Connecting Past and Present: A Rhetorical Analysis of How Forensics Programs Use Storytelling to Promote Team Legacy

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Rationale

Forensics programs are a unique organizational construct. While in any many ways they are like any other organization, their status as a university-affiliated, competitive organization lends itself to an interesting diversion from traditional organizational culture. While many organizations could arguably possess "competitive" aspects, in forensics competition is taken in its most literal sense. While one of the goals of the activity is educational outreach, the competitive nature of the activity can not ignored, as it plays a vital role in shaping many of the programs that are a part of the activity (Gaer, 2002; Hinck, 2003). In a competitive activity such as this, past achievements of a program tend to play a strong role in creating organizational identity. However, identifying with a program's history can be difficult, especially for programs with a long history in which many of the members no longer have direct connections to the organization, as is the case when competitors graduate and become less involved with the program. Yet, this identification with organizational history is essential to organizational culture. As Weick (1995) explains, organizational members rely upon the events of their organization's past to make sense of the present and the future. Hence, being able to share in the collective memory of one's forensics program is essential to its success and ultimately, its survival.

Bormann (1982) describes *collective memory* as the story of an organization's past achievements, as shared among organizational members. Organizations rely on a multitude of practices to promote collective memory. These "micropractices" are integral in helping members form an organizational identity; small-scale rituals and activities shape the atmosphere and attitudes and of an organization, and are therefore worth further research (Tretheway, 2000). Narratives, for instance, serve as lenses through which organizational members view not only their organization, but the world surrounding it as well (Kramer, 2010). Narrative is one of the ways by which forensics programs establish a link between past and present, perpetuating team values and triumphs.

Given forensics programs' status as organizations at academic institutions, these teams experience changes in membership far more often than typical organizations. Each year, a team will graduate a class of seniors who, through their four years as a competitor, have helped shape the program's culture and legacy in numerous ways. Yet this void left by the graduating members is then filled by the incoming freshman or transfer student competitors who will now play a part in reshaping the team's culture. This constant change in organizational culture makes it vital that forensic programs go to extra lengths to ensure that their historic legacy survives the constant changes. Therefore, forensics programs present themselves as an interesting case in which to study the use of narrative in constructing organizational culture.

Literature Review

Organizational Culture

Organizations all have their own culture – a certain atmosphere, set of norms and values, and communication practices. Kramer (2010) argues that because every organization is different, whenever an individual joins an organization, it requires them to learn how the organization they are now a part of functions and what their role in that organization will be. Martin (2002) argues that because organizational culture is socially constructed, the new members will also become integral in shaping the culture of the organization. Organizational culture is not only a product, but a process (Kelly, 1983). Members of an organization enact and embody the very values of the organization, making it essential that they are acclimated to the new culture (Carmack, 2008; Hill, 1997). Hence, new members undergo a socialization process, in which the organization's values, norms, and culture are taught to the newcomer (Jablin, 1982).

Jablin's (1987) linear model of organizational socialization details the process in which new organizational members become acclimated to an organizational environment. New members experience three phases of social integration to an organization: anticipatory socialization, organizational assimilation, and organizational exit. For the purpose of this study, I will be focusing on organizational assimilation, since this is the stage in which the fostering of organizational culture in new members occurs (Modaff, DeWine, & Butler, 2007).

Organizational assimilation. Jablin summarizes this assimilation stage of his organizational socialization model as “the process by which an individual becomes integrated into the “reality” or culture of an organization (Jablin, 1987, p. 163). This is when a member really starts to uncover the underlying culture of the organization. This phase consists of two sub-components: the *encounter period* and the *metamorphosis period*. Both are critical determinants of how the newcomer will fare in the new environment (Modaff, DeWine, & Butler, 2007).

Sometimes referred to as the “breaking in” period (Jablin, 1987, p,. 694), the encounter period is the employee's first real introduction to the organization. In addition to learning what the organization has to offer them, they also learn what the organization expects of them and what constitutes proper behavior for members of the organization (Jablin, 1987). This period of socialization occurs through a variety of ways: interactions with colleagues, organization training sessions, manuals, pamphlets, and other guidance materials (Ahuja & Galvin, 2003).

The second phase of the assimilation stage – the metamorphosis period – is when the new member attempts to truly become part of the organization, taking what they have learned about the organization's values and culture and enacting those behaviors. It can be a time of great change for the individual, depending upon the extent to which they make alterations to their own identity in order to fit in with the organization they are now part of (Jablin, 1987). By emulating the preferred behaviors and attitudes of the organization, the newcomer becomes part of the legacy and collective memory of the institution (Poulton, 1995). At the conclusion of the metamorphosis period, the member is assimilated into the culture (Jablin, 1987).

Storytelling in organizations

One of the ways in which socialization in organizations occurs is through storytelling. Throughout history, stories have served as an avenue for conveying attitudes and values. Stories are used to instill organizational values in members of a group (Kelly, 1985; Randall & Martin, 2003) or even control the behavior of organizational members (Wilkins, 1983). Stories are as essential to the initial encounter process (Brown, 1985) as they are to creating organizational change (Denning, 2001). Stories are the foundation of organizational sense-making. They are the culmination of past experiences connected to present experiences, allowing current members to relate to an organization's history and legacy, even though they may not have experienced it directly. Weick (1995) suggests that we make sense of the present by connecting it to similar past events, giving them meaning. Hence, Weick (1995) would argue that stories are the very vocabulary of organizational identity and sense-making.

Functions of organizational storytelling. Brown (1984) outlines five functions of stories in an organizational setting. First, they are used to inform members about the rules of the organization. Second, stories sharpen the collective memory of an organization – how the organization's values and beliefs shapes members' understanding of past events. Third, stories reinforce member loyalty. Fourth, storytelling is integral to upholding traditions and customs; by reflecting upon the past, stories tell how tradition played a role in defining the organization today. Finally, they serve as a chronicle of the organization's history, linking the past to the present in an effort to establish the organization as a timeless entity.

Genesis narratives. One of the most common and powerful forms of storytelling employed by organizations is that of the *genesis narrative.* While metaphor can be a powerful narrative form for extolling an organization's culture in a condensed form, the genesis narrative is "the frame for interpreting cues to add meaning to the purpose of the organization, relations within the organization, and individual location within the organization" (Poulton, 2005, p.7). A genesis narrative is the overarching story of the organization – somewhat mythical or epic in nature. It typically encompasses such notions as discovery, breaking new ground, fate, and other fantastical elements that are meant to create a sense of wonder when told to present members and instill them a sense of pride in the organization (Poulton, 2005).

The true rhetorical wonder of the genesis narrative stems from its ability to cultivate in listeners such a strong sense of organizational identification. As these stories are told repeatedly, they become so ingrained in individuals that they become convinced that they are linked to the organization's past, able to accomplish the same things as those who came before them. As

Poulton (1995) explains, when these stories are told and retold, organizational members start to "relive" the organization's collective memory.

Fantasy themes

The rhetorical power that organizational storytelling has on its audience is evident in its ability to create such a strong sense of identification between the members and the organization, in some cases even allowing them to identify with a past that they could not experience themselves. There are certain types of stories that will resurface again and again – the hero from humble beginnings, the same "boy meets girl" love story, or the story about the underdog who, through perseverance and determination, achieved greatness. While the stories themselves might be different from a similar one you have heard before, they essentially have the same plot and themes. Bormann refers to these stories as *fantasy types* (Bormann, 1985a). Fantasy types become widely accepted because groups of people can identity with the common themes on a very personal level (Bormann, 1985b).

Symbolic convergence theory. Bormann's theory of symbolic convergence was inspired by the work of Harvard professor Robert Bales, who did extensive research on small group communication in the 1950s. Bales discovered that group members would sometimes become excited and use "dramatic communication" to share their excitement with each other. He also noted that individuals occasionally comment on people not physically present in the group or about past or future events. Bales called these comments *fantasies* (Hirokawa & Poole, 1996).

Further research revealed that group members would often become energized by the comments made by others and that they would attempt to contribute their own comments regarding the topic of discussion (Bales, 1950). From this, Bormann and his students developed symbolic convergence theory. Keeping Bales' foundation of how fantasies emerge, Bormann fleshed out the concept of a *fantasy theme*. A fantasy theme is not to be confused with a myth or story, but rather, it is a "creative and imaginative interpretation of events" that attempts to fulfill some type of rhetorical need (Bormann, 1990 p.122). Fantasy themes are created when one member makes an initial comment about a person or event that excites the other group members, compelling them to contribute their own relevant information about their own experiences with the situation (Courtright et. al, 2004).

Rhetors will often utilize various *fantasy types*, an archetype of a specific incident or person that allows the community members to generalize about it. For instance, the fantasy type "hero" has a set of qualities that are associated with that label. By having a set of well-known attributes associated with that incident or person, fantasy types allow the group to talk in somewhat specific terms about an event or person not physically present (Bormann, 1985a).

