Etic vs. Emic Values in the Culture of Forensics

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Descriptive linguist Kenneth Pike (1947) uses the terms "etic" and "emic" to refer to concepts which either universally apply across cultural boundaries (etic) or are more narrowly meaningful within a particular human community (emic). These terms can be employed in the discussion of a wide array of topics, and are highly useful in the discussion of value systems (Lustig, 1988). This paper seeks to identify and evaluate the values which are significant within a particular emic cultural community (intercollegiate forensics) in relation to the values professed by larger emic and etic communities which overarch the microculture of competitive forensics. A number of values associated with subsuming emic communities (most particularly the academic field of speech communication and U.S. educational institutions in general) as well as universal etic values are considered vis-à-vis the teaching and practice of intercollegiate forensics.

It is impossible to think, choose, or act without drawing on and attempting to reify the value systems we subscribe to. The act of communication is inherently and unavoidable a value-laden and value-asserting enterprise. As Richard Weaver (1970) pointedly reminds us, "language is sermonic" – and every human enterprise accordingly scaffolds itself on the bedrock of values. The forensics enterprise is bound by this unavoidable truth. Thus, Hinck (2003) avows that "our instructional choices as teachers, coaches, and judges – consciously or not – reflect our values. Therefore, we should strive to become aware of our assumptions about the nature of our practices and critically evaluate them to ensure our competitive activities serve educational ends" (p. 67).

As members of the forensics community, our discussions of values have often defined the theoretical construct labeled "values" rather loosely. Instead of strictly adhering to the definition of this term generally accepted by psychologists, we have tended to conflate "values" with other theoretical constructs such as "attitudes," "beliefs," "skill sets," "advantages vs. disadvantages of competing," and so on. Technically, values can be defined as enduring generalizations which reside at the center of our cognitive systems. They are normative and evaluative in function, and can be either terminal (end-states we seek) or instrumental (the means by which we achieve those end states) in nature. Values tend to predict attitudes, which are the sum of all our relevant beliefs (valenced positively or negatively and multiplied by salience) about any given concept/object. Beliefs, meanwhile, are simply the acceptance of object-attribute links and tell us what traits are and are not associated with any given concept/object. Often when we talk about "forensic values," we really end up talking about the attitudes we see in or believe are promoted by the activity, or even about beliefs that forensicators tend to hold. Beyond this, we very often talk not about the values in forensics but rather about the value of forensics, focusing on the various benefits that we believe participants in the activity can derive from it. Put together, this makes for a somewhat confusing playing field when we try to focus on the topic of "forensic values" as such.

This confusion is further exacerbated when we consider the difference between "the good" and "the right." This distinction is based on the premise that conflicts can arise between overriding universal moral principles and the particular rules we enact to concretize or enforce those principles. For example, when Prince Gautama discovered that there was evil in the world, he was torn between obeying "the right" (the laws which bound him to his wife, his children, and his royal duties) and "the good" (the moral imperative to search for answers to the evil in the world. Gautama chose to abandon his home and family (to violate "the right") in order to seek deeper truths (the "good") – and in the process, he became the Buddha. Humans constantly face this dilemma of choosing between "higher laws" and "concrete rules" – and thus, strict "rule-following" is not always the most ethically ideal choice.

Clearly, the question of values and ethics is a stunningly complex one. Yet, because the issues at stake here are crucial ones, we need to directly address the question of values in forensics. In particular, we (like members of all communities) need to examine the values construct at the deepest possible level. As noted by British scientist Jacob Bronowski (1953), "the values by which we are to survive are not rules for just and unjust conduct, but are those deeper illuminations in whose light justice and injustice, good and evil, means and ends are seen in fearful sharpness of outline." Values are ultimately the wellspring of our survival – or our demise.

The present essay is a very preliminary attempt at investigating the extremely broad topic of values in forensics. Its goal is twofold: first, to identify values as they are avowed and practiced on the emic level by the forensics community; and second, to begin considering how forensic values do or do not mesh with the values espoused by some of the other emic and etic communities forensics participates in.

