing rather than listed separately, were most-mentioned (20 mentions). Yet, more interesting was the second most listed genre: humor making fun of audience members (11 mentions). Despite being the eleventh least tolerated form of humor, it was listed as the second most offensive. The fact that this humor format yielded the largest standard deviation (2.42) indicated that this is the form of humor in which judges are most divided when assessing acceptability.

Several subjects also noted the same integral difference in whether a form of humor is offensive or not: the speaker's in-group or out-group status. Respondents indicated that if the person was telling jokes about a social, cultural, or identity group that he or she was a part of, they are much more tolerant of the humor. For instance, an African-American could use more racial humor without being judged as offensive; a person in a wheelchair could tell jokes pertaining to the physically handicapped that no one else could say.

The second open-ended question pertained to other areas of humor that the respondent did not tolerate. The most common response for this item was humor which involved the acting out of characters. A significant segment of after-dinner speakers rely on character props, impressions, and bits as their chief source of humor. Respondents indicated that this type of humor was uncalled for in the majority of situations. One judge wrote that "Character props in after-dinner speaking make the speech less of a speech. Many argue that ADS is not applicable outside of the forensic community. Why? Character props. The outside public expects to see a speech, not an impressionist." Clearly, while the use of characters in ADS was not noted as offensive by anyone, it is a form of humor in which many judges have a low tolerance.

## Discussion

Several important findings can be extrapolated from the data. First, the re-

suits indicate some significant problems with the acceptability of a large segment of humor formats. Thirteen forms of humor yielded scores of 3.00 or higher. While an average below 4.00 indicates that a humor-type leans toward the acceptable side of the scale, any form of humor that is viewed as intolerable, unacceptable, or offensive to even a minor segment of the judging community results in students dropping a joke from the speech because of these potential problems. While this could be viewed as being sensitive to cultural and moral issues, this lack of tolerance could more aptly be characterized as over-sensitivity. With so many forms of humor being viewed as intolerable or only moderately tolerable, the judging community need not be surprised when pun and imitation-filled speeches filter into national final rounds. Granted, some forms of humor such as racism or jokes about the mentally and physically handicapped should never be tolerated—and in this author's view should have yielded much higher ratings of intolerance. However, when all forms of humor except political, age-related, and forensic are viewed as forbidden, even highly-successful professional comedians would have a difficult time writing humorous material.

Yet another interesting finding is that humor pertaining to the ostracization of fellow audience members was tolerated more than ten other genres, yet were deemed the second most offensive genre in the open-ended question. The fact that these two forms of humor can be seen as most offensive yet not be listed as least tolerated indicates the importance of noting the semantic shift from the word "tolerant" to the term "offensive." A judge may not be tolerant of a particular form of humor, yet this lack of tolerance is not always because the judge was offended. Several forms of humor, including profanity and off-topic humor, were tolerated less than humor at the expense of an audience member. Still, none of these forms were listed as being "most offensive." Future research should take further steps to decipher what humor is merely disliked and what humor truly offends.

A final avenue for future research involves developing an even more detailed measure for assessing humor in after-dinner speeches. While this study measures what judges tolerate, future measures should assess what judges find offensive, or, better yet, what forms of humor judges generally find to be funny. This measure should also include additional forms of humor which were not listed in the survey for this study, including the use of character pops, visual aids, puns, and improvised humor. Most specifically, an ethos-based analysis of after-dinner speaking humor is warranted. Several respondents indicated that if a speaker were a part of an "in" group, they could tell edgier jokes without the risk of offense. Yet another noted that a joke that works for one person might not work for another. It appears that some speakers can "get away" with more concerning humor genres and potential offensiveness. Future research should analyze the aspects of credibility that allow or disallow certain forms of humor for certain speakers.

### **Conclusion**

After-dinner speaking is creative, fun, original, popular, and (on rare occasion) moving in a way no other event can be. However, as the event enters the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the humor and creativity have been stifled by the implementation of po-

litical correctness and implicit formulas for ADS success. After-dinner speaking does have a responsibility to the "thought police" to discern what is decent and what truly offends. However, when so many forms of humor become potential pitfalls that drop students to the bottom of a round, entertainment becomes a secondary function of after-dinner speaking—a prospect that should never come to fruition.

On the largest scale, these findings outline important guidelines for communication researchers interested in studying offensiveness of everyday humor. Using forensics as a laboratory for society, one could plausibly assume that these same attitudes toward humor formats occur in comedy clubs, workplace environments, and classrooms as well. In doing such, the findings of this study not only inform us about which topics are acceptable in speech competitions, but also give (at the very least) broad guidelines to acceptable humor in all forms of American society.

Specifically within the realm of individual event competition, this study should allow students to ascertain which forms of humor they can use and which forms should likely be avoided. Coaches can use these results to guide students as well. However, the primary way in which entertainment can be injected back into ADS lies with the judges. If judges choose to reward risks and serve as evaluators rather than censors, the laughs from an after-dinner speaking round can once again be audible.

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### Appendix A

- 1.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of religious humor in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 2.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of racist humor in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 3.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of political humor in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 4.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of sexually explicit humor in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 5.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of forensic humor in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 6.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of humor that disparages men or women in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 7.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of slapstick humor in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 8.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant humor pertaining to violent acts in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 9.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of humor using obscene or profane language in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 10.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of homophobic humor in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 11.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of humor pertaining to the mentally handicapped in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 12.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of humor pertaining to the physically handicapped in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 13.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of humor pertaining to diseases/ disorders such as Alzheimer's or Epilepsy or in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 14.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of humor pertaining to age in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 15.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of off-topic (tangential) humor in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 16.) I would say that, on the whole, I am tolerant of humor that makes fun of audience members/fellow contestants in after-dinner speeches.  
 AGREE :\_\_ : \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: \_\_: : DISAGREE
- 17.) Of all the forms of humor listed above, I feel the most offensive type of humor is:
- 18.) Are there any other types of humor in after-dinner speeches that you tend not to tolerate?

## **Winning is Everything: Education as Myth in Forensics**

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*"The time has come to stop deceiving ourselves and our administrators about the educational value of forensics" (Padrow, 1956, p. 206).*

For several decades, individuals involved in forensics have advocated the educational benefits of the activity (see, e.g., McBath, 1984; Ulrich, 1984; Whitney, 1997). Yet, as Padrow pointed out over forty years ago, we are fooling ourselves. The argument regarding the "educational value of forensics" has been used for purposes such as housing the activity in departments of speech/communication, labeling forensics a "co-curricular," not "extra-curricular," activity, attracting new students, soliciting funding for tournament travel, and even for pleading with universities not to eliminate entire speech/communication departments (Mills, Pettus, & Dickmeyer, 1993; Pettus, Mills, Gaer, & Givens, 1992).

While forensics typically has been promoted as an educational activity, our contention is that forensics is, in reality, highly competitive. That is, current practices in forensics focus on competition and not on an often-referenced education model. The problem is that when the competition model of forensics attempts to justify the activity by advocating a "balance" of education through the realities of competition, it masks the competition model under an educational guise. Thus, although forensics can be viewed as both an educational and a competitive activity, the practice of competition coopts education. In Burke's terms, through the focus on competition, we have developed a "trained incapacity" to focus on the merits of education (1984, p. 7). That is, our focus and training as a forensics community premises competition. Our training at best blinds, and at the least clouds, the mythic "educational" virtues of the forensics community.

The purpose of this essay is threefold. First, we wish to present a rhetorical/critical perspective on myth. Second, we seek to uncover the myth of forensics as

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education by examining the history of forensics education and correspondingly addressing the mythic educational qualities in four current forensic trends/events: experimental events, unwritten tournament rules, the use of original literature, and ethical challenges presented at national tournaments. Finally, we hope to challenge the forensics community to abandon the myth of education, and embrace competition; only then, can forensics become more educational.

### **Mythic Ideological Analysis**

To begin, we frame our discussion utilizing mythic ideological analysis. Many communication scholars address the importance of studying myth as a rhetorical phenomenon in critiquing ideologies (Bass & Cherwitz, 1978; Hart, 1990; Lee & Lee, 1998; Osborn, 1990; Rowland, 1990; Rushing, 1986, 1990; Solomon, 1990). Hart (1990) defines a myth as a master story, describing exceptional people doing exceptional things that serve as moral guides to proper action. Barthes (1988) contends that myth "hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts, myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion" (p. 129). Stated metaphorically, "myth illuminates and projects a light in the darkness of reality and the haze of misperception over the glow of truth" (London & Weeks, 1981, p. 17). Myth "distorts" because its rhetorical ambiguity offers mere impressions of virtuous behavior. Dorsey (1997) argues that myth is influential in the reinforcement of American values because it illustrates a relationship between politics and virtue. This representation of virtue demonstrates the emotive influence that myths have on perception, communication, and ultimately culture (ideology).

Like myths, ideologies (cultures) are "capable of binding people together, not through a set of immutable truths, but through references to historical and political events, and appeals to a material orientation of the world" (Bass & Cherwitz, 1978, p. 215). Ideologies are a collection of beliefs, but where myths attempt to transcend social divisions, ideologies express the interests of the dominant group that provides plausible interpretations of political realities (Bass & Cherwitz, 1978; Lucaites & Condit, 1990). McGee (1980) calls these references "ideographs" and purports that "[t]he significance is in their concrete history as usages, not in alleged idea-content" (p. 10).

The joining of mythic and ideological elements does not take place spontaneously. According to Ellul (1973), "myth and ideology wed via a complicated mixture of ideas and sentiments which entails the grafting of irrational onto the political and economic" (p. 31). Burke (1989) notes that "ideology is to myth as rhetoric is to poetry," (p. 303) since "ideology, like rhetoric, gravitates to the side of ideas, and myth, like poetry, gravitates to the side of image" (p. 303). The result of this fusion of myth and ideology is an appeal to our thoughts and emotions that greatly impacts various aspects of culture (Berkowitz, 1997; Hart, 1990; Lucaites & Condit, 1990).

Barthes (1988) comments on the power and expansiveness of myth in reinforcing the image and ideologies of virtuous cultures: "all aspects of the law, of morality, of aesthetics, of diplomacy, of household equipment, of literature, of entertainment" (p. 148) are related to myth. The joining of myth as a cultural and

political force, and ideology as a logical expression of these forces, creates a manifestation that may rhetorically support how intercollegiate forensics is seemingly educational.

For the purposes of this essay, we rely on Hart's (1990) discussion of myth and ideology in our critique of forensics. According to Hart (1990), several reasons exist for the rhetorical saliency of myth: myths provide a heightened sense of authority, continuity, coherence, community, sense of choice, and agreement. Thus, myth gives rhetoric something to say, and rhetoric gives myth impact in everyday affairs (Hart, 1990). The point is that myth, coupled with rhetoric, offers a culture a "heightened sense" of comfort, or allows for the culture to give off the impression of virtuous action.

In the forensics-as-education myth, the forensic hero is the forensic educator who works hard and whose students are competitively successful. The forensics community pays little or no explicit attention to the learning practices that the forensic educator incorporates. Here the forensic educator protects the virtue of education by coaching students to win awards. At some point in a coach's career, he/she might have enacted this heroic myth by staying up late working with students, calling for work sessions on weekends, discussing ballots in the van on a long ride home, or making changes in debate cases or speeches to improve the chances of winning at the next tournament. In forensics, education is a secondary concern and is only made "real" through its rhetorical alignment with competition. Thus, education is a myth that reinforces the ideological virtues of competition.

The education myth in forensics functions rhetorically because it makes competition virtuous, yet it does not adequately reflect, in our opinion, the competitive reality of college forensics. As Dorsey (1997) argues, myths often do not represent reality. The story of the small town, for example, with its pleasant images of "Main Street," church steeples, and afternoon barbecues, tends to reinforce the mythic notion that social order is paramount in the creation of American values (Lee, 1993). Likewise, promoting the educational value of forensics gives the activity saliency to mask its competitive motives. We now turn our attention to the discourse of forensics, one that coopts education through myth to legitimize competition.

### **The Educational Value of Forensics**

The emphasis on education in forensics began in 1952, when Ehninger promoted forensics as a co-curricular activity, and emphasized the need to provide an educational experience for our students. Participants at the 1974 Sedalia retreat, the first developmental forensics conference, defined forensics as an "educational activity" (McBath, 1975). Relevant conference resolutions included viewing forensics as "humanistic education" (p. 14), furthering knowledge of "argumentation theory" (p. 15), and developing "students' communicative abilities" (p. 16). In an oft-cited passage from the 1984 second developmental conference, McBath states that "forensics is an educational activity primarily concerned with using an argumentative perspective in examining problems and communicating with people" (1984, p. 5). One of the areas of focus in the 1984 conference was on

strengthening educational goals and programs (pp. 37-48). Resolutions for "forensic educators" included integrating forensics into the curriculum, fostering the development of oral and written skills, and promoting "the students' total educational experience" by maintaining minimum grade point averages. Ulrich (1984) notes that the individuals attending the 1984 conference concurred with the primary emphasis on education, and that learning ought to be emphasized above competitive success.

Members of developmental conferences since 1984 have echoed that philosophy. Friedley (1989), in her discussion of the need for an ethical code in public address, emphasizes the notion that forensics is an educational experience. Hefling (1990) and Davenport (1990) discuss the need for educating coaches and judges. Whitney (1997) assisted the participants in the Third Developmental Conference for Individual Events in developing a series of resolutions, many of which focus on the importance of education.

In addition to the discourse promulgated at national conferences, individual members of the forensic community emphasize the educational value of forensics. For example, a series of articles in the Spring 1992 *National Forensic Journal* highlight the notion of forensics as laboratory in the areas of interpersonal, group, organizational and mass mediated communication (Dreibelbis & Gullifor, 1992; Friedley, 1992; Swanson, 1992; Zeuschner, 1992). Gernant focuses on the educational experience of competing in individual events (1991), and Williams (1996) discusses the educational values of Lincoln-Douglas debate. Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt and Loudon (1999) conclude that forensics improves one's critical thinking skills. In addition to publications on forensics and education, the revised AFA Code of Forensics emphasizes education as well (AFA Professional Relations Committee, 1998).

In our opinion, despite changing conditions in the forensics community, including greater pressure to win for budget renewal purposes and an increased level of participation in forensics overall, the myth has not changed drastically from Ehninger's position. The heroes of the myth, "forensic educators," "educate" young people to become better people through forensics. It is "virtuous" to be educational. Sadly, education as mythic frame provides the activity with a sense of heightened legitimacy which masks, or distorts, the competitive reality of forensics.

### **The Role of Competition in an Educational Activity**

While historically those involved in forensics have promoted the educational role of forensics, competition has received more emphasis in recent years. For example, Friedley (1989) places emphasis on both education and competition. She begins her article on ethical issues for coaches by reminding us of the Second Developmental Conference theme that forensics is an educational activity, then proceeds to argue that our second ethical responsibility is to establish rules "that govern the activity to guarantee equality, consistency, and a sense of 'fair play' within the *competitive* [emphasis added] arena" (p. 84).

In fact, the discourse of forensics is all about competition. In preparation for *tournaments, competitors practice their events with coaches*. Forensics educators

refer to themselves as *coaches*, who prepare *competitors*, not students, for week-end-long *tournaments* that give out *awards* to *top competitors*, *trophies* to *programs* that receive *sweepstakes points*, and *qualifier legs* to *competitors* for *national tournaments*. While at *tournaments*, *coaches judge competitors*, providing critiques on *ballots* that reflect a *competitor's school code*. Ultimately, the *judge* gives each *competitor rank and rate points*. Moreover, a *tournament director* and a *tab room staff*, whose sole purpose is to ensure that the *tournament is on time* and that results are *tabulated correctly*, *run tournaments*.

In such discourse, we witness the competitive reality of forensics. Such a reality is clearly not educational, yet since institutions of higher education fund many forensics programs, the activity must commit to a "heightened sense" of educational value that distorts its competitive reality. It is more virtuous to be educational than competitive, despite language to the contrary.

Some acknowledge that forensics is a competitive activity, thus emphasizing the game paradigm. Rieke and Smith (1968) contend that the competitive nature of debate "provides temptation to employ unethical behavior as a means to victory both in school debates and later in life" (p. 223). Greynolds (1991) admits that circumstances such as school size, budget, and past record exert pressure upon coaches to "be more or less successful in competitive situations" (p. 30). Muir (1993) attests that debate is a game, and that by viewing the activity as such, debaters get a "moral education" by learning about competition-related factors such as tolerance and fairness.

