January 2007

Finding an Acceptable Definition of "Original" Work in Platform Speeches: A Study of Community College Coaches

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Finding an Acceptable Definition of “Original” Work in Platform Speeches
A Study of Community College Coaches

Crystal Lane Swift
Gary Rybold

Abstract

The quantitative analysis of this paper was undertaken to discover coach definitions of “original work” in platform speaking in the community college forensics competition. A survey was conducted to determine if there was any consistency to coaching practices when considering a recent rule change requiring that all platform speeches be the original work of the student. Although the literature review indicates that academia has established guidelines for plagiarism and unattributed collaboration, no such consistent definition was found among the coaches surveyed. The discussion of the results revolves around the conclusion that coaches are consistent in their own practices but those practices are not universal within the field. Ultimately, the conclusion is that an agreed upon definition of “original work” remains in question.

Introduction

In 2005, at the general meeting of Phi Rho Pi, a rule was passed to insert the word “original” in the requirements that platform speeches be the original work of the student. Specifically, 2005 Phi Rho Pi proposal form #8 changed section 3 (event rules); part 4 (unlimited preparation events) item “b” to read: “The speeches and the personalized introduction of interpretive programs in these events must be the original work of the student.” Even though a majority of coaches and students who voted for the rule change wanted the word added to the language, one coach commented “How would they know?” while another said “What does original mean?” That rule change and the lack of a cohesive definition of “original” provide the impetus for this paper.

Many opinions have surfaced in the writing of platform speeches. Comments such as “actors do not write their own scripts, so why should students have to write their own speeches” or “writing a speech to entertain is like writing a sitcom: it takes a team of writers” point to an belief that original work of the student includes collaborative effort. A student once joked to one of the authors, “my coaches didn’t change one sentence in my STE. That sentence was on page three.” This type of involvement is justified by some as providing solid pedagogy in teaching the process of writing. Many conclude the best product will surface through the synergy of collaboration.

Some of the controversy surrounding the coaching process involves several practices. Of course, the most obvious violation is to hand a student a speech
that has been written by someone else. Since the student was not even involved in the original invention process most would agree this is not “the original work of the student.” However, such a blatant violation of the rules is rarely the charge and is usually not cited as the need for the original wording. Instead there are other practices that as Kimball (1989) wrote “a few colleagues over the years raise . . . in the face of polite silence” (p. 12). Some of those practices we have heard from others that are considered to be violations of the original rule are:

1. Giving students topics, research, artifacts (for CA) or models (researched and copied by the coach for use in CA).
2. Sitting down with a student to assist in an extensive outlining process (30 minutes plus) in the beginning stages of a platform speech.
3. Placing students who may not be good writers into a group writing process. During this process the speech would be at the center of a big group process to assist the student in writing the speech.
4. After a draft is completed, a coach and the student would sit down at a computer and review the entire speech, sentence by sentence, to develop the best finished product.
5. Taking a student’s speech and editing or reworking language without the student present.

Did some of the above standard coaching practices (and perhaps others) motivate Phi Rho Pi to change the rule to specify “original?” Is there an implication in the term “original” that the student is being evaluated in both the manner of delivery and the matter of content? If there is no guarantee of a minimal involvement by the coach, does an evaluator need to consider the unattributed collaboration in a decision or exclude consideration of content since it is not the sole indicator of the speakers writing skills?

To answer these questions it is imperative for Phi Rho Pi to determine a common definition of “original work.” If no such consistency is found, what actions should be taken to move the community towards a commonality of practice within coaching? Our study undertakes answering the first question to determine if there is a common definition for “original work.” Recommendations about our findings will be outlined in the discussion.

Review of Literature

Academia is very vocal when it comes to ethical concerns and definitions of original work and unattributed collaboration. This is true in both general academic definitions of plagiarism and specifically with forensics ethical considerations. However, while general academia outlines specifics for what qualifies as plagiarism, forensics tends to be much more ambiguous.