It is my hope that this brief introduction to the question can open the door to more detailed and incisive qualitative and quantitative research into some of the particular issues whose general outlines are raised here.

In order to provide a general structure for this essay, we will discuss value clusters according to the partitioning terms provided by Hofstede (2001). After collecting data from multinational corporations with employees in more than forty countries, Hofstede derived a set of factors (originally four, later five) which identified the communication qualities associated with various types of cultures. These factors (which can be thought of as value continuums) include: (1) individualism/collectivism, (2) masculine/feminine, (3) power-distance (high vs. low distances), (4) uncertainty avoidance (high need to avoid uncertainty vs. low need to do so), and (5) long vs. short term orientation. We will consider each of these continuums in turn, briefly defining each and then considering how values which arguably fall within each "play out" in the various emic and etic communities we are concerned with. Neither end of any of these continuums is necessarily "good" or "bad" as such. However, any position we assume on each continuum connects us to (or disconnects us from) not only particular personal and social benefits and costs, but also unites us with or separates us from other emic and etic communities.

In the following discussion, the phrase "the forensics community" (or similar references) should be understood as referring to the set of people and patterns which (in the author's experience, and as reflected in our published research literature) are most in evidence on the "national circuit." The values of this "community" unquestionably vary greatly from region to region, between schools affiliated with different national organizations, over time, across participants, and so on. This essay presumes a sort of "national norm" which constitutes a single level of emic analysis, and hastens to note that all of the generalizations drawn here will apply with greatly varying degrees of relevance to the individual programs and participants who together compose that "community."

Individualism-Collectivism Dimension

Dodd (1998) explains that "individualism concerns personal achievement. In contrast, collectivist cultures are those that emphasize community, groupness, harmony, and maintaining face (p. 92)." Perhaps surprisingly, while we call our activity "individual events," our values seem to cluster more toward the collectivist side of this continuum.

Individual events are clearly "individualistic" in that they place a high priority on personal achievement. However, this individual success takes place within a team framework, and the values which competitors must adhere to in order to achieve individual success are in fact relatively communal in nature. We talk about forensics teams, and every awards assembly culminates in the passing out of team awards. Recognizing this, Hinck (2003, p. 62) labels the activity a "collective effort," and underscores the similarity between competitive forensics and team sports by quoting Duke head basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski (1993, p. L9): "What better place to learn about trust, teamwork, integrity, friendship, commitment, collective responsibility (emphasis added), and so many other values….Where better to learn to work with other people…?" The communal spirit affects all aspects of a team's operation. Hinck (2003) points out that "[t]ournaments feature multiple rounds of competition over the course of a season and require students to function as a team providing support, encouragement, peer coaching, and cooperation in preparing for competition by contributing to Extemp files, debate research, and practice speeches (p. 65)."

This focus on the communal has obvious value implications. Dodd (1998) clarifies Hofstede's construct by noting that "one could expect a great deal more assertive behavior, self-disclosure, and other personal-advancement issues to arise in an individualistic culture. On the other hand, we could expect far more strategies of people pleasing, solidarity, relational issues, and face saving to occur in a collective culture" (p. 92).

One collectivist value that predominates in the forensics community is the group's demand for "professionalism." Paine and Stanley (2003) explain that forensicators adhere to an unwritten "professional code of behavior" that affects virtually every aspect of the values/attitudes/beliefs (particularly as expressed in behavior) manifested at tournaments. This professional code creates a highly "formal" structure for tournament behavior. This code regulates, for example, what clothes to wear, what exact phrases to use when entering or leaving a round of competition, how much to clap and in what way and who to clap for at awards assemblies, what reactions can be made to posted results, and so on. Participants who do not agree with or wish to violate this code tend to be sanctioned by others, and are more likely to drop out of the activity. Individual quirks are suppressed, group expectations are paramount. On more than one occasion, I have witnessed on my own team the aftermath of an individual member's violation of some sub-clause of this code: infractions (for example, displaying negative emotions when postings go up) have too often been followed by the private-space response of one or more team members "descending on" the violator with demands that similar "unacceptable displays of unprofessionalism" never happen again. This call for professionalism extends (in individual events) to a demand that participants display hyper-politeness to others at all times. Paying attention to others in rounds (never

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cleaning one's nails or falling asleep), avoiding "van talk" in public spaces, complimenting the work of others, displaying appreciation to judges, and so on are all aspects of this communal value. Again, students who do not wish to follow this group code find forensics an uncomfortable world. As noted by Paine and Stanley (2003), some "students complained that forensics requires people to be too 'proper' and too 'adult acting', although in one case a student complained that audiences were not professional enough" (p. 49).