Some forensics scholars have recognized a conflict between education and competition. For example, in their study of ethics in forensics, Thomas and Hart (1983) found that, while respondents in the study said they favored the educational approach to forensics, the contest behaviors they approved were rooted in the game paradigm. In fact, some respondents failed to see a relationship between education-rooted rules and the actual contest. Inch concurred in 1991. He wrote that there is a gap "between the educational ethic we promote and the competitive ethic we practice" (p. 52). A discourse of education that Inch envisions is coopted. Education provides mythic legitimacy to an activity with competitive motives.

### **Current National Practices: An Examination of Myth in Action**

Four recent trends/events—the failure of experimental events, the emergence of unwritten tournament rules, the continuing controversy regarding the use of original literature, and the forensics associations' response to ethical challenges at national tournaments—provide support for our contention that the educational focus of forensics is being coopted by competition. The following examples demonstrate how the forensic community promulgates and reifies the myth.

First, despite the fact that forensics practitioners have called for the creation of new, experimental events, few new events have been adopted (Wickelgren, 1989). Wickelgren catalogues a series of individual events which no longer enjoy much attention: sales, radio and television, and Reader's Theatre. He argues that the current individual events surely cannot be the "perfect educational tools," and urges

the community to "break new educational barriers" (Wickelgren, 1989, p. 9; see also recommendations from the First Developmental Individual Events Conference Proceedings, p. 14-15). Since he wrote his essay, only one experimental event has taken hold— program oral interpretation. Our contention is that, seemingly, experimental events do not provide the activity with a "heightened sense" of coherence that maintains the authoritative presumption of competition. When the events are experimental, placings in the event do not always "count" for sweepstakes points, and rules are unclear, making the event more difficult to win. Additionally, experimental events cost money which, with limited budgets, makes them a competitive threat.

Further, experimental events threaten the value of competitive forensics by encouraging students to "experiment" and "discover" something new. Thus, experimental events encourage education and fun: elements that fall in direct opposition to the framework of competition and winning that pervades college forensics. At the tournaments offering experimental events, a gentle "nod" is directed toward the educational value of forensics, reinforcing its mythic and secondary status within the forensics community. In fact, experimental events give the activity a "less-than-heightened" sense (such events remind the community that education should be a component in the activity), and that undermines competitive authority.

In addition to the hesitation in creating experimental events, unwritten rules of competition, not education, have emerged. Cronn-Mills and Golden (1997) highlight unwritten rules in oral interpretation which should be followed to insure tournament success, including using a teaser and holding a little black book. Similarly, Verlinden (1997) outlines the unwritten rules for public address, such as having a timely but not-too-well-known topic and making each informative speech personally relevant to the judge. West (1997) cites similar, unwritten rules for debate. The focus of the unwritten rules is upon tournament success; the point these authors make is that if one is to be competitive in forensics, one must learn, practice, and conform to the unwritten rules. Acquiescing to unwritten standards or rules increases the opportunities for competitive success, which in forensics is the ultimate "heightened sense" of authority, both for competitors and coaches. Thus, conformity to unwritten competitive standards further relegates forensics education to secondary and mythic status. There exist, to our knowledge, no "educational" unwritten standards in the activity. The point is that the only unwritten rules which appear to be important, given their recent attention, focus on competition. What is unwritten, but explicit from a competitive standpoint, is that competitive success requires a keen understanding and conformity to judge and event preferences.

Third, the controversy regarding the use of original literature focuses on competition. While the opponents of original literature base part of their argument on the educational value of searching for and cutting published materials, both parties in the conflict tangle over the competitive advantages provided to the students who write their own literature (see, for example, Endres, 1989; Green, 1988; Green & Ford, 1989; Lewis, 1988). The advantage of using original literature is

that it provides the "seasoned" competitor with a "leg-up" on the competition. The student can create a piece of literature that conforms to the competitive tendencies and standards related to a particular event. Thus, published literature is deemed by many in the forensics community as not competitive enough. Although the issue has yet to be resolved, our contention is that *if it* is resolved, it will be as a result of evaluating competitive merits.

Lastly, at the 1998 AFA-NIET, non-enrolled students competed and won several awards. Reporters from the university's student newspaper made the discovery, and ultimately, the national committee revoked their trophies and placings. Similarly, after a student at the 1998 NFA national tournament was found plagiarizing an after-dinner speech, the national committee revoked his trophy. The responses to both incidents at the national tournaments reflect a competition mindset: the focus is on points and winners/losers. While the forensics community could have taken the opportunity to educate its members about the ethical implications of both incidents, explaining the violations and reasons why such rules exist, neither the AFA nor NFA took the opportunity to do so in their disqualification letters or newsletters ("disqualification letter" # 1; "disqualification letter # 2; "NFA Newsletter").

To be specific, in "Disqualification letter # 1", the two-paragraph letter alerts the reader that two people not enrolled in college "competed" at the AFA. The AFA-NIET committee voted to "disqualify" them, "advance the next two contestants," and "advance the next team." The committee "advanced" the other students in the relevant final rounds. Finally, the committee made "adjustments" in the "team and individual sweepstakes results." Disqualification letter # 2 simply reports the "disqualification" due to "rule violations." The NFA newsletter reports the "ethical violation," the NFA's committee's actions, and the director's admonishment to "forensic educators" to not break the ethical "rules."

An assessment of our current mind set, then, is that whereas a few forensics scholars have acknowledged that a higher value is placed on competition than education, many individuals in the forensics community continue to perpetuate the rhetoric of "the educational value" of the activity. Furthermore, current tournament practices point to the focus on competition. Therefore, not only is forensics more competition-centered than ever, but also the educational value of the activity has become more of a myth than a reality.

### Implications

The argument that forensics is an educational activity is a comfortable one to make. We justify our practices and habits, and create a good "master story" (Hart, 1990) which makes our activity palatable to ourselves, our students, and our departments, universities and communities. In Burke's terms (1984), we in the forensics community have an "occupational psychosis" in which those who are competitively successful are awarded (literally) for their "educational" valor.

The problem with this master story is that when we pretend to be educational, and in reality focus on competition, we cannot make strides to *become* more educational. As Haiman noted in 1964, "too many people are caught up in

the game of forensics," to the extent that the purpose of the activity, if we ever knew it, is forgotten (p. 62). Therefore, when practitioners make educational suggestions for change, if the community believes the myth that we are already an educational activity, we are less likely to make those changes. Our competitive focus, in effect, limits any creative insights to be more educational and less competitive.

Nor is the forensics community well-served to make the argument that competition is educational. We acknowledge that competition can teach students about aspects of winning and losing. However, forensics can educate well beyond that which is gained from competition. For example, students can learn and benefit from research skills and the process of argument creation without competition. By taking the perspective that competition is educational, we are unable to open our minds to new educational possibilities.

Therefore, the major implication of our analysis is that the individuals who currently participate in forensics ought to be more forthright in acknowledging the fact that forensics, above anything else, is a competitive activity. Departments, deans and student government finance boards place directors in the position of defending the worth of their programs—making a winning record essential. Many coaches are just that, coaches, and not educators, and there are not droves of academicians anxious to take their places. As argued above, the reality is that the discourse and practices of forensics make it predominately competitive.

If the community acknowledges and accepts the fact that forensics is a competition, then it ought to be treated as such. In this paradigm, experimental events need not be considered. Forensic coaches ought to begin work in making the unwritten tournament rules explicit and available to all competitors. At the national level, the rules for competition already exist in the competition paradigm; if an ethical violation occurs, the penalty should be meted out without question.<sup>1</sup> If the penalty is such that it potentially would harm the education of the student(s), such as banning the school from participating in the next national tournament, so be it. In this vein, the forensic community would operate as it actually conducts itself.

As a result of acknowledging the reality of competition rather than the myth of education, our hope is that the community will begin to see that the activity needs educational bolstering. That change could occur on several levels. For example, as "forensic educators" we could renew our role as teachers and scholars, not simply coaches and van drivers. Our competitive season could be limited so as to afford scholarly participation at both the national and regional conventions in communication (Brand, 2000). On the competition level, in addition to Inch's (1991) suggestion that the season be shortened, the AFA-NIET "leg" system could be abolished (Olson, 1991); "last chance" and swing tournaments could become a relic of the past. Instead of ranking individual events speakers and awarding a "win" in debate, judges, as educators, could simply offer critiques. In debate rounds, the judge could provide oral feedback throughout the round. The focus of such tournaments could be on a tournament-wide service learning project, social interaction, or simply on skill improvement. Experimentation, innovation, and creativity in using our activity as an educational environment could then take precedence

over standardized and homogenized tournaments. Lay judges and alternative tournament formats deserve to be considered as a means for injecting new experiences and feedback to students participating in the activity. Greenstreet (1997) and Hada (1999) argue effectively for bringing forensics back to the campus and to use the community as a place to interact with forensic participants. Schools could turn their focus outwards on the community, advocating "showcase" performances and assistance with community groups. Only when the competitive environment is recognized will we be able to turn our attention to educational practices, realize that the activity is not as educational as we once thought, and begin to enact some of the suggestions listed above.

Our purpose in this essay has been to assess the current focus of collegiate forensics. Through examining current essays regarding forensics practices and assessing current trends in the forensics community, we conclude that the notion of forensics as education is a myth; the reality is that forensics is a game or competition. Thus, our challenge to the forensics community is to be honest about what forensics really is: a competitive activity that no longer needs to clothe itself in the myth of education. Only then can we hope that the present myth of what the activity is all about, will become a future reality.

### Notes

1. Invitations for both the AFA and NFA national tournaments include rules and guidelines for appropriate competitive participation at tournaments.

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## **Ethical, Practical, and Educational Issues: Addressing the Use of Unpublished Pieces in Interpretation Events**

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The forensic community pretends it is not a big issue, yet we all know it is. People speak of it, but it is always referred to as something someone else is doing. Students practice deadpan expressions if asked about it. In sum, the issue of unpublished interpretation events is often avoided in forensic discourse, largely because the issue opens a potential minefield of problems for the activity. Still, particularly in the mid-to-late 1990s, unpublished pieces have flooded interpretation rounds, drastically altering the landscape of competition. Beyond competitive issues lies the deep-rooted question: Educationally, does the use of unpublished literature hinder a student's potential for learning and growth within the activity? Gernant (1991) asks the largest question of all: "What are students learning?" (p. 41). To answer this pedagogical dilemma, this study will address attitudes regarding (1) the prevalence of unpublished literature, (2) the opinions related to the use of such pieces, and (3) the competitive success of pieces written exclusively for use in individual event competition. In answering such questions, this study provides a solid heuristic for the future study of an issue that must be addressed in the forensic community.

### **Related Literature**

First, it is important to define the differences and similarities between the terms "unpublished literature" and "literature written for the sole use of competition." While unpublished literature has no author referent and only implies that the piece has never formally been printed, for the purposes of this study, the term operationalized interchangeably with literature written for the sole use of competition. This combining of terms is necessary for accurate study of the issues, as this dilemma really is not about whether a piece is or is not worthy of publication; nor is it an essay regarding the many ways a poor piece of literature can now be published on the Internet. Instead, this study should shed light on selections (largely unpublished) that are written with the intent of winning a speech competition.

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Additionally, it is important to note that this study will treat partial-writing of a piece or program as being of the same ethical dilemma as writing an entire piece or program in its entirety. In other words, writing a poem for a program because the published literature that was found only makes for five minutes of performance material will be characterized in the same ethical motif as writing an entire poetry program from scratch. Put simply, any performance that contains unpublished literature as part or all of the texts is open for discussion.

No major studies of unpublished literature have been conducted to date; however, scholars such as Keefe (1985) have examined the performance of oral interpretation in ways that are significant to studying pieces written exclusively for competitive purposes. These areas include: (1) a discussion of author's intent/maintaining the integrity of the selection, (2) the need for accurate and consistent judging criteria for the performance of interpretation events, and (3) the potential difference in pedagogical value of performing published and unpublished literature.

First, researchers have pointed out the importance of maintaining the integrity of a piece of literature, often correlated closely with the concept of author's intent. Geisler (1985) uses the example of a published poem that she wrote herself, performed under a pseudonym, and still received comments regarding author's intent. Five of her nine ballots argued that she "did not understand what the author of the piece had in mind" (p. 71). Considering that she was the actual author of the piece, comments like these underscore the impossibility of maintaining the intended message of the piece. As Geisler wrote, "All too often in competitive interpretation both contestants and judges assume that concepts like 'authorial intent' can be adjusted and quantified in order to do the pieces 'correctly' " (p. 71). Using pedagogy of hermeneutics, she introduces four propositions necessary for the assessment of competitive interpretation:

1. A need to ensure the integrity of a text.
2. An understanding that oral interpretation is both creation and re-creation of an art form.
3. The realization that interpretations which are defensible are valid.
4. A decision to honor generic characteristics of a given art work (p. 78-79).

Within these four propositions lies related concerns pertaining to unpublished interpretation, most notably the fourth, because there is no original pre-cut work in which any honor could be paid to generic characteristics. In addition, the second proposition refers to a re-creating of art, which implies that an interpretation performance takes pre-existing art and then does something new with it. This is obviously not always the case with interpretation written solely for performance.

Beyond the realm of author's intent and integrity of literature, a second area of study focuses on the problems with judging inconsistencies. As Mills (1991) points out, "it is also important to substantiate what is actually occurring in the judging of individual events" (p. 31). Scholars such as Mills (1984), Hansen (1988), and Billings (1997) have addressed judging criteria within public address events, finding issues with standardization of judging criteria. However, the criteria em-

ployed in evaluating interpretation events appear to be even more subjective.

A report from a 1982 Speech Communication Association Caucus argues, "The basic cause of inconsistent judging is that there is no real agreement on how to coach interpretation" (Holloway, Allen, Barr, Colley, Keefe, Pearse, and St. Clair, 1982, p. 43). The same group of researchers examined 72 interpretation ballots, finding that judges comment primarily on vocal response (50 ballots) and introductions/transitions (39 ballots). Judges were less likely to focus on issues such as bodily response (22 ballots), timing/pacing (16 ballots), and command of material (13 ballots). Still comments ranged over eighteen different categories with the average ballot containing only 3.5 of these eighteen categories. As a result, it is no wonder that students and judges have a difficult time understanding the assessment of interpretation performances.

Issues such as unpublished literature serve to blur the boundaries even more. Lewis, Williams, Keaveney, and Leigh (1984) introduce key questions a judge should ask when evaluating interpretation performances, many of which morph into different questions when applied to unpublished literature that is written directly for individual events performance. Among some of the questions that Lewis, in particular, provides:

1. Do you tell about context, characters, omitted scene information required to understand the selection?
2. Does the literature seem "fresh" (not just new, but "revitalized" literature)?
3. Is this "pulp" literature or literature of "merit"?
4. Does the monologic personal grow/change/evolve in the reading?

Clearly, questions such as these are very fair questions to ask when evaluating interpretation performances, but they do not always fit when the student is performing something that was written by themselves or by their coach. For instance, question #1 asks if the context, characters, and other plot references that were cut from the performance were made clear to the audience. When performing a piece written for performance, this criteria is obviously always met, seeing as there is no other text beyond what is being spoken. Thus, judging criterion employed to evaluate a performance is altered greatly. Students who write their own material never have to worry about the comments that "this piece is overdone" or that a judge is "not following the flow of the cutting." With unpublished interpretation, the piece has never been done and there is no "cutting" to be done. While it may be difficult to write a piece yourself, there are clear advantages to performing your own material.

The bottom line is that the material a student is performing is the top criteria that many judges use to determine a ranking. Mills (1991) proves this in an extensive analysis of 2,596 comments taken from 250 oral interpretation ballots. The top number of comments (649) were regarding the material being performed. That fact, in itself, warrants the analysis of the venues currently being used to find the material that is being presented.

Verlinden (1987) writes that "the way oral interpretation is presented in forensics is important because so many students have their first or only exposure to

the art in forensics" (p. 57). Students who perform unpublished literature are gaining art skills in the form of writing, but they are not gaining exposure to the mainstream literary world. Thus, from the standpoints of literary integrity, judging criterion, and pedagogical value, issues inherent in the performance of unpublished interpretation pieces must be addressed.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the perceived prevalence of unpublished interpretation pieces within individual events competition as well as the scholarly arguments concerning what superior interpretation should include, the researchers gained focus on the key issues within this perceived problem. As a result, a survey concerning these issues focused upon five key research questions:

RQ1: Has unpublished interpretation regularly been competitively successful for the students who perform it?

RQ2: How prevalent is the performance of unpublished interpretation in competitive collegiate forensics?

RQ3: Do students within the forensic community regard the performance of unpublished interpretation as an ethical practice?

