Did You Read Today's Paper?: The Erroneous Privileging of Evidentiary "Recency" in the Collegiate Individual Event of Persuasion

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Abstract

This study questioned the nature of the evidence displayed in collegiate level persuasive speaking in order to determine the validity of the general perception that "recency" is a key evaluative measure in determining the value of evidence. Additionally, the study was interested in revealing if a community-wide valuation of recency has impacted other aspects of evidence use. The conclusions articulated in this study strongly suggest that the data reflects a transactional relationship between students, coaches and judges that conspires to facilitate the common practice of rejecting potentially invaluable evidence and insight for the audience simply based on publication date.

Introduction

Competitive forensics offers a learning space for argumentation, which, theoretically, encourages students to delve into a brand of evidence use and research beyond the expectations of the conventional classroom. As the use and scope of the Internet has expanded during recent years, students who have grown up in the era of "instant information" have come to rely on that technology as their primary information source. The result of the shift from library stacks to the information super highway has had implications for the products of collegiate forensics. The considerations in this study do not attempt to draw a specific link between the popularity of the Internet and the nature of student evidence use in collegiate forensics. Indeed, advances in technology have made information that was previously accessible only to elite researchers available to the masses. However, we must acknowledge that our culture has changed as it relates to the search for information and nature of research. The Internet has changed the world and so too has it changed the forensics laboratory.

The central hypothesis that guided this inquiry recognized the fairly recent and significant cultural change in this country related to information gathering as a force that has had an impact on the functional approach to evidence use and evaluation criteria in collegiate forensics. The primary difference, though, between general cultural practices and the collegiate forensics environment is one of mission. For decades forensics literature has

made references to the activity as a laboratory for the public speaking classroom (Aden, 1990; Cronn-Mills & Schnoor, 2003; Harris, Kropp & Rosenthal, 1986; Kay; 1990; Kerber & Cronn-Mills, 2005). The laboratory metaphor generally refers to a place in which individuals are able to experiment without influencing the world outside the laboratory in a significant manner. However, the technological developments of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have substantively influenced that laboratory. Research is still performed to gather evidence to support claims and bolster argument. Yet, it seems that fewer and fewer students are leaving a computer screen to gain access to additional information related to evidence so as to assert a stronger case for the use of their evidence as appropriate rhetorical justification. Evidence is intended to provide support for claims and insight for the audience related to the contextual factors that are critical to evaluating the scope and validity of the central argument of the speech. The convenience and vast content of the Internet is now at the fingertips of student speakers. Students often possess instant access to historical, as well as, recently published data on millions of subjects with fewer limitations regarding distance and language than ever before in human history. The integration of this brand of technology into American existence has certainly reshaped expectations about information and evidence in the collegiate forensics community.

While certainly not a definitive claim, we would argue that "recency" is regularly relied upon as criteria for evaluating the quality and relevance of evidence in collegiate persuasive speaking. At times, the topic a student has chosen dictates a reliance on cutting-edge, recently published evidence. In these cases, recency would be valid criteria for evaluating the usefulness of evidence. This study questions the nature of the evidence displayed in the persuasive speaking event in order to determine the validity of the general perception that "recency" is a key evaluative measure in determining the value of evidence. Additionally, we are interested in revealing if a community-wide valuation of *recency* has impacted other aspects of the nature of evidence.

Review of Literature

This shift in evidence gathering has implications for the products of collegiate forensics, and thus in the education of students broadly. Evidence gathering inevitably becomes "evidence use." Forensics literature has been quite consumed with the ethical implications of fabrication and distortion of evidence over the last quarter century. Several scholars (Cronn-Mills & Schnoor, 2003; DelCasale et al., 2003; Frank, 1983; Friedley, 1983; Perry, 2003; Thomas & Hart, 1983) have helped to shape the debate concerning evidence use in forensics. However, most of these studies featured discussion and analysis related to ethics in evidence use. None offered a broadly based analysis of actual source citations related to the element of recency, nor the

potential by-products of a valuation of such a component. This study poses questions that come after the vast substantiation of ethical violations and considerations in the use of evidence that have been smartly chronicled in the pages of the *National Forensic Journal*.[1]

This inquiry, essentially, extends the conversation initiated by VerLinden, which focused on the importance of publication dates in the citation of evidence during forensic competition nationwide. VerLinden (1996) wrote:

> Detailed dating is often presented as, "*Newsweek*, October 9, 1995, reports" or "Richard Shapiro, executive director of the Congressional Management Foundation, was quoted in *National Journal*, September twenty-third, 1995." The practice of using detailed dates in source citations has arisen in competition with little apparent consideration of its rhetorical or educational value, so it is time to consider if such detailed dating is a practice that forensic educators should promote. (p. 23)

This study extends VerLinden's inquiry by questioning the implications of common practice. If, indeed, the citation of the publication date is of critical importance to the audience within the competitive forensics context, as VerLinden inquired, then assessing the product(s) of this contextual convention must have critical implications within the analytical and philosophical foundations of forensics pedagogy. This reveals questions about the quality and usefulness of the evidence that students have selected to support argument in persuasion.

If collegiate forensics is a central learning space within higher education for students to absorb and master knowledge and skill in argumentation and evidence gathering, then it is likely that practices emphasized within this learning space will be reflected in their post-collegiate experiences. At the very least, students will carry with them a set of conceptions and dispositions related to research that are directly linked to their experience in collegiate forensics. Kerber and Cronn-Mills (2003) suggested that forensics researchers must, among other things, "investigate the educational aspect of individual events to create pedagogy with stronger links to communication theory" (p. 79). This study focuses on common practice evidentiary use in I.E. persuasion as a symbol of pedagogical

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[1] While much of the basis for the literature review in this study relies upon publications from the *National Forensic Journal*, the choice is well supported by the central concern of this study. This research is highly contextualized for the collegiate forensics community. The *National Forensic Journal* serves as a key source for research related to the artifacts and practices that define that community. Therefore, it is important that this study is contextualized as a contribution to the on going conversation related to issues that impact the collegiate forensics pedagogy and practice.

constraints and limitations imposed upon and inherent in the practice of collegiate forensics. The implications of common practice in the laboratory environment of forensics are far reaching since they inform tendencies and behavior in research and evidence use beyond the controlled environment.

Asserting a base judgment of the quality of argumentation, in part, on the worth, importance and usefulness of the evidence, which the speaker has brought together to support her/his base claim is a common evaluative measure (Freely & Steinberg, 2005; Ziegelmueller & Kay, 1997). Such a standard inevitably produces value systems, which govern the definition of these terms of credibility. In collegiate forensics, the *recency* of the evidence has emerged as one of the central measures of judgment.

Recency as an attribute of evidence is a justifiable and necessary criteria for evaluating usefulness of evidence when considering certain subject areas. For instance, if a speaker is asserting an argument concerning recent US military actions in the Middle East, then the recency of the evidence truly helps to shape the argument. Yet, this illustration is not indicative of all topic areas for speeches presented in the persuasive speaking event. Additionally, this study is not attempting to ferret out instances when recency has functioned as justifiable criteria for evaluating the usefulness of source material. Rather, this inquiry functions as an assessment of the valuation of recency as a standard evaluative measure within the collegiate forensics community. Like Verlinden (1996), we seek to reveal whether common practice in the assessment of evidence is reflective of a strong consideration of rhetorical and educational value.

Freely and Steinberg (2005) asserted that, "advocates must determine whether the source of evidence is trustworthy" (p.121). In the realm of forensics competition the speaker inherently accepts the role of advocate and therefore must demonstrate for the audience the trustworthiness and usefulness of the evidence. The persuasive speaking event places a high value on the advocate/evidence relationship. The means for establishing the relevance of evidence have come to be primarily expressed through three actions of the speaker: 1) citation of the specific source (publication name or source root), 2) qualification of the piece of evidence, and 3) citation of the publication date (which establishes a relationship between the evidence and the present time). This study assesses the implications of the last criteria.

Method

A content analysis was used to evaluate the nature of recency in persuasion. This allowed the researchers to analyze the nature and quality of sources being cited in forensic competition categorically. The data for this analysis was derived from the Interstate Oratorical Association's journal *Winning Orations*. *Winning Orations* is an appropriate artifact for this

analysis since it provides full text speeches submitted by the speakers who competed in the Interstate Oratory Competition. Additionally, it is the only publication that provides data on each entry (not simply final rounds).

Data Collection

Given the analytical focus on current competitive trends, the years 2001-2005 were selected representing five recent years of competition. From that sample, three years (2002, 2004 and 2005) were randomly selected. Evidentiary data from 145 speeches were analyzed in total, which accounts for every speaker from the three-year data set; thus providing a representative sample.

Speeches were arranged into three categories based on their final competition placement: finalists, non-advancing semi-finalists, and non-advancing preliminary competitors. All competitors from the selected years were included in the analysis.

The study focused on syntactical units of analysis, specifically, source citations. Each citation was coded by date (year), specific source attribution (publication name, interview source, etc.), and source type (newspaper, academic journal, etc.). Within each year of competition, *recency* was analyzed through three publication date categories: current year, past year, and two-years previous citations.

Seventeen content categories for source types were determined. Once the sources were classified as a "type", each source was identified as either a primary or secondary source. The system for classifying source type was based on definitional components outlined by Frey, Botan and Kreps (2000), as well as Freely and Steinberg (2005). Seven of the 17 speech types represent primary source material whereas the other 10 represent secondary source roots (see Table 1).

The conception of primary source material was defined in two ways. First, primary evidence was defined as that which is derived from an original origin (author) for the information or data (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000). For instance, academic journals are a primary source of information and, therefore included in the category. Material that was specifically qualified by the speaker as having been produced by a governmental department was also categorized as primary. Second, we drew upon argumentation literature for a definition of primary evidence that was more inclusive. Primary evidence, therefore, was constituted by the, "best evidence that the circumstances admit; original or firsthand evidence that affords the greatest certainty of the matter in question" (Freely & Steinberg, 2005, p. 95). Government sources were categorized as primary, because they provided a "firsthand" qualification as opposed to the news report that informed the audience of government action or opinion. Source types placed in this categorization included: academic journals, conference papers/academic projects, theses/dissertations,

government reports/studies/documents, industry specific research/reports/ newsletters, legislation/court rulings, and quotations from prominent persons.

Secondary evidence was classified as, "evidence that by its very nature suggests the availability of better evidence in the matter in question" (Freely & Steinberg, 2005, p. 95). Ten source types fell within the parameters of secondary sources (see Table 1). Source types placed in this category included: textbooks, books, magazine, television, newspapers, personal interviews, websites, discussion lists (blogs), radio programs, and news agencies.

Table 1.

Primary Source Material	Secondary Source Material
• Academic journal (peer-reviewed) • Conference paper/academic project • Thesis/dissertation • Government research/study/ document • Industry research/report newsletter • Legislation/court ruling • Quotations (prominent person with no publication)	• Textbook • Book • Magazine • Television • Newspaper • Personal interview • Website • Discussion list/blog • Radio program • News agency/wire

We must note that the classification of primary and secondary sources in this study was rooted in the data. A data set of source citations is unique in that each of the citations, which provided the basis for the categorizations, did not always supply sufficient information to justify a different classification. For instance, in the citation of a website, speakers often provided only the web address. This left the audience to make a judgment about the nature of the source based wholly and fully on a web address. If the citation indicated government research, documents or studies procured through a website, then the citation was classified under the government research category. However, a large number of citations in the data set provided little qualification of the source. The classification of sources as either primary or secondary was fully rooted in how the citation was presented in the text of the speech.

Additionally, maintaining a category such as "television" under secondary source material could be considered a limitation. Yet, this study is unique. Since the data set defined the source categories, such a classification represents a very clear reflection of the nature of the citations in the speech texts.

In instances in which a source type was not readily apparent based on the fashion that the speaker qualified the source, the source type was researched

and identified. Under certain circumstances source data was excluded from the data set, because it did not fit the full criteria for inclusion. The rules for the exclusion of source data from the set included: 1) References that did not include a publication date were included in the data set, but excluded from the recency statistics. 2) If the manuscript provided no indication of source type then the reference was excluded all together. References that met the criteria for exclusion accounted for less than 0.5% of the total data set.

Results

This study provides two main areas of results first in the notion of recency and second, source type usage.

Table 2 provides a break down of the use of "recency" in competition for each year studied. The analysis found an average of 83.9% of the sources cited in the competition met the study's definition of "recent." Seventy-eight point seven percent of all sources cited over the three-year period were drawn from the same/previous year.

Table 2: Percentage of Source Citation Recency

Year of Competition	Same Year	Previous Year	Two-Years Prior
2002	20.2%	58.1%	7.4%
2004	23.9%	52.4%	4.8%
2005	28.5%	53.3%	3.1%

Table 3 illustrates the use of same/previous year source material according to final placement in the competition. It is evident that all of the students in the competition use "recency" as a competitive choice. Non-advancing speakers relied on sources from the year or year prior to competition 75.9% of the time. Non-advancing semi-finalists relied on these sources 91.3% of the time. Final round speakers used same/previous year sources 79.8% of the time.

