

## WHO IS HELEN LEFKOWITZ HOROWITZ, AND WHAT DOES SHE HAVE TO DO WITH INTERCOLLEGIATE FORENSICS?

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In a 1987 study entitled, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, Smith College Professor of History, Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, examines artifacts as an anthropologist would, en route to defining four cultures that exist today on American college and university campuses. Horowitz traces the development of each undergraduate culture, and in the process, tells many fascinating tales of college life.

Horowitz argues that colleges and universities today feature the following undergraduate cultures: 1) college men/women; 2) rebels; (3) outsiders; and (4) new outsiders. And although she grants that many institutions of higher learning feature more than one culture, she suggests most schools are dominated by one or the other. After explaining what these four cultures are, I will suggest that forensics directors need to be aware of how their programs do or do not function in relation to these cultures. Such an awareness—I will suggest—can lead to at least three positive results: first, avoiding a mismatch between the forensics program and the institution's dominant undergraduate culture; second, better recruiting of potential participants; and third, better understanding of the "culture clashes" that may arise among the members of a forensics squad, coaches included. Finally, I will step back a bit from Horowitz' study and try to map the history she presents onto the history of intercollegiate

forensics. So doing leads to interesting conclusions concerning forensics in the post-1960 period and beyond.

### *College Men and Women*

Horowitz begins her account with the oldest two cultures, what she terms "college men/women" (or "collegiates"), and "rebels." In the eighteenth century, collegiates were intensely anti-academic. The sons and daughters of the privileged, they came to college to refine their social graces, make valuable contacts, and have fun. In Horowitz' words,

genteel sons who went off to college took their extroverted ways with them along with their servants. They brought to college a love of pleasure, an attention to manners, a restless ambition, and an easy conscience (27).

The culture they socially constructed "was assertively hedonistic" (42). These students responded to requests that they study with indifference and to demands that they study with overt hostility, even riots. At the University of North Carolina for example, Horowitz tells us, "students horsewhipped the president, stoned two professors, and threatened the other members of the faculty with personal injury" (25). After all, these students did not need to study: their social status ensured their future, and the very Classical pre-Civil War curriculum just did not seem to them

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to be relevant to that future.

These students were very concerned about status, and anything on campus that gave status was valued. Membership in a secret society, an eating club, a literary society, or a fraternal/sororal organization carried with it a high measure of status. Involvement in student government, publications, or dramatics carried considerably less. Academic achievement carried still less—until another group, "the outsiders," began using academic excellence to "steal" the seats in law and medical school and the lucrative jobs away from the college men/women. As Horowitz notes,

While those under the sway of the canons of college life were too preoccupied to notice, the serious students at colleges and universities across the country learned that their institutions offered to them rewards more lasting than style (68-69).

Today, college men/women have incorporated academic achievement into their pantheon; however, they are very grade-focused, for after all, it's the grade, not the learning, that gains them status and career. This focus on the grade, now and then, justifies within the culture any and all means to get that grade. Fraternity paper files and strategically-placed crib sheets are not recent phenomena! "At Yale in the 1860s, perhaps less than half of the compositions," Horowitz notes, "were actually written by the supposed students" (33). In the early 1950s, she tells us, "Cheating remained widespread, engaged in by nearly two-fifths of all students surveyed [at Harvard]" (143). The fraternity system, she notes, has made cheating a fine art (143-44); furthermore, it has preserved, even into the 1980s, a hostile mentality towards academics:

As historically necessary as male college life once was and as enjoyable as it has continued to be, it has erected a cultural barrier that has prevented its partakers from encountering ideas and taking them seriously. Embedded within the fraternity system is the implicit understanding that faculty and students are at war, and, therefore, that higher education is not a process of discovery, but a series of battles to be won. (291)

Here, interestingly, college men and college women part company somewhat, with the women's

collegiate culture much less willing to condone academic dishonesty and much more supportive of academic engagement. Horowitz tells us that, "Unlike the fraternity system, that of the sorority is not inherently hostile to the academic enterprise;" however, she goes on to note that, "it is . . . , by its very definition, discriminatory, intent on retaining archaic social distinctions that warp the personal and intellectual growth of its members" (292). The sorority then may encourage scholarship, but not openmindedness.

Today, collegiates have incorporated activities such as the newspaper, dramatics, and choral groups into their pantheon; however, these activities still do not have the cache that eating clubs, Greek letter organizations, and the like have. The higher value in the collegiate culture of activity many faculty would demean is largely due to (1) the belief that the connections to be made through fraternities and other organizations will lead to career opportunities and career advancement, and (2) the comparatively higher level of status that members of the collegiate culture attach to Greek letter organizations and the like over other activities. The second of these factors gives the collegiate culture a circularity: high status leads to high value leads to high status, etc. Although illogical, this circularity is very difficult to break into.

Although not foolproof, discovering the percentage of the student body involved in Greek letter organizations will lead to identifying institutions dominated by the collegiate culture. These schools can be large or small. They tend to be found more often in the South and Texas than elsewhere in the nation, which has seen a very definite decline of the collegiate culture between 1965 and 1980.