Fantasy themes allow people to relate to each other through a shared experience and find meaning. When individuals share the fantasy, they go beyond a mere understanding of the message, by becoming highly involved in it, contributing their own details to expand upon the initial fantasy. This whole process of group members rallying around a central theme and meshing together their own experiences is known as *symbolic convergence* (Courtright et. al, 2004). Once group members share enough fantasies, they can be combined to form a worldview for the whole group, or *rhetorical vision*. A rhetorical vision is a "composite drama constructed from fantasy themes and types that have recurred through the history of a group" and may be shared with the larger public through the media, published works, or other formats (Ball, 2001).

Organizations and fantasy themes. Organizations make use of fantasy themes in their storytelling, relying upon the creation of a shared rhetorical vision to amplify the values conveyed in the stories. The stories provide members with a frame for understanding the organization's purpose, core beliefs, and how to act when part of that organization (Papa, Daniels, & Spiker, 2007). Through fantasy themes, organizational life is presented as a drama, with action taking place on a metaphorical stage, and the organizational members as actors "performing" various scenes (Bormann, 1985b). The messages that an organization passes on to its membership in the form of stories identify heroes, heroines, villains, and goals – of all of which, based on how they are cast in the story, promote a certain vision that the organization holds and hopes to instill in its members (Papa, Daniels, & Spiker, 2007).

Forensics, culture, and legacy

Like any organization or team, individual forensics programs all have their own norms, values, and other underpinnings that hold the team together (Derryberry, 1994). Each team has its own storied past, its own paradigm regarding competition, educational value of the activity, and approaches to the activity itself. This organizational knowledge is conveyed through myths or stories, often centering on the organization's past competitors or coaches, those who defined the organization in the past and have made it what it is today (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001). These stories unite team members together around fantasy themes and create a dramatic sense of community (Croucher, Thornton, & Eckstein, 2006). Doty (2008) captures the feeling of shared history on a forensics team that he felt as a competitor looking at team trophies, which also function as symbols of team legacy: "I could see with my own eyes the progress made by the organization as it is symbolized through the hardware; yet the people, processes, and organizational structures helping to achieve the progress were long gone" (Doty, 2008, p. 16).

Being familiar with a forensic team's history and legacy is not just about creating a competitive drive in its current members. It goes beyond that, extending to an individual's sense of belonging, the feeling that they "mean something" to the organization. An organization's collective memory assures members that they can contribute to the organization in profound ways (Doty, 2008), thus stories become a vital instrument for keeping a team's legacy “alive” by making it known in the present. It is crucial that forensic programs promote collective memory. Talyor (2007) suggests that teams that lose touch with their historic legacy lose out on the ability to truly experience the triumphs and excitement that came before them, resulting in a sense of detachment from the organization. Thus, stories are the torch that keep the flame of forensic legacy burning for the current members of the team.

Summary and Research Questions

Organizational culture is in constant flux, being continually redefined by its members (Kelly, 1983). Forensics programs perhaps experience this cultural shift more often than most organizations, since a program's membership changes each year, as former members graduate and make room for new members, who will both assimilate into the program's culture, and play a role in the reshaping of it. Even with these changes, most programs will still retain some of their “roots,” what makes the program different from others (Croucher, Thornton, & Eckstein, 2006). Hence, teams rely on stories of the team's past to ground the present team in its legacy. The stories a team tells reveal much about the core values of the team itself, which are imparted upon its members who both enact and redefine the them. The story archetypes used by teams to induce certain feelings in its members are well worth examining to better understand the how teams utilize this rhetorical device to create and maintain organizational culture. Thus, the following research question is asked:

RQ: How do forensic programs use storytelling to convey team legacy?

Methods

Participants

Participants from this pilot study were current members of a collegiate forensics program. For this pilot study, two team members were recruited through personal relationships with the team, and on a volunteer basis. The program has a rich history, with the organization dating back to the year the university was founded. The program boasts a competitively successful past, accumulating dozens of individual national champions, as well as several team national championship titles. The team remains nationally competitive today.

Procedure

Due to geographical barriers, phone interviews were conducted with the participants. Carr & Worth (2001) note that studies have shown that telephone interviewing tends to produce results comparable in quality to that of face-to-face interviewing. The participants were first asked a set of preliminary questions regarding their general attitude toward their forensics program, in order to establish a sense of the individual's organizational identification. They were then asked to share one or two stories that the team sometimes tells. The collected stories were analyzed using a rhetorical approach to narrative analysis (Feldman, Sköldberg, Brown, & Horner, 2004).

A rhetorical analysis of narratives. While the average person is relatively capable of interpreting stories, this rhetorical approach provides an exceptional tool for this type of study because it gets at the rhetorical underpinnings of stories. Feldman et al. (2004) developed a three-step model for narrative analysis. The first step was to define the story line by developing a one or two sentence summary of the story in order to reveal the basic argument being made in the story. The next two steps involve two classical rhetorical concepts: *opposition* and *enthymeme.*

Step two focuses on the use of opposition. Stories incorporating elements of opposition – juxtaposing one concept with an opposite concept – can be used to define what an organization *is*, based on what it *is not* (Feldman, 1995). By identifying instances of opposition, a researcher can uncover what the organization is based on how the opposition is framed. According to Feldman et al. (2004), stories can be assumed to contain at least element of opposition.

The third level of analysis involves reproducing the story in terms of an enthymeme. Enthymemes are commonly described as "incomplete" syllogisms or lines of argument because they leave part of the conclusion up to the audience. Allowing others to "fill in" in the supposed logical gaps is a rhetorical strategy that gives storytellers the illusion of being more "hands off," empowering the audience. Feldman et al. (2004) explain that enthymemes are frequently used in stories because people can avoid starting the obvious or raising a controversial issue in a story by letting others piece together the argument themselves.

Results

Through the interviews with members of the forensics program, two different stories were collected, each revolving around aspects of team legacy that are explored below. Each was then analyzed through Feldman et al.'s model (2004). From each story emerges a strong theme. In the first story, the theme is one of *work ethic*, while the second story focuses on *community*. I will first analyze the story pertaining to the work ethic theme, before discussing the community-themed story.

Story #1 – "The makings of a champion" – Both participants recalled the story of a particular squad from several years prior that reached paramount competitive success. In summary, the story revolves around the individuals who comprised the team that year, a team that the forensics circuit had dubbed underdogs regarding competitive success. Yet through a season of extremely hard work and dedication, the squad won the national championship title that year.

In this story, there is a clear value placed on positive work ethic and perseverance, since these were values that factored into the team's competitive success at the end of the year. This logical link is made via the use of enthymeme – it is understood that the team members' hard work contributed to their achievements. This simultaneously casts values like laziness or procrastination – things that would have not have led to the team's same competitive outcome – in opposition, as values that the organization does not hold in high regard.

In the preliminary interview about the team culture and participants' attitudes toward the team, one participant affirmed that hard work is something the program strives for, showing that the story echoes team values. She also stated that this particular story is very familiar to team members:

> "No one thought they would [win], but they worked hard and accomplished everything they wanted. That story's told pretty often and is always told to show the team that everyone can get what they want out of [the national tournament]."

The fact that the story is told often suggests that the organization views it as helpful for teaching current members about the team's past and giving them tools for future success. Through the repeated telling of this genesis story, today's members are able to relate to their program's past successes, and are taught to believe that they can achieve the same success as their predecessors by following in their footsteps (Poulton, 2005).

Another way this story becomes highly relatable to today's members is its use of the "underdog" archetype. As Bormann (1985a) explains, archetypes are useful storytelling devices because people have a certain generalized understanding of their meaning, allowing people to identify with characters or events somewhat universally. In this case, the underdog archetype is attributed to this squad that no one expected to be successful, making them a sympathetic figure. But this sympathy is transformed into pride and emotional overwhelming when the underdog group rises above everyone's expectations. Thus, the story capitalizes on the transformation of the team into national champions, something that all competitors strive for and can thus relate to, resulting in the shared rhetorical vision of rising above the odds through hard work.

Story #2 – "A family affair" – The second participant recounted a story that the team sometimes tells about how one former member was able to make light of a bad situation. On the way home from a tournament, there was a car accident on the highway and the team was stuck in non-moving traffic for over two hours. Naturally, the overall mood of the travelers was gloomy. Suddenly, one team member pulled out a harmonica and started improvising a "bluesy" song about the team's predicament. The sheer unexpected behavior and humorous song immediately had everyone laughing and in much better spirits for the rest of the night.

This story does not focus on the competitive nature of the program, but instead, emphasizes ideas like friendship and team bonding. As one participant explained, "When you travel with each other almost every weekend of the season and share a bed with a teammate, getting along is so important. We're all pretty much best friends, able to make the most of any situation when we're together." This comment exemplifies the team members' overall commitment to each other as going beyond just competition. He elaborated on the story:

> "You almost had to know this guy [the team member from the story] to fully appreciate the hilarity of it all, but even if you didn't know him, just the idea of some kid popping up like a cartoon character on a bus with a harmonica and singing the blues... How can anyone not find that awesome?"

Here again, the participant touches on the idea of a rhetorical vision. While current or future competitors may not know the individual from the story, it still provides them with some sort of referent, drawing upon human emotions like laughter and notions of absurdity that are highly relatable (Bormann, 1985a). Listeners find themselves wanting to experience this same camaraderie, making them part of the rhetorical vision.