Interesting discrepancies exist in the data that appears in this comparison. First, non-advancing students saw almost a 10% increase in the use of immediate recency, whereas non-advancing semifinalists saw a 7% decrease in same/previous year citations. Regardless of the discrepancy, the data clearly establishes the overwhelming reliance on same/previous year source material. The data provides the strong suggestion of replication in student practices related to evidence.

Table 3: Usage of Same/Previous Year Citations According to Final Placement

Year of Competition	Non-advancing	Non-advancing Semifanlist	Finalist
2002	72.1%	93.1%	86.3%
2004	73.7%	94.6%	70.0%
2005	81.9%	86.1%	83.1%

The second set of results from this analysis focuses on the use of primary and secondary source usage in persuasive speeches. When isolating source type in competitive speech this analysis found that primary sources accounted for 22.3% of all sources over the three-year period, whereas secondary sources accounted for 76.6%. Table 4 presents a breakdown of the primary and secondary source types used in competition. Of particular interest is the fact that the most commonly used primary source was drawn from industry specific research (7.4%). This sharply contrasts with secondary source usage when three out of the seven categories garnered more than 10% each. Newspapers alone accounted for 38.9% of all source citations.

Table 4: Accumulated Source Type Usage (2002, 2004 and 2005)

Primary Source Usage		Secondary Source Usage*	
Industry research /report/ newsletter	7.4%	Newspaper	38.9%
Academic Journal	5.4%	Website	14.2%
Government report /study	4.8%	Magazine	10.3%
Legislation/ court ruling	2.6%	News agency/wire	5.3%
Quotation	1.9%	Television	3.5%
Conference paper /academic project	.29%	Books	2.7%
Thesis /dissertation	0.0%	Personal Interview	1.6%

* Three secondary source types (discussion list/blog, radio, and textbooks) accounted for less than 1% each of total source citations.

Clearly, the data analysis illustrates a heavy reliance on secondary source material as evidence in persuasion speaking. The valuation of recency as a central component in the evaluative criteria for evidence is strongly linked to the overwhelming use of secondary sources.

Discussion

White and Billings (2002) argued:

> One major reason for writing an argument is to present the readers new information and insights into a topic. At the same time, however, readers need to be informed or reminded about the old information to see how the new perspective adds to the discussion of the issue and merits of consideration. (p. 153)

Although White and Billings focus on the structure of written argument, the fundamental principles of argumentation are not limited by the mode of delivery. The problematic valuation isolated in this study has implications in two areas: first, in forensics pedagogy and, second in the quality of argumentation in the persuasive speaking event. Initially, the pedagogical implications related to this erroneous valuation are far reaching and strongly impact the consideration of the quality of students' education in argumentation. An educator/coach is inherently challenged to balance high-quality guidance related to public speaking/performance practices rooted in communication theory with what they perceive to be competitive expectations of the collegiate forensics community, which are not inherently rooted in communication theory, but strongly linked to the teaching of audience-centered speaking. It would be difficult to find any scholarly source that would place the use of secondary evidence above primary evidence in an event, which boasts the mission of teaching argumentation. Yet, when looking at the three competitive years, secondary sources accounted for 76.6% of all sources. The vast majority of source citations relied on newspapers and websites totaling 53.1% of all source citations. Newspapers are published daily and commonly utilize distributed stories written by a news agency. The vast majority of websites cited in speeches were attributed with the last date the speaker accessed the content rather than offering more substantive qualification of the content.

Two important confirmations emerged in the results of this study that provide significant insight into common practice and the products of pedagogy in collegiate persuasion. First, recency is a central factor in the evaluation of evidence. Second, the valuation of recency is linked to students' reliance on secondary source material. While we could mine a handful of exceptions to the conclusions reached in this study, the fact remains that the data reflects a transactional relationship between students, coaches and judges that conspires to facilitate the common practice of rejecting potentially invaluable evidence and insight for the audience simply based on publication date. This study highlights a serious question for forensics pedagogy. What are the fundamental lessons of argumentation that students should learn from their study and practice in persuasive speaking? Indeed, if we are to claim

that the forensics laboratory hosts a more rich, textured and sophisticated training ground than the traditional public speaking classroom, then surely the general practices of the forensics community should reflect high quality undergraduate speechmaking products. While the products of the activity may reflect high standards on a general basis, the broad and overwhelming use of secondary source material by speakers at all levels identified in this study, suggests that the quality of students' evidentiary investigation is limited.

Given the statistical results of this study it is critical that we gain some insight into the tendency to place the evaluation criteria of recency above usefulness. Such a valuation potentially emerges from several points all of which work in concert to create a cultural tendency. First, students are likely replicating the work of other students whose output they perceive to be superior to their own. Second, students are likely influenced by coaches who are encouraging them to adhere to that cultural tendency under the assumption that an alternative course of action would produce a less "competitive" speech. And finally, to some degree, the general topic areas, which are common to collegiate persuasion, require an increased reliance on recently published source material.

As we consider the first two of these three potential causes it is reasonable to suggest that students witness the practices of fellow students who find competitive success and replicate those practices. At some point in time the forensics community constructed a valuation of recency that now permeates evidentiary practices in the persuasive speaking event. Indeed, there are many other considerations in the use of evidence than the date of origination. Yet, through the influences of adjudication and/or competitor replication the valuation of *recency* has taken a prominent, if not dominant role. Whether or not the practice arose from student replication or the influence of coaches and teachers does not alter the fact that the valuation is verifiable and begs numerous questions related to forensics pedagogy.

The third element of the development of this cultural tendency gives rise to potential counterargument to the results of this study. We could suggest that the topic areas for the speakers presented in this study inherently called for only the most recent evidence to be presented in order to strongly support the central assertions within the speeches. Yet, the scope of this study seeks to refute that argument. It is unreasonable to assert, given the broad range of topics in the set (144), that approximately 15% of the evidence (that which was classified as preceding "two-years prior") played the role of explaining, "how the new perspective adds to the discussion of the issue and merits consideration" by framing the issue within the confines of previous evidence (White & Billings, 2002). Surely, a significant portion of the speech texts featured topics that possessed a past and present that extended beyond approximately 30 months. It is imperative that the forensics community work to question the basis for judging the usefulness of evidence simply on the

merit of publication date.

The time constraints imposed on the persuasive speaking event in collegiate forensics make impossible the general practice of presenting the full breadth of the evidence and substance of the discussion related to the central topic that occurred previous to the immediate past two years. Yet, these constraints do not prevent a more broad consideration of topic areas, including the presentation of critical evidentiary artifacts that may have emerged in the less than "most recent" past that would help to fully frame the issue for the audience. As a community of coaches, teachers, scholars and students, we must begin a serious conversation concerning the criteria for evaluating the usefulness of evidence in student speeches. The results of this study certainly suggest that the products of forensics, and thus, forensics pedagogy, can be improved in terms of evidentiary practices in persuasion.

The results of this study do not serve to indict the forensics community for moving away from a call for higher quality evidence in student speeches. Rather, the study highlights an area within the common practices of the activity that could be vastly improved upon and, thus, enhance the educational opportunity which the activity offers to students. The introduction to this study briefly discussed the emergence of the Internet. While this study did not provide analytic consideration of issues related directly to this source of content, the societal reliance on this technology may also be linked to elements of recency and secondary source use. Future research could compare the results of this study to the results of a similar content analysis of speech texts published in Winning Orations during pre-Internet years.

The results of this study are encouraging for the continued development of forensic pedagogy at the collegiate level. Research that reveals insight into the realities and products of common practice provides a basis for improving pedagogical practice. The results of this study compel the collegiate forensics community to question the nature of evidence use and basis for evaluating evidence in persuasion. This study highlights the need for speakers to qualify the value and usefulness and evidence within the text of platform speeches. The call to discussion and debate that is inherent in the results of this research seeks only to advance the forensics community by challenging students and educators to question evidentiary aspects of the speechmaking process.

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Beyond Interpretation: A Barthes-ian Approach to the Oral Reading of Literature

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Abstract

The oral reading of literature is an activity that has been engaged in by nearly every literate culture in history. The form of oral reading practiced in the United States—often called oral interpretation—has changed significantly since it first appeared in ancient Greece. These changes have generally been responses to changing historical circumstances. The article argues that contemporary theory has ignored the influence of social-political-economic conditions on the practice of oral reading and advances an approach to the oral reading of literature based on the works of French critical theorist Roland Barthes. The Barthes-ian approach to oral reading provides a sound theoretical basis upon which to describe the activity but also the critical perspective necessary to guide it.

Introduction

Much of contemporary oral interpretation theory begins with the assumption that literary material has meaning independent of the reader and, it is generally held, such meaning is determined by the author of the work. Bowen, Aggertt, and Rickert (1978), for example, offered what is perhaps the most basic definition of oral interpretation as simply "reading aloud" or the changing of "written symbols into oral symbols" (p. 7). Very quickly, however, they determined that this definition is incomplete and ultimately settled upon one in which the interpreter communicates his or her "experience of the author's ideas and feelings to the eyes and ears of an audience, so that both the reader and the audience experience and appreciate the author's literary creation" (p. 8). VerLinden (1987) described oral interpretation "an art requiring critical decisions from inception to the final performance" one of the most important of which is "to determine the author's intent and to discover the relationship between the style and the meaning" (p. 58). Although not emphasizing the role of the author, Lee and Gura (2001) shared the assumption that the text had an independent meaning and that the purpose of the reading is to communicate "a work of literary art in its intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic entirety" (p. 3). At the other extreme, however, the author's intent becomes absolute. Bertram (1967) argued, for example, that the reader is simply "a person through whom the author is interpreted to the audience" (p. 7) while Bahn (1932) was even more forceful, and declared that the "sole aim of the interpreter is to re-create the high ideals and thoughts

which existed in the mind of the author" (p. 432).

Although there are exceptions to the rule, Rossi and Goodnow (2006) confidently concluded that the "primacy of the literature" is

> evidenced in almost all interpretation textbooks and even into entire texts exploring the varied theories and approaches behind it...The value, necessity, and power of an awareness of literary content and form, as well as a credible attempt at honoring the two, is almost a given for most theorists, particularly through the mid-seventies, and in most current textbooks. (p. 48)

A generation earlier, Hargis (1952) reached a similar conclusion, that one of the few points of agreement among theorists was that "in oral interpretation it is the author's idea which should be communicated with as little alteration as possible" (p. 176).

This presents a very serious problem, however. It can be reasonably inferred from the number of coaches, competitors and judges who so blatantly rob texts of "their original content" and operate with "little or no regard to their initial authorial intent" (Rossi & Goodnow, 2006, p. 52) that the theoretical consensus is out of step with actual practice. Gernant (1991) concluded that not only do a "larger numbers of students...fail to include such basic ideas as theme and knowledge of author's intent in the their outlines of interpretive steps" but, even more "disconcerting...is the number of students who do not know or care what the author intended by selections, nor do these students feel it is important to the interpretive event to attempt to share the author's meaning" (p. 46). More recently, Rossi and Goodnow (2006) lamented oral interpreters' efforts to "impress the audience with individual creativity" by fashioning programs that "may bear no resemblance to any of the original texts" and place "emphases where the original author did not place them" (p. 49). As a result of these practices, they concluded, "literature has been reduced to the same level and value of a tube of paint and is, unfortunately, treated by many interpreters with the same respect as a tube of cadmium blue" (p. 49). If the meaning of the text and the intent of the author are stressed at the theoretical level while rejected in practice, then we have entered into what Schopenhauer called a logical absurdity: "...what is right in theory *must* work in practice; and if it does not, there is a mistake in the theory; something has been overlooked and not accounted for" (cited in Black, 1946, p. 236). More specifically concerned with oral interpretation, Cobin (1959) suggested that theory and practice must be conceived of as "two sides of the same coin. The most effective practice is guided by theory. The most meaningful theory is based on practice" (p. 3).

This dilemma has not gone unrecognized by critics of contemporary oral interpretation and generally the solution to the problem has been to

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demand changes in practice to put it in line with theory. Often this comes in the form of re-asserting "traditional oral interpretation" and placing renewed emphasis on the "core values" of the activity. The purpose of this paper, however, is to provide a counterpoint to calls for changes in practice by suggesting instead that we reassess our theory. I believe that the perspective of Roland Barthes (1915 – 1980) can enhance our understanding of oral interpretation as both a competitive speaking event and a social activity and that a Barthes-ian paradigm may further the evolution of oral interpretation as a critical art from.

The Problem with "Tradition" and "Core Values"

While the public reading of literature has been part of cultural traditions throughout the world – Thompson (1973) referenced the oral traditions in India, China, the Middle East, Asia, Oceania, Africa and the Americas – it is generally agreed what today we call "oral interpretation" originated in classical Greece (Bartanen, 1994; Bahn, 1932; Bahn, 1937; Bahn & Bahn, 1970; Lee & Gura, 2001). Bahn (1932) identified the "ballad-dance" as the "forerunner, or ancestor, of…dancing, acting and interpretive activity" and the "acknowledged mother of the three main types of poetry" (p. 433 – 434). Olsen (1981) contended that, "Oral interpretation of literature is the "oldest of the speech arts."

