

**FISHER'S NARRATIVE PARADIGM THEORY:
A MODEL FOR DIFFERENTIATING AFTER DINNER SPEAKING
FROM INFORMATIVE AND PERSUASIVE SPEAKING**

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As Schnoor and Karns (1992) have noted, a great spirit of camaraderie and cooperation existed after the Second Developmental Conference on Individual Events concerning the direction of events (pp. 13-16). One of the questions posed at this conference, the authors note, was how to improve the original speaking events. At this the Third Developmental Conference, we ask the question, "How do we discover effective new directions in the original speaking events?" Today, my paper will assess both tried and innovative new directions in after dinner speaking, with a discussion of the other original speaking events as necessary for background material. Particularly, I shall address how these new directions should be assessed on their ability to differentiate the pedagogical value of this event from those derived from participation in informative speaking and persuasive speaking, and to make the event more suitable to the public arena.

A discussion on the ie-1 from May and June of 1995, plus a review of the literature concerning the original speaking events before then (e. g., Congalton, & Olson, 1995, Ballinger and Brand, 1987; Driebelbis & Redmon, 1987; Kay, Borchers & Williams, 1992; Mills, 1984; Preston, 1990, 1992), indicates that in each original event in general and/or in after dinner speaking in particular, variations and even controversies exist as to how each event should be judged. As has been pointed out and quoted often, such disagreements can confuse more than educate our students (Lewis & Larsen, 1981).

The controversy surrounding after dinner speaking has traditionally revolved around three issues: 1) the purpose of the event in terms of humor and the role of the serious point, 2) the extent to which sources should be used, and 3) what, if anything, should be the real-world master

analog for the event. Borrowing heavily from Fisher's Narrative Paradigm Theory (Cragan & Shields, 1995; Fisher, 1985, 1985a, 1985b, 1987a, 1987b, 1988, and 1989) as well as Congalton & Olson's (1995) ideas concerning event descriptions, this paper seeks to address each of these three controversies in presenting a unifying approach to the relationship of after dinner speaking to other original events.

The Controversy: What is a Good After Dinner Speech?

Driebelbis & Redmon (1987) reinforce the notion that controversies have surrounded the after dinner event, and that even as of the last decade, critics disagreed on how it should be judged. They cited the different AFA and NFA rules, noting that they may be the source for some disagreement. They did, however, seek to clarify the purpose of after dinner speaking by defining ADS as a speech whose primary purpose was to teach students how to persuade and make a serious point through humor. They differentiated this event from Phi Rho Pi and Pi Kappa Delta's event Speaking to Entertain, which, they argue, stresses the entertainment value over the persuasive value of the speech. Both STE and ADS, the authors argued, had the identical traits of structural development, a serious point, and good taste (pp. 101-102). Since many schools that attend Pi Kappa Delta nationals also have students who attend the AFA nationals, and since the biennial provincial tournaments for the former are qualifiers for the latter, the trend in both events has followed more the lines of persuasion through humor in recent years.

This trend seems to have occurred despite the argument Kay et al. (1992) made five years later that after dinner speeches should be more entertaining. Decrying that after dinner speeches came off as "stilted and tedious," the authors, nonetheless, argued that "an after dinner speech is a persuasive speech and an informative speech, using humor to sell the informative and persuasive messages" and "innovative organizational patterns, delivery techniques, and cleverly cited sources would make the after dinner speech more creative, enjoyable to watch, and educational" (p. 175). Although innovative organizational patterns and delivery techniques certainly can vivify after dinner speeches, the use of sources, if carried to an extreme, can prove deleterious to the entertainment value--which is fine if we accept the view that ADS is informative or persuasive speaking.