The value of communalism can have many benefits. For example, Paine and Stanley (2003) point out based on their review of the extant literature that "students who see themselves as part of a 'team' (rather than primarily as individuals) demonstrate higher commitment levels" (p. 38). Yet our attachment to communalism can also serve to detach us from larger emic and etic communities. Aden (1991) argues that we need to conceptualize forensics as a liberal art (rather than a science-like "laboratory") and reminds us that "at its core, a liberal arts education is designed to produce individuals who are able to think independently rather than relying solely on existing knowledge. To a degree, a liberal education is the antithesis of a science education. The former emphasizes the discovery of answers within a person and thus, the answers vary....A liberal education empowers the individual..." (pp. 101-102). Accordingly, Aden goes on to cite the statement by Bailey (1984) that the goal of liberal education is to encourage students to "respect themselves and others, as rational and autonomous persons" (p. 137, emphasis added). Bartanen (1998) concurs with the importance of individualism to the liberal arts tradition, noting that one of the central learning goals of the liberal arts is what she terms "reflection." She explains that:

> Liberally educated persons have a distinctive way of thinking about themselves, others, and the world in which they live. They are more reflective, bringing to bear habits of critical, systemic, and comprehensive thinking. As critical thinkers, liberally educated individuals do not accept assertions easily. They develop the habit of seeking answers to the questions: "Why is that the case?" and "By what authority do we know?" They challenge the boundaries of knowledge and attempt to learn how much and what it is that they do not yet know. We often call them "independent" thinkers." (p. 3)

Yet, Bartanen does not reject communalism per se – rather, she maintains a position on this continuum which also notes the worth of collectivism, particularly as its practice can connect us to the larger emic community of culture. She notes that "[c]itizenleaders also learn to work cooperatively to solve problems and to employ teamwork to accomplish a

desired objective. They come to recognize that successful solutions involve concerted efforts, over time, often with some compromise among competing human needs" (p. 4). The question, then, is one of degree. In the balancing act between serving the individual and serving the group, the emic values of the forensics community imply that the individual is best served by meeting group expectations. The collective wisdom of the community at large is assumed to outweigh the particular insights of the individual.

Masculine-Feminine Dimension

Some would argue that Hofstede's terminology here, based as it is on a sweeping gender metaphor, is less than optimal. His definition for these constructs is explained by Dodd (1998), who notes that "Hofstede's masculine cultures are those that exhibit work as more central to their lives, strength, material success, assertiveness, and competitiveness....Feminine cultures are those that tend to...embrace traits of affection, compassion, nurturing, and interpersonal relationships" (p. 93).

Central to defining the value commitments of the forensics community relative to this dimension is the ongoing debate between "education" and "competition." Historically, forensics has wrapped itself in the mantle of education. Perhaps the most frequently cited reference in this regard is provided by McBath (1975) at the 1974 National Developmental Conference:

> Forensics is an educational activity primarily concerned with using an argumentative perspective in examining problems and communicating with people. An argumentative perspective on communication involves the study of reason giving by people as justification for acts, beliefs, attitudes, and values. From this perspective, forensics activities, including debate and individual events, are laboratories for helping students to understand and communicate various forms of argument more effectively in a variety of contexts with a variety of audiences. (p. 11)

We find in this quotation the seminal reference to forensics as a "laboratory," a metaphor which has given rise to much discussion in the years since.