Oral interpretation as we know it today did not appear until the early twentieth century at a time when Speech Communication was emerging as an independent discipline. As Barclay (1972) observed:

> The entire discipline of Speech was in a state of metamorphosis. Oral interpretation was swept up in the new forms issuing from the genesis of a separate department of "Speech." However, oral interpretation faced a singular problem because of its nineteenth century elocutionary overlays. (p. 39)

Barlcay credited "a small crusade of teachers whose rational and intelligent dedication to oral interpretation produced a study worthy of inclusion within the Speech family," a feat they achieved by insisting "upon the meaningful study of literature" and the "repudiation of prescribed rules for voice and bodily action" (p. 39). It is in this transitional phase that the term "oral interpretation" first appeared (Barclay credited S. H. Clark with the coining of the term).

Over the course of the past 2,500 years, the practice of the oral reading has evolved considerably and the path of its development demonstrates, I believe, two very important things. First, any attempt to condemn (or justify) present practices based on reference to tradition must necessarily raise the question: What point in the past 2,500 years of history? Followed swiftly

by: Why that point and not another? The "tradition" to which some would appeal is not the tradition of oral reading but rather a very narrow period of a very long tradition, a narrow period that began in the early twentieth century. Why not the tradition of the nineteenth century elocutionists? Why not the Roman Saturnian verse or Greek rhapsodes? It is just not enough to support a particular approach to oral interpretation (or anything else for that matter) on the ground that practice reflects the values of a particular point in history unless one can also give good reasons why that point in history should be prized over any other point, including the present. If "tradition" is our only basis for insisting on the use of a script or off-stage focus, then it provides equally strong justification for reading works of history as was done in ancient Greece (Olsen, 1981) or for excluding drama, which was done early in the twentieth century when many of the other conventions that are today considered "core values" emerged (Veilleux, 1969). To assume, moreover, that because something has come before that it necessarily also has a superiority over what has come after is fallacious, a species of the *argumentum ad vericundiam*: if the present is different from the past, the present must be wrong (Hamblin, 1970).

The second important lesson to be learned from the history of oral interpretation is that it did not develop in a vacuum. The practice of oral interpretation (like the practice of almost everything else) is shaped by the material forces of the social-economic-political context within which the practice is situated. Theory can both explain practice and it can provide justification for practices based on particular values or ideals thereby shaping the development of practices. It is a mistake, however, to confuse *justification*, in the sense of providing a sound theoretical basis for practices, with *explanation*, or why and how certain practices came to be. Confusing the two is tantamount to the "is-ought" fallacy: confusing what is and what should be.

Nowhere is this confusion more evident than in the case of the use of the manuscript, unofficially known as "the little black book" (Cronn-Mills & Golden, 1997). There are many different justifications for using the manuscript and for requiring its use in forensic competition: it is an aid in memory; it symbolized the author; it maintains the distinction between interpretation and acting (Dailey et al., 1986). These are all theoretical justifications for the use of the script not explanations of why the script came to be considered part of interpretation, which has less to do with theory and more (perhaps everything) to do with material forces. Garrett (1983) noted that in eighteenth century, nearly all of the American "colonies enacted laws to suppress 'the rouges and vagabonds' who "practiced common plays, interludes or other crafty science" and "it was no wonder that an actor occasionally found it expedient to turn "reader" (p. 1). In the puritanical colonies, the manuscript and other conventions such as off-stage focus and the rejection of costumes

and props would have been useful means of differentiating between reading and acting when the latter was prohibited by law. Later, as the emerging discipline of Speech was attempting to disassociate itself with elocution, the script and conventions against movement became a way of reigning in the excesses of the elocutionary movement. Theory emerged post hoc as a discipline that "had begun as a "performance field" with little or no theoretical background [sought] the means to become a research field" (Cohen, 1994, p. 36). Even the very name oral *interpretation* was constructed to give the activity a level of academic respectability. While oral *reading* was about performance—a concept which at that time had no scholarly credibility—the term *interpretation* connoted literary criticism, a reputable scholarly pursuit. Similarly, the contemporary practices that traditionalists condemn are a response to a changing field. Pelias and VanOosting (1987), for example, described "a discipline in transition" (p. 219) in which there is an increasing tension between oral interpretation and performance studies. As performance studies continues to develop, it will, no doubt continue to distance itself from "traditional" approaches generally and forensics especially.

Material social-economic-political forces drive practice. Theory can explain and guide practice. The book, off-stage focus, not using props or costumes were important because they helped to distinguish between oral interpretation and acting at a time when that distinction was necessary. The purpose of theory *now* should not be to find new justification for old practices but to determine whether or not we still need that distinction. Do we need a bundling board between acting and interpretation? If so, why? When we answer those questions we can develop theory that encourages practices which serve the needs and interests of our discipline, our communities, and our society.

A Barthes-ian approach to literature and criticism

It is, I think, best to begin this section of my argument with clarifications and qualifications. First, it is not my intention to supplant any existing paradigm with one based on the works of Roland Barthes. What I suggest herein is, rather, a way of thinking about interpretation (which I prefer to call "oral reading") which expands our understanding of the activity. I am offering *a* paradigm for understanding oral reading not *the* paradigm for understanding oral reading. Secondly, this article is not intended as a full explication of Roland Barthes's philosophy of literature. Barthes's thought is complex and his approach to literature and criticism deserves to be understood on its own terms. This article offers only a partial look at Barthes's work and, on occasion, departs from it. My approach should be understood as one influenced by Barthes, not as one strictly obedient to him.[1]

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[1] Given Barthes's philosophy, I do not believe that either of these limitations is out of line. Barthes would probably have rejected the very idea of "Barthes-ian" as it would imply

Such caveats in place, the starting point for understanding Barthes's approach to literature is a shift in the way in which we understand literature the essence of which is the transference of primacy from the author to the reader. As a starting point, it is important to understand the distinction that Barthes drew between the work and the text. The work, for Barthes (1977) is a material object. It is a thing that can sit on the shelf of a library or bookstore; it can be bought, sold or "held in the hand" whereas "a text is held in language" (p. 157). The experience of the two is thus very different for, although they are not separable from one another, *the Text is experienced only in an activity of production*" (p. 157, emphasis original). A work, moreover, has no substance; it is a fragment of substance. Texts are substantive but they "only [exist] in the moment of discourse" (p. 157).

Barthes's claim as to the insubstantiality of the work is an extension of his position relative to "the author." If the entire corpus of Barthes's thought can be reduced to a single phrase, it would be "the death of the author." In an essay bearing that title, Barthes (1977) noted that the preoccupation with the author was a product of capitalism and the positivist ideology that undergirded it. Barthes is not alone in his observation. Chandrasoma, Thompson, and Pennycook's (2004) research has concluded that the idea of "authorship" is also a distinctly Western concern. The capitalist-positivist-Western approach to the text assumes that the author is the creator of the work and thus also the determiner of its meaning who has the right to control its dissemination, its use, and its interpretation.[2] This is the ideology which sustains the traditionalist approach to oral reading of literature. Connecting those assumptions with a particular ideology is important. The identification of "the author" with a specific social-political-economic context means that "the author" is not a literary universal. If it is not a universal and necessary condition, we are free to hypothesize social-political-economic contexts within which "the author" is not a relevant construct. As the context changes, moreover, and when the discipline increasingly embraces theories that transcend capitalism, positivism and Western models of thinking, we must necessarily question the relevance of "the author" in the study of literature.

Barthes (1977) summarily rejected the author as origin of the text which, he argued:

the authorship/ownership of ideas gathered from his writings, the possibility of which he denies. Moreover, Barthes consistently "[refused] to identify himself with any of the theories he himself pioneered" (Baumlin, 1996, p. 67).

[2] This concern for ownership is evidenced in Rossi and Goodnow's (2006) warning that current practices forensic competition have implications with respect to "copyright issues and other legal rights of the author and publisher" (p. 49) that they might be more forceful in exercising if they were to become aware of the 'misuse' of their works by oral interpreters. National forensic organizations, moreover, have long refrained from making recordings of oral interpretation events, a practice that is common in other forensic events, out of concern for copyright and other legal claims.

> ... is not a line of words releasing a single "theological" meaning (the "message" of an Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (p. 146)

The production of a text is not one of original creation. Authorship is not the power of creation but rather the "power to mix writings, to counter the ones with others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them" (p. 146). There is no originality and if there is no originality there is no authorial claim to ownership of either the work or of its meaning.

An example might help to clarify Barthes's position. Lincoln's Address at Gettysburg is one of the most resonant texts in the English language. It has been described as a transcendental speech that literally transformed a nation (Wills, 1992). For all of its rhetorical and literary potency, however, the text has no claim to originality. The "proposition that all men are created equal" to which the nation is dedicated is, of course, from the Declaration of Independence, a document which draws so much from Locke's *Second Treatise on Government* that if Jefferson had turned it into a freshman composition class rather than to the Continental Congress, he would surely have been expelled for plagiarism. Even the speech's famous closing line—"that a government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth"—is hardly original. A generation earlier it was Daniel Webster who said, "It is, Sir, the people's Constitution, the people's government, made for the people, made by the people, and answerable to the people" and in 1850 Theodor Parker, a well known Boston abolitionist, made reference to "A government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people" (cited in Weaver, 1987, p. 123 – 124). The eloquent epistrophe has become one of the most quoted and paraphrased phrases in history and repeated in innumerable forms. Who has not seen a campaign poster with a young student professing to be the candidate of, by and for the students or a beer claiming to be the beverage of, by and for the people?[3]

The point here is not to diminish the greatness of Lincoln's oration but simply to point out that the greatness is not Lincoln's to claim. The speech is woven from threads pulled from the Enlightenment, the American and French revolutions, and the American consciousness. Its greatness is an

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[3] In my public speaking courses, I often use "of the people, by the people, and for the people" as an example of a figure of speech and it is interesting that, over the years, few of my students have been able to correctly identify its source. The Constitution and the Declaration of Independence are far more popular answers. I think that while many would see this as bearing witness to the sad state of our students' knowledge of history, the more important point (at least from the perspective of the speech and literary critic if not the history teacher) is that the origin of the words bears so little upon their salience. It supports Barthes's conclusion that it is the destination that maters, not the source.

extension of the greatness of its author who, consciously or not, drew upon innumerable sources the origins of which we could not possibly identify. For Barthes (1977), all texts are

> …woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages (what language is not?), antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony. The intertextual in which every text is held is not to be confused with some origin of the text: to try to find the "sources", the "influences" of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable and yet *already read*; they are quotations without inverted commas. (p. 160)

This intertextualization does not end with the production of the text, in which case the author could perhaps claim, if not creation of the text, a novelty of construction from pre-existing works.

With the author no longer able to lay claim to the text, the reader occupies the preeminent position. If work is constituted by fragments from anonymous, untraceable, and innumerable sources, then the movement from work to text comes at the point where those fragments are given unity and this unity comes not from the writer but the reader who Barthes conceptualized as a space, a surface upon which "all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost" and, for Barthes "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (1977, p. 148). This constitution of the text is, moreover, "always fleeting, never finished once and for all" because, as Ott and Walter (2000) pointed out, "text exists within an endlessly expanding matrix of intertextual production, readers continually bring new texts to bear upon their readings of that text" (p. 432). This explains why it happens that when two readers approach the same work, they realize two different meanings (Barthes would say they have constituted two entirely different texts); each as intertextualized the work with other fragments from his/her experience.

To offer another example, Ang Lee's film *Brokeback Mountain* was a work was received very differently by different audiences. Mendelsohn (2006) pointed out that while the popular press was depicting the film as "a gay cowboy movie" producers were working to portray the film as a classic love story in the tradition of Romeo and Juliet. At the Golden Globes, director Ang Lee said "This is a universal love story" (cited in Mendelsohn, p. 12). Mendelsohn countered, however, that the film "must be seen as a specifically gay tragedy" (p. 12) pointing out that, among other things, that the film's final two scenes "prominently feature closets—literal closets" (p. 12), a symbol that is especially resonant for gay people. Brod (2006) argued that the films characters are clearly bisexual, not gay. They both marry women, have

children and live lives in which their relationships with women are significant if not entirely happy—and they are also obviously shepherds, not cowboys. From a Barthes-ian perspective, this range of readings is to be expected because each reader brings something different to the text. Each audience will intertextualize the work differently, giving unity to the fragmentary work based on texts of their own experience. Straight audiences will read the work differently than gay; conservative Christians differently than progressive liberals and so forth. Holleran (2006) pointed out that even among gay men, "reactions to the film have run the gamut" and notes that "what one brings to *Brokeback* explains one's feelings about it" (p. 13).

The meaning of the film changes, moreover, with each reading. "The reader who returns to an essay or book she has read in the past will find that that text no longer exists, that the rereading has been a rewriting" (Ott & Walter, 2000, p. 431). One can imagine, for example, how a reader of Proulx's original short story (originally published in 1997) would react upon reading it a few years later following the 1998 death of a young gay man, Matthew Shepard in Wyoming, very near where Proulx set her story. In Ang Lee's film version, few who are old enough to recall the tragedy of Shepard's death did not see echoes of that event in Ennis's recollections of the beating deaths of two gay men, Earl and Rich, when Ennis was nine years old. The events of 1998 brought new meaning to Proulx's words, meaning she did not intend when she wrote them but which, nonetheless impact how the work is read. If events outside the work can impact the meaning of the work, then it cannot be assumed, as the traditionalist approach to oral reading does, that meaning resides in the words. Meaning, for Barthes, resides in the reader and, more specifically, in the act of reading.