General Academic Definitions of Plagiarism

To begin our understanding of original work, it appears that most of academia does not struggle with definitional problems of collaboration. Harvard’s website undertakes an extensive discussion on the misuse of sources. Section 3.2b specifically defines Improper Collaboration:

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Collaborative discussion and brainstorming is a vital activity of professional scholars, especially in the sciences; but these scholars not only acknowledge in each completed article the contribution of other discussants, but write the article on their own or else submit a single article under two names. When you are asked to collaborate on a project but required to submit separate papers, you must write up your paper on your own, acknowledging the extent of your collaboration in a note. You and your partner should not compose the report or exam answer as you sit together, but only take notes.

Section 3.2 (d) continued
Abetting plagiarism: You are also guilty of misusing sources if you knowingly help another student plagiarize whether by letting the student copy your own paper, or by selling the student a paper of yours or somebody else’s, or by writing a paper or part of a paper for the student: as, for example, when in the course of ―editing‖ a paper for another student you go beyond correcting mechanical errors and begin redrafting significant amounts of the paper. Any of these actions makes you liable for disciplinary action by the College. If another student asks you for help with a paper, try whenever possible to phrase your comments as questions that will draw out the student’s own ideas. (2005)

The University of Cincinnati in their UC Student Code of Conduct “defines plagiarism as: Submitting as one’s own, original work, material that has been produced through unacknowledged collaboration with others . . .” Stuart (2005), citing the University of Texas, provides this definition: “plagiarism, strictly speaking, is not a question of intent. Any use of the content or style of another’s intellectual product with proper attribution constitutes plagiarism.”

He continued “plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration are very closely related areas of scholastic dishonesty . . . plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration both involve the same fundamental deception: the representation of another’s work as one’s own.” He offered this example: “each student submits a written work misrepresenting as his or her own, which in fact he or she has borrowed from other unattributed sources: the other students. Remember, plagiarism includes not just copying from a published source, but also submitting work obtained from any source as one’s own” (Emphasis added).

Stuart specifically discusses the pedagogical and production justifications:

 Unauthorized Collaboration
In the American educational system, the concept of original work is a fundamental tenet of scholarship. In recent years, more educators have also recognized the value of having students work on some assignments in groups. Students, however, may be engaging in scholastic dishonesty if they fail to distinguish between collaboration that is authorized for a particular assignment and collaboration that is done for the sake of expediency. Some students rationalize their involvement in unauthorized collaboration on the basis that it “helps them learn better” and is not cheating because they are
contributing to the final product.…Unauthorized collaboration with another person on an assignment for academic credit is a common form of scholastic dishonesty.

The George Mason University website strikes a positive tone with its honor policy when it discusses appropriate collaboration:

… the final paper is your responsibility; it is not appropriate to turn your paper over to someone else to edit, revise, or complete for your. If only your name appears on an assignment, your professor has the right to expect that the work you turn in is fully and completely your own, with the exception of the information, ideas, and language you have clearly credited to others. As part of a learning community, you are encouraged to incorporate ideas from colleagues, but you must give credit in an appropriate manner.

Three fundamental principles to follow at all times are: 1) All work submitted under your name must be your own, 2) When using the work or ideas of other, including your fellow students, you must give appropriate credit. 3) If you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification.

California State University, Los Angeles in their catalog offers the following on plagiarism:

One distinctive characteristic of an educated person is the ability to use language correctly and effectively to express ideas. Faculty assign written work to help students develop those skills. Each professor will outline specific criteria for writing assignments, but all expect students to present work that represents the students' understanding of the subject in the students' own words.

It is seldom expected that student papers will be based entirely or even primarily on original ideas or original research. Therefore, incorporating the concepts of others is appropriate when use of quotations, citations of original sources, and acknowledgement to the author has been properly issued. However, papers that consist entirely of quotations and citations should be rewritten to show the student's own understanding and expressive ability. The purpose of a written assignment is the development of communication and analytic skills, and every student should be able to distinguish their own ideas from the ideas of another. Properly indicating those distinctions on a written assignment will aid every student in avoiding plagiarizing the work of another.