Yet if after dinner is informative or persuasive speaking, why have the event, especially with the time pressures already placed on students in a stressful tournament environment (see, for example, Hatfield, Hatfield, & Carver, 1989, and Littlefield & Sellnow, 1990)? Can't humor be used to sell a "real" informative or persuasive speech, and don't some of the more successful speeches in these genres use humor to sell themselves? As this author has often noted (e.g., Preston, 1990, 1992), for an event to be offered, it must be justified in terms of its *incremental* educational value, when juxtaposed to the aggregate of value offered by the other events. Thus, as in the case of extemporaneous and impromptu speaking (Preston, 1990, 1992) as well as the case of informative and persuasive speaking (Jensen, 1990), some differentiation between events in terms of both *mission* (the written rules and official event descriptions) and *practice* (how students feel compelled to perform the events in terms of what judges teach them wins) would be necessary. As has been touched upon in the previous analysis, the second controversy concerns the use of sources in after dinner speaking. For points of clarification and information, the American Forensic Association's rules--the ones which govern the "legs" and to which many tournaments adhere--for three original, prepared events follow:

Informative speaking: an original, factual speech by the student on a realistic subject to fulfill the general aim to inform the audience. Audiovisual aids may or may not be used to supplement or reinforce the message. Multiple sources should be used and cited in the development of the speech. Minimal notes are permitted. Maximum time is 10 minutes including introduction.

Persuasive speaking: an original speech by the student designed to inspire, reinforce or change the beliefs, attitudes, values, or actions of the audience. Audio-visual aids may or may not be used to supplement and reinforce the message. Multiple sources should be used and cited in the development of the speech. Minimal notes are permitted. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes.

After Dinner Speaking: An original, humorous speech by the student, designed to exhibit sound speech composition, thematic coherence, direct communicative public speaking skills, and good taste. The speech should not resemble a night club act, an

impersonation, or comic dialog. Audiovisual aids may or may not be use to supplement or reinforce the message. Minimal notes are permitted. Maximum time limit is 10 minutes.

Clearly, of these three events, after dinner speaking, as is true of NFA rules, does not specify the use of sources in after dinner speaking. In fact, as the both sets of rules state, students do not *have* to use sources, just as they do not *have* to use visual aids. However, inasmuch as the rules have not specified anything about source citation, from my own, independent observations, source citations have tended to proliferate in this event. The discussion on the ie-1 I mention which occurred in 1995 indicated that students and coaches alike have mixed reactions to both the extent and implications of this perceived convention.

In addition to this conflict, scholars of after dinner speaking as a contest event disagree on both a) *whether* there should be a real-world analog to contest after dinner speaking, and, if so, b) *what* that master analog should be. Students and coaches alike in the ie-1 thread disagreed over the necessity of a real-world analog for after dinner speaking, presenting a plethora of metaphors for what should constitute success in this event. First, differences abound about "what makes us laugh"--a subject of some controversy even among psychologists. Second, some argued, ADS *should* appeal to a specialized audience which constitutes the national forensics circuit's culture, and that as an event where academics communicate with one another, real world applications proved to be inappropriate analogs. Assuming there should be a real world analog for the event, scholars disagree on what that analog should be. For example, whereas Driebelbis and Redmon (1987) differentiate ADS from STE and claim that ADS should be a persuasive speech which uses humor as a vehicle, Kay et al. (1992) advocate changing the rules to empower the contestants to use some of the best potential analogs to ADS--comedy club speaking and the Washington press corps Gridiron Club roasts.

An Assessment of Past Remedies

To help ensure that the students have a clear idea of that which is expected of them, attempts have been made, mainly on the real world analog level, to make sure the students and coaches have a clearer notion of what is expected in this event. Because the rules reject the comedy club and

implicitly the Gridiron Club analogs by banning standup routines, the rejection of the "tacked on" serious subpoint and a trend toward quantity, if not quality, of sources was perhaps inevitable. As well, since few academics would deny that each speech should make a point salient to the audience and provide documentation to establish credibility, few if any have been willing to attack the controversy at the levels of what role humor plays or number of sources cited. As well, attempts to address the problem on the real-world analog level seem to have mixed results.