On the one hand, the image of the laboratory can be seen as suggesting an open-minded search for new knowledge, a place where "objective facts" outweigh "individual preferences" and students are free to experiment, fail, learn, try again, and ultimately (hopefully) "succeed." However, inherent in this metaphor is the idea that there is ultimately one "right answer" – a "final Truth," a Platonic ideal, toward which questing students should strive. Thus, it can be argued that the laboratory metaphor supports a view of education which is substantively at odds with contemporary values of diversity and the embracing

of multiple perspectives. We will return to this issue at a later point. Here, we will focus first on the value of "competition" as a high priority in the forensics mindset.

Hofstede notes that "masculine" cultures value competition. And the importance of competition in forensics is more than obvious. Miller (2005) explains that "[t]o make a strong case for viewing the intercollegiate forensics community as a microculture, we need to examine the sharing of common values, beliefs, and practices. Common characteristics along these lines include the shared sense of the value of competition" (p. 3). We can examine at least one particular terminal value (end vs. process) and one specific instrumental value (hard work) in connection with our general valuation of competition.

If forensics is defined as an education-based activity, we might assume that the "process" of putting an competitive entry together (reading widely to find topics/scripts, analyzing materials, developing excerpting skills, developing writing skills, analyzing emotions, etc.) ought to be valued more than is the "end product" (the concrete performance) that process eventuates in. In fact, however, the evidence suggests that the forensics community values product much more than it does process (Friedley, 1992; Burnett, Brand, and Meister, 2003; Ribarsky, 2005). As one student stated on a survey conducted by McMillan and Todd-Mancillas (1991), one of the disadvantages of competing in forensics can be that it becomes "an end rather than a means in the educational process" (p. 10). Judges are able to evaluate only what they see in rounds, and so the end product becomes the ultimate litmus test of the process. Since the student's mind is ultimately a "black box" the judge cannot access, the judge relies on the evidence of the product itself to draw assumptions about how much the student has actually learned. There is no clean way to punish students or coaches who short-circuit the process. Of course, the process can be and is short-circuited in countless ways all the time. Coaches locate topics and scripts for students who thus avoid reading widely. Coaches help students locate and sort through research materials, greatly reducing the need for students to develop analytical and processing skills. Coaches get far too heavily involved in "editing" and "cleaning up" speech manuscripts. Students perform passages in certain ways because they are told "it'll work like this," while having limited if any real understanding of deeper theoretical issues which inform the choice. In a competitive world, where only the end product can be directly witnessed by judges, the process is all too easy to shortchange when competitors and/or their coaches focus on the tin trophy rather than the lifelong learning. One possible response to this situation, if we wish to direct more attention to the importance of process, would be make greater use of interactive dialogue and questions at tournaments. A wide array of options could be considered here. For example, we might restore the type of post-speech questions we used to incorporate into rounds of Rhetorical Criticism, employing such questions in any and all events (quite possibly as a part of the judging process). Or, we might institute post-presentation competitor-to-competitor questions (emulating the model used in some rounds of Extemporaneous Speaking). Even more radically, we might significantly modify tournament schedules to allow extended periods of time in which judges and/or contestants could discuss the content and/or delivery of each presentation with its presenter. In whatever format such conversations take place, they could potentially be helpful to both competitors and judges. Competitors would have the time and opportunity to further explain ideas and/or choices made in the presentation which audience members are confused by, have questions concerning the viability of, or simply wish to challenge. Judges could clarify questions or doubts they have in their minds before they make their final ranking decisions. The process by which each final presentation was constructed could be queried, explained, and analyzed much more clearly.

Today, however, acutely aware of the educational dangers associated with holding high the value of "product over process," forensicators continually assert their allegiance to the instrumental value of "hard work," which too often becomes a shibboleth to the community. When someone comes up to a coach and praises the work of one of their students, the most standard of responses is to say: "Thank you! She/he has worked so hard on that!" The assertion of great effort functions to reassure the praisegiver that a valuable process lies behind the viewed product. We argue that competitive success is the ultimate proof that hard work has taken place, asserting that no one can win unless they have worked hard first. Thus Hinck (2003) states that "[c]ompetition requires students to try, to win, to prepare for the competitive event and learn from the activities one engages in to compete. Competition motivates students to prepare in earnest, to practice with an eye toward improvement, and to set personal goals for improvement" (p. 62). In the end, Hinck believes, "[s]tudents that make better choices in constructing and delivering their speeches tend to enjoy more success than students who neglect these elements of preparation for competition" (p. 64). Undeniably, many coaches and students do work hard – very hard. And it cannot be denied that there is, in general, a clear relationship between "hard work" and "competitive success." But the link is not absolute. Many students work very hard and yet do not achieve substantial recognition. Other students do very little work and yet win a great number of awards. Thus, Paine and Stanley (2003) concluded that "coaches and judges who wish for proof that