Irvine Valley College published the following guidelines in the student honesty and dishonesty portion of their catalog (p.21).
2. Plagiarism is the misrepresentation of someone else’s words, ideas or data as one’s own work. Students should be advise to state the source of the ideas when these are known, since this lends strength to their arguments and is part of the ethics of scholarship.

No student shall:

a. Intentionally represent as one’s own work the work, words, ideas, or arrangement of ideas or research, formulae, diagrams, or statistics, evidence of another.

b. Take sole credit for ideas that resulted from a collaboration with others. (p. 21)

Louisiana State University provides this definition in the student code of conduct item 16: Committing Plagiarism. “Plagiarism” is defined as the unacknowledged inclusion of someone else’s words, structure, ideas, or data. When a student submits work as his/her own that includes the words, structure, ideas, or data of others, the source of this information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific references, and, if verbatim statements are included, through quotation marks as well. Failure to identify any source (including interviews, surveys, etc.), published in any medium (including on the internet) or unpublished, from which words, structure, ideas, or data have been taken, constitutes plagiarism;

The American Historical Association emphasized ethical responsibility for all of academia: “Every institution that includes or represents a body of scholars has an obligation to establish procedures designed to clarify and uphold their ethical standards.” (1995 Statement of Standards of Professional Conduct as cited in the ASU website, 2005)

The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2001) provides a bright line standard:

Plagiarism (Principle 6.22). Psychologists do not claim the words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due....The key element of this principle is that an author does not present the work of another as if it were his or her own work. This can extend to ideas as well as written words....Given the free exchange of ideas, which is very important to the health of psychology; an author may not know where an idea for a study originated. If the author does know, however, the author should acknowledge the source; this includes personal communication. (p. 349-350)

The Modern Language Association simplified the definition, “In short, to plagiarize is to give the impression that your have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from someone else.” (MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 1988 as cited in the ASU website, 2005).

Forensics Ethical Considerations

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Establishing a definition of plagiarism in platform speaking is dependent on many factors. One starting point is communicative ethics. Jensen (1997) defined ethics as “the moral responsibility to choose, intentionally and voluntarily, oughtness in values like rightness, goodness, truthfulness, justice, and virtue, which may, in a communicative transaction, significantly affect ourselves and others” (emphasis in original, p. 4). He argued that teaching communicative ethics to undergraduates is essential yet problematic, due to the lack of agreement upon definition and employment. This problem could be avoided with clarity in teaching. Nilsen (1966) also established the inherent need for establishing ethical practices within platform speaking specifically, because it has the potential to influence the audience’s choices.

The American Forensics Association outlines original work in their website under the AFA CODE of Standard, Article II: Competitor Practices:

2. In Individual events which involve original student speech compositions (oratory/persuasion, informative/expository, after-dinner/epideictic, rhetorical criticism, impromptu, extemporaneous or other similar speaking contests), the speaker shall not commit plagiarism.
   A. Plagiarism is defined as claiming another’s written or spoken word as one’s own, or claiming as one’s own a significant portion of the creative work of another.
   B. A speech in individual events competition is considered plagiarized when the student presenting it was not the principle person responsible for researching, drafting, organizing, composing, refining, and generally constructing the speech in question.


Perhaps the clearest justification for study in this area comes from Friedley (1983), who stated, “while textbooks provide little focus on the ethical use of evidence in original speech events [platform speeches/public address speeches], the forensic community as a whole has clearly demonstrated a concern for the
ethics issue” (p. 110). The forensic community as well as communication studies as a whole has had a recent increase in interest and concern regarding ethics. Anderson (2000) stated that because the area of communication studies does not usually aim to prepare students for one, specific career, the ethical responsibilities of the field are ambiguous. He reported that the National Communication Association (NCA)—at the time the Speech Communication Association (SCA)—formed a committee on communication ethics in 1984 and drafted a credo regarding the subject in 1999, which was adopted that same year.