First, since the *National Forensic Journal* reaches a relatively small audience, one finds it difficult to assess to what extent articles such as Mills (1984) and Driebelbis and Redmon (1987) had on the development of national circuit after dinner speaking. As well, this author is unfamiliar with the STE event at Phi Rho Pi. However, having observed the event at both the Pi Kappa Delta and American Forensic Association nationals, there would appear to be little change between the STE--which also bans standup routines at PKD--and the ADS at the April national tournaments. I know of few students who attend both who change their speech for Pi Kappa Delta to "make it more funny," or students who tilt toward the persuasion speech-style ADS when they go to AFA. In short, there would appear, based on anecdotal impression and observation, to be little difference between how the two events are practiced. This may vary at Phi Rho Pi.

Another concrete experiment in defining after dinner speaking was begun in 1994 at the Gateway Individual Events Tournament at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Here, we took Kay et al. up on their suggestion, but only to the extent that we offered an event called "comedy" to supplement the after dinner event rather than replace it. We feared that we would lose ADS entries if we changed the rules, as well as lose our standing as an AFA qualifier in that event. We tried to make the comedy event attractive--the time limit was only seven minutes (so that we could have finals at the student party, which was set in a comedy club/discotheque format), and the students could use the same topic as in after dinner speaking. Our rules stated that comedy would be judged on "level of humor solely," that sources were discouraged as the event should be "100 percent original," that the event did not have the same standards for "taste," "traditional organization," or a "serious point" as did a traditional after dinner speech, and, ultimately, that the comedy club was clearly the real world analog for

the event. One goes to the comedy club to be entertained solely, thus one judges the event comedy, solely, on its entertainment value.

We were enthusiastic about the event, but each year it was offered it was by far the smallest event at the tournament (typically, duo improvisation and radio broadcasting, the other experimental events, attracted well over fifty contestants each, and even communication analysis attracts annually at least twenty at the Gateway; comedy never attracted more than fifteen). Feedback on the part of some participants concerned about taste was negative. By the third year of the event, we had to modify our stance on taste as the second year saw at least two speeches with grossly sexist language, and another with extreme obscenity, in the final round. As the entry still remained financially nonproductive to run last year, and as the rules became more similar to ADS, we relented and abandoned comedy. So enjoy ADS finals at this year's Gateway Karaoke party October 31.

Because of these experiences, this author is skeptical about reforming after dinner speaking at the real-world analog level, as to do so would fail to clarify the event for either coaches or students. Since written rules already differentiate the mission of the activity, changing them may not be necessary to ensure differential educational value, or to ensure that the event be enjoyed in the public arena. At the same time, some decisions need to be made on codifying the perceived unwritten conventions that have emerged in contest after dinner speaking, and while doing so, focus on two criteria for improvement: 1) on an educational level, differentiating after dinner speaking from informative and persuasive speaking and 2) on a practical level, returning after dinner speaking to the public arena. Several proposals, if adopted nationally, might contribute to achieving these ends.

Steps Toward Improving Contest After Dinner Speaking Differentiating ADS from Informative and Persuasive

In light of the stress felt at tournaments and the emphasis on wellness that emerged at the First Developmental Conference in Denver, our activity should avoid events that offer little or no incremental educational value to our participants. The existing rules about after dinner speaking make that distinction on two levels--first, they don't mention documentation requirements for after dinner while they do for informative and persuasive

speaking, and they mention humor for after dinner speaking while leaving that dimension unwritten in the rules for informative and persuasive speaking. Since the differences seem to occur on a micro level, using real-world analogs to make the differentiation might be difficult, and might explain the failures noted above. Yet although a *real-world analog* for after dinner speaking may prove undesirable or illusory especially since such an analog may change constantly (Kay et al. note, for example, that the comedy club which constitutes one of their real world analogs is a relatively recent, and perhaps ephemeral, development), an analog grounded *theoretically* in the study of communication might prove helpful to coaches and students alike. Because successful ADS requires skill in telling stories either as points or as the basis for a speech, a flexible application of Fisher's narrative paradigm theory (NPT) might prove to be helpful as a descriptive, analogic, and critical evaluative tool for locating similarities and differences in prepared speaking events. As well, a theoretically-based paradigm would be proactive rather than reactive.