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'hard work is its own reward' tend to be relatively disappointed by forensics" (p. 55). The disconnect-in-reality between the values of hard work and competitive success shakes one of the most basic value underpinnings of our community. In the words of Burnett, Brand and Meister (2003), "[i]n the forensics-as-education myth, the forensic hero is the forensic educator who works hard and whose students are competitively successful. The forensics community pays little or no explicit attention to the learning practices that the forensic educator incorporates. Here the forensic educator protects the virtue of education by coaching students to win awards" (p. 14).

Yet, while our valuation of competition pulls us toward the "masculine" end of this continuum, other facets of our activity incline toward the "feminine." Dodd (1998) notes that feminine cultures "embrace traits of affection, compassion, nurturing, and interpersonal relations" (p. 93). We see these values in evidence in our activity in a variety of ways. The "team" nature of forensics can powerfully bond forensicators (within and across squads) to each other. Thus, Paine and Stanley (2003) found that "having positive relationships with others is an important part of what makes forensics fun....relationships with teammates and people from other teams are important" (p. 44). The demanding code of etiquette referred to earlier, and the high valuation of collectivism more generally, also play a role here. Members of the community are expected to treat each other respectfully, politely, and supportively. Even judges who are too "negative" or "mean" on ballots can receive informal sanctions. Relationships built between coaches and students, between alumni and students, and among students themselves, typically prioritize the values of affection, compassion, and nurturing that Hofstede associates with "feminine" cultures. And beyond the bounds of the members of the forensics community alone, aspects of the activity function (or can function) to make participants more sensitive to and accepting of the viewpoints and values of others in general. For example, Burnett, Brand and Meister (2003) reference Muir's (1993) assertion that debate can provide a "moral education" for students as competition teaches them lessons which promote the values of tolerance and fairness. The promotion of this value can have important implications for one's citizenship, one's ability to participate in the larger emic community of country/culture. Encouraging us to cleave more tightly to this value (not yet fully embraced, but one which we can move toward), Bartanen (1998) argues that another of the learning goals central to the liberal arts is "connectedness." She explains that:

Just as a liberally educated person seeks to know herself, so she works to understand how all humans are connected to one another. This con-nectedness is built upon abilities to see and feel the world as others do, to work cooperatively, and to serve others. In their liberal arts education, students are invited to enlarge their view of the world. In particular, they are encouraged to value well-informed empathy....Liberally educated individuals also have an instinct for reform; they want to make the world – or at least some small piece of it – a better place. Perhaps because of their ability to look at situations systemically and to imagine realistically the needs and emotions of those affected, they work to serve others in some way. (p. 4)

Overall, the forensics community holds values that can be defined as both "masculine" and "feminine" in nature. However, at the same time that we note this, we need to raise two important issues. First, do we hold these values in a somewhat "bifurcated" way? It might be argued that masculine values tend to reflect the "terminal values" of our community (they represent the end states we wish to reach), while feminine values tend to operate more as "instrumental values" (the means by which we achieve the end state of competitive recognition). Second, we must consider the way all of these values guide our interactions internally within the community vs. externally as we communicate on different cultural levels (in relation to other emic and etic value systems). Which values do we emphasize when we describe our community to those outside it, such as departmental colleagues, campus administrators, program reviewers and so on? In our conversations with others, do we build a "masculine" or a "feminine" frame through which we invite them to view our work and our community? Since much of what external groups perceive about us is based on what we tell them, we must assume that the values we promote in our external-to-the-community messages have a decided impact on how our colleagues, schools, localities, and cultures understand and react to us. We need to think in more detail about the values that we avow in the internal vs. external communication patterns our community engages in.