Discussion

In response to the research question, this pilot study suggests that forensics programs use storytelling to promote team legacy among current members in a variety of ways. One way this is achieved is through the telling of genesis stories, which allow current members to feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves and can contribute positively to their program's legacy (Poulton, 2005). This sense of belonging and cohesion is clearly essential to the success of the organization. Both students expressed having a sense of connectedness to their program by being a part of the storytelling, initially as someone who listened to the story being told by another member, and later sharing becoming the storyteller themselves, in terms of passing the story on to other students, as well as sharing their stories for this research.

Second, reliance on story archetypes is also helpful in helping members identify with past members who they have never met, but can get a sense of through the meaning surrounding certain archetypes like "the underdog" (Bormann, 1985a). This is evident in the case of the first story about the team that no expected to succeed winning a national championship. The student sharing the story was not present for the event itself, nor had they met most of the individuals who were part of the national championship team. Yet, through the constant retelling of the story among current team members, this student felt a sense of connectedness to those former team members. Moreover, the student was instilled with a sense that they, too, could achieve the same feats as that previous group of individuals if they embodied the same work ethic as the champion team.

Limitations

This pilot study has several limitations. First, only two participants were able to take part in this study. While they both provided insightful interviews and shared interesting stories, having a larger sample would have useful for seeing if other members brought up the same stories, which could suggest that the elements of legacy featured in those stories are particularly revered among the program. It is worth noting that both participants who *did* participate in the story both shared one of the same stories (Story #1). This implies that the values promoted in that particular story of seen as important to the team, hence its apparent prominence. However, since these results are based on interviews with two individuals, it cannot be concluded that was more than mere coincidence. The collection of additional stories would naturally offer a more complete picture of the organization's values and legacy promotion in general. Second, it should be taken into consideration that participants are members of a highly competitive team, which could affect the way stories are used in organizational socialization and the promotion of legacy.

Seeing as this study focused on the perspectives of the competitors, future research could benefit from examining how coaches view storytelling as promoting legacy, given they are often the storytellers and even the gatekeepers of which stories remain part of the team's collective memory. Futhermore, a circuit-wide study of teams from all different backgrounds – old/new, highly competitive/somewhat competitive, etc. – could explore how this phenomenon occurs among teams with varying dynamics.

Conclusion

Forensics programs undergo a constant evolution in terms of organizational identity and culture. Yet for an organization that is rooted in competition, the balance between change and staying true to its historic legacy is one worth pursuing. One of the many ways in which programs try to achieve this balance is through storytelling. By using rhetorical devices such as opposition, enthymeme, and story archetypes, programs create a rhetorical vision in an attempt to unite the current generation of forensicators with those who came before them. Round by round, today's competitors try to defend their team's legacy – a legacy appropriately conveyed through the art of words themselves – the art of storytelling.

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Building Bridges: Connecting Performance Studies and Forensic Oral Interpretation

Alyssa Reid

ABSTRACT

Forensic educators have faced long standing criticism, within our discipline and beyond, in regards to the true educational benefits of forensic competition with particular scrutiny towards oral interpretation events. Although forensic interpretation events may seem like fun raucous performances, they are in many ways are grounded in sound pedagogy of oral interpretation scholarship. However in recent years, forensic oral interpretation has evolved to move beyond mere rendering of a text. In many ways forensic interpretation has shifted towards a paradigm of performance studies. Therefore, I shall reexplore past criticisms of forensic interp in order to argue for new ways to interpret interpretation and build a stronger bridge between forensic pedagogy and the communication discipline.

As a forensic educator and coach I am aware that I will face criticism from colleagues about the academic legitimacy of intercollegiate individual event speaking. An outsider observing a forensic tournament might enjoy watching the oral interp events the most, even if they do not understand some of the strange speech norms. It is not only the norms but the modes of forensic competition that have caused the practice of oral interpretation to face particular scrutiny. Although, forensic interpretation may have been birthed from oral interpretation of literature it has since become its own medium of study. Geisler (1985) pointed out that forensic interpretation events vary from the non-competitive oral tradition of interpretation. Forensic interpretation is highly nuanced and in some ways inaccessible to outside audiences. Whereas the academic field of oral interpretation has evolved into a more comprehensive study of performance.

Performance studies addresses not only traditional stage performances, but also daily performance and cultural rituals. Performances academically grounded in performance theory are implemented in a very differently textured setting, while forensic oral interpretation varies from contemporary performance studies scholarship. In many ways it functions as a cursory introduction to the practice of academic based performance. Because performance scholarship is often rooted in dense language that is foreign to the untrained ear, forensic oral interpretation provides another frame in which to understand performance theory. Performance studies focuses on performance theory while competitive oral interpretation teaches students the necessary practice of performance. Although forensic interp can serve as a basis for comprehending performance scholarship, it faces criticism from disciplinary scholars as disingenuous performance lacking sound pedagogy. In order to understand this tension and justify forensic interpretation practice I will first introduce the academic function of performance studies, then explain the criticism forensic oral interpretation receives from performance scholars, before finally clarifying performance pedagogy within forensic interpretation.

Performance Studies

Performance studies was originally defined as oral interpretation. In order to understand the layered academic terrain of performance studies it is necessary to grasp the foundation of the discipline, then discuss the paradigmatic shift to performance studies.

Oral Tradition. Most definitions surrounding the tradition of oral interpretation pay close attention to the literature selected. Yordon (2002) defined oral interpretation as the "artistic process of studying literature through performance and sharing that study with an audience" (p. 4). Lee and Gura (2005) argued that communicating the meaning of a text and the aesthetic performance of the literature are the primary components of oral interpretation. Their explanation places an emphasis on *how* a text is used to guide performance and they ground much of their definition of in the reader's duty to perform within the parameters of the author's intent. Further, Rossi and Goodnow (2006) stated, "the communication of textual content and form is a central aspect of the interpreter's art" (p. 46). The foundation for interpretation of literature is based in how the interpreter can communicate emotional development of throughout an author's script. In order to interpret literature it is important to have an understanding of the script being performed to create a performance of a script. Holloway Allen, Barr, Colley, Keefe, Peares, and St. Clair, (1982) defined oral interpretation as "the art of eliciting in the mind of a listener the imagistic, intellectual, and emotional potential of a piece of literature through the subtle appropriate use of voice and body" (p. 45). Bowen, Aggert, and Rickert (1978) stated that interpretation of literature "offers a fusion of literature and communication" (p. 12). A text in this way can be brought to life through performative reading of the text. In this understanding of interpretation the interpreter should be able to evoke audience imagination through masterful elocution, to compensate for a lack of physicality. By these standards, oral interpretation is an art form that is supposed to bring forth emotional processing of an author's text through proficient use of technical performance skill. Forensic interpretation was not only conceived around the principles of oral interpretation, it has relentlessly clung to the principles even as the academic field has matured. An oral interpretation paradigm initially limited the expression of a worldview to the reading and analysis of canonical literary texts, but a performance studies paradigm would open up many texts to be analyzed and performed.

Paradigm Shift

As scholars of the oral tradition began to develop and expand their academic discipline, the overall ideological standard of the field adapted. Pelias and VanOosting (1987) described that oral tradition shifted to a performance studies paradigm to adapt with changes in both oral tradition and Communication as a discipline. This paradigmatic shift warrants the question of what performance studies actually is. In this shift, instead of defining how interpretation is different from acting, everyone in cultural contexts is a actor/performer of culture. Elizabeth Bell, in her widely popular introduction to performance studies text, *Theories of Performance*, stated in the opening chapter, "Oftentimes, we get so involved in any one set of ideas, or one specific performance, that we forget that all theories and performances are products of their times and larger world-shaping views" (p. 1). Performances can thus be thought of as a reflection and/or criticism of the world in which we live. This is reflected beyond mere costuming for stage but also in contemporary attire. Pelias and VanOosting (1987) framed "performance as a social act relying upon emergent principles and cultural conventions of enactment" (p. 224). Culture, in this understanding, is a performative act.

Although one cannot spell description without script, a performance studies approach to studying the drama of a text, to exploring the human drama, enacted daily. Bell (2008) structured performance theory as a means to make clear why and how performance aids in intricate social and political understandings through multiple creative forms. In many ways, theatre, rituals, parades, protests, or even acts of terrorism are not only creatively expressive forms but very powerful transformative mediums. Performance is not only a way that people understand culture, it can also be a site to change views about culture. Conquergood (1992) described performance as existing in a space between rhetoric and ethnography. Often the ways in which performances are negotiated and understood is through an individual's systematic processing of culture. Performance then, is a facet of cultural production that is apparent in performances outside of a theatre. Boal (1995) argued traditional theatre was occupied by the social elite and theatre was a means of controlling messages communicated to the masses, but performance can become a location for cultural opposition. Performance studies is not necessarily limited to the construction of theatre, but rather how humans communicate as drama. Shultz (2000) stated that Kenneth Burke theorized that all human interaction is played out through "dramatism". Human beings process the world through stories and dramatism thus functions as a symbolic interaction of metaphors used by humans to distinctly communicate their experiences. In this way the stage is more than a physical structure to observe others acting out culture, it is a fluid space that aids in viewing culture happening around us. This posits that performance is not just a site outside of ourselves to observe, it is something that we do in order to describe contemporary life. Many facets of ourselves are thus elements of a story; there are heroes and villains, ebbs and flows, and yes the perfunctory beginning, middle and end. West and Zimmerman (1987) argued that even gender is a performance element in our symbolic life metaphors. Performance studies moves beyond the realm of textual analysis but into a complex method of informing our processing of the world we live and the cultural conscriptions adhered to our bodies.