None of this is to say that a work is utterly empty of meaning or that any interpretation is as good as another. A work is, I would argue, a "text-in-waiting" needing only a reader to be complete. It is a field or, to borrow a term from Foucault, a grille, which allows for plurality of meaning, perhaps even an infinite number of meanings constrained only by the number of readers. In this sense, however, "infinite" does not mean that "any" reading is valid. It does not mean that a work means whatever the reader wants it to mean. The work constrains the possibilities of the text.

But if the meaning of the text is dependent upon the reader, this raises very serious questions relative to oral interpretation, or as I prefer to call it, oral reading. The purpose cannot be to determine the text's meaning if each reader brings to it a different meaning and, presumably, if the text meaning changes with each reading. Such an approach, moreover, is simply unsuited to forensics. If the purpose of the reading is to capture a meaning of the printed word that exists independent of the reader, then any evaluation of the activity would have to begin (and probably end) with the meaning of the text. The judge would have to know what the text means in order to evaluate

the interpretation. One can only imagine the sort of chaos any attempt to *actually* apply this standard would mean for tournament competition. Competitors could not read from materials unfamiliar to judges and some sort of agreement on the meaning of texts would need to be arrived at in advance of the reading.

This is simply not what happens in forensics. Cronn-Mills and Golden (1997) pointed out that one of the unspoken rules of oral interpretation is the use of literature that is not only unknown but, if possible, from authors who are unknown. While Babcock, Johnson, Dennis, Clark and the others who Barclay (1972) credited with founding the "interpretation" approach to reading literature seem to have envisioned readers on the platform interpreting classics of Western literature, Cronn-Mills and Golden (1997) observed that in practice, competitors avoid literature that even *sounds like* classic literature. Clearly the traditionalist approach to the activity does not describe what is going on in competitive reading of literature. Several studies, moreover, confirm that whatever the basis on which judges are evaluating the activity is, it is not the accuracy or depth of the reader's interpretation of the work. In Mills' (1991) survey of 250 ballots and 2,596 comments from judges of oral interpretation events, author's intent was mentioned only once. Characterization and delivery occupied much more of the judge's attention that the interpretation of the literature. More recent studies confirm that judges are not focused on the accuracy of interpretation (see, for example, Elmer & VanHorn, 2003; Elmer & VanHorn, 2004; Littlefield, et al., 2001).

Within Barthes's work (1972), I believe, there is a standard by which we can evaluate the reading of literature. For Barthes, the "final approach to the Text" was "that of pleasure" suggesting what he called a "hedonistic aesthetics" (p. 163). We read because we take pleasure in reading. We do not read so that we can better understand what an author meant. Our appreciation of the literature is not contingent upon whether or not we get what the author intended us to get out of it.

The text is, in Barthes (1977) words, "made of a multiplicity of writings…but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author" (p. 148). Oral performance of a literary work provides us with a unique phenomenon, moreover. The reader creates a performance in which he or she becomes that space wherein fragments realize, in the moment of reading, a unity. Fragments of works become a text. The reading, however, is also a performance and thus the reader is simultaneously an author. The performance of the reader-author is both text and work in that the performance must also be read. Because herein I am principally (although not exclusively) concerned with forensics and with competition, the first of those readers is the judge.

Barthes's "hedonistic aesthetics" is, I believe, descriptive of what is actually going on in forensics. Judges do not render their decisions based on

whether or not the reader has offered the right or even a good interpretation of the text. It is clear that contemporary practice is structured to preclude even the possibility of rendering a decision on such grounds even if there is such thing as the right interpretation (and within the Barthes-ian paradigm as I have articulated it herein, there isn't). Rather judges evaluate works on whether or not they like them. To say that this reading is a 1 and that reading is a 2 is to say "I, the judge, like this one more than that one; I took more pleasure from one reading than I did from the other." The RFD (reason for decision) is an effort to explain why the one was more liked than the other and post hoc theoretical justifications for the decision do not change that essential fact of what judges are actually doing when they judge. To say "I liked your piece more than the other guy's" is, if nothing else, honest.

Of course, it might be countered that this means that the activity is entirely subjective. Well, it is. Every coach has had to explain that fact to a novice competitor who did not understand why he or she did not do as well as someone else, even when their performances seemed comparable. Anyone who has been in this activity for any length of time has seen fabulous performances of truly wonderful literature not make it to finals while the mediocre reading of material in which we find little if any literary value somehow makes the cut. Forensics, like all arts, is subjective.

It is possible, however, that the concern is not necessarily with subjectivity but with an uncritical subjectivity. If the basis of the standard by which we rank performances is pleasure, how can there be a rational basis for differentiating between readings and judging them? I think, however, that there is little foundation for such concerns. In the first place, I would reiterate my contention that Barthes's hedonistic principle is not just prescriptive but descriptive: it explains how we are judging now. The only difference between the Barthes-ian paradigm and the traditionalist paradigm with respect to the judging of oral reading in forensic competition is that the Barthes-ian paradigm admits that ballot is a reflection of the judge's liking or disliking. The traditionalist paradigm would have us conceal that fact behind language of pseudo-objectivity. When a judge says on a ballot that the reader is "not connecting with the character" what they mean to say is that they – the judge not the reader – is not connecting with the character and, most importantly, that inability to connect with the character made the experience of the reading less enjoyable than experiences in which that connection was stronger.

A second reason why opponents may wish to dismiss Barthes-ian hedonism as uncritical is because they do not believe there is a rational basis for pleasure. I do not accept that assumption and, on my reading, neither did Barthes. The judge's role in competition is that of a reader and a critic. He or she reads the multiple performances, critiques them, and, on the basis of those critiques, ranks the performances. The traditionalist would argue that the standard upon which such criticism is based is the interpretation of

the text or the communication of the author's intent. But as I think I have already established, that is not what anyone is actually doing. The Barthesian paradigm begins with the assumption that the performance is a tissue of fragments woven together. For Barthes (1972) criticism, or the untangling of this tissue, involves what he called dissection and articulation. Dissection requires the critic "to find in it certain mobile fragments whose differential situation engenders a certain meaning" (p. 216). The critic attempts to isolate fragments used to construct the text. Once the fragments have been pulled apart, the critic can "discover in them or establish for them certain rules of association" (p. 216). What is it that ties these fragments together?

This is what the judge does when he or she judges. What are the fragments of the text? These fragments include not only elements of the work, or what forensic competitors often call the "cutting," but also elements of performance. The voice, whether or not it is accented, what differentiates "accented" from the "normal" speech, posture, gestures, expressions, these are all fragments which together with words printed on the page construct the text. The critic identifies them and then seeks the principle of articulation which organizes them into something meaningful. Where there is nothing to articulate those fragments, there is nothing meaningful just a random collection of words, phrases, stanzas, or images. The best reading are the most tightly articulated, in which every fragment "belongs" in the reading.

What Barthes recognizes, or perhaps more precisely stated, what a Barthes-ian paradigm permits us to recognize, is that the judge is part of that process. Judges are simultaneously critics, in that they look for the mobile fragment and the principle of articulation which holds them together, and readers, in that they bring to the performance their own history, understanding, and experience. When a performer speaks with a southern accent, some readers will understand this fragment as an expression of dim-wittedness or backwardness while others will attribute to the fragment a homey down-to-earth-ness. Even our ability to conceive of a particular pattern of pronunciation as a "southern accent" requires that we know something of regional dialects in the United States. It is not about what the performer is trying to communicate but whether or not we, as readers, can articulate the fragments in a meaningful way.

When we take pleasure in a text, it is because we can connect with it. It not only makes sense, that is to say we can discern and appreciate the principle that articulates the fragments, but it also permits us to actively engage the performance as readers. We can connect with the performance in the sense that we can read it in terms of our own understanding of the world. This is what makes a reading pleasurable and it is an intelligible and rational basis upon which we can judge a forensics competition. Under the Barthesian paradigm as I envision it, the judge's ballot reflects the judge's ability to dissect the fragments and to articulate them intelligibly.

The Implications of a Barthes-ian Paradigm

I think it is important to reiterate my position that I am not proposing that we abandon all other perspectives on oral reading of literature in adoption of Barthes's. I believe, however, that a Barthes-ian paradigm can expand our understanding of oral reading beyond the traditional paradigm and thus explain some of the practices that traditional approaches cannot.

Perhaps the most immediate impact that the Barthes-ian paradigm would have on the activity would be a change in what we call it. Oral interpretation is a name that not only reflects the traditionalist approach but was specifically created by the founders of that school of thought. It reflects assumptions that Barthes rejects, principally the belief that the purpose of reading is to discover a meaning already present in the text. Rossi and Goodnow (2006) recognized that in forensics this is not what competitors are doing and thus proposed changing the name of the activity from oral interpretation of literature to oral performance of literature. This change, they contend, would differentiate what was happening in forensics from "true" oral interpretation and thereby preserve the activity. I think this is the wrong approach.

First, I do not think forensics benefits from further divorce from the outside world. If we insist that there is a valid tradition of reading material aloud as a method of discovering and communicating its meaning but that this is not what forensics competition teaches, then all we have done by such a name change is to relegate forensics to a second-class status relative to "true" oral interpretation. Second the name "performance of literature" does have the advantage of associating the activity with the growing field of performance studies (although it is not at all certain that performance studies scholars would welcome that association), but I think that it narrows the field to performance and *not* interpretation. Barthes's approach is inclusive, not exclusive and while herein I am specifically concerned with forensics, I think the Barthes-ian approach to the activity widens the scope, asserting a unity with other areas of activity, such as performance studies, while acknowledging the distinction between them and their respective independence. I think that the term "oral reading of literature" is best suited to what is going on in that it not only permits the Barthes-ian approach I advocate but also because it does not reject the traditionalist perspective. It is, moreover, the term that was generally in use before "interpretation" became popular and thus "reading" better connects the activity with its heritage.

Name changes, however, are superficial. The Barthes-ian paradigm, I believe, has much more significant implications for forensics the most immediate of which is that it provides us an intelligible and meaningful basis for justifying the difference between oral reading and acting and thus addressing related questions such as blocking, off/on-stage focus and the use of a manuscript without resorting to fallacious appeals to "tradition" or

attempting to impose artificial "core values" upon the activity.

As previously noted, the need to distinguish between the oral reading of literature and acting was historically contingent. Because the world has changed, the need to distinguish between the two activities has changed, perhaps even dissolving completely. Barthes (1977) rejected both the hierarchical ordering of texts—he did not distinguish between "literature" and "not literature"—and what he called "the simple division of genres" (p. 157). The rejection of classification would necessarily entail the rejection of a hard distinction between acting and reading.[4]

For Barthes (1977), to read is to range over the surface of the text, to "'run' (like the thread of a stocking) at every point and at every level, but there is nothing beneath: the space of writing is to be ranged over, not pierced" (p. 145). To read is not to hunt for truth buried underneath but to take pleasure in the texture of the surface. To take pleasure in the surface is to look at it whereas attempting to find something underneath is to look *through* it. Stylistic theorists such as Lanham (1972) and Leech and Short (1981) make a similar distinction. Style that is intended to be seen, to be looked at, is called opaque while that which we are not supposed to dwell upon is called transparent. But while stylistics understands them to be a dimension of the style, as something inherent in the language and the product of the language choices of the author, I contend (and I think my contention is consistent with Barthes) that transparency and opacity are found in the reader: that the reader makes the choice to either look at the text or to look through it. Opacity and transparency are poles on a continuum so our choice as readers is not to look either at the text or through it but the degree to which we are choosing one over the other. To the extent that there is any meaningful distinction between acting and oral reading, it is along this continuum.

Both activities involve a performer speaking lines from a work and thus both are forms of reading. They are different in form and purpose but not in essence. As I understand it, the Barthes-ian frame that I have developed permits us to see the distinction between the two in terms of the relationship between the reader and the text.

On the acting end of the continuum, the relationship between reader and text is transparent to the degree that the distance between him or her and the text has been reduced to zero (or at least as close to zero as possible). The reading has erased any distinction between reader and text. The reader has become part of the text and when we say a person is acting we are saying that we no longer see any distinction between him or her and the text. It is important to bear in mind, too, that this erasure of distance is not necessarily intentional on the part of the actor but a product of our reading the performance. It is not that the actor has attempted to or tried to eliminate distance between him/

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[4] It would also recognize and further problematize the (arbitrary) distinction between prose, poetry and drama.

herself and the text but that we as readers see no distance between them.

Oral interpretation, or what herein I have preferred to call oral reading, lies at the other end of the continuum. As a reader, the performer creates a distance between him/herself and the text, a space. The use of a book, off-stage focus, the absence of costuming and props, and other devices help to create that space. The space exists in order to permit us, as audience members, to enter into the performance as readers. We cease to be spectators to the reading and are compelled to read for ourselves. In the early days of oral interpretation, as Veilleux (1969) described it, the reader stood still with nothing but a stool or reading stand and "the scene behind him generally a highly neutral one visually" (p. 113). The purpose of this "neutralizing the visual" was to help "the audience concentrate on the oral symbols and thus image, even visually, themselves" (p. 113). On a theoretical level, of course, Veilleux's contention is nonsense. There cannot be no visual cues. The neutral background, stool, stand, even the absence of a costume are visual cues. The issue, then, is not whether we are or are not being cued but rather to what we are being cued.