RQ4: Do students within the forensic community feel the performance of unpublished interpretation should be legal?

RQ5: What are the advantages and disadvantages of performing unpublished interpretation?

### **Method**

In order to assess current attitudes regarding unpublished interpretation, a 13-question survey was constructed by the researchers and then tested for any possible flaws by two students within the forensic community. These items asked questions about the prevalence, ethical and legal issues, and benefits and drawbacks of the use of using such material. A copy of the survey in its entirety can be found in Appendix A.

The surveys were distributed at four large individual event tournaments in October 2000. These tournaments represented three distinct regions of the country (Midwest, Southeast, and East), that allowed a diverse number of teams to participate in the survey. While the exact number of different schools participating in this study can not be ascertained because of the anonymity of the surveys, it is estimated that 35-45 different schools were represented in the database, based on the number of schools who attended these tournaments. Once surveys were completed, means and crosstabulations were calculated using SPSS for Windows 10.0 (2000). Two additional coders checked the data for intercoder reliability. Overall correlation between the coders exceeded 99 percent.

### **Results**

In sum, a total of 109 respondents took part in the survey. Eighty-six (79%) had competed in an interpretation category at the collegiate level. Within this group, 24 students (28%) indicated that they had performed an unpublished piece at some point in their forensic career. When asked to indicate their success, all 24 (100%)

indicated they had advanced to a regular season final round, 10 (42%) indicated they had made a quarterfinal round at AFA or NFA, and six (25%) indicated they had performed in a national final round using unpublished literature. Considering the fact that a quarter of all people performing unpublished interpretation did so at the highest level, research question #1 was answered, as using this type of writing was found not to hinder competitive success whatsoever. In fact, it appears to have enhanced a competitor's chances for success.

Yet, beyond the apparent success of the students who did choose to perform unpublished interpretation pieces, evidence was found to indicate that the practice does not dominate collegiate forensics. The eighty-six respondents who indicated they have performed in an interpretation category also self-reported that they had performed 674 pieces/programs collectively. Among this sample of 674 interpretation events, only 55 (8%) were unpublished material or material written directly for use in competition.

Students were also asked if they knew of anyone on their team who had ever performed unpublished interpretation. Thirty-five (32%) said yes, 57 (52%) said no, and 17 (16%) indicated they did not know or were unsure. When asked how much unpublished literature is being used in interpretation events today, 48 (44%) said 0-20% of all interpretation performances contained unpublished material, 34 (31%) felt that 21-40% of all material was unpublished, 12 (11%) said 41-60%, 5 (5%) said 61-80%, and 2 (2%) said 81-100%. Eight (7%) additional respondents claimed they were either unsure or had no basis for the assessment. The data concerning number of pieces performed, number of unpublished pieces performed, number of teammates performing unpublished literature, and the amount of unpublished literature within the entire activity combine to answer research question #2, which asked for the prevalence of unpublished interpretation. While only 8% of all interpretation actually were reported to be unpublished, the majority of students guessed the number was actually much higher. If the 8% figure holds true in subsequent studies, it should note that the amount of unpublished literature *actually* being performed does not amount to nearly as high a percentage as the amount of unpublished literature people *think* are being performed.

The respondents were also asked to indicate how big a problem the use of unpublished literature is within collegiate individual events. Nine (8%) said it was a major problem, 25 (23%) indicated it was somewhat a problem, 39 (36%) said it was a minor problem, and 28 (26%) argued that it was a non-existent problem. Eight (7%) respondents either did not answer of the question or indicated no opinion.

Building off of this question, respondents were asked how ethical the practice of performing unpublished interpretation is, yielding perhaps the largest array of responses. While six (6%) people has no opinion, 13 (12%) said it was highly ethical, 13 (12%) said it was moderately ethical, 33 (30%) said it was neither ethical nor unethical, 21 (19%) said it was moderately unethical, and 23 (21%) said it was highly unethical. Thus, research question #3, which asked about the ethics of using unpublished literature must be answered in a mixed response. The most frequent answer to this question is that the practice lies in the middle of the

ethics continuum. However, slightly more people (40%) leaned toward labeling the practice unethical than leaned toward the practice being ethical (24%).

Students were also asked the pragmatic question of whether unpublished interpretation should be legal for competition. The majority of respondents (56/51%) said that it should be a legal practice while 43 (39%) said the use of unpublished interpretation should be deemed illegal. Ten (10%) people indicated no opinion. One respondent even said, "I hate it. It's cheating. If we want to use so much of it, then it needs to be its own event, or legalized so everyone can do it, not just those prestigious enough to get away with it.." As a result, research question #4, which pertained to the legality of unpublished pieces, was answered by saying that while the majority of respondents favored keeping it legal, the forensic community, as a whole, remains largely mixed. Ironically, while both ethical and legal issues yielded diverse responses, people indicated leanings toward labeling the practice unethical, but nonetheless legal.

Respondents were also asked if performing unpublished interpretation made a student more or less likely to succeed. Thirty-nine (36%) said yes, while 49 (45%) said no, with the remaining 21 (19%) indicating that the practice did not cause students to be any more or any less successful. Respondents were then asked the question of why they felt that way. Several themes emerged within the responses of the thirty-nine individuals that answered yes. Ten individuals claimed that students would succeed because of an increased connection with the literature; nine indicated that the unpublished literature was written specifically for the performer—a "tailor-made" piece—thus increasing the likelihood of success; six wrote of being able to follow a specific "formula" for success; three respondents believed that success would be enhanced because the student would be more familiar with the literature; and three postulated that the unpublished literature gave advantages to a limited few. Other arguments included: (1) unpublished literature increased the quality of literature, (2) only top level competitors performed unpublished literature, and (3) it was easier to find unpublished literature. Of the 49 surveys that indicated no, respondents justified why individuals were no more likely to succeed with unpublished literature. Nine respondents suggested that material did not matter nearly as much as the talent of the performer; seven believed that unpublished literature would have as much literary quality as published literature. As one respondent stated, "If someone beats me with an unpublished piece, they were just better than me." Three thought that using unpublished literature was unnecessary because there are plenty of quality published literature available, three more suggested that the unpublished literature did not make any difference in success. Other reasons why people who perform unpublished literature were seen as being less likely to succeed were that: (1) the feeling that "cheaters never win", (2) judges are not familiar with unpublished literature, (3) there is no guarantee with unpublished literature, and (4) the practice is unethical. A final sentiment for these students being less likely to succeed was voiced by one respondent, who wrote that "It is actually more difficult to write a piece with the necessary levels and parts."

The next question pertained to the perceived advantages of performing an

unpublished interpretation. Respondents were able to detail multiple advantages including that: (1) unpublished literature is new/novel/unknown (20 responses) (2) the competitor would feel a more personal connection with the literature (17 responses); (3) the competitor could tailor to a piece in conjunction with a performer's "style" (15 responses); and (4) an interpretation "formula" could be more readily followed (12 responses). Others indicated that unpublished interpretation was an advantage because there was no need to decipher the author's intent because they did not have to locate literature, and because the selection could be rewritten to suit the audience. Fourteen individuals could not find any advantage to performing unpublished literature.

The final question asked for disadvantages surrounding the idea of performing unpublished literature. A few answers were repeated a multiple times. Nineteen respondents believed that a disadvantage would be the possibility of poor writing or decrease in the quality of literature, eight individuals felt you could be caught or disqualified from competition, and six implied that performing unpublished literature could bring "bad name" to a student, a team, or even an entire activity. A myriad of other disadvantages was given concerning legitimacy, ethics, and author's intent. Several others spoke of how unpublished literature "creates an imbalance in the playing field" as some students are working on better cuts of published pieces while other students are working on rewrites of pieces they have written themselves. Fifteen surveys indicated that there were no disadvantages to performing unpublished literature.

### **Discussion**

The results of the survey provide insight and integral data on how people feel about unpublished literature within interpretation events. Five key findings appear to be important for the forensic community and the direction of future research within this area.

First, students did appear to be just as successful (if not more so) when performing literature that is in unpublished form. Of the 24 students who reported they had performed this type of piece, a quarter made it to the pinnacle of forensic success: a national final round. While we do not know the success of the other people in the survey, it could be safe to assume that they would not have had such high success rates with published literature. Still, students felt there was no inherent advantage, as the results showed a near-split between people who felt unpublished literature helped them and the people who felt it hurt them competitively.

This study also pinpointed the prevalence of unpublished literature. Perhaps surprisingly, the practice of using this form of literature was not nearly as widespread as what we think it is. In fact, half of the people surveyed surmised the percentage of unpublished literature would be 20% or higher. However, this survey found that only 8% of all performance literature were reported to be unpublished. Granted, the perceived stigma of performing unpublished interpretation could imply that students may have been hiding the truth within the research, making the actual percentage higher. However, given the complete anonymity of the surveys itself, students actually were given no motivation to do so, as any report of

performing self-written or unpublished interpretation would not come back to harm them personally.

A third finding uncovered what many already would have guessed: there is no clear-cut consensus about the ethical implications of performing literature written directly for forensic performance. In fact, when asked about such concerns, there was a virtual split, although people did lean slightly toward the "unethical" side of the scale. Such a disagreement confirms division within the community as to how to handle the issue. It also shows why the topic rarely is openly discussed within the forensic activity; people's opinions are widely diverse on the ethical issues within the debate.

Fourth, in regard to legality, the largest finding was that students were uneducated about the current rules. Many students dubbed the practice illegal when, in fact, the practice is not specifically banned by either the American or National Forensics Association. While most appeared to endorse the status quo, they differed as to what the status quo was. Some reported that the practice should "stay legal" while others wrote it should "remain illegal." It is clear that the lack of discussion about unpublished interpretation has caused many to be unable to discern the rules of the activity. Clearly, this problem must be alleviated. Nonetheless, beyond the perceived lack of knowledge about the rules as they relate to unpublished literature, the set of respondents stayed fairly split—although this time they leaned on the side of the practice being legal. The fact that the majority (albeit not an overwhelming majority) felt that unpublished literature is both unethical, yet should be legal is an interesting juxtaposition of the issue. Yet, perhaps this actually does reflect an endorsement of the status quo, because while some feel they do not like the practice, they see it as impossible to enforce because of the prevalence of internet publishing and other venues to make unpublished literature become published literature in a matter of minutes.

Finally, this study uncovered some of the reasons why students choose the unpublished option when performing interpretation pieces. The most common advantage listed was that the piece would be guaranteed to be new. In other words, they could avoid the comment that the piece has been performed successfully by another competitor. Perhaps people who do not endorse the use of unpublished literature would want to take these comments to heart by rewarding students for performing high-quality, classic pieces of literature even if someone had performed it before. Students also felt that they would have more of a "connection" with the piece if they dictated what was the exact text and that this practice helps students fit into the inherent "success formula." The most common disadvantage listed was that the literature would not be of as high a quality as other pieces. In sum, the question of whether to perform unpublished literature becomes an issue of benefits and drawbacks. For instance, if the decreased literary quality of the piece could be counteracted by the ability to create a success formula within the piece, the student is more likely to opt for an unpublished piece. If that is not the case, they are more likely to remain with a piece that is already published. The same could be true with the other advantages and disadvantages; the practice has clear benefits and drawbacks and the question becomes whether the unpublished piece

is seen as "worth the risk."

### Conclusion

Without question, the performance of unpublished literature is a touchy subject that polarizes students, coaches, and judges alike. The most pressing question that coaches, as educators, should ask, is not whether students using unpublished interpretation are more or less likely to *win*, but whether they are more or less likely to *learn*. There is no question that the skills employed when performing an unpublished piece are significantly different than the skills used for finding, cutting, and performing published literature. The forensics community should be asking whether both of these skills have educational value and whether the goals of interpretation are still met regardless of whether the piece is published or not. Additionally, the findings in this study should spark debates about judging paradigms, specifically what judges look for when assessing a piece for interpretation. Those who feel the practice is unethical may need to adjust their paradigms to allow room for pieces that have been done by other competitors at other times and places. Coaches must also speak openly about the issue with their students. At times, students may be performing unpublished literature without the knowledge of their coaches for fear of the coaches' disapproval of such a choice. However, it is only through frank discussion of these issues that the forensic community can eventually come to an understanding of them. These questions will persist until we create an open, honest dialogue about unpublished interpretation. Right now, the dialogue is relegated to the nebulous "other" that is choosing to perform unpublished literature. The stigma of admitting to writing a piece for competition is quite evident, but the only way to erase such stigmas is to talk about them with an aware eye toward consensus building.

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## Appendix A

### Interpretation Events Questionnaire

NOTE: *You are about to answer a series of questions pertaining to unpublished interpretation that is performed in individual events competitions. Obviously, this is a subject that has been kept a secret because of a possible backlash against some performances. Please know that we guarantee that your answers will be kept confidential and that you will not be asked to render information that in any way helps to identify you, your school, or even the geographic region in which you compete. Feel free to answer these questions openly and honestly.*

1.) Have you ever competed in interpretation events (prose, poetry, duo, DI, POI) at the college level?

Yes       No      *If no, skip to #5*

2.) Approximately how many different interpretation pieces/programs have you performed at the college level?

Number of pieces/programs performed

3.) How many of these pieces/programs have been unpublished material (i.e. written by students, coaches, etc.)

Number of unpublished pieces/programs

4.) Have you ever performed unpublished material in:

\*\*You may check more than one:

Regular season final rounds

AFA or NFA quarterfinals

AFA or NFA semifinals

AFA or NFA finals

5.) To your knowledge, does anyone on your team perform unpublished material?

Yes       No       Unsure

6.) What percentage of interpretation events on the circuit do you feel are unpublished pieces/programs?

0-20%       21-40%       41%-60%       61-80%       81-100%

7.) Would you say unpublished interpretation, is a:

- Major problem
- Somewhat of a problem
- Minor problem
- Non-existent problem

8.) In your opinion, performing unpublished material is:

- Highly ethical
- Moderately ethical
- Not ethical or unethical
- Moderately unethical
- Highly unethical

9.) In your opinion, performing unpublished interpretation should be:

- Legal  Illegal

10.) Do you feel people who perform unpublished interpretation are more successful?

- Yes  No Why?

11.) What do you feel are the advantages of performing unpublished interpretation?

12.) What do you feel are the disadvantages of performing unpublished interpretation?

13.) Additional comments:

## **Evidence and Ethics in Individual Events: An Examination of an AFA-NIET Final Round**

Daniel Cronn-Mills  
Larry C. Schnoor

### **Introduction**

People in forensics often hear and use the phrase, "forensics is the laboratory for the public speaking classroom." Forensics is where we put into practice the principles of communication we teach in public speaking and oral interpretation courses. Numerous public speaking textbooks contain example speeches which were first developed and delivered in intercollegiate forensic competitions. Videotapes of final rounds are often presented as examples of persuasive, informative, and extemporaneous speaking. A similar situation involving a final round tape from the AFA-NIET led to our research project.

Our project began as a simple classroom exercise. Students in a routine public speaking class were shown videotapes of the six final round contestants in Informative Speaking. The students were asked to review the speeches for numerous qualities: primary organization, internal organization, transitions, introductions, conclusions, and evidence. The students' final assessment focused on the inclusion of evidence in public speech.

We have found the activity highly worthwhile as a form of "reverse engineering." Students' research abilities are significantly expanded by tracking down sources from the speeches, the forms and types of sources increases, and the means for including evidence is enhanced. The classroom project on this occasion took an unexpected turn—the students started identifying numerous discrepancies between the sources/evidence stated in the speeches and the actual sources. The students provided permission to Cronn-Mills and Schnoor to use their efforts as the basis for this research effort.

### **Literature Review**

The issue of evidence in public address events—while a necessary compo-

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ment of the activity—has received little scholarly scrutiny. Friedley (1983) noted more than 16 years ago "while debate educators have been willing to undertake such study over the years, individual events research in this area has been extremely limited" (p. 116-117). The dearth of scholarship involving evidence and individual events continues to this day. Few articles in our forensic journals directly address the use of evidence in public address events.

Forensic scholars believe ethics is a serious issue for the activity and the discipline. Thomas and Hart (1982) distributed a questionnaire at the AFA-NIET focusing on the issue of ethics. The findings indicate 85 percent of competitors and nearly 80 percent of judges believe fabricating evidence constitutes the worst ethical violation in the activity.