Fox (2007) argued that performance of the self has the potential to alter how one perceives their position in the world. Our bodies can cast us into particular roles. The ways in which people present themselves is a performance of identity. Warren (1999) framed the body as a performative site that is irrevocably distinguished by political, ideological, and historical inscriptions that act as an interactive canvas of alternative experiential knowledge. Aspects of the self that are often perceived as private can function as performative indicators of identity. Fox

(2007) explained how his body was marked as a cultural signifier of a sickly gay man. His *Skinny Bones* demonstrated how our bodies look and move are reflections of culture and cultural values. Evaluation of the body's shape, movement, and character is just one of the many ways which performance studies has progressed.

Performance studies covers a broad area of academic ground. It is clearly a varied field of scholarship that operates and analyzes how performance works on stage, in culture, and in presentations of the self. Forensic interpretation was founded upon the discipline of oral interpretation that has since evolved into the field of performance studies. Performance studies now has placed a scrutinizing eye on the forensic practice of interpretation that has not evolved at the same pace as the academic field it once attempted emulate.

Criticism of Forensic Interpretation

Both forensic interpretation and oral interpretation have evolved significantly since their inception. They were born out of the same theoretical concepts but much has changed in both fields. However, performance studies has grown at a quickened pace and scholars in the field are often frustrated by many norms inherent to forensic oral interpretation that are isolated performance skills. Performance studies currently criticizes forensic interpretation for the ways in which the field overvalues forensic aesthetic and how competition undermines pedagogy.

Overvaluing Forensic Aesthetic.

The forensic world is its own cultural microcosm filled with demanding norms that dictate how performers should look and act. Interpretation competitors are often evaluated more on aesthetic of performance instead of how a script is interpreted. Bacon (1979) warned that to place too much emphasis on *how* something is said diminishes the emphasis on the message of *what* is being said. This can be seen in forensic interpretation when a judge evaluates a round on ambiguous terms. Mills (1991) highlighted that character and delivery were the most prominent evaluation factors in interpretation rounds. However, both of these evaluation tools are vague. These are facets of how a judge arbitrarily determines that a student interpreted a script “correctly” even though they likely have not read the text. Lee and Gura (2002) advocated that while performing a text that “technical display is not an art” (p. 5), meaning that a brilliant performance of literature is distinctly different from interpreting a text. It also suggests that someone can interpret a script incorrectly. I have seen many powerful performances in forensic interpretation events, however the performance trend has become increasingly more separated from the text and more motivated in performance aesthetic and forensic norm expectations.

Rossi and Goodnow (2006) stated “Put simply, oral intepers, like all artists, make choices reflective of individual experience as well as aesthetic understanding, technical training, and personal goals” (p. 46). The interpreter then is expected to find a personal connection to the literature they are presenting, otherwise the performance is definitively shallow. However, a shallow performance is not necessarily *bad* in forensic performance, or even an incorrect interpretation of a script. Often times, a forensic interpretation performance is rewarded for technical skills. Bookwork, blocking and page turns are technical aspects of forensic interpretation that have little relevance outside of a speech tournament. In this way, forensic judges critique how well forensic performances portray forensic performance.

A fine line exists between what warrants educational practice and pure performance. Klosa and Dubois (2001) explained that ballots function on two levels: judging and educational feedback. Oral interpretation has faced criticism even by forensic scholars as emphasizing performance aesthetic over educational interpretation practices: Lowrey, 1958; Greeen, 1988; Koeppel & Morman, 1991; Rossi & Goodnow, 2006. Forensic evaluation of oral performance also relies heavily on the elocution of performance. Mills (1991) found that delivery was a key component in the judging paradigm of interpretation events. Further, Conquergood (2000) articulated that elocution has traditionally been used as a mask to hide racial, ethnic, and class biases. This should be prompting discussion in the forensic community in regards to potentially problematic judging decisions. Evaluations more focused on how a message is delivered are subject to discriminatory practices. Scott and Birkholt (1996) criticized forensic judging stating that personal bias can never be effectively removed from ranking decisions. For example if a judge were to rank a round on elocution, it could reflect a bias against a particular regional dialect or even speech impediment, that in forensics is justified due to the objective opinion of a judge. Morris (2005) highlighted evaluative practices in judging forensic tournaments that were based in superficial distinctions prefers style and execution of norms over performance quality. Without sound pedagogy supporting judging decisions in the forensic community an evaluator may resort to qualitative intangibles to rank and rate a round. This could allow for hidden discrimination within forensic participation. Meaning that certain cultural voices within interpretation for multiple reasons are unrecognized in forensic interpretation.

Competition Undermines Pedagogy.

One of the most prominent criticisms of forensic oral interpretation from performance studies are the ways in which competition tarnishes performance integrity. Burnett, Brand, and Meister (2003) stated that in intercollegiate forensics "the practice of competition coopts education" (p. 12). Competition can motivate students and coaches alike to stoop less than scrupulous practices. Gaer (2002) further argued that forensics has success formulas for students to construct speeches in order to meet the unwritten rules of the activity. Students and coaches in many ways observe what wins and begin to copy models of success instead of inventing new models or deriving success through individual understanding. This model suggests that if students want to become successful they need not learn the skills of textual interpretation they just need to learn forensic norms. This emphasis can promote winning over interpreting a text with integrity.

Sometimes, coaches are complicit in pedagogical undermining. Managing a successful team can be difficult, especially if there is pressure to achieve external goals. Gernant (1991) argued that in interpretive events, students are sometimes handed pre-cut literature complete with introductions. This means that some students are not doing the initial processing of a script. This criticism, in my opinion, is valid. Although I have heard of programs taking this approach, I would argue that those teams are the exception to forensic interpretation and not the norm.

A majority of interp competitors are learning how to critically examine a text. In some cases, the examination of the text goes so in depth that the interpretation performed veers slightly from the original text. Gernant (1991) conducted a survey of interpretation competitors in forensics and concluded that the students were not necessarily interested in the intent of the author, only the success of their performances. This was framed by Gernant as a lack of regard for the script shows that demonstrates students are not extracting meaning from the text they are performing. However. I argue that it demonstrates that they are performing—in many cases successfully—devoid of knowledge of performance theory. So many forensic interpreters think they are integrated into the world of performance, but in reality, they engage in a practice of Sophistic mimicry of performance. Of course, I think it is necessary to point out that many forensic students go on to become performers and communication scholars. Forensic interpretation has served as a stepping stone to future academic ventures. I thought I knew all there was to know about performance before I began researching performance scholars, discovering my true ignorance to the field was a rude awakening. It also made me even more interested in how to improve as a performer and scholar. Even though forensic interpretation did not adhere completely to performance scholarship, it provided me the impetus to delve into performance scholarship.

One of the most daunting competitive challenges for forensic interpretation events is to fit within the ten minute time frame stipulated within the rules. A piece of literature is often much more detailed than the script that is presented in forensics but it is necessary to cut it down in order to fit within time constraints. Gernant (1991) claimed that students, in order to compensate for the work of cutting, will turn to easy literature that is shorter or not as complex instead of challenging themselves and the audience with a richer text. This criticism should make the forensic community place a greater emphasis on literary merit. If judges began to think of their ballots as a means of promoting students with messages worth sharing to more people than this criticism could dissolve.

Performance scholars also argue that if forensics was true to interpreting a text than it would not cut it apart and restructure the authorial intent of the literature. Geisler (1985) argued that competitive oral interpretation restricts an honest creative work of an original text. The disruption of the text distorts the creative integrity of both the text and the forensic activity. However, similar criticisms are made about a book translated to a movie. The book is usually better and the same is also true for forensic performance. The translation of a text to a performance almost always requires interpreting words on paper and figuring out how to communicate them to an audience. The text is admittedly altered, but not necessarily distorted. Understanding these criticisms is not only an important reminder for our community but also a means of justifying our practice to colleagues within our discipline.

Forensic Interpretation Pedagogy

Forensic competition is a unique subset of society that not only represents culture through performance texts, but also simultaneously critiques itself and society. Currently forensic interpretation does not completely bridge the gap between performance theory and practice. Although I have provided justifications for forensic practices in interp, I also want to demonstrate monumental changes in the forensic activity that show a shift towards more progressive performance practices. This can be seen in shifts to include original authorship and the incorporation of embodied performance.

Original Authorship.