The Barthes-ian paradigm I advocate herein would suggest that we are being cued that we must enter into the text as active readers rather than as a passive audience. While theoretically mistaken, on a purely descriptive level, Veilleux is right: if a reader performs *Hamlet* while standing on stage alone in a suit, we will have to do the work ourselves to visualize the Danish court. The performer asserts his/herself as both a reader—inserting him/herself as the organizing principle which transforms a work into a text—and author who has created a work which demands reading. Ultimately, however, whether we choose to insert ourselves into the text as readers or to remain passive spectators is our choice as readers. We can choose to actively interpret and participate in even the most elaborate staging of *Hamlet* or sit passively and watch the lone reader on the stage. Although authors create works and the work that the author has constructed may lend itself to our being readers rather than spectators, the choice is finally in the hands of the reader rather than the author.

The distinction between acting and reading is, finally, fluid. At points even in the same performance we may find ourselves lost in the reading of an actor and later to become actively engaged as readers. There is probably no performance that is either pure acting or pure reading but all lie somewhere in between. Regardless when we call something acting or call it reading we are not describing the phenomenon but rather we are describing something of ourselves.

Whereas pure theater invites the audience to see the performer(s) as the text, reading creates space between reader and text. That space invites the audience or the judge to enter, to become a reader along with the performer. It permits us to engage in the same processes as the reader: to evaluate the

dissection and engage in an articulation of the work or works performed. The distance between performer and text invites critique which, although not exclusive of competitive oral reading, makes it possible to rank and rate speakers.

Conclusion

Oral reading of literature is one of the most popular events in competitive public speaking attracting thousands of secondary and post-secondary students throughout the United States and around the world. The activity has been practiced for thousands of years and, in all probability, in every literate culture. Throughout the twentieth century, however, the practice has been constrained by a narrow theoretical framework that, while it might have served the political-social-economic interests of the moment, have long since ceased to accurately picture what readers are doing when they read. So far divorced from actual practice, this traditionalist/interpretation theory of oral reading can no longer hope to influence the practice of the activity.

This paper suggests one approach to widening the scope of that theory based upon the critical theory of Roland Barthes. This is, of course, not the only approach that we might take with respect to a sound theory of oral reading of literature. It offers, however, a solid basis to both explain what readers are doing and to evaluate and critique their reading.

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When Metaphor and Reality Collide: A Coach Negotiating Between Family and Forensics

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Abstract

This study looks at the juncture between work and family specifically in the forensics community. A critical lens is used to view the power, hegemony, and ideology inherent in the manner in which an organization disciplines its members. A qualitative approach allows for a glimpse of the voices of members who have been affected by their work with various programs. Results reinforce current critical ideas present in the organizational communication literature and suggest forensics might need to reevaluate its unwritten rules. Conclusions suggest a better understanding of existing messages as well as the need for more visible role models who successfully balance work and family.

Introduction

Many organizations create and (re)create metaphors to describe relationships within the groups of people that spend great deals of time and energy to accomplish organizational goals (see Hogler, Gross, Hartman, & Cunliffe, 2008 as an example). The forensics community has long used the family as a way to describe its particular view of organizational life (Gilstrap & Gilstrap, 2003; Williams & Hughes, 2003). This metaphor seems to reflect the time and effort put into the activity but it also points to a sense of caring and love that is shared by members. This positive emotion helps form a bond that strengthens the community and gives members a strong sense of belonging.

The very metaphor that binds, however, can be used to punish. As members accept these familial bonds, they give up other ties. In order to travel, many students forego other university activities. Some in the forensics world report paying by giving up activities of their home families (Willams, McGee, & Worth, 2001). Others view the labor of the activity spills over into

their "real" family life (Cronn-Mills, 2001; Gilstrap & Gilstrap, 2003).

As persons struggle to balance coaching responsibilities, other professional assignments and their personal lives including family obligations, they often experience role conflict. Role conflict results when people have a limited supply of resources that work and family systems must share (Wharton & Erickson, 1995; Zedeck, 1992). The strain on resources is even more prevalent in the case of forensic coaches because many schools fail to recognize the activity in the arena of scholarship and teaching. This is further magnified by the nature of the work in which a forensic coach must engage. A coach must be an educator and a confidante. They have intimate relationships with students who demand time, energy and devotion. In short, the relationship between a coach and team members can, and frequently do, become like a family.

With the demands of forensics – including team meetings, individual appointments, administrative work, and travel on weekends – the coach is spread thin with this one aspect of the work system. When additional professional and personal responsibilities are considered, the result is a system that is greatly stratified. As an individual takes stock of the different roles that she or he holds, difficult decisions must be made. These decisions are not made in isolation; pressures from external sources (e.g. family, team members, academic departments, administration, and other members of the forensic community) and internal schemas can lead to frustration for all involved parties (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Kirstin Cronn-Mills described the frustration felt as the spouse left at home in an essay entitled "Loving It, Hating It, Living with Intercollegiate Forensics" in *Speaker and Gavel* (2001). She stated, "However, my status as spouse and mother is altered each fall as forensics season rolls around. I become the "family at home" until April, and the other forensicators become the family with whom my spouse spends more time" (p. 63). This quote reflects the frustration that Cronn-Mills observes between the role of spouse and coach, which affects her life throughout the forensic season – and perhaps beyond it.

Review of Literature

The literature reviewed reflects the critical nature of both authors of this work. It is further influenced by the thirty-plus years of experience in the forensics world for the first writer, while the second researcher's participation is limited to judging in a handful of tournaments. Literature explored includes the organizational communication concept of work and family research as well as forensics research that explores the cross-section of the forensics world and family issues.

Work and Family

Burke and Greenglass (1987) explain six possible relationships that exist at the juncture between work and family. These relationships are incompatible, independent, compensation, instrumental, reciprocal, and integrative. The incompatible relationship states that work and family are in conflict with each other and cannot be easily reconciled. The independent relationship exists that work and family exist as two separate systems that do not intersect. In the compensation relationship, the work and family systems are mutually supportive; what an individual cannot get in one area can be obtained in the other. The instrumental relationship states that one system exists to finance, either monetarily or emotionally, the other. The reciprocal relationship states that the systems are either positively or negatively correlated. Finally, integrative relationship of work and family states that work and family are so closely fused that it is practically impossible to consider them separate (Burke & Greenglass, 1987; Kirchmeyer, 1995).

However the relationship between work and family is defined, role conflict may still occur because of limited resources available. At any given time, individuals adopt one or more of these relationship types to define their work and family interaction (Gutek, Searle, & Kelpa, 1991; Kirchmeyer, 1995).

Looking at the role conflict that defines the experience of forensic coaches does several things. First it allows for the diverse experiences of the coaches to be reflected in the literature. Individuals will hold many simultaneous roles throughout their lives and as such role conflict will occur in many different ways with varied systems being privileged. Individuals will privilege certain roles based on internal systems like attitudes, beliefs and values, external systems like societal expectations, or some combination of both. Specifically, role conflict is likely to increase as the demands of either the work role or the family role increase (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Higgins, Duxbury & Lee, 1994). The demand of the family role can increase through marriage, the arrival of children and the need to care for aging relatives. Because society expects women to appropriate the caretaker role in the family system, they are more susceptible to role conflict in their work roles due to family changes (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Higgins, Duxbury & Lee, 1994; Wharton & Erickson, 1995). As such, when talking about role conflict, gender cannot be ignored (Burke & Greenglass, 1987; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001).

Both men and women can experience role conflict between work and family. Gender role-expectations theory is based on traditional socio-culture roles, and suggests that women and men will perceive work-family conflict differently (Higgins, Duxbury & Lee, 1994). Work systems are historically engendered because they are seen as the public sphere, a male domain, whereas women are still seen as purveyors of the private sphere focused on

care giving tasks and domestic work (Jorgenson, 2000; Wharton & Erickson, 1995). As a result, women are often ignored in the public sphere until a conflict arises that brings their private sphere into a public space, making their private roles visible and often undermining their public roles. As such, gender is a constitutive part of organization practices that is created and maintained by organizational members (Mumby, 2000). Hegemonic forces keep in place behaviors, beliefs and attitudes that determine the opportunities available for men and women to negotiate work and family. The hegemony reveals itself in the ways that work and family is talked about within organizations, and in the fact that so much of the literature is biased towards women (Thompson & Walker, 1989).

To negotiate work and family, the power intrinsic in an organization must be revealed. Barker and Cheney (1994), identify four facets of discipline in contemporary organizational life.

1. First, all organizations exert some measure of control over individual members (p. 28).
2. Second, discipline is collaboratively generated and reinforced (p. 29).
3. Third, discipline is embedded in the social relations of the organization and its actors (p. 30).
4. Fourth, disciplinary mechanisms are perhaps the most potent when they are associated with or grounded in highly motivating values that appeal to the organization's actors. (p. 30)

These four facets are reflected throughout the literature of work family conflict.

The influence that co-workers exert on an individual's ability to manage role conflict is one example of how discipline is collaboratively generated and reinforced (Kirby, 1999). It is not enough for an organization to have in place policies that are responsive to family needs; supervisors and co-workers must also support these policies through their actions. Through discourse co-workers reinforce behavior that is rewarded in the organization (Golden, 2000; Sias, 1996; Warren & Johnson, 1995).

Informal stories told by organizational members are typically much stronger indications of the group's culture than the official policies that the group eschews. The informal often becomes the formal because affective and functional actions within an organization are coordinated (Mumby & Stohl, 1996). This illustrates Barker and Cheney's (1994) third facet of discipline in contemporary organizational life; discipline is embedded in the social relations of the organization and its actors. What is talked about and what is not talked about within an organization gives rise to organization expectations in regards to roles. Jorgenson (2000) illustrated that among women engineers, family life – especially children – was not discussed in the workplace because

a woman could not be both an engineer and a mother. This reinforces the concept of separate worlds and reifies the perception that women's lives should be centered on their private roles and if they choose to participate in the public sphere that must suppress the personal roles they hold (Farley-Lucas, 2000).

To cope with role conflict, individuals generally have three approaches they can take (Burke & Greenglass, 1987). The first approach is structural role redefinition. This method requires that individuals attempt to reduce, reallocate and reschedule to, in effect, control for increased demands. The second type is personal role redefinition. This method requires individuals to negotiate role conflict by the adoption of strict priorities. The third way of dealing with role conflict is reactive role behavior. This method posits role demands cannot be changed and the only way to navigate the conflict is to alter personal strategy to be more effective at meeting the demands of the role.

Role demands and discipline are intertwined. Awareness of the different roles that individuals play and how these roles are disciplined by society are important to deconstruct the reality they create and better understand the choices available to forensic coaches to manage work and family roles.

Forensics and Work and Family

A study by Burnett and Danielson (1994) specifically delineated the roles of the working mother who happens to be coaching intercollegiate debate. They explored the experiences of five women who were serving as debate coaches while raising a family. They found that these mothers were successful because they assessed the nature of the program and had a supportive spouse. Their participants recommended taking children with them to tournaments as long as possible, establishing an extended family, and making sure to become a professional in the field before having children.

A panel discussion at the 2001 National Communication Association entitled "Balancing Families and Forensics: A Group Discussion" was the basis for a special edition of *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta* about the line between forensics and family. That panel acted as a seed for the four articles printed in the journal (Gilstrap & Gilstrap, 2003; Hobbs, Hobbs, Veuleman, & Redding, 2003; Jensen, 2003; Williams & Hughes, 2003) as well as for the pilot study for a gender class the two authors of this study had that was eventually turned into a research project for this article.

While this study looks at decisions of the coach, research looking at competitors who are affected by the relationship between forensics and family can shed light that gives us a view into decisions that are made. Williams, McGee, and Worth (2001) studied the effects of the traveling with the debate team on their familial activities. Hughes, Gring, and Williams (2006) feel that

keeping a family in the loop about the student's forensics career can help ease the tensions that naturally arise out of the problems between the two spheres.

Our research questions are based on this review of literature and seek to extrapolate how the unique context of forensics can advance the current understanding of work and family.

RQ1: How does forensics as an organization discipline members?

RQ2: How are work and family roles created and maintained by forensics?

RQ3: How do forensics coaches navigate work and family?

Method

We conducted this study by talking to nine participants about their relationship with family and forensics. Five of the interviewees were female and four were male. Five have left the activity. Three are currently coaching teams but at the time of the interview were making decisions about their future participation. One person left the activity because of family concerns, but returned to coach a different program.

We interviewed the participants using the Retrospective Interview Technique (RIT), a specific type of Retrospective Self-Reports that allows participants to recall their past. Metts, Sprecher, and Cupach (1991) stated that this interviewing technique is a good tool to get to participants' attitudes and emotions, as well as the meanings people ascribe to their own and others' behaviors during communication episodes.

Interviews were tape-recorded and followed a protocol established before the interview took place (see Appendix A). The transcripts were then transcribed and coded by both researchers.