### *Rebels*

The term Horowitz uses for the second culture, "Rebels," is unfortunately misleading, for the few college students who belong to this culture are not rebelling against the academic establishment but

rather rebelling against the collegiate culture. These rebels had very little interest in what the college men/women valued, be it membership in an eating club or a high grade; these rebels valued learning for its own sake and/or social action. Whereas the college men/women would ask, "What do I have to do to get an A in this history course," the rebels would either ask, "What else can I read on the Russian Revolution" or not be in class because they were working on a revolution of their own. And, as long as the rebels kept one particular academic interest or their chosen social cause from dominating, they tended to get high grades. Many went on to graduate school and became the professors of the future. Others chose law, social work, clinical psychology, or politics, and left their "rebel with a cause" mark on their work. Rebels are excited by ideas, and they thrive when allowed to pursue these ideas fully. As a result, rebels tend to gravitate away from schools with rigid curricula and toward schools with more open programs. Rebels have never been numerous—suggesting that for centuries young men and women have gone off to college for what most faculty would label "the wrong reasons." Rarely will a school be dominated by the "rebel" undergraduate culture. Only at schools with very open curricula, such as Hampshire, Reed, or St. John's in Annapolis, Maryland, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, do you come close to finding, rebel schools.

Rebels, because not very numerous, did not pose much of a threat to the historically dominant collegiate culture. Occasionally, a rebel would become editor-in-chief of a school's newspaper and, applying a large measure of his or her intellectual energy, write *against* the collegiate culture and turn the college men/women's annoyance to anger. Usually, however, collegiates and rebels could coexist in the classroom and go off to their separate domains—fraternity row and university library or "the city"—after classes were dismissed.

### *Outsiders*

The real threat to the collegiates was posed by the third culture, the outsiders. These men and

women came from humble roots. Their parents had not attended college; family connections did not guarantee them professional schooling or lucrative careers after graduation. These outsiders came to study (maybe to learn) and to get the grades necessary to get ahead:

College for them was not a time for fun, but a period of preparation for a profession. They focused on academic, not extracurricular, success; sought the approval of their teachers; and hoped, by dint of hard work, that achievement in the future would compensate for the trials of the present. (14)

Like the "rebels," these outsiders focused on the academic, but like the collegiates, these outsiders were primarily interested in "making the grade," not learning (221). And these outsiders did get the grades. In fact, it is these outsiders' success (measured by getting the grades and the opportunities high grades led to) that caused the collegiate culture to abandon the gentleperson's "C" and begin caring about grades. As Horowitz notes,

Gradually, the worldly success and prestige of former outsiders and rebels called into question the assumption that the extracurriculum had future value. By midcentury it was becoming clearer, even to undergraduates, that disciplined training leading to the professions—the curriculum—had the surest potential economic benefits. (18)

The outsiders did not fit into college life as the college men and women had defined it: they lacked the clothes and the social graces. Plus many had to work to earn some of the money being used to pay tuition. The outsiders staffed the dining hall; the collegiates left their tables dirty sometimes in contempt for the outsiders. Focused on getting high grades and working many hours, the outsiders did not have much time for the extracurriculum.

Large public universities, especially the second tier of such schools, are dominated by outsiders. Whereas the University of Maryland and Ohio State University have retained something of their collegiate past, Towson State, Salisbury State, Wright State, and Bowling Green State are outsider places. So were the early community colleges.

### *New Outsiders*

The 1970s saw two groups of "new outsiders" enter higher education: both groups saw college as the place to gain credentials, not learning. One group of traditional college age realized that lucrative job opportunities would be limited in the years ahead. The members of this group were determined to gain the credentials that would allow them to grab these limited opportunities. They sought grades, recommendations, resume items--but not learning-genuine respect from mentors, and meaningful (or time-consuming) activities. Unlike the original outsiders, they "lack . . . the sparks of intellectual life that were the saving grace of many earlier outsiders" (268). Earlier outsiders could be transformed into the students academe sought; the new outsiders came for credentials and only credentials. They were also intensely competitive—to the point of sabotaging the efforts of others. The opportunities, they realized, might be few. And they could use tooth and claw in order to be the fittest and survive—with a big house in suburbia and two BMW's in the driveway.

The second group of new outsiders—dominant at metropolitan area community colleges—are, like the originals, first-generation college students; however, they have demographic characteristics not traditionally found on college and university campuses. They are not as Caucasian; they are not necessarily between 18 and 22 years of age; and they may not be at school full-time. They will rarely reside on campus; they will almost always work as well as attend classes; and they may well have small children, even if they do not have a spouse (250).

These students, like the other groups of outsiders, value grades. In addition, they come to higher education with expectations and attitudes the outsiders did not. The new outsiders expect classes to be offered in the evening; furthermore, they increasingly expect services, such as low-cost child care, to be available to them on campus.

Whereas the earlier outsiders were respectfully

in awe of the institutions they entered, the new outsiders of both sorts tend to exhibit an anti-institutional attitude. They see the faculty—fairly or unfairly--as the "keepers of the keys" (i.e. the high grades) and either "play" the faculty or play-up to the faculty to get those keys. As Horowitz notes, "Whereas college men scorned both the techniques and the goals of grade-grubbing, the New Outsider turns them into valued strategies and admirable ends" (269).