Scrivner and Robinette (1980) suggested that the fundamental role of oral interpretation is to understand personal experience through performance. In many ways, this fundamental aspect of performance is agreed upon among oral tradition scholarship, forensic scholarship, and performance studies scholarship. Forensic interpretation competition rules, despite much controversy, have shifted in order to allow students to select original material for competition. Paine (2005) articulated that forensic competitors often express dissatisfaction with the rules and norms of forensic competition. He offered that the alternative to stifled creativity for students should be to play with the norms that they had spent years mastering. Original material or "homewritten" material can serve as a means to promote creativity and performance scholarship within forensic competition.

Rossi and Goodnow (2006) suggested that original literature is unfair and should be disallowed in forensic competition, because original material can be changed and unfairly understood by the performer/author. Green (1998) claimed that forensic judges may not necessarily be qualified to evaluate original material, because it establishes unfair starting points for competitors. Students that write their own text do not have to analyze a text in order to make performance decisions. Gernant (1991) argued that original literature is "easy" to perform. Further, Rossi and Goodnow (2006) claimed that it was disingenuous to the foundations of interpreting literature. These criticisms from forensic scholars are still grounded in the antiquated oral tradition.

The process of performing is a different educational act than writing. In many ways, writing and then performing can function as means to equalize cultural representations in forensics or otherwise. Agosto, Hughes-Hassell, & Gilmore-Clough (2003) argued that literary representations of intersectionality are *still* difficult to find in modern fiction and non-fiction. This literature is not as likely to be published or available in "credible" places. Conquergood (2000) stated that writing a textual history of a marginalized experience sheds light on disenfranchised discourses. In forensics, members of marginalized groups have an opportunity to express a perspective or cultural experience that is often ignored in the public sphere. Miller-Rassulo (1988) stated that "competitors who compromise our individual events constituency increasingly include students who possess varied life experiences and desire to impact others in every aspect of the communication beyond competitive forensics" (p. 13). Because literature is not as varied as life experience, writing and sharing those stories can function as a subversive act to include a discourse of difference into an overwhelmingly homogenous landscape of forensic competition. Pelias and Van Oosting (1987) argued that practitioners of performance studies embrace *all* modes of available discourse. In this framing of literary discourse, home-writes could provide a critical perspective and revelatory performance for the student performer. Lauth (2010) offered "As educators we have to ask ourselves a simple question, do we want students to show us the paintings of others, or do we want to hand them a brush and let them paint?" (p. 90).

In many ways this question elucidates much of where someone sides in the “What Qualifies as Interp” debate”. Although Endres (1991) described original material as a shortcut to pedagogical practices in forensics, this new conceptualization of home-written material functions as a different form of pedagogical practice in forensics.

Embodiment of Performance.

When a text is performed it takes on a different light derived almost completely from the perspective of the performer. In this way the physical body of the performer becomes a new way to read the text. Littlefield, Canevello, Egersdorf, Saur, Stark, and Wynia (2001) summed “Oral interpretation is perhaps the best way to show appreciation of the literature, to bring it to life, and to understand the author’s intent” (p. 46). However, when a text is performed it takes on a new performance identity that is inherently different from what the author intended. The performance is more of a representation of the interpreter than the author. Dimock (2008) debated the standard of author’s intent through by examining the work of semiotician Roland Barthes. Barthes (1977) argued that once a text is narrated it loses its’ voice of origin, in terms of forensics, once a script is performed it is then inherently detached from the script and contextualized by the audience through the performance. The words act as symbols that make sense to the audience as they are spoken and performed. Nonverbal movement in many ways fills in the gaps of words on paper. This harkens back to Fox’s (2007) *Skinny Bones.* The text is not merely the words the student is performer but also the student themselves and how they embody the text. This frame of text moves competitive interpretation farther away from the oral tradition and closer to a critical performance studies frame, where the performance of a script is not only performed but evaluated as an embodiment of a text.

Forensic competition differs from oral interpretation literature in the de-emphasis of script and the emphasis of performance. Holloway et. al, (1983) asserted that “A good oral interpreter should be able to build images; the good oral interpreter should be able to weave a spell without the use of vocal or physical gymnastics or devices outside the self” (p. 45). Subtlety and ingenuity are key in this framing of oral interpretation. Rossi and Goodnow (2006) argued that the physicalization of performance limits audience involvement: “competitive interpreters often pantomime specific actions for which the text calls, leaving little to the imagination of the audience.” (p. 52). However, the authors never problematize this physical rendering of the text. In many instances moving into a more physical performance can offer a different, more complex way for the audience to imagine a scene. I contend that the initial assumption to judge forensics free from cultural underpinnings means to promote an impossible tabula rasa paradigm in interpretation. Physicalization of a performance introduces a new text into interpretation; the body. Regarding the body as a signifier of evaluation in forensics is a shift *towards* a performance studies paradigm. Boal (1979) theorized that the first step in theatrical production is knowledge and control of the body. The body is thus a medium and filter of corporeal expression. Butler (2004) stated “The body has its invariably public dimensions constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere” (p. 436). Cultural values are materially embodied by the adherence to socially constructed norms, yet they also serve as a theatrical site to process and critique socially constructed norms. Incorporating more unique body movement can allow for different movement to be seen and experienced by an audience. In this way embodying a text is better than antiquated oral interpretation approach. It demonstrates an increased understanding of nonverbal communication as a mode of cultural performance. A student cannot just perform as a “gay man” very long before judges begin to comment on that student’s cursory understanding of a gay man, and demand more. In this way physicalized performances of literature in forensic competition incorporate an improved understanding of how culture signifiers can and are performed. Forensic performance functions as gateway to understanding not only how the body moves, but also how the body communicates.

Conclusion

Brennan (2010) probably contextualized the most off-putting aspect of evaluating "good interp" in forensic competition: "it is difficult to define- you just know it when you see it" (p. 86). Interp evaluation exists in a murky terrain. It is clearly contested waters that are often difficult to navigate. Therefore, it is crucial for forensic scholars to push forensic interpretation further. Croucher (2006) called for increased individual events research in order to bring more legitimacy to our field. If performance scholars are establishing the standard for what qualifies performance than we will always be defending our field instead of progressing. Formulating more links to the communication discipline is critical to the future of forensic scholarship and the pedagogical practice of performance studies offers ample opportunity for our field.

The more we normalize pedagogical practices in the activity of intercollegiate forensics and begin to bridge the gap between practice and theory, the more ties we have to scholars within our departments and field. The forensic activity can do this by embracing the rhetoric of performance studies, whether performance studies scholars or forensic judges are welcome to the idea or not. Rossi and Goodnow, 2006, Lauth 2010, and myself conclude that forensic interpretation could and should be renamed "performance" of literature. This would signify a shift for forensic pedagogies more grounded in performance theory. The ways in which the events are performed and evaluated have begun to take on more of a performance studies paradigm that should be met head-on by the forensic community. Although intercollegiate forensics is not explicitly the pedagogy of performance theory, it *does* introduce students to the language and application of performance studies in a unique way that is beneficial for developing both academic fields.

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Special Section – Critical Thought in the Age of Forensics

Bruce Wickelgren, Editor of the *National Forensic Journal*

Like any organization, the National Forensic Association recognizes that change is vital to the growth of any institution. My view of NFA includes one that suggests that the members are open to new ideas from the community, yet, as we can see through ongoing debates about how to improve the pedagogical goals of this organization, change is never easy.

At the 2012 NFA national tournament, the body of the organization decided to run an experimental event called Forensic Criticism. One of the goals of the experimental event was to create a stage for analysis of the activity directly to the students. As the editor of the journal I was excited to see a scholarly approach to the understanding of our discipline, one that allowed healthy discussion of what it is we do. Normally, I saw these conversations taking place in public spaces like our semi-annual meetings and developmental conferences, and private spaces when participants in the activity sat around sharing coffee and stories. The introduction of Forensic Criticism as an event elevated discussion of the activity to another public forum and created dialogue about what it is we do.

As a critical scholar, I was excited to see the organization take these steps. The chance to extend these discussions led to the decision to open the journal to texts of speeches that students had written that offer a critical perspective of the activity. This style of writing makes the transition from an oral form to a written form daunting; therefore, the pieces in this issue are published in their original manuscript format, containing oral citations rather than in-text citations, so as to preserve their original format. I include these ideas to explain the text that you see here are as a representation of an oral text. This means that they have orally referenced their sources. I decided that to turn these into APA manuscripts would take us even further away from the intent of the original activity.

The manuscripts were submitted and reviewed by the journal's Review Board. Two performances were done in competition at the National Forensic Association tournament in 2011 and we have manuscripts submitted by Katie Donovan of Rice University (please note that Ms. Donovan's speech includes an appendix with visual representations of visual aids she used in competition) and Jaime Bingham and Kylia Goodner of Berry College. Another speech used in Rhetorical Criticism at the 2010 NFA nationals comes to us from Illinois State University competitor Stephanie Orme (Donjon).