Initial research participants were generated by the first author of this work at a panel discussion on work and family at the 2001 National Communication Association (NCA) convention in Atlanta. Participants in the panel discussion were asked to name people they believe either left the activity or are considering leaving due to family activity. Persons identified were contacted, and if they agreed to be interviewed, were asked to identify others they might know. Granovetter (1977) described this technique as "snowball sampling" and suggested that it was an effective way to recruit participants. Subsequent participants came from recommendations from other people in the activity. Qualitative research has long recognized "snowballing" as a good way to reach additional participants.

Interviewees were contacted through email and interviews were conducted over the telephone. Because participants were from diverse geographic areas in the United States, we chose the telephone because traveling to these places would be cost prohibitive. Other solutions were considered and rejected. To go to a place where many people in forensics

gather such as a national or regional forensics tournament or professional meeting would produce many possible participants, but we believe actively participating in the activity could skew participants' observations. Another option would be for us to go to one city and talk to many former and current coaches in that area. The Chicago area, for instance, would produce more than enough participants. These people, however, could share too much in terms of their experiences. We believe that the advantages received from conducting interviews over the telephone outweighed the disadvantages. Two participants were interviewed for the pilot study; four more were added for the convention paper presentation. Additional interviews were conducted when the authors decided to write a paper in order to be submitted for publication.

Participants

There were nine persons interviewed for this pilot study. Because the forensics experience can be so vastly diverse, we decided to include a short biography of participants. As you can note from the protocol (see Appendix A) each participant was asked to provide a name that we could use to write about their experience. Per Institutional Review Board instructions, we have included information about the participants that each interviewee allowed us to include. Even with that, we have purposely made ideas vague so that participant identification is more difficult. Some misleading facts about the individuals were included to direct attention away from some unique individuals (all based on their direction).

Ian is a 30-something man who went to a mid-sized Midwestern university as an undergraduate competitor. His Master's program was at a mid-sized university in another Midwestern state. He started coaching while involved in a relationship with another coach. For a few years, they actually were colleagues working with the same program. Managing the relationship was less stressful because as a couple they understood what the other was doing. Their relationship actually seemed to make their team family metaphor all that much more real. When Ian's partner left the organization, he tried to maintain the relationship, but it faltered and eventually ended. A new relationship was begun, and he managed his teaching responsibilities, coaching work, and a long distance relationship for two years. Ian decided to leave forensics and his university to start a new life with his partner and his partner's children.

Roxy received her undergraduate degree, coached for one year as a graduate assistant, and was a full time coach. As a full-time faculty member, she married and remained in coaching for one year. After quitting forensics, she moved into another full-time teaching position.

Lana competed in forensics as an undergraduate at a small private liberal arts school. She worked as a coach in many institutions across the

country. She and her partner settled into a Midwest city and decided to have children. At the time of her interview, she claimed that her plans were to stay in the activity and she is considering how to balance both obligations.

George was a debater in high and college, and coached the activity as a graduate assistant in both his Masters' and Ph.D. programs. As a faculty member in the upper Midwest, he helped with individual events. He decided to leave the activity because forensics as an activity interfered with his idea of what a coach is, and what a husband and father is.

Sue competed in individual events at a small liberal arts college in the South. She acted as a graduate assistant coach in large public university. Accepting a position at a small liberal arts college, she revived a program that had been dormant for over ten years. Her daughter was born and she coached until the baby was one-year-old. Sue quit the activity when named chair of the department.

Bill competed for a large Midwestern university and coached as a graduate assistant for another large Midwestern university. He served as Director of Forensics at a mid-sized upper Midwest university. His wife had a baby and he coached for one year before quitting the activity.

Beth competed at a private Eastern university. She coached at another Eastern institution, had a baby with her partner, and is currently coaching.

Glenn was a competitor and graduate assistant coach in the Midwest before leaving the activity to start a relationship. After the end of that relationship, he decided to come back to forensics and was hired at an Eastern college to coach a team.

Results

Even with only nine interviews in this study, enough evidence surfaced to justify a further look into how an organization can affect its members. In response to our first research question, "In what ways does forensics as an organization discipline members?" our data supports the literature. Interviewees maintained that the organization exerts control over the individual. Roxy suggested that she when she began with the program it was competitive. She felt that her job was to act as coach and sustain the competitive nature of the program. As a current faculty member who is not working with forensics, her criticism of a subsequent coach shows she has moved from the disciplined to the discipliner. She stated that while she thought that the new coach could do with the program as she saw fit, she was disappointed that the new person "let the program go."

Ian also felt an obligation to maintain a competitive program at the national level. He felt the pressure from many sources including his current team, alumnae of the program, his department, and his university. He also reported pressure from coaches from university programs in his area

of the country. In this way, the organization disciplined members to act in appropriate ways.

Barker and Cheney (1994) claimed that discipline is collaboratively generated and reinforced. By this, they mean that members of an organization create a culture that sends messages to its members outlining appropriate behaviors that make a good organizational member. These messages are both created and re-created by individuals and act as a means to control who is doing good work. Roxy provided the greatest support for this idea. She provides implicit support for it when she said,

> I think the general message would be that it was just an
> expectation on the coach to quit when you started a family,
> that you weren't gonna stay in it. It wasn't really looked
> down upon, it was just accepted – generally known, it was
> like okay, well, that one's getting married, she'll be out of
> it, or whatever, especially with the family, the children part.

The implications that these expectations were something that everyone knew as rules are quite clear. She provides a more explicit collaboration when she discusses a theme that was talked about a lot on her team. "Well, there was one woman and she brought her kids to tournaments, but it was kind of creepy. She had a baby with her all the time." This story served to expose ideas about how her team, and therefore forensics, communicated how others should act. While these stories served the purpose of creating an "us-them" dichotomy, it was also producing and reproducing "appropriate" organizational behavior.

Another disciplinary mechanism suggests that it is embedded in the social relations of the organization and its actors. Glenn claimed that he saw mostly other women reinforcing the fact that women would leave the activity when family considerations came into focus. He related the story of one young woman who became engaged. Even though the engaged woman never discussed her career plans, one of Glenn's colleagues bemoaned the loss of yet another talented female coach to marriage. Barker and Cheney (1994) recognize that disciplinary mechanisms are most potent when dealing with motivating values. Many participants shared ideas that fit in this category. Lana spoke of the desire to stay in the forensics activity because of the educational value that she has experienced. She felt that a program with as much money as the one she is in has the potential of switching over to a competitive program. Her values included a sense of responsibility to her students to continue an educational venue.

Ian and Roxy both espoused competitive motivating goals. Ian wanted his students to have the absolute best and felt that making them win were the true end. When asked if Roxy would settle for a less competitive team so that she could coach more, Roxy stated,

> I think you can if that would be a choice that you could
> make. I don't think you could do it on a very competitive
> team. I just can't see wanting to, to negotiate that, I guess.
> I'm not saying it couldn't be done effectively, I just don't
> know why you would want to.

She seems to be saying that the values of forensics are so deeply rooted in competition that she could not see a reason to be anything but competitive. In these ways, forensics as an organization disciplines its members through many means. Its powers are often difficult to recognize and socially constructed.

Our second research question was "How are work and family roles created and maintained by forensics?" These roles are produced and reproduced both externally and internally. The chief external manner was discussed above by means of organizational discipline. All participants discussed internal role creation.

Lana stated that her personal image started as a coach. After marriage she added wife to the list, but maintained separate definitions of self that tended not to mix the two roles. This maintenance of two separate worlds changed when she and her husband decided to try and have a child. She realized that the separation of her private and public world could no longer be so easily maintained and that has caused her to reconsider how her work and family roles converge (Wharton & Erickson, 1995).

Like Lana, Roxy maintained separate identities. She decided that she was a full-time coach. She tried coaching for one year while married, but decided to quit coaching but remain with the university as soon as she and her husband made the decision that they wanted children in the near future. When May of her final coaching year hit, her team had a banquet where they thanked her for her years of service, and after that she was done with the activity. She literally chose a date to end her public sphere and begin her private sphere.

Lana chose to navigate public and private sphere separately; Roxy took the approach that the roles were incompatible and since they could not be integrated she left the activity (Burke & Greenglass, 1987). Roxy had a self-professed love for the activity when she was coaching. It seems rather ironic that now she seems to want nothing to do with it. The school she is with still has an active program, but she rarely helps out in any way. They ask her to judge or to help by listening to speeches, but she says she finds excuses so that she does not have to attend the events. She stated

> The thought of going back – sometimes I think if they don't
> get a coach hired and they go 'the only way you'll get you
> job back is if you coach, I'd have to go, ok, bye bye'. Yeah,
> cuz I couldn't do it, I couldn't go back to it.

Roxy showed her commitment to her personal life that separated herself from the activity.

Like many males, Ian seemed to have greater freedom to choose different role perspectives that seemed to match Burke and Greenglass' (1987) perspectives. As he worked with his first partner, he maintained a family atmosphere on the team. This suggests Burke and Greenglass' integrative approach. He maintained this spirit as a single man, but when he started his new relationship he tried an independent approach. The independent perspective he adopted was greeted by "the cold shoulder that then led to a backlash." After a year of trying to maintain an independent relationship, he eventually switched to viewing forensics as incompatible with his new found family, as evidenced in his decision to leave the activity. Glenn reported similar ideas, except he found when his "real" family came to an end, he decided to return to his forensics family.

Finally for the third research question, "How do forensic coaches navigate work and family?" The data reveals that several external factors influence the ability for coaches to navigate work and family. Burke and Greenglass (1987) suggest that there are three ways to deal with role conflict: reducing, reallocating, or rescheduling. Lana employed reducing strategies by making a conscious effort to travel less. Ian made a similar agreement for the one-year he was in his long distance relationship. Both Ian and Roxy eventually made the ultimate role redefinition by leaving the activity.

By reallocating responsibilities to others, Lana and Ian helped alleviate their workload by asking others to fill in on the team. They both had graduate assistants and faculty coaches take greater responsibility for travel. Lana moved some administrative responsibilities onto other faculty members with the blessing of her department. Beth's reallocation came on the home front. She states that she found alternate child care through family members, but quickly added that if another baby comes into the picture – her work with the team is finished.

Rescheduling did not seem to be an option as far as travel was concerned with the members who were interviewed for this study. Because many of them wanted to maintain the competitive nature of the program; they did not cancel tournaments outright, nor did they choose tournaments that were closer or took less time. Rescheduling did occur in the family arena. Lana had a "meeting" with her husband at a specific time and day of the week that she would prioritize on her schedule. In these ways, Roxy, Ian and Lana dealt with structural role redefinition.

Personal role redefinition mostly emerged in the discussion of "life past forensics." The role as forensic coach was completely abandoned and other family roles were redefined. For Roxy and Ian this meant adopting childcare as one of their primary roles. Reactive role behaviors were not topics that were discussed in the interviews other than the personal choice to

leave the activity.

Beth found support from both sides of the equation in order to successfully maintain her coaching responsibilities. She said only support on both sides of the aisle make it possible. A supportive husband and a supportive director make it possible to maintain both roles. She stated it was easier because her "forensics family is close with my blood family."

Discussion

Forensics does provide a unique perspective to look at the intersection of work and family. The concept of discipline in forensics emerged throughout our interviews. Individuals involved in forensics were disciplined both internally and externally. The internal discipline emerged as participants discussed their ideas of what forensics coach should privilege. Roxy perhaps said it best. "I would have needed to be on a team that wasn't nearly as competitive... but I wouldn't have been happy with a team like that."

In addition, role models that demonstrate how to manage work and family were not visible in the organization, sending a message that forensics is not a place for families. Our understandings of roles were limited in this study in part because in our initial protocol this wasn't a question we asked. To gain a better understanding of roles, we need to ask this question more directly and provide a better definition of family and work to our participants. In our definition we need to account for the fact that the literature on work and family is biased toward the traditional nuclear family.

In our study, it is important to include members of the forensic community who are successfully navigating work and family for several reasons. First, members of the community who are managing work and family can serve as role models for others. In order to answer the question, how do forensics coaches navigate work and family we need to talk to those who are successfully navigating this particular family and work nexus. When asked what kind of message forensics sends about the ability to navigate family and forensics, Beth told us,

> Honestly, many of my forensics friends do not have to juggle the same responsibilities that I do. Not that forensics discourages "moms" like me from being involved – but I don't know many others who are in the same boat as me.

What the data and literature support is that work and family is engendered. It is an interesting context that shares common themes and experiences with other professions, at the very least competitive sports, academic coaches, and Greek letter organizations. We believe, however, that there are applications that can be applied to any person who traverses more

than one organization in the work life.

Awareness of work and family roles and the hegemony that creates and maintains these roles is important for redefining the intersection between work and family. We entered this study expecting to find that forensics coaches were under tremendous pressure to place forensics at the top of their priorities and that work and family were incompatible. For the most part this is what we found; however, there are other alternatives that appear to be available to members of the organization. This study succeeds in helping to explore alternatives available to the person who is trying to balance work and family. Perhaps there are ways for persons like Kristin Cronn-Mills to negotiate the work and family spheres and have a more comfortable relationship between her partner's work life and his family life.

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Appendix A

Forensics and the Family Interview Schedule

Pseudonym: What name can we use when we write about you?
Are you currently coaching forensics?
If yes, are you considering whether to leave the activity due to family considerations?
If no, were family considerations one of the main reasons you left the activity?
If **no** to either – end interview; if **yes**, continue
Please tell me about your time in forensics.