There have been many debates and inconsistencies in the study of communicative ethics. However, Brembeck and Howell (1952) set the norm for persuasion texts to have a chapter regarding ethics. Additionally, Anderson (1979) found seven consistent unethical behaviors as defined by speech text books: 1) being unprepared, 2) letting audience adaptations overtake convictions, 3) being insincere, 4) the fallacy of suppressing evidence, 5) lying, 6) using pathos to mask truth, and 7) not listening critically.

The specific controversial subjects within the ethics of platform speaking seem to be: detailed source citation, ghostwriting, and collaboration. VerLinden (1996) argued detailed source citation has become the norm in forensic competition and is problematic. The reason that competitors tend to follow the norm of overly detailed source citations is because this is the current expectation. It is attribution to the author(s), however, not the date that avoids plagiarism. Franck (1983) furthered that in order to check the validity of sources, it is not necessary to have the level of detail usually included in forensic speeches. Reinard (1991) agreed by stating that the exact date of a source does not bolster its credibility. Source citation my increase a speaker’s ethos, but only if the source itself is credible (Bettinghaus & Cody, 1994; Freely, 1996; Simmons, 1986; Warnick & Inch, 1994; Ziegelmueller, Kay, & Dause, 1990). Many speech communication texts inform their readers that there are a variety of citing sources (e.g. Barrett, 1993; Beebe & Beebe, 1991; Ehninger, Gronbeck, & Monro, 1984; Gamble & Gamble, 1994; Lucas, 1992; Nelson & Pearson, 1990; Samovar & Mills, 1980; Sproule, 1991; Verderber, 1994; Wilson, Arnold, & Werteimer, 1990; Wolvin, Berko, & Wolvin, 1993; Zeuschner, 1992). However, there are other speech communication texts that do not give specific plan for how to cite sources at all (Osborn & Osborn, 1991; Peterson, Stephen, & White, 1992; Ross, 1992; Taylor, Meyer, Rosegrant, & Samples, 1992).

McBath (1975) stated that the goal of forensic coaches ought to be to teach that “students communicate various forms of argument more effectively” (p. 11). However, rewarding overly detailed citations violates this educational goal, because no student will use this practice in the real world, this practice perpetuates poor sentence structure, and it can distract the audience (VerLinden, 1996). To correct the problem of detailed source citations, coaches must teach their students to “be brief in citing a source. Give just enough information to satisfy essential needs” (Barrett, 1993, 156). Judges must also take responsibility in this area by stopping the practice of rewarding detailed source citations, talk to each other about doing so, and replace detailed sources with reference pages (VerLinden, 1996). Haiman (1984) argued that ghostwriting is a major concern
in the forensic community. He drew two conclusions about ghostwriting: speakers and audiences both have responsibility to be accountable and there is no excuse for not attributing original authors.

Bormann (1961) stated that the primary reason that ghostwritten speeches are problematic is because of the inherent deception involved. He went on to reveal that many authors defend ghostwriting by saying that the act of reciting another author’s speech makes those ideas those of the speaker as well. Additionally, Bormann (1961) exposed that authors speak in support of collaboration by saying that there is no deception involved in collaboration at all. He concluded that there is a continuum in the ethics of speechwriting, and it is the director of forensics’ responsibility to draw and enforce a line along that continuum for his or her competitors. Until we hold public speakers such as the president accountable for ghostwriting, however, Bormann claimed, there will always be ambiguity in this area.

Method

This study sought to establish a general definition for what constitutes “original work of the student” for platform events in Phi Rho Pi competition. The survey we used was original, and tested four variables: coaches’ value of ethics, coaches’ perception of collaboration in platform speeches, coaches’ perception of coach editing of student platform speeches, and coaches’ perception of whether the student ought to be the sole author of the platform speech with no outside help (see Appendix). There were five items for each variable, totaling 20 items altogether. We used a seven-point Likert scale where one represented strongly disagree and seven represented strongly agree. We used electronic means to send the survey to all programs provided by Phi Rho Pi, after obtaining secure permission of the executive board to conduct the survey with their data base.