Cragan and Shields (1995) summarize Fisher's NPT as follows:

NPT's three basic concepts include narration (stories), logical reasons in the traditional sense, and good reasons in the value-laden narrative sense. NPT's narration structural terms include character, emplotment (plots), and two master analogs: idealistic-moralistic and materialistic. NPT's three evaluative terms include audience, narrative probability, and narrative fidelity.

In assuming that humans are storytellers (*homo narrans*), Fisher also assumes that *all* human communication constitutes stories. As a general communication theory, NPT would apply to any of our individual events, whether they be limited preparation, original prepared, or interpretative performance. As such, these messages would constitute, in Fisher's (1987a) words, "symbolic interpretations of aspects of the world, occurring in time, and shaped by history, culture, and character" (p. xi). While applicable to all events, such elements ring particularly true with respect to after dinner speaking. Whereas Fisher recognizes traditional forms of support ("logical reasons in the traditional sense"), he also recognizes as persuasive alternative forms of support ("good reasons in the value-laden sense"). It is at this the basic-term level that we can begin to

define the differences between informative/persuasive speech documentation (for this study we'll keep unresolved how Fisher might differentiate between informative and persuasive speaking) and after dinner speech documentation. I would argue in addition to the after dinner speaking *rules*, guidelines should be provided to all critics to reflect the supporting material expectations of the event--and that the documentation demands for informative and persuasive speaking stress logical reasons in the traditional sense, whereas those for after dinner speaking should stress good reasons in the *values* sense. Note that since no events can or should be entirely different, the persuasive elements involved in after dinner speaking should remain--yet with this distinction, the student and coach can see wherein the difference as to *how* to persuade would be. Such a distinction in what constitutes good reasons would also focus more back on the humor and entertainment value of after dinner speaking, without detracting from those who *choose* to use some documentation in the traditional sense.

Fisher's *structural* concepts provide not so much the areas of event differentiation, but what to differentiate about. For example, let's take the topic of unemployment. Regardless of the event in which a student performs an element of this topic, we will see, within the story, a treatment of the characters (the boss, the government, the unemployed person, his or her relatives, etc.), an emplotment (such as "from riches to rags" or "a funny thing happened on the way to work" or "finding out who your real friends are"), and a competition between two master analogs. One master analog could be an idealistic-moral master analog which supports (Cragan and Shields, 1995) "an egalitarian myth that characterizes all humans as created equal. It implies such values as tolerance, charity, trustworthiness, love, and justice," the other could be a materialistic master analog which "concerns individual success. It is a competitive myth that characterizes all humans as striving to get ahead." This myth implies such embedded values as pleasure, self-aggrandizement, political acumen, self-reliance, competitiveness, playing the game, and achievement [Fisher, 1987a. . .] (p. 103). Obviously, each master analog implies a different way out of the unemployment situation--whereas the former would be a government "safety net," the latter would be accepting responsibility for being unemployed, and the hope to climb out of the situation through individual initiative. Whether the student speech be informative, persuasive, or after dinner, according to Fisher's notions, it

will address all of these notions. It is *how* these notions are treated that differentiates the events.