Did you compete as a student? When and where? How long did you compete? When and where did you serve as a forensic coach? How long did/have you coached at what level (e.g. Graduate Assistant, Faculty, Volunteer)?

If not currently coaching:
When did you leave?
Why did you leave coaching?
What factors influenced your decision to leave?

Would you interpret your decision as being more influenced by internal or external influences?

Do you think that a forensics coach can successfully navigate family and forensics and the same time?
Do you think that you could successfully navigate family and forensics?
What kind of a message do you think forensics sends about the ability to navigate family and forensics?
Do you remember general messages about the ability to navigate forensics and family?

Where did these messages come from?
From whom?

Can you remember any specific statements or messages?
What could have led you to make a different decision to in regards to your decision to leave forensics?
Anything else that you would like to share in regards to this issue?

If Currently Coaching
Do you think that a forensics coach can successfully navigate family and forensics and the same time?

Coaching Critically: Engaging Critical Pedagogy in the Forensics Squad Room[*]

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Abstract

Forensics coaching philosophy, like competition, is continually being evaluated and interrogated, whether by scholars, coaches, or competitors. This essay introduces critical-pedagogical philosophy into forensics coaching, in order to move coaching further from practice and ever closer to praxis. This move is accomplished through looking at a sample of the current forensics activity literature, locating a space within the dominant discourse where coaching-as-critical praxis can serve the forensics community, presenting examples of praxis-centered coaching, and identifying possible results of this particular coaching approach.

Keywords: coaching, critical pedagogy, Paulo Freire, praxis, competition

Introduction

During my first few years as a high school speech coach, I worked with an oratory student who was also a policy debater. During one particular coaching session, she mentioned that she and her partner were "running Foucault" as a case in policy. "What do you mean you are 'running' Foucault," I asked? She then informed me how the work of Foucault and other critical and cultural theorists was being employed in the competitive policy debate world as "kritiks." My student explained that she and her partner were using Foucault because it was "the way" to win rounds: "all of the good teams are running kritiks." No real explanations of Foucauldian concepts – e.g.; the development of technologies as methods of power and oppression, the using of discourse as systems of cultural control, histories as exemplars and expressions of hegemony – were presented or taught by her coaches in practice or detailed by her competitors in rounds. None of these formative and revolutionary ideas were actually engaged, employed in detail or explained, or taught to the debaters. Debaters simply stated "as Foucault points out ..." in their 1AC and that was it.

This anecdote demonstrates that ideas and arguments from critical theory, cultural studies, and critical pedagogy are already being used in forensics. Traditionally, critical and cultural theories have been employed to help understand the world we live in through investigation, inquiry, and identifying those ideologies and systems that are hegemonic and oppressive, finally moving to dismantle those oppressive systems. Turning such a lens towards the current practices that make up "forensics coaching" illuminates ideological structures and systems of thought that may need to be revisited. Though forensics coaching most often occurs at the application level (whether this is because of time, funding, or the philosophical leanings of the coach is not in question here), an opportunity exists to coach forensics through a theoretical, praxis-centered paradigm.

When examining cuttings or resolutions, coaches recognize that preferred methods of interpretation or analysis exist at the secondary school competitive level[1]. As certain stylistic moves win rounds, and those style preferences are adopted by teams and coached or trained to the team members, other styles of presentation and technique -- interpretations that may be equally compelling but do not "win" -- fall out of favor. This pedagogical decision may come from knowing the judges, the competitive circuit, and the practices that have been adhered to because "they work." I argue here that accepting what "is," without a critical interrogation of those normalized practices, allows for the essentialist re-production of those same dominant cultural practices and ideologies without question. As a result, coaching is less about theoretical investigation, education, or philosophical inquiry, and more about utilizing the methods that make winning most possible.

Unfortunately, any critical examination of these practices within the frame of forensics coaching has been forced to the periphery of squad room discussions, though they are alive and well within academic circles. These critically reflective conversations do occur in judges' lounges, during the van or bus rides between school and tournament location, or after a particularly taxing coaching session. However, even as the shortfalls of coaching to win may be recognized, coaches are quickly reminded that funding for this most important educational activity often relies on the success or failure of the team during a competitive season. Even as coaches deconstruct their own positions and roles, trying to understand what it means to be a "good" or "great" coach, dominant outside forces will insist that winning is the ultimate goal, regardless of the means by which that particular outcome is achieved.

Other coaches may simply feel that critical engagement of coaching is not their "job." Lindemann (2002) contends that "some forensic educators may argue that they are not teachers of literature; in other words, it is not

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[1] Though the focus here centers on secondary school levels of forensics coaching strategies, the same strategies – and realities of the coaching community – may also hold true at the collegiate level.

their duty or place to teach literary theory" (p. 46); such arguments can be extended to include argumentation, rhetoric, and critical theory. Regrettably, such a perspective implies that coaches have lost sight of the educational foundations of the activity, though this is often not the case. In limiting the coaching experience in these ways, however, the structures of power and normalization are accepted without question or critique.

The argument cannot assume that all coaches engage and support this hegemonic thought. In that light, coaching strategies can be enhanced through the *application* of various theoretical methods, ensuring that those same hegemonic systems are properly interrogated. One need only examine the educational philosophy literature to begin locating *different* ways of teaching and, by extension, coaching. John Dewey, while writing as part of the American Pragmatist theoretical movement, recognized that educational experiences, what Brookfield (1990) calls "teaching moments," should be based on the experiences of the teacher as well as the student. Though this is often seen as a rallying cry for simulations and out-of-classroom laboratory experiences for traditional teaching environments, educational experiences can also occur during coaching sessions.

After being oppressed by his own country's political and educational systems, Paulo Freire (1970) recognized traditional educational systems as ideological states that further cement existing systems of oppression. Freire (1970) argues that the teacher should not simply employ the teaching methods by which he or she was taught, as doing so reproduces existing systems of oppression. Rather, the teaching – or in this case coaching – experience should be driven by the talents (e.g. skills, thoughts, ideas, background) of the competitor as well as the coach.

Critical theory and pedagogy allow for traditional coaching practices to be deconstructed and re-constituted in a new emancipatory light – that is the position under interrogation here. This essay explores praxis-centered coaching (PCC) as an epistemic transition, allowing for new approaches to coaching within currently structural and essentialized[2] system of practices. The essay looks at the current forensics coaching literature, explains what praxis-centered coaching could look like, then presents the inherent limitations to such an approach as well as opportunities for future research and engagement.

Forensics Coaching – The Current Conversation

The position of Forensics and, therefore, the coach within the academic community often oscillates between *co-curricular* and

[2] "Essentialized" here refers to the lack of apparent flexibility that may exist within coaching practices. This may be due less to the perspective of the coach and more the limitations placed on the coach due to time limitations, budget constraints, etc.

extracurricular. Under the latter, the goals of the coach and the program shifts towards winning tournaments with forensics pedagogy and education perceived in a secondary or tertiary role. If the former categorization, co-curricular, is dominant, the identity of forensics becomes much more murky.

The forensics community has often wrestled with this question. Keefe (1989), when addressing the PKD annual developmental conference, recognizes the power of the adjective "co-curricular" as one that has "a responsibility to consider the issues pertaining to pedagogy and research" (p. 45) as well as those of competition. Dean (1991), when presenting various developmental and educational theories as preferred approaches to forensics coaching and administration, and in response to what he sees as "a numbers game" (p. 89) to promote and legitimate forensics to school-level administrators, argues that "emphasizing the glitter of trophies cheapens the true educational purpose and ultimate value of the activity" (p. 89).

Coaching philosophy can be further critiqued when looking at forensics philosophy overall. Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) call for the forensics community to recognize that it has moved from an educational opportunity to a competitive activity and that, from this new vantage and position, the pedagogical implications of forensics can be brought back into forensics. The "myth" that there is a balance between education and competition, in the authors' eyes, is false. Rather, "the forensics community [should] embrace competition; only then, can forensics, become more educational" (p. 13). The authors further that, though forensics can teach aspects of life to both competitors and coaches, "forensics can educate well beyond that which is gained from competition" (p. 19).

In his response to Burnett, Brand, and Meister's position, Hinck (2003) agrees that the activity should recognize the dialectic tension that exists between competition and education, and develops his argument around the educational benefits of competition as well as through four identified tensions. Hinck does recognize that, sometimes, "the problem for some students and some coaches is that the status markers, the titles ... creates pressure for us to behave in ways that contorts what many of us take as common ethical starting points for an educational activity" (p. 72). Hinck finalizes his position by presenting "both/and"[3] arguments, demonstrating both educational and competitive benefits from forensics as a way to create balance within the dialectic and calling for future research and discussion surrounding the position of forensics. It is this same dialectic that Littlefield (2006) responds to when viewing forensics as an epistemology.

Littlefield (2006), when presenting "forensics as epistemic," introduces a third point of view into the conversation. Rather than forensics

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[3] "Both/and" refers to theoretical moves offered by Stuart Hall, among others, who want to allow for all possible options and realities to be explored, rather than denying possible emancipatory options based on an "either/or" empirical mind set.

being either educational or competitive, he would see forensics (and the various forms that it takes) leading "to a higher level, which should be the ultimate goal; that higher level is knowledge" (p. 6). It is such a philosophical move within Littlefield's argument that would match well with a praxis-centered approach to forensics coaching by taking into account the dialectic Burnett, Brand, and Meister uncover and Hinck responds to. If a critical pedagogical approach to forensic coaching is to be explored and, perhaps, adopted, then the structures that support both "excellence" and "winning" need to be interrogated and, if necessary, torn down and rebuilt in a new way. Littlefield (2006), and the day-to-day responses to his position that could be engaged through praxis-centered coaching, may present one of many forensics re-formations possible.

It is the position of this essay that the ideal role of the coach is one of educator and mentor, allowing for the competitor to explore and experience various perspectives of her or himself while constructing, rehearsing, and presenting competitive forensics artifacts. Whether the importance is placed on competition, exploration, or epistemic discovery, a critical inquiry into coaching practices has been and continues to be vital to the pedagogical success of the forensics community. By embracing a praxis-centered coaching pedagogy, focusing on the emancipatory power and possibilities within the forensics activity and community, such inquiry and action are possible. The following section presents a possible approach that may aid in that inquiry.

Praxis-Centered Coaching

Constructing a new coaching paradigm, one that is based on theory and action, is a burden that has existed within education since the first teachings of Socrates in the olive groves, if not before. Freire reminds teachers (coaches) that, once the old pedagogical methods are interrogated and emancipated, coaches are no longer the "oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both" (1970, p. 44). Emancipation does not have to be an awesome display of resistance and revolution, but can occur at various levels and in various locations. Emancipation must be adhered to as an epistemic and philosophical position at all levels, including coaching.

To accomplish this shift in coaching, the forensics community must do away with the old standards of coaching and replace them with a theory-centered approach, one that places education (or the discovery of knowledge, per Littlefield (2006)) over competition. It is true that a variety of coaching strategies can and do exist throughout the community. Speaking from my own experiences within the region I coached, I have also recognized that those coaching strategies and pedagogies can fall prey to the pressure to "win" versus the opportunity to "learn" and "uncover."

As former competitors, coaches may tend to coach the way they were coached. This act further solidifies the dominant ideological moves adhered to, which may not allow for re-examination of old coaching strategies and the exploration of new coaching pedagogies. Competitors run through speaking exercises, have selections chosen for them, are told what it means to be a "winning" competitor, and then coach towards that end. In this process, however, the pedagogy – the act of educating and teaching – is lost or at least diluted. Is this necessarily bad? After all, the goals of coaching and forensics have traditionally been rooted in competition. Yet, forensics exists within an educational environment. Forensics competition is intimately joined with the school that supports it. Its roots are – or at least ought to be – educational.

Critical pedagogy asks the practitioner of pedagogy – the coach – to look at exactly what he or she is doing when coaching competitors (which, after all, are students). What decisions are being made on the competitor's behalf? What are the underlying discourses of the coaching process? The act of coaching can be emancipating for both the student and the teacher if it is not oppressive or normalizing in, simply re-producing the same ideologies and systems of hegemony. This downward spiral moves forensics away from an emancipatory praxis and towards simply another way of determining winners and losers.

The benefits are pedagogical and constitutive in nature. By moving away from prescribed coaching strategies, both the coach and the competitor are able to explore new options and possibilities that would have normally been ignored or not recognized by utilizing structured coaching methods. Also, competitors are able to enact their own *voice* and *agency* through their piece selection, case construction, and practice. This may be particularly helpful in the ever-present challenge of keeping students interested and engaged with forensics, particularly if they have a less-than-successful competitive season developing. This coaching praxis engages the student in the process of discovery rather than the process of competition, something from which all students and coaches can benefit. Such changes in coaching methodologies in no way belittle current competitive practices. Instead, they add to and enhance them. In this way, the coach and the student both benefit at multiple levels.

The benefits to the coach and competitor move well beyond the tournament. Recruitment for forensics on a school campus may often include statements about preparing for college, to become a lawyer or politician, or perhaps a stronger citizen in a democratic society. Engaging our coaching through a critical perspective, where dominant ways of thought are interrogated and either re-tooled or dismantled, could be one of the most beneficial aspects of the activity. Are our competitors prepared for such engaging futures? It is possible. However, such an emancipatory move as detailed here would do nothing but enhance that possibility further than considered in the past.