Friedley (1983) points out the forensic community has taken steps to address the ethical use of sources and evidence. According to Friedley, the Sedalia National Development Conference on Forensics forwarded two resolutions involving ethics and evidence:

- Forensics should promote adherence to the ethical and scholarly obligation of the advocate, including respect for the integrity of evidence, accurate representation of the ideas of others, and rigorous examination of beliefs. (p. 111)
- Evidence should be evaluated not by its quantity, but by its quality determined in part by its credibility and audience acceptability. Thoroughness and care must be exercised in finding, recording, and documenting evidence. Advocates should recognize their ultimate responsibility for all evidence they use, whether discovered by them or by others. (p. 111)

Two studies specifically analyzed the use of sources and evidence in individual events. The most comprehensive and revealing article was authored by Robert L. Frank and appeared in the fall 1983 issue of the *National Forensic Journal*. Frank specifically studied the evidence used by the six finalists in persuasive speaking at the 1981 National Forensic Association tournament. Frank's investigation revealed all six speakers engaged in the systematic abuse of evidence. Frank notes "a comparison of the claims made by the speakers with original source documentation reveals a pattern of fabrication, distortion and deception of disturbing proportions" (p. 97).

Frank determined the six students engaged in three primary forms of evidence abuse: fabrication of evidence, source deception, and plagiarism. The fabrication of evidence includes attributing data to "a wholly non-existent source" or attributing the information to an extant source yet does not contain the data stated in the speech (p. 97). Four of the six speakers in Frank's study engaged in the fabrication of evidence.

Source deception is the second primary problem Frank (1983) identifies. Source deception is when tactics are "used to deceive the listener as to the true source of evidence" (p. 97). Frank distinguishes between two forms of source deception: undisclosed sources and pseudo-citations. Undisclosed sources are major sources of information which are not revealed to the audience. Frank states three students relied extensively on sources never stated in their speeches, and five of

six used at least one major undisclosed source. Pseudo-citations are the second form of source deception. A pseudo-citation is when a secondary source is included within a primary source, yet the secondary source is identified as a primary source within the speech. Frank states nearly one-fourth of all the evidence used by the six final round speakers consisted of pseudo-citations. The final form of source deception is source splitting. Source splitting is when a student "divides the details that identify the source into two parts" by attributing "one fact in one part of the speech to one part of the source and later attribut[ing] another act the second part" (Frank, 1983, p. 103). Frank notes only one of the six finalists engaged in source splitting. Frank provides an example of source splitting:

... during the first minute of the speech, Speaker 5 reported that "According to the 1980 *Journal of Trauma*, accidents are the third leading cause of death in the U.S. as a whole." One sentence later she noted, "In fact, Dr. David R. Boyd, Director of the U.S. Division of Emergency Medical Services said that shock is the number one killer in people under the age of 45." Actually, both "facts" derive from the same *Journal of Trauma* article by Dr. Boyd. (p. 103)

Plagiarism is the final form of evidence abuse identified by Frank (1983). Frank's analysis indicates one of the six finalists plagiarized his speech. The plagiarism by the student was extensive. Frank determined 43 of 92 lines in the speech "consist of whole phrases, sentences, and paragraphs lifted word for word from a single unattributed source" (Frank, 1983, p. 103).

The second study to examine the ethical use of sources and evidence was a master's thesis written by Robert L. Markstrom (1994) titled: *A Case Study of Source Citations Found in the 1993 AFA-NIET Final Round of Extemporaneous Speaking*. Markstrom's results indicate students "often made mistakes within the citations" and "frequently misrepresented the content of the sources they cited" (p. 23). Markstrom used a broad standard to determine if the content of a source was appropriately represented. The standard stated: "the general thesis of the speech had to match the general topic nature of the source" (p. 25). Yet, even with such a broad standard, Markstrom notes only 44 percent met the criteria (66% failure rate). Markstrom argues speakers were clearly misrepresenting the evidence used in extemporaneous speeches.

Finally, the American Forensic Association has established clear ethical standards concerning the use of evidence in forensic competition. See Box 1 on page 39 for the AFA code of ethics.

### **Data Collection**

The students involved in the data collection process were instructed to write down the source cites and evidence the speakers claimed was derived from each source. Second, the students attempted to track down the sources and determine the veracity of the evidence. The sources stated in the six speeches were tracked to the original documentation, including tracking down personal interviewees. The students were able to track down approximately 60 percent of the sources, another 30 percent were located by Cronn-Mills and Schnoor, and 10 percent were not

verifiable.

Our data collection of the sources, as noted above, is not exhaustive. We were unable to locate or verify certain sources cited in the speeches. The verification problem stems from three issues: use of internet sites, use of television broadcasts, and use of international newspapers. Internet sites are problematic due to their potentially fleeting existence. An internet site can be "up" one day and "down" the next day. Certain internet sites are also by subscription only (e.g., *Ivanhoe Medical Breakthroughs*). The prohibitive cost of subscribing to the site negated verification of the source/evidence. The second verification problem results from television broadcasts. Television broadcasts were used by numerous students. The transient nature of broadcasts make verification difficult. Lexus/Nexus does contain transcripts of some broadcasts—but not all (e.g., *The Leeza Show*, *CNN Morning News*). The final verification issue deals with international newspapers. Many university and college libraries subscribe to major international newspapers, but the more regional newspapers are far more difficult to verify. Interlibrary loan (ILL) is of little use in such instances since source citations in competitive speeches do not contain information necessary to request materials through ILL (e.g., author, article title, page numbers).

## Results

The six speakers were quite proficient with their inclusion of evidence. The six students averaged 13.3 pieces of evidence in their presentations. The average of 13.3 sources computes to a source citation spoken approximately every 45 seconds. Two of the students far exceeded the average using 16 pieces of evidence (cite every approximately 37 seconds) and 17 pieces of evidence (cite every approximately 35 seconds). Two of the students set the minimum with 11 pieces of evidence in their speeches (cite approximately every 54 seconds).

We have organized the ethical concerns around the three primary evidence violations of the AFA: fabricated evidence, distorted evidence, and plagiarism. The use of the AFA code (1982/1998) is particularly appropriate. The six speakers involved in this study were all part of the 1998 final round in Informative Speaking at the American Forensic Association—National Individual Events Tournament. The speakers are, as part of the AFA-NIET, responsible for upholding the AFA code of ethics (1982/1998). We have grouped the results by speaker within each ethical violation. We have included only the sources/evidence which we believe violated the AFA code of ethics. We have not included: (1) sources/evidence which were verified accurate; (2) sources/evidence which we were unable to locate; or (3) sources in which the only issue was a "mis-speak" by the student resulting in the transposition of dates or titles. Statements in brackets indicate analytical comments on the evidence and its the relationship to the AFA code.

**Box 1: AFA Code of Forensics Program and Forensics Tournament Standards for College and Universities**

The AFA code of ethics identifies three primary violations concerning evidence usage—fabricated evidence, distorted evidence and, plagiarism. (The AFA code was adopted in 1982 and revised in 1998.) We have replicated below the relevant part of the AFA Code of Forensics Program and Forensics Tournament Standards for College and Universities:

**ARTICLE II: COMPETITOR PRACTICES**

1. Forensics competitors shall not use fabricated or distorted evidence.

A. Evidence is defined as factual material (statistics and examples) and/or opinion testimony offered as proof of a debater's or a speaker's contention, claim, position, argument, point or case.

B. Fabrication of evidence refers to falsely representing a cited fact or statement of opinion as evidence when the material in question is not authentic. Fabricated evidence is so defined without reference to whether or not the debater or speaker using it was the person responsible for fabricating it.

C. Distorted evidence refers to misrepresenting the actual or implied content of factual or opinion evidence. Distorted evidence is so defined without reference to whether or not the debater or speaker using it was the person responsible for distorting it. Distortions shall be judged by comparing the challenged evidence against the material as it appears in the original source. Distortions include, but are not limited to:

i. quoting out of context.

ii. misinterpreting the evidence so as to alter its meaning.

iii. omitting salient information from quotations or paraphrases. MLA Standards will be considered advisory with respect to this standard.

iv. adding words to a quotation which were not present in the original source of the evidence without identifying such an addition.

v. failure to provide complete documentation of the evidence (name of author(s), source of publication, full date, page numbers and author(s) credentials where available in the original) when challenged. Debaters and speakers are expected to be in possession of the forms of documentation listed here at the time they used any evidence which was challenged.

vi. Failure to provide complete documentation of electronically retrieved evidence, including:

a. Name of author(s), source of information, full date, and author(s) credentials where available;

b. The nature and type of the electronic site identified in the evidence citation [e.g., "listserve," "Lexis/Nexis," "Homepage," "CD-ROM"];

c. A full current Universal Resource Locator (URL) when applicable [e.g., <http://www.epa.gov>]; (iv) The date the information was retrieved [date of access]; (v) Unique and original page numbers where available, or an indication if not available [e.g., "n.pag.," "p. Lexis"].

2. In individual events which involve original student speech compositions (oratory/persuasion, informative/expository, after-dinner/epideictic, rhetorical criticism, impromptu, extemporaneous or other similar speaking contests), the speaker shall not commit plagiarism.

A. Plagiarism is defined as claiming another's written or spoken word as one's own, or claiming as one's own a significant portion of the creative work of another.

B. A speech in individual events competition is considered plagiarized when the student presenting it was not the principal person responsible for researching, drafting, organizing, composing, refining and generally constructing the speech in question.

(the AFA code is available online at: <http://www.americanforensics.org/afacode.html>).

### Fabricated Evidence

According to the AFA code, fabricated evidence "falsely represents a cited fact or statement of opinion as evidence when the material in question is not authentic" (AFA Code, 1982/1998). We counted as fabricated any evidence not apparent in the cited source. On certain occasions we reclassified evidence initially thought as fabricated to the categories of either distorted or plagiarized evidence. The reclassification occurred when we found the stated evidence in another source or under a different date of the stated source. We highlight 18 instances of fabricated evidence. Five of the six final round speeches contained instances of distorted evidence.

**Table 1: Fabricated Evidence—Artificial Muscles**

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Findings
<i>New Scientist</i> December 6, 1997	"... can be made in any shape or size ..."	Evidence not apparent in article.
<i>Pacific Affairs</i> Sept. 23, 1997	"... artificial muscles function like a regular party favor."	<i>Pacific Affairs</i> published issues in Summer '97 and Fall '97; the evidence was not apparent in either issue; <i>Pacific Affairs</i> addresses only matters pertinent to the Pacific Rim region of the world.

**Table 2: Fabricated Evidence—Danger Model**

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Findings
National Institute of Health August 1997	"The danger model will protect millions of infants from the cold, flu, and measles."	According to Polly Matzinger of the NIH (personal communication, December 21, 1999), "I'm not sure which paper she is quoting here. It is true that the Danger Model has the potential to save a lot of infants, but I certainly never said that it in that way."
<i>Lancet</i> , July 5, 1997	"... Danger Model is revolutionizing cancer therapy allowing organ transplant recipients to lead a normal life."	Evidence not apparent in article.
<i>Lancet</i> , July 5, 1997	"... first infant-related vaccine ..."	Evidence not apparent in article.
<i>Lancet</i> , November 20, 1997	"The tumor is a healthy tissue growing too quickly and the healthy exterior tricks the immune system into not fighting until it is too late."	<i>Lancet</i> did not publish an issue dated November 20, 1997. The November 22, 1997, issue does contain an article on immunology, but does not contain the evidence cited in speech. <i>Lancet</i> of July 5, 1997, contains the statement, "A tumor isn't attacked because it is healthy, growing tissue."
<i>Science</i> , March 13, 1996	"... article on the Danger Model"	<i>Science</i> did not publish an issue on March 13, 1996. Issues were published March 8 and March 15, 1996. We did not locate an article on the Danger Model in either the March 8 or March 15, 1996 issues.

Table 3: Fabricated Evidence—Bee Venom

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Findings
<i>American Journal of Rheumatology</i> , December 17, 1997	"97 percent of rheumatoid nodules react positively to bee venom."	<i>American Journal of Rheumatology</i> does not exist. We found <i>Journal of Rheumatology</i> , <i>British Journal of Rheumatology</i> , <i>Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology</i> , <i>American College of Rheumatology</i> , <i>Journal of Clinical Rheumatology</i> , <i>Current Opinion in Rheumatology</i> . Evidence not apparent in any of the journals listed above.
<i>Biochemistry</i> , April 1, 1997	"Melatin is 100 times more potent than hydrocortisone."	Evidence not apparent in article.
<i>Washington Post</i> , January 18, 1998	"according to BVT advocate Pat Wagner, medicine gives adrenal glands the day off.. BVT wakes them up again."	Evidence not apparent in cited source.
<i>American Journal of Rheumatology</i> , April 8, 1997	"German study of 284 people with varied rheumatic diseases; 1 to 2 days needed to alleviate major symptoms; 70 percent showed marked improvements."	<i>American Journal of Rheumatology</i> does not exist. We found <i>Journal of Rheumatology</i> , <i>British Journal of Rheumatology</i> , <i>Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology</i> , <i>American College of Rheumatology</i> , <i>Journal of Clinical Rheumatology</i> , <i>Current Opinion in Rheumatology</i> . Evidence not apparent in any of the journals listed above.
<i>Medical Industry Today</i> , July 18, 1997	"Approximately 2 percent of the world is hypersensitive to insect stings."	Evidence not apparent in source. According to Natalie Franceschi, customer care manager for MIT (personal communication, Dec. 27, 1999), "after searching our site for "insect stings," I cannot locate a reference in the articles or any others to the phrase/sentence you quoted." [Franceschi provided a list of all the articles from the July 18, 1997, issue of <i>Medical Industry Today</i> . List is available upon request from Cronn-Mills & Schnoor.]

**Table 4: Fabricated Evidence—Vomeronasal Organ**

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Finding
<i>Boston Globe</i> , February 13, 1999	"reports the use of vomeronasal pheromone in treating psychological disorders such as schizophrenia."	Article not published by date of NIET in April 1998.
<i>Chemistry and Industry</i> , August 18, 1997	"Dr. Van Toller reports that the way the VNO converts pheromones into electrical impulses is being seriously studied in humans."	Evidence not apparent in article.
<i>Newsweek</i> , March 15, 1997	"They [scientists] studied the VNO in other animals—to moths, to monkeys, to rats—but ignored it in humans"	<i>Newsweek</i> did not publish a March 15, 1997, issue. Article on VNO appears in issue published October 13, 1997. Evidence is not apparent in October 13, 1997, article.

**Table 5: Fabricated Evidence—Edible Plastics**

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Findings
<i>Washington Post</i> , July 23, 1997	"... explains it is protecting the environment through advances in edible packaging, allowing the elderly to take their pills without swallowing and kids from choking on plastic toys."	According to Jensen (1999), the student misstated the source; the correct source is the <i>Washington Post</i> , July 26, 1997; However, the evidence is not apparent in either the July 23 or July 26 issues.
<i>Chicago Tribune</i> , October 21, 1997	"Scientists have discovered when edible plastic is bonded to one side of a glass it is nearly shatterproof."	Evidence not apparent in article.
Christine Meyer, spokesperson for UNICEF, Telephone Interview, March 26, 1998	"Looking into edible plastic for all humanitarian food packaging."	According to UNICEF (personal communication, Dec. 27, 1999), "the person you are looking for is not listed in the UNICEF directory."

### Distorted Evidence

According to the AFA code, distorted evidence "refers to misrepresenting the actual or implied content of factual or opinion evidence" (AFA Code, 1982/1998). We illuminate 10 instances of distorted evidence. All six final round speeches contained at least one instance of distorted evidence. The maximum number of ethical violations was three instances of distorted evidence in the speech on the vomeronasal organ (VNO).

**Table 6: Distorted Evidence—Artificial Muscles**

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Findings
<i>London Daily Telegraph</i> , April 26, 1997	"... real alternative to heart transplants"	"Doctors have already said that they can use artificial muscle for heart surgery" [surgery ≠ transplant]
<i>Technology Review</i> , October 1997	"Artificial sphincters are being developed by doctors"	"Meanwhile, companies are considering the use of polymers as artificial sphincters to treat incontinence" [companies ≠ doctors; "considering the use of ≠ "being developed"]

**Table 7: Distorted Evidence—Danger Model**

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Findings
<i>London Daily Telegraph</i> , April 15, 1997	"Danger model is the most far reaching advance in immunology this century"	We were unable to find the cited evidence in the April 15, 1997, <i>London Daily Telegraph</i> . We did find the following in the April 13, 1997, <i>London Sunday Telegraph</i> : "... It's rather pleasing that it's taken an ex-Playboy bunny to come up with what is potentially the most far-reaching development in immunology this century." [Note the removal of "potentially" from the stated evidence. The removal dramatically changes the tone of the evidence from a possibility to a fact.]