The Success Gap

Katie Donovan, Rice University

When Lisa Uhrig, Cathie Craig and Ruth Brisbain won Impromptu, ADS and Persuasive at the 1971 National Forensics Association National Tournament, the forensics community breathed a collective sigh of relief. These women had won three of the six events the NFA offered at the time. Apparently, the lack of women in the activity had been solved. Over the next several decades teams were encouraged to diversify and include more women. However, while these efforts brought women into the activity, they failed to create a culture of equal success between men and women in forensics. Instead, we have considered the issue solved and have turned a blind eye to the success gap women still face in forensics. We owe it to our activity to first, examine the modern problem of discrimination and how it hinders women in forensics, second, detail the causes within our activity that perpetuate this gap, before finally identifying solutions that give all competitors an equal opportunity for success, not just participation.

Resolving gender discrimination requires more than simply "add women and stir." Our desire to move past gender discrimination has created a success gap in our activity: we let women compete, but we don't let them do well. I analyzed the AFA-NIET results from 2009, '10 and '11. For the nine individual events recognized by both the AFA and NFA, I compared the number of women in prelims and outrounds, and then compared these numbers to the total number of people competing in each level. These percentages reveal how often women break in an event, relative to their presence in that event. Because only data from outrounds of the 2011 NFA national tournament is publically available, I compared that data to the corresponding AFA data to ensure that the results were similar between the organizations. Overall, this data shows two distinct trends: first, that there is an overall gap between the number of women who compete in an event and the amount of women who break in that event, and second, that this gap is worsening in the events where the speaker issues a call to action.

First, of the nine events considered, only rhetorical criticism and informative speaking did not have a significant bias against women. However, in Extemp, Impromptu, ADS, Persuasive, DI, Prose and POI there is at least a gap of at least 11% between the number of women in prelims and the number of women in outrounds. In this chart (Female Participation Gap), each bar represents the percentage of women who competed in prelims of that event. The red indicates the percentage of outround competitors who are women. The blue is the success gap between those percentages. That means that although 53% of the people competing in DI in 2011 were women, women made up only 37% of those who broke in DI. That's a 16% gap. In Prose, it's 12%, in ADS it's 18%, in Extemp and Impromptu it's 21%, and in Persuasive it's 22%.

The distribution of this gap leads us to our second trend: this success gap is worsening in the events where the credibility of the speaker matters most. Extemp, Impromptu, Persuasive and ADS have the largest gaps and the worst trends over time. As you can see (AFA-NIET Success Gap), all of these events have a success gap hovering around 20% and all have had steep increases in this gap over the past three years. This trend held for this year's AFA as well, with Persuasive ringing in with a gap of 17%. These events rely upon speakers being perceived as logical, assertive and credible so that the audience is moved to take action and reconsider their view of the world. That judges consistently reject women within these events suggests that this success gap is part of a larger cultural assumption about the ability—or inability— of women to be effective public speakers. Gender discrimination in forensics is not the archaic practice we believe it to be.

It takes more than gender to be a national champion. Yet, this modern form of gender discrimination is so widespread that we must examine the causes for the success gap in forensics. There are two: implicit audience bias, and lack of awareness.

First, audience members have biases that fall along gender lines. As a community, we have explored these judging biases since Lisa, Cathie and Ruth first became national champions. Bruce Manchester and Sheryl Friedley found in 1987 that "male judges were more likely to rank males higher in [public address] events" and "rank males considerably higher in the limited preparation events." Leah White confirmed in 1997 that "male judges rank male competitors higher than female competitors in both extemporaneous and impromptu speaking." In 1974, Cheris Kramer noted that "as a whole, people don't like to hear women's voices telling them things." In 1989, John Murphy documented that women who succeed in forensics are often trained to imitate men by lowering their voices and speaking at a slower rate to minimize the "feminine" traits that irritate judges. This preference exists beyond forensics. The January 2012 Journal of Evolution and Human Behavior notes that people of both genders prefer political candidates with deeper voices. These biases combine to predispose judges to see female competitors as less authoritative, compelling and effective, and judges convey those perceptions onto their ballots.

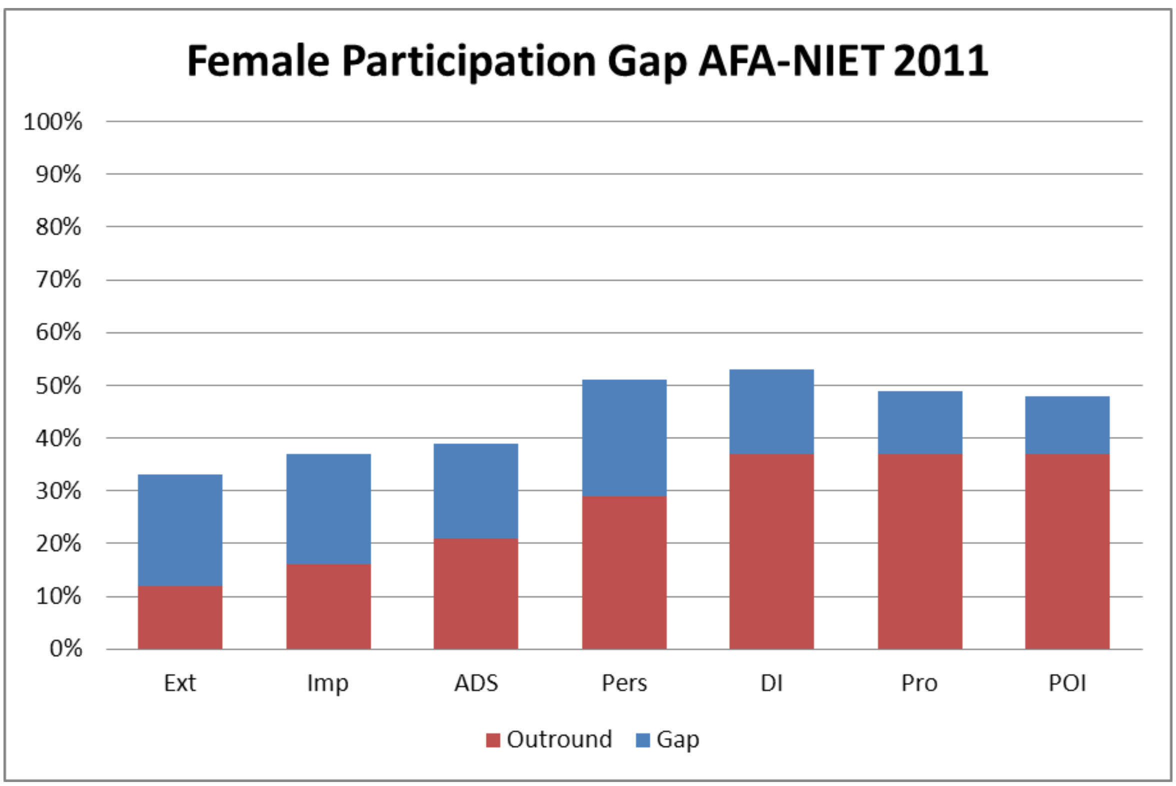
Second, we as a community are unaware of how deeply this bias is ingrained. We see women in out-rounds and winning championships, so we assume that all is well when it comes to gender in forensics. However, this superficial assumption has allowed our community to consistently ignore the complexity surrounding the success of women in this activity. That ignorance has systematically denied women the success they deserve. While women continue to face a success gap in forensics, the newest research examining the forensics success gap is almost eight years old. As a community, we have become complacent. We see ourselves as more equal than debate and think this lets us off the hook. However, this lack of academic and personal interest in examining our progress on issues of gender has left everyone blind to the discriminatory bias they unknowingly bring to their ballots.