Thoughtful action (Freire, 1970) is the hallmark of critical pedagogy and could be the hallmark of the forensics activity.

Re-constructing what it means to be a "coach" may illuminate some new practices for the forensics community. By defining the coach as advisor and co-learner, encouraging agency for the competitors, and moving away from assigning categories and cuttings or cases, the coach and the competitor can both learn and grow from the competitive forensics experience. Two alternative perspectives that may allow us to further explore this process are: *Coach as Advisor* and *Peer Coaching*.

Coach as Advisor.

As a coach, we are asked to take competitors with little, some, or an abundance of "talent" and mold them into competitive orators, debaters, or interpretive performers. During this process of construction and disciplining, certain techniques are presented and drilled: breathing, use of body (e.g., gestures, eye contact, facial expression, body language), use of voice (diction, rate, volume, expression), and rhetoric (writing, development, argument). Typically, coaches rely on what has worked in the past, that is, what has won. Unfortunately, this process creates a strong power differential between the coach and competitor. Consequently, the relationship can range from fulfilling to, unfortunately, verging on abusive. It is this latter relationship description that can be eliminated if the role of coach is rearticulated with critical praxis in mind.

The coach need not be a "coach" in the traditional, authoritative sense of the word. Rather, the role of the coach should be defined and performed as advisor or mentor. Such a position has been argued previously (White, 2005), and has been demonstrated theoretically to be a preferred option if enacted properly. When education – and rhetorical training – was first formalized, the educational process was not a top-down structure but, rather, individual learners were mentored through Socratic dialogue and questioning. The only difference between the learners is that one (the mentor) had engaged similar material and subject matter before.

Within forensics coaching, the same can be true. The coach knows various ways of achieving a winning performance, but the competitor must find her or his own path. The first step in this is an initial conversation between the two learners – "What do you want out of this experience? Do you want to learn, grow, and become while competing ... or do you want to compete solely?" The former affords the competitor an opportunity to learn, make decisions, make mistakes, continue to learn, and become finally successful by her or his own measure. The latter allows the coach to follow what has been done before and mold the student as a competitor, but articulates the relationship into one that is based on power and the desire to win. By allowing the competitor to make this choice, he or she realizes her or his stake in the

experience. The central move within emancipatory theory is that choice is not given but allowed. By providing agency to the competitor, the coach presents the road ahead for both of them without requiring a preferred direction. This philosophical approach to coaching begins to remove the hegemonic structures that so easily develop in competitive coaching environments and guides the coaching process for both individuals toward a more egalitarian and fulfilling experience.

Peer Coaching

A central force in critical pedagogy is the learner's responsibility for her or his own learning, with or without the guidance of the teacher. Though the teacher employs specific pedagogical techniques, the learner must step into uncharted territories (though, of course, the teacher falls into the quagmire of the unknown often as well). An effective way to allow the learner to work on her or his own, as well as others, with the guidance of the teacher, is through *peer teaching*, or in this case, *peer coaching*.

Peer coaching is not new to forensics. Particularly in this age of budget cuts and failed referendums, peer coaching often becomes a means by which a team grows even though it's coaching staff does not. In critical pedagogy, peer work is more than simply giving a task to a group and assigning a grade or reward to their efforts at the end. It is the process of exploration and learning that is as important – if not more important – than the end result itself. Peer coaching allows for all members of the team to have *voice* and *agency*.

When the peer moves from passive receiver of information to active participant in knowledge discovery, he or she enacts the role of agent. By reconstituting coaching pedagogy as emancipatory praxis, a space is co-constructed by all agents where the opportunity to act exists. The coach should never be in the position of "provider" here, instead philosophically participating as fellow agent within the space.

An example of a praxis-centered approach to peer coaching might look like the following scenario:

> *Random groupings of competitors, not from the same categories, are placed together. Their goal is to teach each other about her or his respective category through the presentation of her or his specific cutting, piece, or speech. The dialogue within the group is not to be one of judgment or ridicule, but one of critique and exploration. Questions like "why did you choose to interpret that line that way" or "what thought process did you go through to select this topic" would replace statements like "I just don't get this" or "I would not have done it that way at all." By being asked*

— nicely — to defend the choices made, each competitor will begin to recognize her or his own agency and can grow through asking questions like "how might you approach my piece differently than I?" Again, this process is less about judgment and more about appreciation. Afterwards, the coach-as-advisor debriefs with the competitors individually about her or his experiences and what he or she learned from the peer coaching process.

It could be argued that peer coaching may, in fact, lead to a further repression of the competitors, as seasoned competitors share "tricks-of-the-trade" with the first-time orator or debater. This is a possibility. It will be up to the peers themselves, once the coach has not only introduced her or his rationale for this approach but also the responsibility to not simply re-structure the same oppression (Freire, 1970), to work through this dilemma, experiencing the reality of the learning as well as the theoretical rationales.[4]

Both philosophically and pragmatically, the competitors must understand their choices as their choices. They must embrace them, own them, defend them, and discard them if need be. Never does the coach become the excuse. Rather, the coach as advisor helps to clarify any questions the competitor has, determine how the peer coaching experience can uncover new options or directions, and assist in developing a course of action to follow for the competitor. Always, the coach allows the competitor to make the choices about her or his own piece. Always, the coach allows the competitor to express and engage her or his own agency.

Praxis-Centered Case Construction and Piece Selection.

Agency is one of the hallmarks of critical pedagogy. Freire (1970) implores educators to move away from making decisions about what is "right" or "correct" for students and to allow students to understand through their own exploration, experiences, and consequences. Within coaching, this can be accomplished when coaching staffs stop writing speeches, designing cases, choosing pieces, or locating evidence for competitors and place this responsibility firmly on the shoulders of the competitors themselves. The traditional practice of "the binder" for IE competitors or coaches creating case templates for debate teams only hinders the educational process for the competitor. The only power the competitor is allowed is in the interpretation of the pre-chosen material.

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[4] An additional avenue to consider, when looking at peer coaching at the competitor level, is peer training at the coaches' level. In my own experiences, I often was "coached" in coaching by my DOF or other member of the coaching staff. The same guiding principles to the peer-coaching philosophy presented in this article could be applied to ensure that new coaches, while learning how the particular systems they are engaging work, are allowed to opportunity to discover their own coaching "voice." As each competitor is unique, so too is each coach, regard-less of what system they come out of.

Unfortunately, as the coach selected or constructed the piece, a "preferred" interpretation of the piece is also attached, which means the molding of the competitor is already preset. This does not advocate allowing the competitor to go into the research process blind; quite the contrary. It becomes the responsibility of the coach to ensure that competitors know how to conduct research, create guidelines about what makes a "good" piece for them, and construct arguments as well as cases. Though the coach presents certain epistemic and ontological approaches, the agency is still held by the competitor as it is up to her or him to engage the process to her or his own ends. This praxis allows the competitors to own a central aspect of what is forensics, giving the competitor a chance to rise or fall on his or own merits and work.

A Possible Example

By it's very nature, critical pedagogy does not encourage prescriptive methods or structures, as this would instill a "right way" of "doing" coaching. Rather, a praxis-centered approach would ask that the coach and the competitors meet and determine the best course of action together. Having said this, a possible syllabus is provided here as a way to see how such a coaching approach can be engaged.

> During the first meeting of the team, the coaching staff will open the meeting explaining the philosophical position the coaching staff has decided to adopt, as it will offer a unique and long-lasting experience for the entire team. Each member of the team is asked to decide how he or she would prefer to be coached, as a what will be called in this example "traditional" competitor or as a student who, as part of her or his identity, embraces competition as one facet of her or his total personal philosophy. Once the students make their decision, the coaches now know how they can best serve the needs and preference of each student. In this way, there is no "wrong way" to be coached. All students receive instruction and guidance in the way that best suits their individual needs.
>
> For the coaching staff, there may be members that want to coach towards competition, while others wish to engage coaching through a praxis-centered approach. Coaches are then linked with the students that have chosen a particular strategy, with the knowledge that, at any time, the competitor may work with coaches that concentrate on a different perspective than her or his own. Through such an approach, each aspect of the coaching paradigm can be

> *engaged for the benefit of the whole team.*
>
> *As the competitors meet with the coaching staff, the philosophical and epistemological positions that guide the praxis-centered approach are discussed. While students coach each other, work in teams or as individuals with the coaches, they are continually asked to explain why a certain discovery or piece of knowledge is important, not only to forensics competition but at a larger, "real world" level. These dialogues are essential, as the competitors are presented with the space to enact their agency further, and their needs and considerations are given voice.*

Although this is just one sketch of a possible praxis, it does demonstrate the philosophies behind the approach and the dialogues that may come about because of it. It will be up to each coach and student in this scenario, regardless of her or his position, to accept the approach and make part of hers or his own praxis. Only in this way will such an approach be truly successful for all parties involved.

The Reality vs. The Ideology of Praxis-Centered Coaching

"Old habits die hard" is the expression; within the realm of forensics coaching, it is quite appropriate. The standard ideologies and practices that forensic coaching holds onto are seen as the "things that work." For many teams at all levels of competition, this perception is accurate. Certain types of pieces, styles of delivery, and paradigms of analysis have become the dominant systems that win rounds and tournaments. In turn, these systems bring with them ways of coaching that are established and well vetted.

The overarching question, theoretically, is "but are they right?" Right for the student? Right for the activity? If the purpose of forensics is to create winners, then the answer to each of these questions is a triumphant "Yes!" However, if the purpose is something else – a further understanding of the world, an insight into literature and culture, even a stronger sense of self, then the answers to the questions become complicated. When a critical lens is applied to what is overtly assumed to be a very structuralist and essentialist perspective on forensics (the goals and ideals of forensics), the ruptures within the dominant discourse become illuminated. It is these ruptures, or gaps in the traditional and normative ways of coaching, that critically pedagogical approaches to forensics coaching can give light to and bring to the same level of the otherwise established dominant ideology.

The big question, of course, is "would this approach work?" Could competitors be coached in such a way as to be learners and innovators, changing ways of doing in response to intrinsic motivators, and still "win?" because, in competition, it is all about the "win," right? Critical theory has

been shown to collapse on itself when moved from the theoretical to the applied, as the oppressed system becomes the dominant and, therefore, the oppressing system. This is the limitation of ideological critique. However, if the role of the coach is to not simply practice coaching "the old way," but to find new and better ways, would not a re-tooling of the old practices be a logical first step?

The follow-up question to "would it work" is "how would you judge a tournament where the coaching practices of various teams do not stress specific rhetorical and competitive strategies?" This is a question that, until the changes are made within coaching pedagogy practiced by forensics teams, cannot be answered. What I argue for here is a first step – resistance through micro-practices, incremental moves made within the dominant ideology with the purpose of promoting diverse ways of praxis. A complete re-tooling of competition may not be possible (competition, at the end of the day, is the normalized goal of forensics). However, how students learn and prepare for that competition can be engaged through a more emancipatory paradigm.

Even if these critiques of coaching may present practices that may not guarantee competitive success, why even bother? The answer is this – if forensics is grounded in education, then it logically follows that the competitors are first and foremost students. Therefore, if students are meant to learn, and experiential and emancipating methods of educational praxis are best suited for learning, then a pedagogy grounded within the ideology of critical theory is the appropriate path to follow.

Does this somewhat controversial path guarantee a winning season? No. In fact, by embracing a position that does away with the old coaching practices, a rough couple of seasons can almost be guaranteed. However, no coaching system guarantees perpetual winning seasons. But if forensics is truly meant to be an educational experience, the "win" may not be as important as the world of forensics would have the citizens of that world believe. By applying different and unique approaches to the art and science of forensics coaching, new results could emerge, and new knowledge about the self and the activity might just be uncovered.

Crystallization

Often, as a forensics coach, I ask myself if the practices and disciplined behaviors I perform and reinforce still make sense. Over the past two decades of forensics practice (as coach, judge, and competitor), there has been little change, little true innovation, in the way coaching is performed. Before taking a leave from my home forensics circuit, I noticed that many of the conversations I was having with other coaches centered around the critique of coaching methods and whether or not the final product even resembled what forensics is "supposed" to look like.

As forensics competition continues to evolve, the coaching strategies and philosophies engaged need to shift as well. Coaching practices should be investigated and critiqued. Moreover, each forensics coach and director needs to clearly know what is philosophically expected of them by the funding administration, what they expect of themselves, and what should be expected of their competitors. If the expectation is competitive success, then the path is clear. If, on the other hand, the expectation is one of education and critical awareness of oneself, then a different approach is needed. A more critically pedagogical and praxis-centered approach may be that approach.

This essay is an attempt to take the conversation beyond the coaches' lounge, the tab room, and the late night meetings after the competitors have gone home for the evening. This essay is meant to aid in our own critical awareness of our coaching philosophies and practices. This conversation is in no way complete. However, by presenting one possible epistemology, along with corresponding practices and approaches to this entity known as forensics coaching, my hope is that, perhaps, other coaches and researchers within and outside the forensics community will begin to question their own practices. Asking, "why something is done the way it is done?" not only aids in the progression of the discipline and of competition; the questioning is the core of what forensics is all about.

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