Power-Distance Dimension

As explained by Dodd (1998), those groups who have "a high power index are said to accept inequality as the cultural norm. In other words, these cultures are vertical – that is, they are hierarchical cultures. People expect hierarchy, and authoritarian style communication is more common in these cases. We could expect...more formalized rituals signaling respect, attentiveness, and agreement" (p. 94).

It seems obvious that the forensics community constitutes a relatively high power distance culture. Competitive results are used by many to divide the "haves" from the "have nots," the "top dogs" from those at the other end of the chain. The previous

reputations of schools, competitors, and perhaps even coaches are undeniably factors in many judging decisions. Just like in any other form of "sport," the language we use reveals our hierarchical nature. When Team B beats Team A, we talk about an "upset." When one judge disagrees with two others, we call him or her a "squirrel." We look at the names on the blackboard and immediately view that section as a "stacked" or "weak" round. According to Aden (1991), the tendency to accept high power distances is inherent in the laboratory metaphor, since laboratories are "controlled, secretive, run by elites, sterile, and involve the manipulation of variables" (p. 100). Friedley (1989) argues that one of our primary ethical responsibilities is to ensure "equality, consistency, and a sense of 'fair play' within the competitive arena" (p. 84) – but our tendency to value power-distanced hierarchies clearly threatens this ideal. Aden (1991) notes that there have been "frequent worries about the lack of inclusivity in all forensics activities" (p. 100), and Bartanen (1997) stresses how crucial it is that we strive for more verticality and a less horizontal mindset. She reminds us that we can all recall "many moments in forensics education when students are offered opportunities to encounter difference, to understand other cultural perspectives, to consider their point of view in context….I think of students (especially beginners) traveling from the limited boundaries of their campuses to encounter and enjoy at regional tournaments the perspectives of many other students and coaches" (p. 5).

Internally within our community, we often think of competitive success as a ladder. Beginners are expected to start at the bottom, learn all the rules, slowly climb upward, until someday (with enough work and the right attitude) the day comes that they reach the "top of the pile." This quest for the most recent permutation of the competitive hierarchy does not presume an equal playing field. Previous experience, effort, school reputation, financial constraints, school location, coaching assistance, and a myriad of other factors operate to put any given student at an advantage or a disadvantage when they walk into a particular round of competition. And when the round is over, the judge will evaluate it in very hierarchical terms. Each student will be ranked in relation to others – and only a select few will advance to the Finals, in the scoring of which we will pursue distinctions from one tie-breaking device to another until we finally have a perfect top-to-bottom hierarchy.

This value may or may not give our activity credibility in the eyes of administrators or assessors who are concerned with the public relations potential of our competitive success. But it does not necessarily endear us to departmental colleagues who value process over product, theory over skills, or research over hardware. Furthermore, our departmental colleagues tend to live inside departmental hierarchies dictated by educational politics that do not overlap with the hierarchies extant within the forensics community. We often talk about living in "two worlds" – campus-world and tournament-world – and thus the hierarchies which operate within forensics often carry little weight when we encounter other emic values. We need to think about the hierarchies that operate at the other levels of our lives and consider how the values we adhere to in forensics position us in other realms. Very few people can switch value systems at will, or fully live up to the expectations placed on them by widely divergent value codes. In order to best evaluate the values we promote in forensics, we must look at how they do or do not mesh with the values accepted by the other emic and etic communities we (and our students) operate within.

Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension

As explained by Dodd (1998, pp. 94-95) Hofstede's focus here is on the degree to which cultures are comfortable vs. uncomfortable when "dealing with diversity and ambiguity." Some cultures are relatively more likely than others to respond to feelings of anxiety by attempting to minimize the uncertainty being felt at any given time about any given situation. These cultures or groups employ rules to provide structure and reduce doubt.