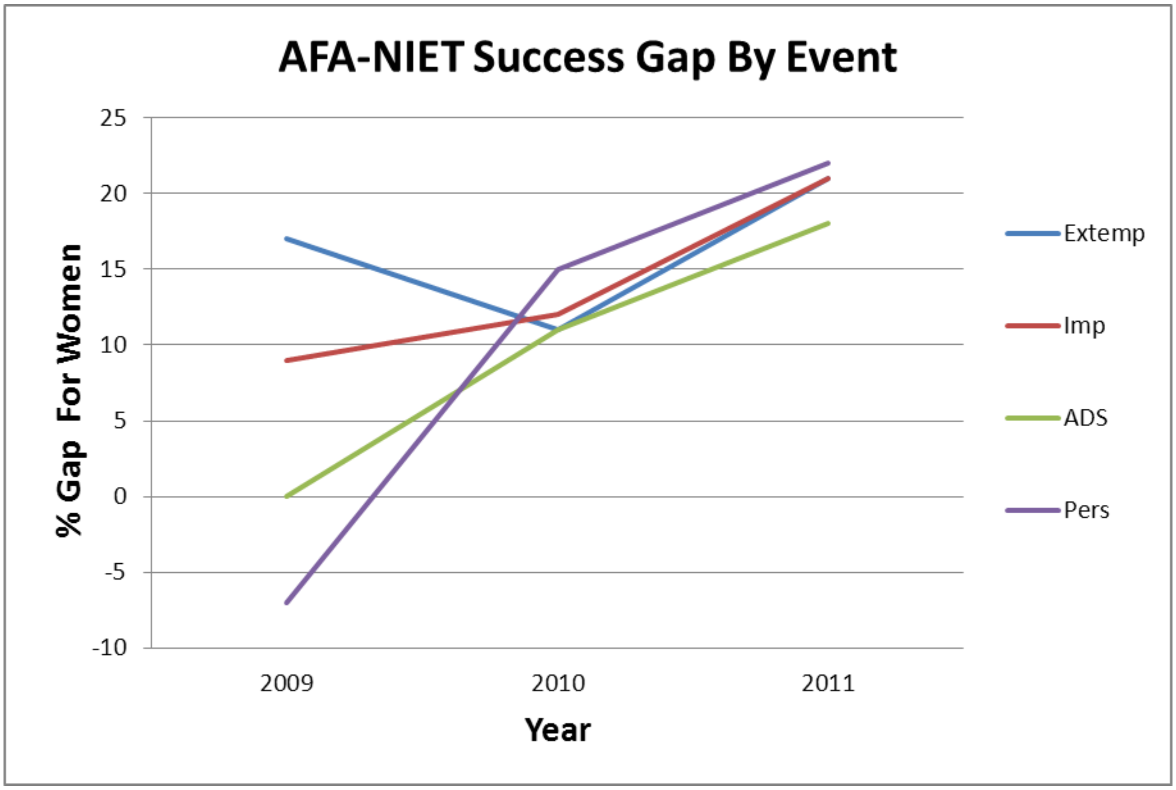
All forensics competitors deserve to be evaluated by judges who appraise their speech content and presentational style without relying on gendered assumptions. As a community, we have the power to make this change through solutions on the organizational and individual level.

First, we can petition our organizations to address the success gap on a national level. Contact the editors of forensics journals and ask them to solicit articles on this issue, or even offer special editions of their journals devoted to this inequality. This speech is being submitted for publication, but my analysis is just the tip of the iceberg. These organizations issued calls for diversity and inclusion within the activity in the past; now it's time that they call for us to re-evaluate our prejudice so that forensics can better lead the nation into the future.

Second, we as competitors should demand fairness of ourselves and of each other. Being members of the forensics community doesn't preclude us from cultural socialization, but it does offer an opportunity to reflect upon and change those preconceptions. When you judge or watch rounds, try Kenneth Burke's perspective by incongruity: imagine the speaker is a different gender, then think about how that would change your evaluation of the speaker. Would they still be talking too fast? Would their voice really bother you? Would they still seem too aggressive? Being aware of our biases is the first step to removing the power they hold, so don't be afraid to question yourself as a judge or audience member.

Thirty years after Lisa, Cathie and Ruth won their national championships, we are still struggling to address the success gap facing women in forensics. The data show that we still tend to "add women and stir," confusing participation with success. By examining how this success gap is playing out in today's world, detailing what we as a community have done to cause it, and identifying ways we can end this discrimination, we have the opportunity to transform forensics. Forensics prides itself on its social awareness and personal advocacy, so let's live up to our rhetoric and finally make gender discrimination a thing of the past.




AFA-NIET Success Gap By Event
25
20
15
10
5
0
-5
-10
% Gap For Women
2009
2010
2011
Year
Extemp
Imp
ADS
Pers

Small World: A Forensic Dialectic

Jamie Bingham and Kylia Goodner, Berry College

B: A forensic dialectic

J: with apologies to Plato

K: (Humming "It's a Small World.")

J: According to the 2009 Collins English Dictionary Complete and Unabridged 10th edition, "Insular – adjective

1. Of, relating to, or resembling an island…"

K: Welcome to Forensics Island, may the odds be ever in your favor

J: 2. "Remote, detached or aloof…" like Mitt Romney

3. "Illiberal or narrow minded… "like Rick Santorum

4. "Isolated or separated…" like Ron Paul

B: It's a small world after all.

J: So today, in order to better understand the pervasive insularity choking the body forensic, we will first of all -

K No we won't! This is a new potentially creative event. Why don't we build our organization around the events we're criticizing – then tack on a solution step because the rules say we need one.

J: But that's not organized.

K: Yes it is. It's just not the organizational set up prescribed by ballot-wielding zealots, (to judges) not you of course, forcing their own narrow, unwritten rule of arrangement on the rest of us.

J: But that's preview prejudice! You're an anti-forensics style bigot!

K: Who's the one forcing a narrow latitude of acceptance on the rest of us? And a preview statement – well it usually makes good sense to have one, but what happens when we get to forcing forensics templates on what areas of analysis must be? It's kills creativity and rewards mediocrity. Jumpin' hegemony Batman, we hate it when people do that with the Constitution or the Bible, but when it comes to the unwritten rules of forensics, we delight in forcing our own narrow view of acceptability often with no justification other than “that’s the way it’s always been done.” How else do you explain judges mandating a teaser in interp? It certainly isn’t in the written rules – but try going without one.

J: So, we’re like forensics Pharisees and Jesus said “woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Ye blind guides which strain at gnats and swallow a camel.”

K: Yes, except we’re more likely training for nats and smoking camels.

J: No one smokes camels anymore

K: OK, Prepping for nats and humping like camels.

J: Do camels really hump? I mean I guess they do.

K: I was referring to their unique physiology.

J: Oh.

(Open books.)

K: “Who is the judge?

J: The judge is God:

K: Why is he God?
J: Because he decides whether I win or lose, not my opponent.
K: Who is your opponent?
J: He doesn't exist.
K: Why does he not exist?
J: Because he is just a mere dissenting voice to the truth I speak.” *

(Close books.)

* (quoted from 2007 film, “The Great Debaters,” screenplay by Robert Eisele).

K: Take public address for instance. Please take it

J: The following excerpts are cleverly arranged rantings taken from Dr. Randy Richardson’s paper, “Problems in After-Dinner Speaking: Ranting into the New Millennium,” presented at the 1999 National Communication Association Convention.

(Open books.)

K: “Forensics critiques rarely mention word choice or speech writing in general. The evaluation of language choice seems to be a foreign language to judges preoccupied with a plethora of tallies-source counts, stumble counts, gesture counts, forensics reference counts, etc… “

J: “Counting sources may be useful. However, formulating judging criteria from arbitrary source requirements reflects a shallow, checklist mentality in judges who would rather attend to pre-fabricated, easy to assemble, mobile home style, follow the blueprint speeches instead of building a habitat for humanity on the foundation of ideas. The problem is that when Billy Bob shows up in prelims of the real world there are twisters with his trailer park written all over them. The checklist won’t keep him from being blown away. “

K: “We have created a polishpalooza, which we routinely confuse with creativity.”

J: “Our ballots suggest that no one is listening to content anyway.”

K: “Narrow judging paradigms and paint by number cookie cutter approaches reward imitation over imagination.”

J: “I care about as much about your problem-solution obsession as I do about Tinkie-Winky’s sexual preferences. Your hang up should have nothing to do with my practice. Unless of course, I am your therapist. Which I am not, but if I was, I would suggest, ‘ get over it Oedipus, she’s already married to your dad.’”

(Close books.)

K: And what about persuasion?

K: Don’t get me wrong, I’m no fan of Nazi’s. But our blind devotion to a single organizational pattern seems, almost, well Fascist,

J: Problem. Cause. Solution. Heil!

K: And now many are forcing it on ADS as well.

J: Impromptu isn’t impromptu.

K: Extemporaneous isn’t extemporaneous

J: And what about POI?

B: Who cares – not at NFA (Page turn.)

J: Rhet crit - who mandated the circular begging – the question research question?

K: And who mandated that you have to slow down like Mr. Rogers or Al Gore speaking to a group of second graders when you state the damn thing?

J: But if you don't those judges have got you. Because you're not doing something that they teach their students to do. Or, you're not wearing something that they teach their students to wear. Or you're not over enunciating the way they teach their students to over enunciate.

K: Jumpin' hegemony, caped crusader, that sounds ridiculously robotic to real audiences.

J: Of course it does, Phaedrus, but when the insular concerns of an intellectually caged community dominate any reasonable standards of performative or educative acceptability, then Geekspeak will prevail. Consider how students in communication classes react to NFA DVDs. It calls into question all of our hard work.

J: (Humming it's a small world after all)

K: But it doesn't make sense. In so many ways the forensics community is so loving and kind and accepting. I know lots of students who have struggled with teasing and tormenting and even worse forms of oppression, who find a nonjudgmental home in forensics.

J: Ironic isn't it? That a community that is so loving and progressive when it comes to accepting all kinds of people, can be so narrow-minded and judgmental when a student steps to the front of the room wearing the wrong colors, or holding the wrong color book, or God forbid beginning an interp piece without a teaser.

K: Which brings us to interp:

J: Yeah, what about POI

B: Who cares, not at NFA (Page turn.)

(To the tune of the Pussycat Dolls, "Don't Cha," 2005.)

"Don't cha wish your book tech was hot like me
Don't cha wish your pages could pop like me
Don't cha?
Don't cha baby?