**Table 8: Distorted Evidence—Bee Venom Treatment**

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Findings
<i>Washington Post</i> , June 17, 1997	[Student uses source in speech, yet ignores evidence contrary to thesis.]	Speech ignores criticism of bee venom therapy. Headline of June 17, 1997, <i>Washington Post</i> reads "Bee Venom Gets Test Against Multiple Sclerosis; Some say Georgetown's Proposed Study of This Unorthodox Therapy is Poorly Designed." Evidence appears to be taken out of context of the article.

**Table 9: Distorted Evidence—HEV Vehicles**

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Findings
<i>Washington Post</i> , May 13, 1997	"Even the most well-designed electric cars can only go 50-70 miles before it needs recharging. Recharging process takes 8-9 hours to complete."	First statement is inaccurate. Article states "most cars" not "most well-designed electric cars." Second statement is not supported by article.
<i>St. Louis Dispatch</i> , April 11, 1997	"GM's cheapest electrical car, a two-seater, sells for \$35,000."	Evidence is inaccurate. The source states vehicle costs \$34,000.

**Table 10: Distorted Evidence—Vomeronasal Organ (VNO)**

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Findings
<i>LA Times</i> , March 12, 1998	"How the VNO and pheromones work together to send messages to brain on own neural pathways directly to the hypothalamus which sends messages to glands which secrete hormones and other pheromones"	Speaker did not fully represent the article. Statement on VNO and pheromones is accurate, yet the article continues by stating many experts believe the VNO has no function or may not be the only tissue sensitive to pheromones.
<i>Chemistry and Industry</i> August 18, 1997	"Dr. Van Toller states that 'if what has been found out about the VNO is accurate and we think it is, then these molecules hold a lot of potential'"	Article states, "Van Toller adds, 'the jury's still out on the human VNO, but if what's being said is true, then these molecules have a lot of potential.'" [Van Toller does not say "we think it (data) is ([accurate).]

**Table 11: Distorted Evidence—Edible Plastics**

Source Cited by Student	Student Said	Researchers' Findings
<i>London Daily Telegraph</i> , June 12, 1997	"The collective scientific minds of NASA and Dupont could never perfect"	"Dupont has shown interest." [Article does not mention "collective scientific minds," NASA, or inability to perfect substance.]
<i>Chicago Tribune</i> , October 21, 1997	"By using edible plastic to cover pills ..."	Closest phrase in article states "That was enough to intrigue Richard Fuisz, president of Fuisz Technologies Ltd., a Chantilly, VA, company that makes coatings for medicines."

## Plagiarism

According to the AFA code, "plagiarism is defined as claiming another's written or spoken word as one's own, or claiming as one's own a significant portion of the creative work of another" (AFA Code, 1982/1998). We have determined one student committed multiple acts of plagiarism. The student appears to have lifted significant portions of her speech from the *Washington Post*, July 26, 1997, article "From Weird Science to Business Alliance; Va. Students' Lab Explosion Leads to Deal for 'Edible Plastic.'" The student never cites the July 26, 1997, *Washington Post* article in her speech, but does miscite the July 23<sup>rd</sup> *Washington Post* in one instance in another reference. The table below lists statements made by the student on the left and passages from the *Washington Post* article on the right.

**Table 12: Plagiarism —Edible Plastic**

Statements made by Student	Passages from <i>Washington Post</i> , July 26, 1997
"It all started with green slime."	"It all started with a little slime."
"As Justin White told the <i>CNN Morning News</i> of April 23, 1997, the flask of green slime was boiling over and I thought it was going to blow. The bright green gunk spewed all over the place, sending legions of freshmen fleeing for cover."	"The bright green gunk spewed all over the place, sending legions of startled freshmen fleeing for cover." (We were unable to verify the CNN cite.)
"These properties made the boys overnight media sensations. Including an appearance on <i>Good Morning America</i> and several marriage proposals." (no cite provided in speech).	"so, what is this thing that has brought the boys marriage proposals and appearances on CNN and ABC s ' <i>Good Morning America</i> ' ?"
"J & G's <i>Edible Plastic</i> homepage, last updated May 19, 1997, gives up its composition. The plastic is a clear, transparent protein that looks a lot like Saran Wrap, except it's thicker and it's edible."	"It's a strong, transparent protein film that looks like a lot like Saran Wrap, except it's a little thicker and it's edible." (We were unable to verify <i>J &amp; G's Edible Plastic</i> homepage.)
"The <i>New Scientist</i> of June 14, 1997, explains that the plastic bonds to glass, paper, and wood, and dissolves in saliva, but not in water. It even passed the microwave and oven test ---- the plastic doesn't begin to decompose until the temperature reaches 350 degrees Celsius."	"It bonds to glass, paper and wood, and it dissolves in saliva but not in water. It passed the microwave and oven test—the plastic doesn't decompose until it hits 350 degrees Celsius." ("The <i>New Scientist</i> of June 14, 1997, does not contain the stated evidence.)
"One place the slime landed was in a small dish in the back of the room. The next day, when they were cleaning up, they realized the residue had combined with other chemicals and looked like plastic."	"It did explode, and they spend the rest of the afternoon mopping up a bucket's worth of the slime. They managed to salvage enough for their teacher's door, but otherwise figured their chemist days were over. But the following day Hash saw that some of the slime had landed in a small dish in the rear of the fume hood. The dish, which was forgotten after an earlier class experiment, contained a certain residue that combined with the slime and formed the plastic."

The preponderance of evidence clearly indicates extensive plagiarism occurred in the speech. While we were unable to verify two of the citations provided by the student, the almost identical language strongly indicates the statements are plagiarized from the *Washington Post* article. The two unidentifiable sources, as we note in the Data Collection section, are difficult to impossible to verify. One of the sources is a CNN broadcast and the second is a personal webpage.

### Discussion

Our results are distressing. Students in the final round of Informative Speaking at the AFA-NIET should represent among the best the activity has to offer—on both competitive and educational levels. Yet, the fact all six speakers appear to have violated the AFA code (1982/1998) in one manner or another clearly indicates a systemic issue within intercollegiate individual events competition. We sincerely believe most students do not commit ethical violations. We do not believe, however, the violations we have illuminated are limited to just the six speakers in our study—the chances are remote only the six finalists engaged in such practices.

We understand in certain circumstances how an inadvertent violation may occur. The most common reasons are memory/delivery "glitches" in the speech. A student may, under performance pressure, cite a source different than the prepared text. We believe an incorrect source/date is potentially the least severe of ethical violations. We should remember, however, the six students in the final round were not average speakers. The six students more than likely presented their speeches hundreds of times in practice and competition—including numerous final rounds. The six final-round speakers should have been well prepared for the pressure of a national final round. The rationale of a memory/delivery glitch does not, however, cover the full range of violations uncovered.

Some persons will lay the blame for the ethical violations on the students' coaches. We disagree with such an assessment. The primary responsibility for the evidence used in a public address event lies mainly with the student. The coach is responsible for *teaching* students the appropriate use of sources and evidence; the student is responsible for how they employ those teachings. We believe each student speaker has primary responsibility for any evidence used in a speech. Our perspective is in agreement with other forensic scholars. According to Friedley (1983), the members of the Sedalia Conference stated, "ethical evidence usage [i]s the responsibility of the individual competitor in contest speaking" (p. 111).

We believe, however, partial blame for the current state of affairs also lies with the forensic judges and the internet. Both have the potential to misguide students as they prepare and compete in public address events. We place a portion of the blame on judges who listen to public address events throughout the competitive season. We concur with VerLinden (1996) who argues conventions in forensics are not always based on a sound pedagogical/theoretical foundation. The conventions are too often predicated on perceived reasons for success in others' performances and/or adjusting to the whims of judges' preferences. We believe many judges have either inordinate expectations and/or do not actually evaluate the evi-

dence presented in the speeches.

The issue of "counting sources" has been noted in the activity for awhile. Many judges place "hashmarks" at the top of the ballot indicating the number of sources used by the students along with comments such as "need more sources" or "good number of sources." Neither judging comment indicates the quality of the sources employed. Williams (1997) determined an average of 14.8 sources were cited in informative and persuasive speaking at the 1996 American Forensic Association—National Individual Events Tournament. The net result—A source was cited every 39.6 seconds. Our study found an average of 13.3 evidence cites per speech (e.g., a cite every 45 seconds). One student in our study cited a source on average every 35.3 seconds (17 evidence cites). Williams correctly points out few if any other public speaking forums would find speeches so inundated with source citations. Williams contends too many judges are only concerned with "how many sources are used in the speech?" (p. 107).

We believe "simple and easy criteria" is one reason judges count the number of sources. Counting sources is "simple and easy" to do and requires little cognitive involvement in the actual quality of the evidence/source the student cites. Counting sources is a "simple and easy" standard for a judge to use in rendering a decision.

Based on his findings, Williams (1997) argues competitors and judges have become pre-occupied with the quantity, rather than the quality, of sources in public address events. For example, the speech on Artificial Muscles cited the journal *Pacific Affairs*, which addresses geo-political issues relevant to the Pacific Rim region of the world. An astute judge evaluating the sources would question the validity of the citation. Students under the intense pressure to please such judges may wander toward unethical behavior.

Second, the internet now provides competitors with a plethora of potential sources for their speeches. Electronic databases provide evidence from journal/magazine/newspaper articles across the world. Students are now expected to access and include in their presentations the full range of sources at their disposal. We believe the internet has compounded the problem of excessive source citations in public address events. Forensics cannot limit offerings or access to the internet, but forensics can request judges to curb the demands they make on the quantity of sources used by students.

A critical issue confronting forensics is how to prevent such occurrences in the future. We offer the following recommendations. *Directors* should reinforce and explicitly teach the AFA Code of Forensics Program and Forensics Tournament Standards for College and Universities (1982/1998). We suggest posting the code in a highly visible area for all competitors to see. Directors should explicitly discuss the appropriate use of sources and evidence with their students. Directors can become more involved in the process by challenging judges who write non-educational comments on ballots (e.g., "need more sources"). A director can send a simple e-mail to a judge asking them to explain ballot comments and how the comments serve a sound theoretical/pedagogical purpose.

*Students* should know, understand, and follow the AFA code (1982/1998)—

and realize the standard to which they are held. We recommend students maintain a hard copy of all sources they used in constructing their presentations (including the sources not actually cited in the speech).

*Judges* should, first, base their comments and decisions on sound theoretical and pedagogical standards within the discipline. For example, the "counting sources" standard is not supported by the discipline. We conducted a quick review of a number of public speaking textbooks and did not find a single reference indicating the *quantity* of evidence to include in a public address; yet all the public speaking textbooks discussed the importance of *quality* of the evidence/source. Second, judges should know and follow the Sedalia resolutions mentioned earlier. We repeat the resolutions here due to the critical role they play in adjudicating forensic competition:

- Forensics should promote adherence to the ethical and scholarly obligation of the advocate, including respect for the integrity of evidence, accurate representation of the ideas of others, and rigorous examination of beliefs. (Friedley, 1983, p. 111)
- Evidence should be evaluated not by its quantity, but by its quality determined in part by its credibility and audience acceptability. Thoroughness and care must be exercised in finding, recording, and documenting evidence. Advocates should recognize their ultimate responsibility for all evidence they use, whether discovered by them or by others. (Friedley, 1983, p. 111)

The viability of forensics as a co-curricular activity is dependent on the implementation of sound ethical standards. All individuals involved in the activity have an obligation to ethical standards to ensure its endurance.

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## **Engaging Ethos: Source Citation Accuracy in Intercollegiate Forensics**

Lisa A. Perry

### **Introduction**

Almost twenty years after Frank (1983) looked at evidence used by persuasive speaking finalists at the National Individual Events Tournament hosted by the American Forensic Association (AFA-NIET), investigations by Cronn-Mills and Schnoor (2000) suggest that students in the final round of the 1998 AFA-NIET of informative speaking also were not as careful in their citations as the forensic community would hope. Given the nature and extent of ethical violations in informative speaking and the previous research by Frank, an important question emerged: what is the current state of ethical evidence usage in persuasive speaking? This paper reports the results of a study performed on speeches delivered in the final round of Persuasive Speaking at the 1999 American Forensic Association-National Individual Events Tournament (AFA-NIET). The results are distressing: inaccurate citations as well as distorted, plagiarized, and fabricated evidence are the rule and not the exception in the speeches examined. The surprisingly high number of violations in source citations and information raise a number of ethical and pedagogical questions for forensic coaches, competitors and the entire forensic community. This paper, then, will look at the state of ethics in intercollegiate forensics, provide a detailed explanation of the method and results of this project, and discuss the implications of this pattern of source inaccuracy for intercollegiate forensics.

The ethical use of evidence in forensic competition is not a new issue. In 1974, attendees of the National Developmental Conference on Forensics (referred to as the Sedalia Conference) expressed their concern "with both the inappropriate and inaccurate use of evidence" (McBath, 1975, p. 33). As a result, two important recommendations were made regarding the use of evidence. One emphasized the

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importance for advocates to accurately represent the words and ideas of others (McBath, p. 16) while the second reminded advocates of their "ultimate responsibility for all evidence they use, whether discovered by them or others" (McBath, p. 33). Subsequent articles echoed the philosophy expressed by conferees at Sedalia. Friedley, for example, in her 1983 summary of ethics in evidence usage, provided a call to action for both competitors and coaches: "[i]dentifying and encouraging positive, appropriate, ethical behavior, as well as identifying and discouraging negative, inappropriate and unethical behavior in individual events competition is essential if we are to educate our speech competitors on ethical issues ... [and] individual events educators must be willing to examine the uses of evidence in the competitive setting to assess the extent of ethical abuses" (p. 116). What counts as unethical in evidence use is rather consistent. In a survey of participants and judges at the NIET, Thomas and Hart (1983) reported "both contestants and judges deplore the practice [of fabrication of evidence in an oration]" (p. 84). In fact, "eighty-five percent (85%) of the contestants and nearly eighty percent (80%) of the judges agreed with the statement that fabricating evidence is the worst ethical violation a contestant can commit" (p. 85). The authors concluded "forensic educators and participants share a basic concern for ethics in speech contest events, and also over what particular practices in student performance fall outside the boundaries of ethicality" (p. 94).

While there seems to be almost uniform agreement in the abhorrent nature of unethical evidence use and what counts as unethical, examination of the speeches themselves reveals a different story. The most pertinent study for this project is Frank's 1983 examination of evidence in the 1981 NIET Persuasive Speaking final round. Frank found what he termed "a pattern of fabrication, distortion and deception of disturbing proportions" (p. 97). Sixty-six percent (four out of the six competitors) fabricated or made up at least one citation in their speech (p. 97). In some cases, the fabrication resulted from an incorrect attribution of source (p. 98), but other incidents were much more troubling. For example, Frank reported that one speaker made up the publication, author and ostensibly the material supposedly contained therein (p. 98). While Frank's research provides an important glimpse into evidence usage in the 1981 NIET, his work has limited application to current forensic practices. Since that time the AFA developed and revised the "AFA Code of Forensics Program and Forensics Tournament Standards for Colleges and Universities" (AFA Code) which governs competitive practices at AFA sanctioned tournaments, including the AFA-NIET. The classification of practices Frank used in his research is not directly comparable to the classifications established by the AFA. Another difference in competitive practice is the increased use of evidence in persuasive speaking. Frank reported 58 total citations in the final round of 1981. In 2000, there were almost double, or 97 source citations.

As the governing body of the NIET, the AFA (through the Educational Development and Practices Committee) established the "Code of Forensics Program and Forensics Tournament Standards for Colleges and Universities" (1982, revised 1998; available at <<http://www.americanforensics.org/afacode.html>>). The AFA Code explicitly forbids three evidence and citation practices: fabrication, dis-

tortion, and plagiarism. Article II, section 1.B defines fabrication of evidence as: "falsely representing a cited fact or statement of opinion as evidence when the material in question is not authentic. Fabricated evidence is so defined without reference to whether or not the debater or speaker using it was the person responsible for fabricating it." Section 1.C states "Distorted evidence refers to misrepresenting the actual or implied content of factual or opinion evidence. Distorted evidence is so defined without reference to whether or not the debater or speaker using it was the person responsible for distorting it," which includes "quoting out of context... [and] misinterpreting the evidence so as to alter its meaning." Section 2.A forbids plagiarism, or "claiming another's written or spoken word as one's own, or claiming as one's own a significant portion of the creative work of another" (AFA Code).