The formal written rules which regulate the forensics community are relatively few in number. However, the unwritten rules which boundary the activity operate to create a highly structured forensics world (Aden, 1991; McMillan and Todd-Mancillas, 1991; Burnett, Brand, & Meister, 2003; Paine and Stanley, 2003). These unwritten rules strongly discourage risk-taking by coaches and students (Brand, 2000). As Ribarsky (2005) notes, "[w]hile the forensics community appears to support the diversity of ideas and experimentation in public speaking, the community's cultural norms have stifled innovation in forensics" (p. 19). This causes a severe disconnect with many of the educational goals forensics professes to seek, and reduces the status of the activity in the eyes of external audiences. For example, this value choice reduces our ability to prepare students for citizenship in the larger culture. Bartanen (1997) argues that:

In our efforts to make competitive success more predictable for participants, we have standardized tournaments to the extent that one largely replicates the next with the objective of polishing a narrow range of behaviors in advance of the national presentation….'You either do it as a national 'in-crowd' does it or you risk complete censure' summarizes…[a survey] respondent. I find these comments very troubling. They reveal an activity which looks increasingly inward, ra-

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ther than a community which seeks to be inclusive of and responsive to America's pluralism. (p. 6)

I am similarly troubled by our community's continual movement toward standardization. While standardization can be beneficial in many ways, mindless standardization has the potential to isolate us completely from the larger communities we are a sub-part of. For example, only a year ago one of my students was told by a judge in a round of competition that her rank was being severely penalized because she had used the "wrong color" poster board. Instead of using the standard black poster board (a choice which would have been nonsensical since the dominant color in the picture being displayed was black), she chose a different unobtrusive but non-standard background hue. The judge did not consider any possible reasons for this choice – he simply declared that the choice was "non-standard," and therefore completely unacceptable. If we have devolved to the point that we are basing our scores at national tournaments on such trivia as the slightly non-standard color of poster board, we have indeed reached a point where the unwritten rules are over-regulating a vast amount of free choice and original creativity out of our activity.

The pragmatic effects of this value on the forensics circuit are legion. For example, it operates to the detriment of experimental events. Nationwide, the list of events offered at local and regional tournaments has grown increasingly standardized, driven in large part by the "drive for legs" and the struggle to qualify for the national championship tournaments which finish the year. Today, "experimental" or "nuance" events appear far less than in the past. And even when they do appear, they may be marginalized in status, slated but not allowed to "count" toward sweepstakes points. Burnett, Brand and Meister (2003) account for this pattern by asserting that "experimental events threaten the value of competitive forensics by encouraging students to 'experiment' and 'discover' something new. Thus, experimental events encourage education and fun: elements that fall in direct opposition to the framework of competition and winning that pervades college forensics….[an experimental event] undermines competitive authority" (p. 17). Unfortunately, "fun" is one of the primary factors that causes participants to commit to forensics (Paine and Stanley, 2003) – and without it, people who are not fully satisfied by the competitive paradigm are more likely to walk away.

Our community's intolerance for ambiguity reinforces the claim that we implicitly believe in the Platonic ideal of "absolute truth" rather than the Aristotelian alternative of making the best available choice in any given situation. This idea that "a Truth" exists is accelerating our separation from the value systems extant at other emic and etic levels. Ribarsky (2005) strongly argues the case:

> …as the forensics community continues to implement the same presentational formats, the community limits its ability to implement other acceptable presentational formats. Without knowledge of other presentational formats, the community may be moving further away from a realistic style of public speaking….narrower expectations have locked students into one style of presenting in order to please a homogenous audience. The student no longer has to attempt to adapt to various audiences because the public has been removed from this public speaking setting. (p. 20)

And the problem of value-divergence (as well as and as accompanied by practice-divergence) does not stop with the issue of presentational formats. Referencing the work of Kully (1972), Brand (2000) notes that "[c]ontestants are evaluated on their adherence to practices unrelated to communication theory and based on competitive techniques" (p. 1). According to Kully, as cited by Brand, "there appears to be limited academic connection between the practice of forensics and the theory of and the academic courses in speech communication" (p. 192). As a result, "[n]ot only has the relationship between speech communication and forensics cooled considerably during the past few years, but it will continue to deteriorate" (p. 193). And indeed, the 36 years that have passed since then have seen the fulfillment of Kully's prediction. Unless we take decisive actions to close this gap, we will continue down the path of academic, financial, and theoretic isolation.