In the unemployment after dinner speech, the student could "play" the unemployed character, with humor being the vehicle for telling the story of becoming unemployed. The mind's fertile imagination might come up with characters (spouses, back-stabbing friends, an eccentric boss) whose ironic interactions with the unemployed person (the speaker) might have led to this condition. By telling these humorous yet plausible stories and playing them to the hilt, the speaker can weave the speech around the serious point which could choose its persuasive point somewhere along the idealistic-materialistic continuum. The ADS contestant could choose to humanize the unemployed figure by noting all of the ironic things that happen and how perceptions change (the thrown-away orange half becomes a delicacy if it's still cold) to promote the idealistic notion of having charity toward the unemployed, or, alternatively, he/she could joke about how the narrator caused the predicament to tell the story about how we the audience could avoid the same situation. Two observations emerge from this illustration--1) it is the *treatment* of the structural elements (humor) that would determine the speech type, not the structural elements themselves; and 2) whereas traditional documentation would serve as the focus of convincing the audience of which master analog to accept in a persuasive message (such as "How much should we help the unemployed?" or "Can we help the unemployed too much?") or an informative message ("Here's how to approach a friend recently unemployed," or "The psychological aspects you can expect if temporarily unemployed and how to cope"), alternative, experiential, and value-laden good reasons could hold the story together as well if not better in after dinner speaking.

Realizing that the locus of the difference lies in what constitutes good reasons, the critic can understand how Fisher's critical evaluative terms--audience, narrative probability, and narrative fidelity--apply differently to after dinner speaking. Through his stress on audience, Fisher allows critics and the forensics community as audience members some flexibility in applying his other means of conveying a speech, and provides the competitors of after dinner speaking a means of accepting a low ranking even though the speech may have received much laughter in the round. As Fisher (1987a) notes, "a story is as good as the audience that would adhere

to it" (p. 105). On the one hand, such a notion would imply that the student should adhere to the norms as well as the rules established by and for the critic/auditors of the activity. The student should certainly adapt to the culture surrounding the activity. However, to the extent that cultures may vary from region to region, teaching students the basics of what constitutes good reasons in after dinner speaking may be confusing. Since audience is important, a case begins to be made for judge training, and some minimal, written agreement on what a trained critic should look for in an after dinner speech, regardless of the region of the nation in which it occurs. Just as a culture such as a "national forensics circuit" requires the adaptation of students and judges, it is just as necessary as we who constitute our culture consider our audience--the entire pool of students who decide not only whether or not to compete in forensics, but those who we would like to compete in after dinner speaking!

Secondly, judges of any speaking event should consider whether the performance "hangs together" or possesses, in Fisher's words, "narrative probability." According to Cragan and Shields (1995), narrative probability "deals with the audience's evaluation of the story's coherence, consistency, noncontradiction, and comparison and contrast with prior competing and accepted stories" (p. 104). As Cragan and Shields note, Fisher (1987a) gives the critic three ways to assess the narrative probability of a story (or after dinner speech, or any other event):

1. Check a story for its argumentative and structural coherence. For example, is the story internally consistent or are there contradictions?
2. Check a story for its material coherence. For example, are facts left out; are counterarguments ignored that are known to be present in competing stories?
3. Check a story for its characterological coherence. For example, are the character's attributes and actions in the story consistent, and are the story teller's attributes and actions consistent with those of the story?

Again, as a general communication theory, Fisher's NPT can be applied to any forensic event. However, the application of the method and how to

apply the critical evaluative notions should differ if the events are to have a theoretically-based difference. In this case, rules and/or event descriptions should stress argumentative and structural coherence for informative and persuasive speaking as primary considerations and as secondary considerations for ADS, and material coherence should come to the forefront in both informative and persuasive speaking. However, the characterological coherence dimension should be stressed for after dinner speaking as the primary consideration. On balance, narrative probability should, aside from audience, be the primary consideration when judging persuasive and informative speaking, although it cannot be ignored entirely in after dinner speaking.

A third consideration in assessing any communication according to NPT is whether the communication "rings true," or possesses narrative fidelity. Clearly, the speeches and performances of any event which "ring true" to the critic/audience will prove most successful. In the real world, both traditional supports and experiential, value-laden supports must be analyzed in order to assess the success of a speech. However, in the real world, speeches do not always neatly into our event categories. Thus, a general application of whether a speech "rings true" does not help us differentiate after dinner speaking from the other events.