Need more book tech (need more book tech)
You know you do (you know you do)
That's why whenever you turn that page
you need to pop it like me (Pop it like me)
Need more emotion (need more emotion)
That's easy to see (Easy to see)

And when you flip that page
You now it should be clean, so clean

Don't cha wish your book tech was hot like me
Don't cha wish your pages could pop like me
Don't cha? (Jamie walks to judges)
Don't cha baby?"

(Close books.)

K: The point is, we've developed a check-list, template form of coaching and judging which works against many of the original educational goals of forensics – like creativity, critical thinking and argumentative development

K: Like our educational system, we have developed easily identifiable check-list templates which teach to the test, but miss the larger considerations of a fully-contextualized education. And so, we are all left behind, unless our world suddenly needs snappy book tech or canned impromptu examples.

J: (Sitting with judges: comments should be dispersed within Kylia's monologous) kinda preachy. Very heavy- handed. Do you have a source for this? Avoid offending your judges. Who are you to delineate educational goals or forensics? Work on book tech. Nice shoes.

J: But can't we find solutions on a governmental and personal level? Can't we write letters to judges, or start a website, or sign a petition calling for the end of inane forensics insularity?

K: Great idea Socrates, where did you learn to think so deeply?

J: I'm not sure. Sometimes brilliance just comes to me. So today, we have discussed the problems and solution of forensics insularity. I'd like to leave you with the inspiring words of Miss Teen South Carolina.

K: (In background) Listen. Please listen. Please stop the devolution of forensics education. We've got to reconnect with real world communications education. Listen please listen. Our forensics world is a small world, but it doesn't have to be. We could be leading academics in real, hands on, educational engagement.

J: "I personally believe that US Americans are unable to do so, because some people out there in our nation don't have maps. And I believe that our education like such as in South Africa, and the Iraq and everywhere like such as. And I believe that they should, our education over here in the US should help the US or should South Africa and should help the Iraq and Asian countries so we will be able to build up our future, for us."

B: It's a small, small world.

Performance Key: B=Both

J=Jamie Bingham

K= Kylia Goodner

Questions Surrounding Questions: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Use of Research Questions in Academic Writing

Stephanie Orme, Suffolk University

Monday through Thursday, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown is mandated to set aside an hour in which he publicly responds to questions posed by members of Parliament. Government backbenchers strategically write questions that, given their party, will allow the Prime Minister to either discuss the virtues of a policy or attack it. Hence, even the most seemingly innocuous questions can be laced with rhetorical intent. However, these leading questions often appear in places we least expect them—like research questions. Surprisingly, the use of research questions in academic writing has received almost no scholarly attention. In fact, the only study that has been conducted on research questions is a 1994 article that was limited to medical journals. But more recently, Kenneth Hyland performed a study of all forms of questions, found across multiple types of academic texts, and discovered that questions are most commonly used by authors seeking to lure the audience to the author's viewpoint, limiting the potential for critical evaluation. Unfortunately, his study failed to examine the role that the *research* question plays in this discourse. The fact that researchers have begun to question the potentially unethical use of questions in research, and that the research question has become an increasing presence in all scholarly rhetorical criticism– including 99% of the speeches you will see this year– the use of the research question in a venue that has traditionally avoided it merits investigation. So in order to explore the objectivity and academic effectiveness of research questions in our field, I performed a content analysis of top rhetoric journals using Hyland's method for analyzing questions found in the article "What do they mean? Questions in Academic

Writing," published in the 2005 edition of *Discourse Studies*. Because Hyland explores the definitive characteristics of different types of questions as they appear throughout the genre of academic texts, it is perfect for our analysis. So we'll begin by examining Hyland's methodology, then we'll apply it to some leading communication journals, and finally, we'll draw some critical conclusions.

Hyland conducted an analysis of over two hundred academic texts, including journals from eight disciplines, fifty-six textbook chapters, and sixty-four undergraduate papers. After doing so he set forth a methodology for analyzing questions in academic writing. He argues that one can understand the functions and impacts of questions by placing them into one of two categories: (1) questions that frame the discourse and (2) non framing questions.

First, questions that frame the discourse set the agenda for the discussion. They are written with not just a question in mind, but also with a fore-knowledge of the answer. Authors utilize authoritative discourse, distinguishing themselves as the expert, and the audience as the novice. While these questions engage the audience, they cast the author as the superior in a one-way transfer of knowledge. For example, a philosophy textbook asked: "Think of yourself as an obvious example of a person. What are the characteristics that make you a person?" By adopting almost patronizing language, the author asserts themselves as an expert with the answer and can therefore manage the structure of the argument and the flow of information. In other words, the framing questions are like a road map, guiding the audience from one thought to the next, while discouraging any detours —intentionally restricting other possible interpretations of the research.

Second, whereas questions that frame the discourse rely on the pedagogic model of expert-to-novice knowledge transfer, non-framing questions seek to create a more egalitarian relationship. Hence, these questions are not asked *of readers*, but instead, on their behalf. For instance, a biology article asks: "Given the complexity of mycorrhizal functioning in the real world, is there any hope of understanding these systems well enough to manage them in forestry and agriculture?" Notice, the author does not assert superiority over their audience, but instead, draws upon the audience's own knowledge of the discipline, recruiting them as an equal partner in a collaborate intellectual effort.

Now that we understand Hyland's methodology for categorizing questions, we can examine the question's role in communication journals. I've spent the last year conducting a content-analysis of roughly five hundred journal articles published in five leading communication journals over the last five years. (This is why I sat alone at lunch in grade school.) All research questions found were then coded according to Hyland's respective categories.

First, questions that frame the discourse, or set the agenda for discussion. These represented 92% of the total questions found. Broadly, they represented a clear effort to lead the audience to a specific, biased conclusion. An article in the November 2007 *Western Journal of Communication*, included the research questions: "Why did Bush's speeches fail as constitutive rhetoric?" and "What rhetorical opportunities are afforded by the failure of constitutive rhetoric?" Through their strategic use of language – namely the repeated use of the phrase "failed rhetoric" – the author implants in the audience members' minds that Bush's speeches were, in fact, rhetorically flawed before engaging in the research. This means that interpretations of what constitutes "failed rhetoric" have been restricted to the author's definition, limiting the potential for discourse.

Second, non-framing questions. These were far less common, representing 8% of the total sample. One article in the May 2005 *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, asks: "But how does one account for the dismissiveness of more recent readings of earlier research on ideology? And how are we to understand our own, contemporary ''terministic screens'' when we approach this literature?" Rather than portraying themselves as superiors, these authors use inclusive language, framing their research questions as invitations for the audience to join their quest for answers, rather than be informed by the authors themselves – maintaining an egalitarian relationship that allows the audience to question the author's findings.

Now that are familiar with Hyland's categories of research questions, and have examined how rhetorical scholars employ them, we can examine three critical conclusions regarding academia and what this means for us as forensicators, who posit our own research questions every round.

First, these findings suggest the research question is oppressive in nature. In my study of the communication journals, the vast majority of the research questions were found to be framing questions that restrict critical thought. While Hyland notes research questions can sometimes be necessary for guiding an audience, specifically in scientific studies or when teaching an audience that is less experienced with the subject matter, because rhetoric journals are generally intended for academic peers, the discourse occurs between intellectual equals. Therefore, any attempt by authors to control the discourse with a research question is unnecessary, if not insulting, to their colleagues – creating an atmosphere that discourages critical thought.

Second, while oppressive research questions exist, most rhetoric journals don't subscribe to research questions at all. In fact, when conducting the content-analysis I was shocked to discover that less than 1% of the journal articles analyzed contained a research question. More often, authors would employ a hypothesis, which clearly states their intent from the beginning, implicitly inviting the reader to evaluate the arguments based on their own knowledge, without either side having unique authority. This is reminiscent of the Socratic Method, in which individuals engage in dialogue, assisting each other in finding answers. Hence, in promoting the Socratic Method amongst those who read journals – namely, higher level students and professional academics – rhetoric journals without research questions may be the most effective at advancing esteemed academic principles.

Finally, forensics norms have taught us to expect research questions; competitors, trying to meet the competitive expectations of the event, will often craft a research question as an afterthought, when it should have been the guiding force for the research. In his article "Forensics in the Year 2000: Competition v. Educational Values," Hamm Durell warns that we must be wary when the competitive side of forensics overshadows its educational goals. If we want to ensure forensics provides an educational experience, we need to re-evaluate the use and effectiveness of the research question. I'm not saying we have to abolish the research question altogether, but if we do use questions, we need to make sure they are used ethically. Or competitors can use a hypothesis, which accomplishes the same objective as a research question, but engages the audience more ethically. Regardless, we need to reevaluate the research question to ensure that forensics is more than just how we spend our weekends, keeping in mind that many of us are preparing for academic careers.

So today, we examined Hyland's methodology on questions in academic text, applied it to the use of research questions in prominent communication journals, and finally drew some critical conclusions that force us to re-examine the role of questions in rhetorical research in and out of forensics. We as members of the forensics community comprise some of the brightest minds in the country and much of the future of communication research. Therefore, it is our responsibility to question our own use of questions.