Another value dimension that arises here concerns our community's commitment to "argumentation." While our historic roots as a community (and more broadly as a discipline) spring from the grounds of argumentation, our modern approach to it seems to be tightly tied once more to the Platonic idea of singular "Truth." For example, it has been informative in recent years to watch the evolution of the introductions written for oral interpretation performances. Once upon a time, different performers made different choices. Then we started to standardize the use of the "teaser" preceding the introduction. Then we became enamored of starting introductions with quotations drawn from external "experts" or writers ("George Bernard Shaw once said….."). Then we began to write more and more ballots demanding that oral interpreters tell us what "the message" of any given text was. Rather than let texts stand on their own, tell their own stories, and potentially offer different insights to different audience members, we increasingly expect oral interpreters to tell us in their introductions what a text "means" (singular Truth assumed) – and beyond

that, they'd better prove to us that this text has a "new and unique message/moral" that separates it from all other pieces of literature. The message must be singular—it must be fresh—and it must be obvious/indisputable/central/provable. Again, the cultural value being expressed here is an extremely low tolerance for ambiguity. Our colleagues who teach oral interpretation do not buy into this value system – and our dogmatic adherence to it provides one more push toward separation.

Long vs. Short Term
Orientation Dimension

Hofstede (2001) identifies a fifth value continuum which revolves around the culture's "time horizon." It asks the question of what importance the group attaches to the past vs. the present vs. the future. Groups whose orientation is toward the long term are typified by adherence to values such as persistence and shame (a group construct) avoidance, while groups oriented toward the short term tend toward a reliance on normative statements, stability on the personal level, and the protection of personal face.

Given the quick turn-over rate which typifies the forensics community, it is perhaps not surprising to find that our community tends toward the short term orientation. The competitive careers of college students are limited to four years, and the rate at which coaches "burn out" is much higher than the burn out rate for teachers at large. As a result, it is very difficult for the majority of the community to maintain or appreciate the value of a long term view. The past seems long ago (and often irrelevant), and the importance of the future is minimized by the fact that "I probably won't be around to see it." The present is paramount. For many people involved in the activity, the only rules and options they know are the ones which have dominated during the span of their personal journeys. As a result, learning from the past or preventing the potential problems of the future becomes (for many members of our community) far less important than getting ready for the tournament coming up next week.

Viewed against the backdrop of schools and departments who regularly review their missions, their learning objectives, and their "Five Year Plans," the short term time orientation of the forensics community feeds an emic value system at odds with the larger emic and etic value systems which surround it. Millsap (1998) observes that "[t]oo frequently forensic programs begin living in their own worlds and forget the impact they can have to the campus community" (p. 17). It is necessary that we act – not only in relation to this one value dimension, but in relation to all value categories – in ways that will reconnect us to the larger departments, colleges, and societies which house us. One aspect of this reconnection is key to Bartanen (1997), who argues that

"[e]ducational mission – training citizen-orators for the 21st century – needs to be the driving force and determinative end of our work. Only then will our programs fit well within the speech communication departments that should be their homes; only then will our programs fit comfortably at the center of liberal arts colleges rather than teetering on the peripheral high-wire" (p. 9). Hinck (2003) also reminds us of the dangers of isolation, noting that "[o]ur students will graduate, leave our programs, get jobs, and pursue careers beyond competitive forensics. Therefore, what we teach and reward should have transfer value beyond tournaments" (p. 71).

Conclusion

This paper has done nothing more than inadequately scratch the surface of the immense issues it raises. Ultimately, this essay is simply an invitation to our community to directly examine the topic of comparative values as they knit us to or separate us from a variety of etic and emic codes. Our values inevitably and unavoidably scaffold the relationships we form with our world, our culture, our profession, our schools, our departments, and ourselves. We need to look with clear eyes both at what we say we value and at what our actions demonstrate we actually value. We need to consciously evaluate practices and patterns in terms of their discovered impact on the values we wish to accept ourselves and teach our students. As Richard Weaver avows, "language is sermonic" – and with each message we send, with each event we coach, with each ballot we write, we are preachers to the world.

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