Results

Demographics

Our participants consisted of 38 forensics coaches; 14 were female and 24 were male. They ranged in age from 25 to 60 and had between two and 38 years of forensic coaching experience. Seven were not directors of forensics and 31 were directors; 30 were the primary coach for platform speeches, 29 were the primary coach for interpretation of literature speeches, 26 were the primary coach for limited preparation speeches, and 21 were the primary coach for debate.

Analysis

Our survey tested four variables: coaches’ value of ethics, coaches’ perception of collaboration in platform speeches, coaches’ perception of coach editing of student platform speeches, and coaches’ perception of whether the student ought to be the sole author of the platform speech with no outside help. We calculated the means of items one through five to create the ethics scale (α=.86),
items six through 10 to create the collaboration scale (α=.48), 11 through 15 to create the edit scale (α=.50), and 16 through 20 to create the student scale (α=.71). Then, the mean of the collaboration, edit, and student scales was calculated to determine the coaches’ overall perception of students having help of any kind when authoring platform speeches, the practice scale (α=.81).

Once our scales had been transformed, we ran independent sample t-tests to determine whether sex, status, or events coached made a significant difference in perception of any of our variables. There were no statistically significant results. Our data suggests that sex, status, and events coached do not correlate with a coach’s value of ethics, perception of collaboration in platform speeches, perception of coach editing of student platform speeches, or perception of whether the student ought to be the sole author of the platform speech with no outside help.

Next, we ran a Pearson two-tailed correlation on our transformed scales. Here we found some significance. Collaboration and ethics had a .59 correlation, with a .01 significance level. Collaboration and student had a .38 correlation, with a .05 significance level. Collaboration and practice had a .63 correlation with a .01 significance level. Edit and student had a .53 correlation, with a .01 significance level. Edit and practice had a .75 correlation, with a .01 significance level. Student and practice had a .87 correlation, with a .01 significance level.

**Discussion**

**Demographics**

On the Phi Rho Pi website, there are 91 schools and 112 coaches listed as members. This means that we were able to collect data from 34% of our target population. While it would have been ideal to collect data from the entirety of the population, and our results are not completely generalizable to all Phi Rho Pi coaches, we do believe that we have a fairly representative sample. For future studies in this area, it may be helpful to collect data at the Phi Rho Pi National Tournament in order to increase return of the surveys.

**Scales**

Our ethics scale and practice scale had the most highly reliable internal validity, which indicates that the coaches in our sample may agree on definitions of ethics and put similar habits into practice when it comes to forensic platform speaking. However, our edit, collaboration, and student scales had highly unreliable internal validity. This seems to be the crux of our results. Coaches do not seem to agree on definitions of appropriate editing, how much collaboration is appropriate, or where the line of absolute one-student authoring lies. Some of the unsolicited comments about the survey yielded excellent qualitative data. For example, in response to item number six, “Speeches that were the product of a collaborative effort should not be labeled as ‘original work of the student,’” which is a collaboration question, one participant wrote, “Yikes. It really depends upon what you mean by collaboration.” In response to item number 10, another collaboration item, “Coaches should provide topic recommendations for

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students competing in platform speeches,” another participant wrote, “What do we do when we teach courses?”

On an editing question, another participant responded, “It depends how you define editing - if it is writing comments of what to revise, than it is perfectly acceptable - but I sense this isn't what you meant” to item 11, “Coaches should never edit a student's speech without the student present.” Another participant, in response to item 14, “Ghost editing (providing words and phrases without crediting the source) is a problem in forensics competition,” simply wrote “don’t know really.” Another coach responded with the following at the end of his or her responses to the survey items:

This survey is confusing. The term "editing" is not clearly defined. I really hesitate to send this in, because of this ambiguity but I know that it is probably important research for you. So let me express my feelings in a non-likert way and you can use this info as you see fit. If, by editing you mean; someone other than the student writing whole paragraphs or sections, I am ethically opposed to it. If, by editing you mean; sitting with a student (at the computer) and using questions and discussion to help them come up with better choices for how the speech is written, than I think it is not only ethical - but highly recommended. If, by editing you mean; a coach sitting with the speech and a red pen (I still like red) and crossing out sections and offering a limited number of phrasing suggestions and then sending the student off to rewrite the speech than I think that is also acceptable.