However, the dimension of narrative fidelity as a critical evaluative concept can help us differentiate between what proofs are required in which event. In persuasive and informative speaking, where some humor may vivify a speech but where humor is not necessary, again, the traditional forms of documentation, including consideration of whether all of the facts are included, whether they are accurately presented, and whether key arguments are identified, should be stressed. In after dinner speaking, that which makes us laugh is, arguably, that irony which "rings true" such that specific information as is included in traditional documentation should be stressed less.

Overall, then, Fisher's theory as a general communication theory can be clearly applied to all events, and on a structural and critical evaluative level, all of the notions noted above must be applied to have a complete Fisher analysis of performance effectiveness, regardless of event. However, by recognizing that the student has different, alternative good

reasons than those of traditional documentation, the theory offers criteria that can be stressed in after dinner speaking, and de-emphasized in persuasion and informative speaking. That way, students and critics alike would have a means, grounded in communication theory, to locate different communication skills which can be stressed in different events such as after dinner speaking

Returning After Dinner Speaking to the Public Arena

Within the debate portion of our forensics activity, a splintering controversy has existed as to whether debate belongs to the public arena. Two forms of debate argue yes--the NPDA and NEDA forms. CEDA and NDT, on the other hand, have chosen to stress hard, academic, specialized debate. The latter group argues that such activity is valuable in that it enables students to communicate to a specialized audience in a way that requires them to process, synthesize, and analyze large amounts of material in a short period of time--as is increasingly required in our information age.

Nonetheless, public communication, as well, is considered important--and certainly, after dinner speeches, regardless of whether our analog be a real after dinner speech at the Rotary Club, a comedy club routine, or a Gridiron Club roast, fall toward the public communication end of the public-specialized continuum. As well, students have many opportunities, in forensics, to engage in events (such as extemporaneous speaking and rhetorical criticism) which tend toward specialization, as well as others (policy debate) which tend to go all of the way. These are beneficial activities, but activities that don't need replication in the event after dinner speaking. Thus, the question arises, what steps can be taken to promote after dinner speaking as a public speaking event? I would suggest several that would first determine to what extent the event ADS needs to be improved, and second how it could be improved, if necessary, in terms of both its mission and practice:

1. Find out the existence and/or extent of the problem. At tournaments throughout the nation, I intend to collect after dinner speaking ballots and compare them to persuasive speaking and informative speaking ballots. Similar to the ballot analysis studies Jensen (1990) and Preston (1990, 1992) conducted earlier this decade, I plan to categorize and count

comments on these ballots to determine what types comments judges are making to determine what is important in after dinner and the other two events. By comparing these numbers, we should be able to come up with some idea as to how differently these events are being treated. My null hypothesis will be that after dinner speaking ballots de-emphasize sources, and emphasize humor. If these are disproven, I will argue, it will have been further demonstrated that we have some difficulty in not only differentiating this event from others we offer, but that we have allowed it to drip from the public arena. On the other hand, the study's evidence might argue that ADS is related to audience considerations, is different, and that the controversy is moot.

2. Have more public performances, including mass-judged final rounds.

When an audience constitutes those without as well as within our field, students tend to adapt to what would be humorous to this type of audience. At the same time, when this is tried, clear instructions must be given to the audience members. At a minimum, the AFA rules which the students followed at the tournament should be used in the mass-judged finals, until they are changed and/or event descriptions added. These would ensure at least some familiarity with what skills should be stressed in this event. As a first step, the Gateway will, at its Karaoke party, hand out ballots to all attendees not attending the schools represented by the finalists. This will provide a first step toward a more general audience, such as is being tried at our mass-judged parliamentary debate finals. It will also enable us to assess, with survey and anecdotal impression information, the effectiveness of this exercise.