### Data Collection

In order to determine the accuracy and content of source citations a close textual analysis was conducted of the speeches given during final round of Persuasion at the 1999 AFA-NIET. These speeches were chosen as the sample for three reasons. First, since the NIET "reflects the culminative [sic] event for the year for the majority of its participants" (Thomas & Hart, 1983, p. 76) the speeches would be at their most polished and perfected. Second, Frank's examination of the 1981 Persuasion final round provides historical data to which these results can be compared. Most importantly, however, the AFA-NIET is governed by the AFA Code of Conduct thus coaches and competitors have explicit guidelines regarding the ethical and unethical use of evidence in forensic competition.

Students in an Advanced Public Speaking class were split into five groups, with each group assigned one of the 1999 AFA-NIET final round persuasive speeches. The sixth speech was examined by myself. All groups were required to follow the same procedure in their research. First, the groups transcribed the speeches from final round videotapes of the 1999 AFA-NIET. Next the groups isolated the "evidence"<sup>1</sup> used in each speech, primarily through the existence of source citations. From the sources they then drafted bibliographies. The bulk of the research involved the groups transcribing the source citation and evidence provided by the speaker and comparing these citations and evidence to the actual source<sup>2</sup>. After the students provided written reports on the speeches, I verified all the information including the transcripts and sources. After compiling the results, I attempted to contact the students and coaches via email or letters, asking for their help in finding missing or inaccurate information. I was able to contact all of the coaches and two of the students directly, only one student responded to my request with additional clarifying information.

The verification process included a comparison of dates, publication, and text given by the speaker to the actual information. When the information could not be found in a particular source, a general search was done on Lexis-Nexis, Uncover, and Webpal's general magazine online database looking for any publication on any date with the information. Initially the determination of whether the text was "evidence" or not was based on the existence of a citation. In the process

of verifying the information, however, I would on occasion discover uncited sections of a persuasive speech in a published source. This uncited information was also included in the evidence count for the speaker.

After comparing the information contained in the speech to the information contained in the source citation, I used the AFA Code to place the evidence into the appropriate category. Not all of the sources were problematic, thus I needed to create an additional category of "no apparent violation." Some of the citations within the speeches were not verifiable due to source availability. The ephemeral nature of the Internet, especially emails and corporate web pages, makes verification of information from a particular date virtually impossible. Also difficult to verify were personal interviews. As a result a separate category of "unable to verify" was added. In total there were five categories used to evaluate the evidence: plagiarized (items found in a source not cited by speaker); distorted (items not found in the source or date provided but found in another source or items found in the source on another date); fabricated (items not found at all in the source provided); no violation and unable to verify. In order to get a sense if the error might have resulted from a memory glitch or other unintentional error in delivery, for available speeches I compared the speech transcript to the manuscript published in *Winning Orations*.

### Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the overall results; the six speeches contained 97 citations, 74 of which violated the AFA Code (76.3%). The results show that the every speaker included at least one incorrect source citation in their speech (Table 1). The worst violator was the student who delivered his speech on E-911: sixteen out of sixteen sources violated the AFA Code. The fewest violations were made by the student who gave her speech on Free Saipan, "only" 42.85% violated the AFA Code. In order of least to most violations, the list reads: Free Saipan, six out of fourteen (42.85%); Food Terrorism, twelve out of twenty (65%); Military Spouse Abuse, fourteen out of seventeen (82.3%); AIDS Apathy, fourteen out of sixteen (87.5%); Polyurethane Condoms, twelve out of fourteen (87.5%); and E-911, sixteen out of sixteen (100%). The national champion in Persuasive Speaking at the AFA-NIET that year, the AIDS Apathy speech, placed in the top one-half.

Most of the citations contained one error, for example either an incorrect source citation<sup>3</sup> or an error in the content. Fourteen citations (18.42%), however, contained two or more errors, usually involving distortion of date and text. For example the Polyurethane Condom speech contains two citations that are both plagiarized and distorted. The first was in the introduction:

Luis Lopez has dedicated his life to teaching young Americans about the dangers of STDs. In the classroom he supports abstinence, but at home Lopez admits condoms have been his contraceptive of choice for 20 years. Despite the condoms he donned, Lopez was infected with the HIV virus in the fall of 1997. As a teacher he knew what was at stake (Kosenko).

Despite being phrased as an actual example, no source is provided by the

Table 1. Number of Citations and Errors for Each Speech

Speech	No. of Cites	Correct		Incorrect		Unable to verify	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
AIDS Apathy	16	2	12.5	14	87.5	0	0
Condoms	14	1	7.1	12	85.7	1	7.1
E-911	16	0	0	16	100.0	0	0
Food Terrorism	20	8	40.0	12	60.0	0	0
Free Saipan	14	6	42.85	6	42.8	2	14.0
Spousal Abuse	17	1	6.0	14	82.3	2	11.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18.6</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>76.3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

speaker. A search of Webpals and Lexis-Nexis uncovered one Luis Lopez with a connection to AIDS:

Luis Lopez knows first hand what's at stake. About ten years ago, Lopez, now 31 and a health educator with the People with AIDS Coalition of New York, became infected with the HIV virus, which causes AIDS, during a casual sexual encounter. (*FDA Consumer Magazine*, March/April 1998).

The *FDA Consumer Magazine* was cited by the speaker at another point in her speech. By failing to refer to the *FDA Consumer Magazine* (or other source) for the story of Luis Lopez the speaker plagiarized the information; by changing who Luis Lopez was and making him a more sympathetic character the speaker distorted the information. These compound citation violations resulted in totals equaling more than 100%.

The most common violation was fabrication, or "falsely representing a cited fact or statement of opinion as evidence when the material in question is not authentic" (AFA Code) with a total of 40 (54%). As Table 2 shows, all six of the speeches contained at least one fabricated source, ranging from one (16.66% of the total violations) in the Free Saipan speech to fifteen (93.75%) in the E-911 speech. Usually fabrication involved providing a citation to a source that did publish information on the general topic, but did not contain the same information

Table 2. Type and number of violations per speech

Speech	Fabricated		Plagiarized		Distorted		Multiple Errors	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
AIDS Apathy	11	68.7	1	5	3	21.4	1	5
Condoms	4	31	3	23	6	50	1	8.3
E-911	15	93.75	0	0	1	6.2	0	0
Food Terrorism	5	41.6	3	25	6	50	2	16.6
Free Saipan	1	16.6	4	66.6	4	66.6	2	33.3
Spousal Abuse	4	28.5	3	21.4	11	78.5	4	28.5

Note: Totals add up to more than 100% due to citations containing multiple errors and uncited incidents of plagiarism. The number plagiarized, distorted or fabricated equals actual instances of the violation. It was possible that a citation would have more than one violation, thus the number of acts of violations would often total more than the number of incorrect citations.

provided in the speech.

The E-911 speech contained the highest incidence of fabrication. For example, the E-911 speech states "The *Los Angeles Times* of March 1,1999 explains that beginning in 1994,48 states changed their 911 system to a new computerized version known as enhanced, or E-911" (Gallagher). An examination of the *Los Angeles Times* for this date finds nothing matching this statement. The *Los Angeles Times* for March 1,1999 has a story about 911, however it is about the shortage of 911 dispatchers and operators and says nothing about E-911. This speech also constructs three stories of E-911 catastrophes that occurred in 1999, one in California, another in Denver, and a third in Philadelphia. A thorough examination of local, regional and national newspapers found no such instances.

Although the worst violator, the E-911 speech is certainly not alone in the fabrication of information. The Food Terrorism speaker presents the story of a troop of Boy Scouts sickened by tainted lettuce. The story is introduced in the introduction without a source citation, then expanded with a reference to *USA Health*. This publication cannot be found, neither can the story of the Boy Scouts. In the AIDS Apathy speech the audience is introduced to the idea of compassion

fatigue with a reference to the 1981 *Utne Reader*. "In 1981, two strange diseases first grabbed the attention of the American public. The first, a mental malaise born of our overabundance of seemingly insurmountable societal ills. We called it compassion fatigue, best described by the July-August, 1981 *Utne Reader*, as the inability to care anymore about social issues..." (Meinen). Not only has the *Utne Reader* never discussed "compassion fatigue," more importantly however, the magazine did not begin publication until 1984.

While most cases of fabrication involved the creation of non-existent information to support a claim, occasionally a source itself was created. In addition to the Food Terrorism Boy Scout example mentioned in the previous paragraph, another such instance occurred in the AIDS Apathy speech which cites the January 1998 *Scientist*. A search on Lexis-Nexis, Uncover, and Webpals general magazine index finds no magazine entitled *Scientist*, although the *American Behavioral Scientist* and the *New Scientist* are found. It is possible that the information was actually taken from an unknown source, in which case many of these cases of fabrication would be relabeled as plagiarism.

Plagiarism is defined by the AFA Code as "claiming another's written or spoken word as one's own, or claiming as one's own a significant portion of the creative work of another" (Code, Article II.2). The incidents of plagiarism were relatively few, a total of fourteen occurrences (18.9%). The AIDS Apathy speaker provided the statement "We don't want to hear that 16,000 people contract HIV every day, 650,000 Americans are HIV positive, that 47 million are afflicted world wide" citing the January 13, 1999 *New York Times* (Meinen). This particular citation has three different violations. In addition to the distortion and fabrication, the speaker plagiarized two sources in this citation. The first is from *Business Week* of February 16, 1998, which reports 400,000 to 650,000 Americans are HIV positive. The second can be found in the *Scientific American* of July 1998 which reports UNAID statistics that worldwide almost 16,000 people contract AIDS per day.

All speakers included at least one example in their speeches to provide a human face to their respective tragedy, usually as the attention getter. The personal stories are all presented as factual, no one prefaces or otherwise identifies the story as a hypothetical example. Most speakers present these stories without a source citation, and two of these are plagiarized from unnamed publications. One story relating the taking of Saipan in World War II mistakenly cites the *Washington Times* of March 29, 1998 rather than the correct *New York Times* of January 20, 1998. The introduction of the Polyurethane Condoms speech tells the story of Luis Lopez without a source citation. As mentioned above, a strikingly similar story about a Luis Lopez does appear in the March/April 1998 *FDA Consumer Magazine*.

In addition to plagiarized statistics and stories, speakers occasionally plagiarized the ideas and words of others. For example in the Food Terrorism speech, the speaker warns "In fact, most sponges could evolve into a new life form and crawl out of our kitchen" (Voss). An article used earlier by the speaker also contains these words, only they are spoken by Professor Gerba: " 'If a new life form ever evolved in your home, it would be in this sponge' Gerba said" (*Florida Sun-Senti-*

nel).

There were 44 distortion errors in the speeches. A distortion error is defined by the AFA Code as "misrepresenting the actual or implied content of factual or opinion evidence" (Code, Article II. 1 .C). In essence, distortion is configuring information to fit the purpose of the speech rather than to keeping it true to the content or context in which it was communicated. The types of distortion committed in the speeches involved distortion of statistics (12 or 27.2%), distortion of dates or sources (14 or 31.81%), and distortion of facts or text (18 or 40.90%).

Distorted statistics occurred less frequently than the other types of distortion and uniformly resulted in a more significant number than was correct. An example of distorted statistics occurs in the Food Terrorism speech when the speaker claims "89% of women wash their hands after using the restrooms, however [with] men...46% actually wash their hands" (citing a 1998 study conducted by the American Society of Microbiology, Kosenko). The correct statistics from the 1996 study claim women as dirtier and men as cleaner: 74% and 61%, respectively, washed their hands after using the restrooms (*Washup.com*).<sup>4</sup> Another example of distorted statistics can be found in the Polyurethane Condom speech where the correct 11.8 percent failure rate for polyurethane condoms (*Family Planning Perspectives* March/April 1998) is doubled to "an average failure rate of 21 percent" (Kosenko). In addition, in the AIDS Apathy speech the citation, "We don't want to hear that 16,000 people contract HIV every day, 650,000 Americans are HIV positive, that 47 million are afflicted world wide" cites the January 13, 1999 *New York Times* (Meinen). There is no article that provides all of those statistics in the January 13 edition, however; only one article in that edition states there are 40,000 new American cases per year, which equals 109 per day. Discovering the source of the 650,000 statistic (*Business Week*) also reveals a problem of distortion as the speaker reports only the highest number, but not the entire range of Americans suspected to be HIV positive.

Examples of distorted text can be found in every speech. In the Free Saipan speech the speaker claims an abused garment worker asked "Is this America?" (Shankar). While Li-Li the worker may have been feeling or thinking that question it is not in the cited February 9, 1998 *Time* article. In AIDS Apathy the speaker asserts "AIDS has recently been renamed a pandemic," citing the July 1998 *Scientific American* (Meinen). The July 1998 *Scientific American* was a special issue on AIDS, but nowhere could be found the phrase "renamed a pandemic." Instead AIDS was simply called a pandemic. This speaker also cited a Gallup Poll from October of 1997 as stating: "30% of us consider AIDS a serious threat. Ten years ago, 66% of us did. Only 29% of us are concerned about contracting the disease, compared to 42% of us a decade ago" (Meinen). The Gallup Poll of October 17, 1997 actually placed a qualifier on the concern; it stated that Americans "have some degree of concern" over contracting AIDS. Gallup also differs on the threat of AIDS; they reported that 66 percent believed AIDS was "the most urgent health problem facing this country at the present time" and not a "serious threat."

Distorted sources and dates overwhelmingly resulted in a more recent citation in the speech than actually published and more credible sources than is cor-

rect. For example, in Free Saipan the speaker ascribes information to the February 15, 1999 *Sacramento Bee*, rather than the correct January 14, 1999. In another place she cites the February 9, 1998 *Time* rather than February 2, 1998. The Food Terrorism speaker distorted the date of a *Science News* article on the cost of food poisoning. The information could be found in two different dates (May 25, 1996 and February 7, 1998) since it came from a 1996 Government Accounting Office study; it could not be found in the cited July 14, 1998 *Science News* (Kosenko). In the Spousal Abuse speech a *Time* citation was consistently replaced with the *Arizona Republic* (November 22, 1998), Senator William Cohen, or a 1994 Congressional study. While Senator Cohen did ask that the *Time* article of May 23, 1994 (entitled "The Living Room War") be reprinted in the May 19, 1994 *Congressional Record*, it was neither "proclaimed" by him from the floor nor was it a "1994 Congressional Study," as the speaker claimed. The *Time* article itself was never cited.

Although the reason why a speaker may have erred was irrelevant, I did not want to appear to condemn simple errors in presentation. In order to eliminate the possibility of a mere mistake or memory glitch by the speaker, I compared the three speeches given at both the AFA-NIET and the Interstate Oratory competition (Free Saipan, AIDS Apathy and E-911) by collating the transcripts of the AFA-NIET speeches to the manuscripts published in *Winning Orations* (1999). In no instance was a mere slip-up apparent. In fact, in two of the speeches the content of the evidence remained unchanged at the same time the source changed and the date became one to four weeks later. For example in the E-911 speech from AFA-NIET the speaker stated

"Each year, Americans make more than 76 million non-emergency phone calls to the system and e-911 can do nothing to stop them," citing the *Austin American Statesman*, September 6, 1998 (Gallagher, AFA-NIET). However in *Winning Orations* the speaker wrote: "According to the *Montreal Gazette* of March 30, 1999, each year, non-emergency calls clog the system. Last year more than 76 million non-emergency phone calls were made to 911. And e-911 can do nothing to stop it" (Gallagher, *Winning Orations*). *Winning Orations* was used as the comparison text because the students submit the manuscripts of their persuasive speeches, thus citations and evidence were more likely to be accurate. No evidence matching this statement can be found in either source. Later in the AFA-NIET speech the speaker claims "The *Journal of the American Medical Association* of January/February 1998 explains that in an emergency, always make sure to double down (Gallagher, AFA-NIET). In *Winning Orations* the speaker changes *JAMA* to "The Emergency Workers web site, last accessed March 15 1999" and says they recommend that "in an emergency it is absolutely necessary to double down" (Gallagher, *Winning Orations*). Once again, neither source is correct. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* does not publish bimonthly issues, and no *JAMA* from 1998 contains or is likely to contain this information—*The Journal of the American Medical Association* is a professional journal that primarily reports results of medical studies, it does not provide "consumer tips." In addition, there is no one Emergency Workers web site. Even after checking other web

sites for emergency workers, no information matching this statement was found.

Unfortunately the problem of source citation inaccuracies condemned by Frank in 1983 still exists, only on a grander scale. Not only has the raw number of citations in total increased from 58 to 97—almost double—but the percentage of errors has also increased from approximately 66% in 1983 to 76.28% in 1999. The amount and severity of errors present in the six persuasive speaking finalists of the 1999 AFA-NIET is disturbing. The type of errors found suggests that this is not a mere problem of misstatement while delivering a speech from memory, nor is it entirely a problem of not understanding how to cite materials. Perfection in evidence is just another symptom of the requirement of perfection coaches and judges (and the students themselves) place upon public speakers (Hindman, 1997).