Another coach put his or her overall response to the survey as follows:

I filled out the survey, but I think I was looking too much into the word, “edit,” so I marked 4. By editing, do you mean a coach rewriting a speech? I would never write any of my students’ speeches, but I would definitely give them a lot of feedback that goes beyond grammar (e.g., thought process and logic). Perhaps I am incorporating feedback with editing. Does collaborative effort include feedback? I am not looking for a response back. I just wanted you to know that I had difficulties filling out this survey and by marking four (which I am assuming is neutral) may not really represent my view.

One respondent simply wrote, “(Confusing question)” in response to item 13, “Forensic competition coaching should allow for more specific editing than English Department writing laboratories.” A final participant suggested, “In an ideal world,” in response to item 16, “Coach editing of a student speech for competition constitutes plagiarism.”

In further support of a lack of understandable definitions, at the end of a survey, one coach wrote:

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I appreciate that y'all are doing this, but it is really hard to quantitatively answer these questions w/o explaining rationale and clearing up gray areas in wording. I’m sure that the last thing you need is a colleague rambling about the survey, but it was so difficult to make definitive statements on these topics. In case you ever felt the need to read about my random thoughts, here's where I had such a hard time. If not, good luck collecting the responses and presenting! If a collaborative speech writing process is a coach writing half the speech that is unethical. But I define a collaborative process as sitting w/the student and suggesting substructure and brainstorming humor w/them and cleaning up words. In this way, they learn how to do all of this much easier themselves. I also don't force topics on students, but if you know them and find a topic that fits them, suggesting it isn't wrong. Editing a speech without them present is like grading a paper. I won't rewrite, but will make suggestions, clean language (in pen and not just on a computer file) and they see where they went wrong. The idea of students working on one another's speeches is tricky too. When teammates invest in one another and look at one another's speeches or watch delivery, it brings the team closer together. I’m not saying that "smarty PHD track" should write all the CA's. I am saying that it’s great when students make suggestions and learn how to be peer coaches.

Another respondent made these comments:

I believe that I understand the intent of the questions, but I feel I need to clarify some “definitions” that guided my answers for them to be relevant at all. I consider “collaborative” to be instructional (where the coach and student talk through research and organization together and workshop ideas); therefore it should be considered the original work of the student because s/he created it through an instructional process. “Collaborative” IS NOT, “student writes some, coach writes some.” I fear that was an implication in the survey. The extremes of this survey were confusing. Is there an inherent assumption that it’s all or nothing when working on a public address? I mean, if the coach “coaches” then is it no longer the work of the student? Anyway, I am sure that your project will cover all this issues. I just wanted to clarify so the results aren’t invalid.

All of these responses suggest that the definitions of editing, collaboration, and our primary research concern, “original work,” are not uniform among coaches. This means that some of the student speeches used in competition have the advantage of coaching which substantially changes the text of the speech while other students must compete with speeches they have written exclusively by themselves. Most would agree the collaboration speeches will have a competitive edge. Does this mean that one set of coaches provides too much involvement, while others not enough? The study does not answer that value proposition.
Correlations

Our correlations indicate several things about our survey population’s opinions. The correlation between collaboration and ethics was a positive 59% at a 99% confidence level, which indicates that the more a coach views ethics as an essential value to platform speakers, the more he or she will discourage collaboration in platform speech writing. The correlation between collaboration and student was a positive 38% at a 95% confidence level, which indicates that the more a coach discourages collaboration the more he or she will encourage his or her students to write their platform speeches completely on their own. The correlation between collaboration and practice was a positive 63% at a 99% confidence level, which indicates that the more a coach discourages collaboration, the more he or she will discourage students seeking help overall with their forensic platform speeches.