3. Provide a thorough event description for all events, including after dinner speaking, to assist critics. As Congalton and Olson (1995) have noted, relying on unwritten trends and conventions to "guess" what constitutes a good after dinner speech constitutes an elitist, "bad science" nonconducive to making the event consumable to the public arena. They note that in addition to the rules for the each event, a thorough event description, with all of the basic expectations, should be provided to all critics and students. There is really no need to change the after dinner speaking rules, as are, to achieve differentiation between ADS and informative and persuasive. However, a written guideline--adopted for the national tournament similar to those employed at some district tournaments in the west--for after dinner speaking would help. This guideline could,

among other things, specify that, "clearly, although standards of tastes should be met, humor should be the primary means of relating the subject matter to the audience," and,

"just as visual aids are optional in informative and after speeches, and just as they should supplement rather than structure or dominate the message, documented sources in the traditional vein are optional in after dinner speeches. Clearly, nontraditional 'good reasons' are to be considered equally with traditional documentation in this event as a means of making the serious point through the primary use of humor."

As well, the description could end with,

"Although all elements of speech preparation and presentation are to be considered, the speech's entertainment value, to the extent that it goes hand in hand with the serious *raison d'etre*, should be your primary consideration when judging this event."

Such descriptions would represent an agreement over what the basic elements of an after dinner speech would be, and what skills are stressed, while giving the critic some flexibility in determining what constitutes "humor" and "good reasons."

4. Have, at a minimum, all school and experienced critics provide a clear judging philosophy for individual events, including after dinner speaking. Again, this experiment has been tried and has worked (Congalton & Olson, 1995) in some parts of the west. Especially in light of the norm that students may refer to each other's speeches in after dinner speaking, having philosophies available offers the students to adapt to their audiences, both in a general fashion, and as in Fisher's key critical evaluative term "audience." As noted earlier, forcing on the critic/audience a rigid criteria would be stifling, and would ignore many speech-specific considerations of whether an after dinner message hung together and/or rang true to its critic. Although if a problem in after dinner speaking's educational value is discovered and the event is changed, some degree of adaptation to audience would prove more theoretically appropriate within Fisher's framework, but moreover, additionally useful for similar situations in the real world.

5. As Congalton & Olson (1995) have noted, thorough judge training would be a must for all those involved in judging the event as in suggestions 2-4 above. Tournament directors should be sure to explain these guidelines, in training sessions, in comprehensible terms, thus making the event accountable to the general, outside audience, consistent with both Fisher's theory and the net benefit of this event.

Conclusion

Today, I have, based on observations of the literature, anecdotal information, participant-observation as a tournament critic, and a discussion over the ie-1, assessed some of the potential challenges that face us as we try to improve on the event after dinner speaking. I have identified disagreements over the role of humor and the serious point in this event, the role of documentation in the traditional vein, and whether and/or what should be the real-world analogs for this event. Using Fisher's Narrative Paradigm Theory that applies to all individual events but especially to after dinner speaking, I have noted areas after dinner speaking shares in common with other communication activities, and I have attempted to offer how from Fisher's theory, what constitutes good reasons should be the main area wherein after dinner speaking should be differentiated from the other events.

Having noted that critics will vary regardless of the rules and that real world analogs failed, I offered five suggestions toward improving this event that leave open the possibility that the event is practiced well as is. Certainly, from these implications, it would appear that AFA rules sufficiently differentiate the event from persuasive and informative speaking, and also reflect an approach that would go over well in front of a general, public audience. However, whether the practice of after dinner speaking reflects this mission remains a question worthy of further analysis and study, in addition to continuing experiments such as mass judged finals.

By applying Fisher's NPT to the ADS event, it is hoped this paper will spur a discussion that at once 1) helps to better define after dinner speaking, 2) leads to more specific guidelines at the national level to accompany this and perhaps other events as is done in the west, 3) leads to better judge training consistent with Fisher's notion that audience is

important in determining whether a story is accepted or rejected, and, above all, 4) provides a unifying perspective that still allows for individual differences in critic taste hence challenging the student to continue to learn the skills of adaptation even as fundamental expectations are clarified. If needed, such could enhance the educational value, as well as the camaraderie and social responsibility, offered in after dinner speaking within the framework of the present rules. In doing so, the forensics community could assert its leadership role in defining how speakers in non-academic settings should approach audience expectations for humor, rather than it being the other way around.

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