Part of the problem likely results from the emphasis that competitors and judges place on sheer number of citations rather than analysis. This problem is not isolated to persuasive speaking; the problem of "evidence count" has been discussed in virtually all the public address and limited preparation events. The trend in persuasive speaking to focus on logical (and cited) appeals versus evocative appeals was noted by Sellnow and Ziegelmueller in 1988. In that study the authors reported an overall increase of both evocative and logical appeals from pre- to post-1970s (197 to 202) and a twenty point increase in the use of logical appeals with a corresponding twenty point decrease in evocative appeals (p. 81). The result was a more precisely documented speech (p. 82). In this study, the six students used many citations in their speeches, in fact an average of 16.16 sources. Using the entire 10 minutes allowed for the event, the least evidence-dense speech would have one citation every 37.12 seconds. The time between citations shrinks when the speech is shorter than 10 minutes.

There seems to be a common assumption that communication, or more accurately for persuasive speaking, rhetoric, is incommensurable with research and accurate, ethical citation of sources. In this research there is virtually no instance of an uncited statistic in any of the speeches. The source provided by the speaker may not be accurate or even existent, but all speakers realize the importance of backing up quantification with a source besides themselves. It is not just students who hold this view, Sellnow and Ziegelmueller in their article on persuasive speaking limited their examination of documentation to "logical supporting materials" (78). The belief seems to be the use of statistics or other support should only apply to logical appeals. An over-reliance on the expert opinions of others seems to be a natural response to topics that are unlikely to have a connection with today's student. The problem with "generic" topics has been expressed by Logue: "persuasive argumentation becomes little more than an informative problem-solution speech... Because of the lack of relevancy, authoritative appeals, and dependency upon congruent subjects, the intent 'to affect change' seems to give way in this event to the intent 'to win.'" (Logue, 1991, p. 389).

Inaccurate citations are not just a theoretical or pedagogical issue limited to the year the students violate the AFA Code. Many speakers are now incorporating as a solution that forensic audiences need to be in the forefront of spreading the news about problems. For example the Free Saipan, AIDS Apathy and Military

Spouse Abuse all incorporate a call to action in the conclusion. The most evocative was that in the AIDS Apathy speech:

This time the solution really is in our hands. This community has the ability to speak passionately, the platform to affect an enormous audience, and the clout to command attention. This community has a choice. We can either take a risk and speak out, knowing that our voice may be lost but hoping someone hears. Either we can sit idly by, succumb to our compassion fatigue, and watch AIDS claim the lives of our best and our brightest. (Meinen, AFA-NIET)

With claims and solutions supported by false, misleading, or otherwise questionable information, we in forensics are being asked to risk our reputations by these competitors. Another significant problem arises when speeches mention people or products by name and make potentially libelous statements unsupported by evidence. For example in the speech discussing polyurethane condoms, the speaker claimed that Avanti ignored a health hazard by not labeling their condoms to notify consumers of the likelihood of breakage. However, no specific information regarding this negligence was found in the article, rather the article discusses the Red Cross in Mexico and controversies regarding use of condoms in Mexico (*Free Inquiry Frontlines*, 1998). The fact that the unfavorable claims made by the speakers are not truthful raises the possibility of slander and libel litigation for the speaker, the program, and perhaps even AFA. In addition, publishers of communication textbooks and learning aids such as videotapes often use the final round speeches in their texts or aids. The reputation of programs, AFA and intercollegiate forensics overall is at risk when these publishers discover that the speeches are falsified.

While this project provides an important benchmark for the use and abuse of evidence in persuasive speaking there are a number of limitations. The most obvious is the limited scope, both in longitude and latitude. Research needs to go beyond the final round of the NIET every twenty years. Looking at these final rounds does provide a good representation of how competitively successful speakers construct their arguments and use evidence, among other practices. More research, however, needs to be done on the preliminary rounds or rounds at tournaments during the regular season to determine if any statistical difference exists in violations of the AFA Code. An argumentative analysis also needs to be done on the persuasive speeches to see how evidence is used to construct arguments, especially persuasive arguments. If, for example, most students do not cite sources completely or accurately because "it is impossible to communicate in a manner that is truly consistent with [the] AFA Code unless the speaker reverts to a completely sterile, evidence by evidence manner that is reminiscent of academic debate," (R. Shankar, personal communication, February 19, 2001) or they believe that the art of rhetoric allows putting words in a person's mouth, it is vital that the forensics community discover this. On a more theoretical level, this perceived separation between logic and rhetoric also poses an interesting question to theorists and historians of rhetoric.

### Conclusion

Certainly one instance of a more recent or credible source, or one plagiarized statement in a speech, while lamentable, is not grounds for concern. However when there are numerous incorrect dates and sources, combined with incorrect information in those sources and plagiarized or fabricated information elsewhere in the speech, then there is cause for concern. The results of this research into source accuracy of final round persuasive speeches provides the forensics community with a significant impetus to step back and examine the purpose, practice and instruction in public address events in competitive forensics. Astoundingly one student contended "the focus of forensics is communication rather than research and documentation" (Shankar, personal communication February 19, 2001). There can be no more compelling call to reexamine how we teach rhetoric and what we expect from competitors than that very statement.

While the responsibility for ethical speaking rests squarely on the shoulders of the speaker, clearly students do what coaches allow and judges reward. Some students are unaware of the AFA Code and elements of plagiarism or distortion and thus do not provide source citations for information they include in a speech. What does and what does not count as plagiarism can be difficult to ascertain by a student or a coach. Some judges look primarily at the number and type of sources in a speech, and expect tight, perfectly constructed evidence for problems and solutions.

The forensics community, then, needs to approach this problem from multiple perspectives. First, students must be held accountable for violations of the code of ethics that governs the tournament. At the AFA-NIET, the tournament director should require students competing in public address events at the NIET verify the accuracy of the citations in all speeches. If a student is unable to verify the accuracy, they should be disqualified from that event. The AFA-NIET already requires documentation that students have qualified for the tournament, so an additional verification would not deviate from current practice. In addition, directors, coaches, and most importantly the competitors must re-embrace the educational function of the activity. As part of this reemphasis on education, programs should hold meetings or sessions on the AFA Code covering topics such as what is plagiarism and how to cite sources, and developing systems to check students' speeches throughout the season. Tournaments and programs need to work to reprioritize judges on criteria for evaluating speeches. Certainly sources are important, however a focus on the number and name of the source overlooks other important elements of a good speech. Judges should also be encouraged to critically listen to the speeches and the sources, rather than expecting horrific social problems to be completely cured through governmental and personal solutions.

But the most important solution requires that the issue of ethical competition in forensics be a constant concern for all involved in the activity. There has been a plethora of articles written on the importance of ethics in competition (Thomas, 1983; Ulrich, 1984; Friedley, 1989 to name only a few) and competitors as well as judges agree on the abhorrent nature of certain ethical practices such as fabrication (Thomas, 1983). Numerous articles have also been written on the sorts of unethi-

cal practices students and coaches currently commit (Cronn-Mills and Schnoor, 2000; Frank, 1983; Kimble, 1997). If forensic educators and directors look at ethics as a sort of election-year problem that only is important every few years or so and is then forgotten they encourage unethical practices to continue.

### Endnotes

1. The AFA Code, Article II.1.A states: "Evidence is defined as factual material (statistics and examples) and/or opinion testimony offered as proof of a debater's or a speaker's contention, claim, position, argument, point or case."

2. Some speakers referred to personal phone or email interviews with various experts. In these situations the groups attempted to locate the expert and, if successful, asked if such an interview with the speaker took place on the date and topic claimed.

3. The term "citation" is used to denote the package of source citation and actual quotation or paraphrase. In the case of plagiarized information that does not contain a source citation, "citation" refers to the plagiarized information.

4. Washup.com states that handwashing surveys were done by the American Society of Microbiology in 1996 and 2000, no reference to a 1998 study could be found.

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## Response To: "Engaging Ethos: Source Citation Accuracy in Intercollegiate Forensics"

Robb Del Casale  
Mike Malloy  
Todd Anten  
Stephen Conaway  
Christopher Kristofco  
Leo Mullin  
Danielle Rogowski

This response is likely not the one intended by the editor of the *National Forensics Journal*. As the original call for responses stated, "The responses will be evaluated based on the degree to which they contribute to a better understanding of issues raised in the article, including ethical source citation, plagiarism, and the standards used by the AFA in evaluating ethical source citation" (Borchers, personal communication, November 20, 2001).

However, based on the astonishing amount of errors and misjudgments that Perry (in press) commits in her article—from a deeply flawed method, to proclaiming her opinions as facts, to thinly-veiled accusations of purposeful cheating and possible legal action—we feel that the author and the *National Forensics Journal* have committed a grave disservice to the forensics community by allowing this article to have ever been published.

The most shocking development arose when we contacted the author to request greater detail about her methods. She responded, "These seem to be out of bounds of the spirit of the response opportunity, thus I will not address these issues, nor will I provide you with any information about any speech other than [your student's]" (Perry, personal communication, December 5, 2001). We requested further detail about the methods the author employed so we could fashion an accurate response, and she refused to disclose. This contradicts the foundations of proper academic research—we cannot trust the accuracy of the findings if she refuses to reveal her full methods.

Nonetheless, the editor has chosen to proceed with the article's publication, which implicitly suggests the journal's support of the article as valued academic research. We strongly disagree. While we intend to provide a detailed explanation of the article's errors in the future, our 1,500-word limit prevents us from address-

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ing them all. Here are just ten fundamental errors to recognize:

1. **RESEARCHER BIAS.** The author indicates that five groups of students each analyzed one speech and the author analyzed the sixth. Therefore, the sixth speech underwent a different coding process than the other five. The author also states she double-checked the accuracy of the five speeches not coded by her. Then who double-checked the speech she coded? Again, that sixth speech was held to a different coding procedure. Coincidentally, according to the coding sheet provided to us, the speech which the author coded was also the one that exhibited the most citation errors, in her judgment.

2. **INAPPROPRIATE STATISTICS.** The author extensively uses statistics, including using them to weigh one student against another (e.g., the speech whose sources were 87% inaccurate was a greater offender than one with 80% inaccuracies). However, the author never discloses the intercoder reliability for any of these statistics. She does not disclose how often she disagreed with the five groups' judgments of violations. Since the author uses statistics in a factual manner, she must prove their validity through scientific method.

3. **SAMPLE SIZE.** There is little to no value in weighing the errors of a speech with 15 sources against one with 17 sources. These numbers are too small to be reliable at a statistical level, yet the author presents her statistics as if they are inherent truths. If the author chose to combine the six speeches' violations together and discuss them as a whole (e.g., the round exhibited 96 citation errors), it could be statistically viable. But her small sample sizes make this moot. Further, it does not benefit the forensic community to refer to one competitor as having more errors than another based on 13 of 14 errors found versus 16 of 16 errors recorded. Such differentiation is statistically insignificant, again due to sample size.

4. **FAULTY FACT-CHECKING.** In checking citations, the author states she used "Lexis-Nexis, Uncover, and Webpals general magazine online database" (Perry, 2002, current journal, above). However, she neglects to mention the shortcomings of this procedure. Lexis-Nexis, for example, does not include all articles from the newspapers to which it subscribes, nor does it include all articles from regional versions of newspapers, nor is it error-free in reporting dates and sources. (Lexis-Nexis, personal communication, Dec 3, 2001). To use this database as the ultimate authority to conclude that two-year-old articles never existed is unsound research.

5. **ARBITRARY UNCITED FACTS.** The author states, "In the process of verifying the information, I would on occasion discover uncited sections of a persuasive speech in a published source. This uncited information was also included in the evidence count for the speaker" (Perry, in press). The author does not provide a sound method for recognizing this uncited information. Our student's speech, for instance, included several pieces of information that were not explicitly cited—the author included some of these in her analysis but not others. Her decisions regarding which uncited facts to include were arbitrary. Further, these uncited pieces of information were not noted by the five student groups, again showing that the author coded texts using different standards than the primary coders, suggesting unreliable intercoder reliability.

6. LACK OF DISCLOSURE. The author fails to disclose several key pieces of information. She does not disclose that she had students competing in the same competition as the six speeches she analyzed, a possible source of bias. Second, she does not disclose that one of her own students wrote a speech on a similar topic to one she analyzed, another possible source of bias. Third, she does not disclose the effect the one student who provided "additional clarifying information" had on that student's results (Perry, in press). This is critical, for the author states she was only able to contact two competitors directly. If the student who provided additional information changed any of the author's original findings as a result, then one must question the thoroughness of the author's original research methods.

In our program's case, reaching our student was not possible (the student is currently serving in the Armed Forces and was doing so in 2001 and could not be reached). However, one wonders how our students' results would have changed had the student been contacted to provide "additional clarifying information." A responsible academic would have noted that certain pieces of information were not verified by the relevant competitors and may or may not exist, instead of immediately leaping to assumptions of fabrication.

7. SOURCE CREDIBILITY. The author claims competitors would substitute the name of one source for another that is more "credible." The only example provided is a student who supposedly replaced a *Time* citation with *The Arizona Republic*. The author never cites any studies supporting *The Arizona Republic* as more credible than *Time*; it is purely her opinion espoused as fact.

8. IMPROPER USE OF *WINNING ORATIONS*. The author compared her transcripts to speeches available in *Winning Orations*. However, only three of the six students had speeches published in *Winning Orations*. Thus, she holds those three students to a different and more rigorous set of standards than the others. Furthermore, *Winning Orations* is a completely separate competition with its own rules, standards and code. It is inappropriate for the author to use its speeches to analyze a separate competition.

9. BIASED INTERPRETATION OF THE AFA CODE OF ETHICS. The author states "Astoundingly one student contended, 'the focus of forensics is communication rather than research and documentation' (Shankar, personal communication, February 19, 2001). There can be no more compelling call to reexamine how we teach rhetoric and what we expect from competitors than that very statement." (Perry, in press). Perhaps the author would be served to revisit the AFA credo, which begins:

Our principle is the power of individuals to participate with others in shaping their world through the human capacity of language;

Our commitment to argument expresses our faith in reason-giving as a key to that power;

Our commitment to advocacy expresses our faith in oral expression as a means to empower people in situations of their lives (full text at <<http://www.americanforensics.org/credo.html>>).

This credo unequivocally places the focus of forensic activity on the power of expression and communication. This is not to say research is not an important

aspect of forensic activity. However, what we find "astounding" is that the author so smugly passes judgment on the student's value of communication over research and documentation when communication is the value the AFA credo holds at its absolute center.

10. DISPERSION OF LEGAL INFORMATION. One of the most disturbing elements of the author's article is her inference that citation errors may put competitors, their programs, and the entire AFA-NIET in legal straits. The author does not cite any evidence to support such a claim. Such a transparent scare tactic in an effort to make her conclusions seem more dire is irresponsible.

The list above only provides a taste of the validity errors in her study. Even if students made errors, before addressing how those errors occurred, the underlying method and analysis must be competent. Unfortunately, that is not the case with this study.

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## **Re-engaging Ethos: A Response to St. Joseph's University**

Lisa A. Perry

I welcome the opportunity to further engage the issue of evidence use in intercollegiate forensics, as well as issues of plagiarism and the "Code of Forensics Program and Forensics Tournament Standards for College[s] and Universities." In order to advance this discussion I feel it is important to first address the methodological and bias issues raised by the St. Joseph's response team and then comment on the pedagogical issues originally laid out by the editor of *NFJ*. Before I begin addressing the actual complaints made by the St. Joseph's team, however, I feel it is important to underscore the fact that Del Casale, et.al. (in press) provide no examples where the supposed faulty research actually resulted in incorrect conclusions or results. In fact, as shall be shown in the following response, the research is sound and the results are valid.