The correlation between edit and student was a positive 53% at a 99% confidence level, which indicates that the more a coach discourages outside editing, the more he or she will also encourage a student to write his or her platform speech completely on his or her own. The correlation between edit and practice was a positive 75% at a 99% confidence level, which indicates that the more a coach discourages outside editing, the more he or she will discourage students seeking help overall with their forensic platform speeches. The correlation between student and practice was a positive 87% at a 99% confidence level, which indicates that the more a coach encourages students to write their forensic platform speeches completely on their own, the more he or she will discourage students seeking help overall with their forensic platform speeches.

Conclusion

Though many of our participants pointed out that our definitions were unclear, the consistency in their answers shows that they may have clear definitions of these variables. Overall the results of the study lead us to conclude that the inclusion of word “original” by Phi Rho Pi will have little effect on coaching practices. Quite simply, coaches do not agree on definition of what constitutes ethical behavior in collaboration on platform speech writing. Therefore, although a majority of Phi Rho Pi voted to specify “original” in the rule, nothing really changed. So even though, some may have voted for the rule to stop the use of unattributed collaboration, others who believe that unattributed collaboration is their coaching duty will not be deterred. If Phi Rho Pi, on the whole, wants to move in the general direction of the rest of academia to label unattributed collaboration as plagiarism, then a specific bright line standard must be established. Even if a clear standard was codified, enforcement may still present a problem.

The respondents may not have fully understood what we meant on the survey, but they do seem to have their own consistent perspectives. The coaches who disagree with the practice of one of the variables tend to disagree with the practice of all of them. The concerns that coaches raise about not being clear on definitions is the primary concern of this study. The many possibilities of defini-

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tions seems to support previous research that has drawn the conclusion that forensic coaches are resistant to universal rules or practices (e.g., Swift, 2006). However, even if there is a subset of coaches who would violate a more objectively defined rule, Phi Rho Pi should try to communicate clear standards as a way to establish a uniform ethical guideline for coaches and competitors to follow. In this way the community as a whole would know what is expected and the playing field would be more level. Judges would also know that when evaluating the text of a platform speech the students were operating under the same constraints. Moore (2002) calls academia to action in the Chronicle of Higher Education. “But faculty members (at least those who haven’t resorted to plagiarism themselves) remain in the front lines of a war against plagiarism. What is at stake? Truth and honor.”

Appendix
Please answer the following questions about yourself.
I am ___female ___male and ___years old
I am a(n) ___director of forensics ___assistant coach
I primarily coach ___platform speaking ___interpretation of literature events ___limited preparation events ___debate
I have been coaching forensics for ___years

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements on a scale of 1(strongly disagree) to 7(strongly agree).

1. Ethics are secondary to competitive success when it comes to platform speaking.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. It is important for platform speakers to be as ethical as possible.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. Coaches should be as ethical as possible when coaching platform speeches.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. Platform speakers should follow the rules of the events as literally as possible.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. The most important value to uphold in forensics is ethics.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. Speeches that were the product of a collaborative effort should not be labeled as “original work of the student.”
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. If a student is having trouble, a coach should write an introduction for a student speech.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. A collaborative speech writing process is an excellent pedagogical tool for speech writing.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. Coaches should provide one researched article to start a student on a speech.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

10. Coaches should provide topic recommendations for students competing in platform speeches.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11. Coaches should never edit a student's speech without the student present.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12. Coaches should not provide specific language suggestions for any platform speeches.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13. Forensic competition coaching should allow for more specific editing than English Department writing laboratories.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14. Ghost editing (providing words and phrases without crediting the source) is a problem in forensics competition.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15. Coach editing of a student speech for competition constitutes plagiarism.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16. Platform speeches ought to be written from start to finish only by the competitor.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17. Platform speeches should not have to be completely the work of the student speaker.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18. Students should be allowed to work on each other's speeches instead of having to work totally alone.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. Participating in platform speaking is an effective way for students to learn to be better writers on their own.

20. In writing platform speeches, students should be responsible for every word written without any editing (other than grammar corrections) from another person.

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Crystal Lane Swift, Louisiana State University, Gary Rybold, Irvine Valley College. A version of the paper previously presented at the 2006 National Communication Association convention, San Antonio, Texas

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