The methodological concerns are easy to answer. At the risk of sounding redundant, I will again explain the research process and show how the concerns are unjustified. The purpose of this descriptive research project was to determine to what extent the speakers and speeches satisfied the normative principles provided by the "AFA Code of Forensics Program and Forensics Tournament Standards for College[s] and Universities," Article II. Competitor Practices. As explained in the original paper (Perry, in press), students performed the initial analysis. For the first draft presented at the 2000 National Communication Association meeting the speeches were divided between the co-researcher and myself. I double-checked the work for the E-911 speech, the Food Terrorism speech, and the Polyurethane Condoms speech. The co-researcher for the NCA paper double-checked the work in the AIDS Apathy, Free Saipan, and Military Spouse Abuse. Checking the research involved double-checking the transcript for accuracy, verifying the completeness of evidence instances noted on the sheet, and making another attempt to confirm the accuracy of evidence, or in cases where the source was not found, locate the source and evidence. I diligently looked for the sources cited and/or not cited, and when I found such sources, I compared the passages in texts that the forensics performers said with passages in texts of the sources found. Using the rules and definitions established in Article II for plagiarism, fabrication,

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and distortion of evidence, I then placed the inaccurate citations and/or evidence into the appropriate category. In rewriting the paper for submission to *NFJ* I again checked all speeches; all speeches were subjected to the same coding process. Del Casale, et.al. (in press) suggest that my failure to go into more detail about the research process is suspect. However there were two very simple reasons why I did not submit additional research information to the St. Joseph's team, only one of which they provide in their response. I declined to go into more elaborate detail about the method in part because it seemed outside the spirit of the discussion outlined by the editor, but also because "the associate editors ... already determined that the methods and research process met the requirements for a scholarly article..." (Perry, personal correspondence, December 5, 2001).

In addition to the general complaints raised in the response, Del Casale, et.al. make five specific grievances about the method: incorrect or incomplete use of the "scientific method" (Responses One, Two, Three and Eight); unclear effect of student response to request for information (Response Six); failure to uncover all instances of plagiarism (Response Five); reliance on an incomplete database (Response Four); and researcher bias (Response Six and Nine). Their first criticism is based on the incorrect assumption that the research paper involved the use of coding words or meanings to make claims about statistical significance, correlation, or causation. As stated in the article, the texts of the evidence in the speech were compared with the text of the cited source. If they varied, the difference was noted on the form. The definitions of ethical practices in the AFA Code were then applied to the evidence differences in order to categorize them. The statistics and numerical counts came from simply counting the number of different kinds of violations, the number of cited sources, the number of uncited plagiarized evidence, and comparing them. Response Three alleges the sample size is too small "to be reliable at a statistical level" (in press). Certainly, if the conclusion that 76 percent of all sources were incorrect was extended to all competitors at the AFA-NIET or all competitors in intercollegiate forensics, the size of the pool would be an issue. However in this case the claims made apply only to competitors in the final round of Persuasive Speaking at the 1999 AFA-NIET. There are no population-based interpretations, no generalized conclusions. Response Eight complains that the researcher "improper[ly] use[d]... *Winning Orations*." As explained in the original research, the determination of whether an ethical violation existed and of what type was made solely by examining the transcripts from the 1999 AFA-NIET. *Winning Orations* was only used "in order to eliminate the possibility of a mere mistake or memory glitch by the speaker" (Perry, in press). The research is a straightforward logical application of the AFA Code to competitors in the final round of Persuasive Speaking at the 1999 AFA-NIET.

The second complaint is that students who responded to the requests for information may have changed the results of the research. I requested the citation from students and/or coaches at an early stage in the research, while I waited for responses I continued to try and uncover the information. The response by the one student did not significantly change the results for that speech. The purpose of asking for student or coach information was to try and verify transient web-based

information. I did not expect to find such widespread evidence problems in these speeches. I was especially baffled with the E-911 speech in which virtually no citation was correct. In that case, numerous searches using the terms "E-911," "enhanced 911," and the cities mentioned in the speech where problems occurred uncovered nothing. The only source that was remotely similar was an article in the October 1998 *Consumer Reports*, which simply warns cell phone buyers that they can't assume their 911 calls will be handled by local authorities and provides some different suggestions to deal with the problem.

The third complaint is that not every case of plagiarism admittedly committed by the student was uncovered (Response Five). Del Casale, et.al.(in press) allege that the research is faulty because the "student's speech ... included several pieces of information that were not explicitly cited" and I found some of these instances of plagiarism but not all (in press). In other words, the E-911 speech had more ethical problems than discovered, thus the conclusions about ethical practices should be thrown out. Interesting not only for its admission of ethical violations, this statement demonstrates the problem with the authors' response—an avoidance of the pedagogical issues envisioned by the editor of the *NFJ* and an attack on the researcher for the results. Certainly some very interesting results could be obtained if the texts of the speeches were put through a computer program specifically designed to catch plagiarism. The inability to discover every uncited piece of evidence is due to the limitations of doing research which progresses from text to source. The additional discoveries of uncited sources by the St. Joseph's team would, at worst, make the results more significant by increasing both the overall instances of plagiarism as well as the percentage of incorrect to correct source cites.

The fourth complaint alleges inappropriate reliance in Lexis-Nexis for news retrieval. The retrieval process was begun in early spring 2000—less than one year after the speeches were given. Again, as explained in the article, the electronic databases such as Lexis-Nexis were used only when a search of the source failed to reveal the information cited in the speech. When searching the databases, a general search using key terms in the evidence was used to find any source that made claims that were similar to those made by the speaker. In the case of the E-911 speech, neither an examination of a microfilm copy of the sources nor a general search of the electronic archives uncovered the information provided by the speaker.

The fifth complaint is that the research conclusions are suspect due to researcher bias. This allegation is difficult to respond to simply because it is nebulous. I assume that the lack of disclosure mentioned in Response Six were two Mankato students competing in Persuasive speaking at the 1999 AFA-NIET, one giving a persuasive speech on locksmiths and the other on AIDS drug testing in Africa. While it is true that students from Mankato were competing in persuasive speaking at the 1999 AFA-NIET and one of these students did do a speech on AIDS, this did not affect the decision to do this research, the process of doing research, or the conclusions reached. There are two reasons why team bias was not an issue. First, the initial step of the research process was done by researchers who

were unfamiliar with intercollegiate forensics as well as the competitors and the schools they represented. Second, the AFA Code itself removes much of the subjectivity in determining violations since the question of intent by the competitors is not a factor in determining whether a student plagiarized, fabricated, or distorted.

The other bias allegation involves my interpretation of the AFA Code. In this response the St. Joseph's response team falls victim to the fallacy of false dichotomy. Communication and research are not mutually exclusive goals or requirements in intercollegiate forensics. In no part of the AFA Code is this even insinuated. It is exactly this misconception of rhetoric, persuasion and communication which is at the heart of a later paper on this topic presented at the 2001 Alta Conference on Argumentation (Perry, Alta, 2001). And this misapprehension of the use of support in the art of communication, along with the basic issue of what is ethical behavior, are what need to be discussed.

The AFA Code provides clear normative guidelines for ethical conduct while competing at AFA-governed tournaments. The fact that the ethical behavior is clearly delineated does not mean, however, that the definitions are without issue. The conception of plagiarism is especially tricky. The pervasiveness of culture and the internet result in ideas insinuated into our memories. It is difficult at times to remember where ideas come from as well as at what point does an idea, definition, or turn of phrase become "public domain?" There are also questions about the strictness of the standard that we use to evaluate if a source has been cited. I approach this issue imbued with my training and education as a lawyer and historian of rhetoric—text and authorship are crucial and must be cited correctly. But is this the standard to use in college forensics? If not, are we doing a disservice to the discipline and our students? It was these issues I was hoping to be able to discuss.

While intercollegiate forensic is not alone in the problems of ethical use of sources and evidence it is alone in the lack of response. The issue of ethics and citations is timely. In just the past two months there have been five instances of plagiarism in the news. The range of cases—from higher education (The Associated Press, March 6, 2002; The Associated Press, February 22, 2002), to history (McManis)—also demonstrate a variety of responses. I hope that the forensics community responds with more forthrightness and less guile than historian Goodwin, who when confronted with accusations of plagiarism confessed "to her transgressions, said they were 'absolutely not' plagiarism. Instead, she said, she had 'borrowed' phrases and passages and facts from Lynne McTaggart (author of *Kathleen Kennedy: Her Life and Times*) and others in her own book *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*" (Yardley, 2002).

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## Forum: Perspectives on Travel

### The Student View on Travel: Glimpses from a National Survey

David E. Williams

Intercollegiate forensics coaches, as a group, have long lamented the problems that accompany travel to tournaments. Whether it is a 30 minute trip from one Midwestern university to another or an 8-hour trek across the state of Texas, these trips have taken their toll of forensic educators and students alike.

From the coaches' perspective, the concerns are well known. At least as early as the mid 60's, Rives and Klopf (1965) recognized that travel demands were helping to thin the forensic coaching population. They identified the elements of time, workload, travel, compensation, training, lack of recognition, competitiveness, and ethics as factors that were causing coaches to quit the profession. In a similar essay, Barfield (1971) argued that the length of the tournament season was causing forensic educators to leave the activity. While many factors would be present in Barfield's concern for season length, travel was certainly one of the prominent disadvantages of the activity. He suggested a competitive season that began November 1 and concluded by March 31.

While the concern for travel has been a problem for forensics coaches for decades, steps to rectify the problem would seem to be limited. Gill's (1990) survey recognized that travel, training, and competition were significantly correlated with satisfaction among forensic coaches. While she could not determine the degree to which each variable was viewed positively or negatively, travel was clearly an important factor in determining coaches' satisfaction with their job. With the well-known disadvantages of travel inherent to the activity (e.g. exhaustion, safety, time away from family, time away from other elements of the educators' career), it is a virtual necessity of the job for many forensic coaches. Porter and Sommers (1991) made the travel concern even more worrisome for forensics coaches. They published a must-read article for all forensic coaches that identified potential legal liabilities stemming largely from tournament travel. They also provided useful tips for limiting liability and increasing safety on these trips.

These, and other, travel concerns for coaches have been tournament talk, and occasional professional writing fodder for decades. However, the student perspective on travel must also be evaluated. Frequently, the effect of student travel

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is left to individual program directors to evaluate and make appropriate adjustments as needed. However, a more systematic evaluation of students' views toward tournament travel can provide insight into whether they share similar concerns with their coaches. The assumption can be offered that students are younger and have fewer family and professional obligations that are hindered by travel. It is also reasonable to assume that the travel experience is simply more novel and enjoyable for students as well. But such assumptions should be examined.

As part of a study designed to assess the perceptions of intercollegiate debaters, surveys were mailed to Directors of Forensics of 358 debate programs in the United States. Each mailing had seven questionnaires. Directors were asked to distribute, re-collect, and return via mail to the researcher. Seventy institutions responded by returning from one to seven surveys, thus creating an institutional response rate of 19.5%. The surveys were sent to programs listed on mailing lists of the following organizations: NDT, ADA, CEDA, APDA, NPDA, IPDA, NEDA, and NFA.

The survey included 23 items that dealt with demographic data and prior forensic experience, previous experience in debate and other communication activities, and views on specific aspects of intercollegiate debate. The survey also included three open-ended questions that asked students to identify three benefits and three disadvantages of intercollegiate debate. The third open-ended question asked students to identify something they had given up because of debate participation. While this was a study of intercollegiate debaters, it is a fair assumption that debaters' beliefs toward travel would be similar to those of individual events contestants. None of the questions asked specifically about travel, but many of the responses have direct implications for uncovering the student' view of forensic travel.

Respondents who answered the open-ended questions identified travel as both a benefit and disadvantage. The benefits of participation question received 735 responses. Travel was the eighth most frequently identified benefit, listed by 28 respondents for 3.8% of all responses. Interestingly, "travel time" was the sixth most frequently identified disadvantage to participation. Twenty-one respondents listed "travel time" accounting for 3.6% of the 582 total responses to this question.

The initial look would suggest that students were relatively equally split (3.8% to 3.6%) as to whether travel was a benefit or disadvantage of participation. However, a closer look at the disadvantage responses might suggest that students have a greater concern with travel. The top five disadvantages identified in Table 1.

**Table 1. Top disadvantages of forensics**

Rank	Issue	Number	Percent
1.	Time	138	23.7
2.	Hurts Academics	104	17.8
3.	Health/sleep frustration/stress	56	9.6
4.	Affects social life	54	9.2
5.	Financial Costs	42	7.2

The top three disadvantages (time, academics, health) would be, at least, partially attributable to the amount of travel involved in intercollegiate forensic competition. Certainly, things like practice, research, and squad meetings are part of the time element. But, travel is one of the largest single time elements in forensic competition. Likewise, other elements can affect the competitors' grades, but travel that requires missing classes is a significant factor in the "hurts academics" category. Health, sleep, frustration, and stress would seem to be the result of a few components of forensic competition, including travel and tournament competition.

It appears that the student perception of forensic travel may not necessarily be as evenly split as the responses initially indicated. While some students clearly see travel as a benefit to intercollegiate forensics, travel is also seen as a disadvantage. I would argue that travel is also at the root of some of the most prominent disadvantages debaters identify with intercollegiate competition.

Travel, however, is not as systemic to the other benefits identified by students. The top seven benefits are identified in Table 2.

**Table 2. Top benefits of forensics**

Rank	Benefit	Number	Percent
1.	Speaking/Comm. Skills	136	18.6
2.	Analytical/Critical Skills	94	11.8
3.	Social life/Meet people	77	10.4
4.	Research skills	62	8.4
5.	Knowledge/Education	46	6.2
6.	Self-esteem/confidence	43	5.8
7.	Argumentation	33	4.0

In the list of benefits, one could argue that travel helps facilitate the "social life/meet people" benefit. However, the other benefits listed more prominently than travel are derivatives of the activity itself, not the travel.

The final question of the survey asked students if they had ever given up other personal or educational opportunities because of debate participation. Responses were clustered into the four categories of work, school, social/family, and extra-curricular activities (other than forensics). Responses are listed in Table 3.

**Table 3. Activities given up for forensics**

1. Work	26 responses
2. School	37 responses
3. Social/Family	47 responses
4. Extra-curricular activities	52 responses

Forty-three students did not answer this question or responded that they did not have to miss out on an activity because of debate. Some students indicated that practice sessions and research required that they miss these activities. However, over 90% of those who indicated that they did miss an activity identified travel to tourna-

ments as the reason. Several students listed multiple activities that they missed because of travel.

In the work category, students noted that they had reduced hours, lack of promotion, and even passed up job opportunities because of debate. Missed classes were the most frequently identified item in the school category. This category also included poorer performance on papers and in class and missed extra-credit opportunities. The social/family category included missing church, parties, time with family and friends, and time away from their own children. There were a wide range of extra-curricular activities missed including sports, fraternities, participation in theatre, work on student newspapers, and membership in campus clubs and governance.

To provide balance, it must be noted that several students offered commentary that suggested they felt the tradeoff was worth it and that they would receive significant benefit from their tournament travel. As well, every student who completed the survey had obviously made the decision that participation in forensics outweighed the disadvantages, if any, that they observed. Furthermore, students who participate in intercollegiate sports might respond with similar tradeoffs that they have to make because of their participation in football, volleyball, track, etc. This would actually make for a very insightful study in the future.

Regardless, it is difficult to ignore the apparent suggestion from this study that the typical travel practices of intercollegiate forensics students has a negative affect that is different, but not less important, than the effect on their coaches. Travel would appear to be a cause of many of the disadvantages associated with forensics, as identified by student participants, and is taking the place of time that might otherwise be spent in work, school, extra-curricular, and social/family activities.

I will stop short of suggesting wide-ranging changes that should be made to the activity because of what has been identified in this study. Most of my suggestions would likely be echoes of suggestions previously uttered by others. Instead, I would suggest two things.

First, I believe this is a sign that the forensics community should examine the travel practices that are dictated by the structure of the activity. It may well be that the benefits derived from the activity far outweigh the problems that arise for some because of the travel. Obviously, some students hold that belief. It might also be that the structure of competitive forensics could be modified to alter (reduce) travel for students to limit the disadvantages of participation and the tradeoffs that take place with other activities. Again, I leave those suggestions to others.

Second, I would suggest that individual Directors of Forensics might study their own students' choices with regard to travel. While widespread changes in the entire community may not be needed or possible, changes in individual programs might be beneficial. Directors could solicit feedback from their students about what disadvantages they experience because of travel and what tradeoffs they are making in order to participate in intercollegiate forensics.

I have experienced the 30-minute travel to the next tournament in the Midwest and the 20 and 30 hour drives to national tournaments, which were far away

from my Lubbock, Texas home. I must admit that I do not tell stories about the 30 minute drive, but the 20 and 30 hour drives are relived in vivid detail with those former students and others who have a difficult time imagining how or why such a trip was made. I doubt that the results of this study suggest that wholesale changes are needed to intercollegiate forensics. I think it does suggest that tournament travel is something that affects students in a similar manner to the way it affects coaches. The health of the activity, coaches, and students who are served might benefit from some careful review by individual programs and organizations.

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