### *Implications for Forensics*

By now many of you have already guessed many of the ways Horowitz' picture relates to intercollegiate forensics. I have directed a program for more than a decade at a school still dominated by the collegiate culture, and doing so has been a struggle, for except for an occasional "debate-aholic" or forensics freak, I find most who join the program unwilling to commit time to the activity the way I did in college. I found the unwillingness to jeopardize their grades in any way understandable, even admirable; however, I found their unwillingness to miss a single fraternity or sorority rush event less understandable. After reading Horowitz' study, I now know why my students are the way they are: they are almost all collegiates, and the few rebels and outsiders are so fully immersed in the collegiate culture at my school that most eventually embrace that culture's values—or transfer.

But I don't intend for this paper to be a sharing of anecdotes. Rather, I want to extract from Horowitz' work three rather practical lessons.

### *Avoiding Mismatches*

Forensics, of course, consists of many different genres: numerous individual events; Lincoln-Douglas debate; audience debate; parliamentary debate; CEDA; and policy debate. Rare is the forensic program director who can offer them all. Choosing among the genres should, I suggest, be more than expressing one's personal preferences. Rather, choosing should be an intelligent response to—among other factors—one's

school's undergraduate culture.

The following recommendations are only guesses, but they demonstrate how Horowitz' work, applied to one's school, can lead to an intelligent choice.

If one's school is dominated by the collegiate culture, a very demanding activity such as policy debate or CEDA is unlikely to be very successful. More likely to succeed will be genres that (1) have on-campus status; (2) "fit" the old eating club, drinking club mold the way the literary societies of an earlier time did; and (3) offer career advantages without a major expenditure of time. A combination of audience debate, parliamentary debate, and Lincoln-Douglas debate (as it is currently developing) would seem the best bet, with maybe some carefully selected individual events thrown in.

If one's school is dominated by the rebel culture, an intellectually demanding activity such as policy debate or CEDA might be very successful. The depth of research as well as the chess-like game-playing characteristics of good contemporary debate would appeal to the rebel.

If one's school is dominated by the outsider culture, activities that offer career benefits without demanding an excessive expenditure of scarce time would be likely to succeed. Individual events match this culture well, and so does debate, either CEDA or policy, to the extent that one's circuit permits one to compete fairly successfully without devoting endless hours to research and materials preparation.

If one's school is dominated by the second sort of new outsider culture, you will encounter serious, perhaps insurmountable problems. Forensics, especially debate, has an elitist, establishment aura about it that may well put many of these new outsiders off. Furthermore, forensics, with its weekend trips, poses logistical problems for the non-traditional new outsider. Plus, whereas new outsiders believe in the tangible advantages of good grades from the beginning, they must be sold

on the advantages of forensics participation. And remember that some are skeptical of if not hostile toward what establishment figures (like forensics directors) tell them and will, therefore, be difficult to sell. And, even if you sell them on forensics, the director will probably have to work in conjunction with his or her peers to overcome some of the logistical barriers~e.g. staging one-day tournaments, something that is a realistic possibility only in areas where there are enough competitors within, let's say, a two-hour commute.

### ***Better Recruiting***

Of course, not all schools are dominated by a single culture. If a director is working within a "multi-cultural" institution, Horowitz' descriptions of the four undergraduate cultures is still quite useful. It is useful because the four cultures have very different values and needs, and members of these cultures should therefore be recruited differently.

College men/women want status—status primarily in the eyes of their fellow collegians. If your prospect is a member of this culture, argue as best you can that participation will make him or her a "big man/woman on campus." Then, do all you can to make the promise a reality~e.g. sending press releases to the campus newspaper, following them up with calls to the paper's editor-in-chief or news editor. Collegiates are these days also interested in whatever will help them get ahead in the world, as long as it doesn't involve what they view as excessive work. So do talk about how forensics looks good on a resume, impresses prospective employers, etc. Beware that your collegiate prospect may well be quick to sour on forensics when the work load exceeds what he or she calculates as the career benefit. Collegiates are quick to weigh advantages vs. disadvantages and do so in rather superficial ways.

Rebels seek intellectual stimulation. If your prospect is a member of this culture, argue that forensics will have him or her exploring interesting subjects in depth. You will be competing for the rebel's attention not so much with other activities,

as with either his or her classes, especially classes in his or her major, or social causes. Your successful recruiting (and holding onto) a rebel may then depend on to what extent the forensics activity appeals to the same interest that prompted the student to choose his or her particular major. If, for example, you are trying to recruit a rebel to participate in policy debate, you will probably have more luck with a political science or economics major than a literature or chemistry major. Rebels can become "speech and debate nerds," which may be good or bad; however, rebels can just as quickly reject the intellectual excitement of a forensics activity for the intellectual excitement of a demanding advanced seminar in critical theory or Islamic culture or the excitement and sense of accomplishment of working for a cause. So, to minimize such shifts, which can disrupt a forensics program's continuity, stress the intellectual stimulation, the excitement, and the sense of achievement in forensics as you coach.

Outsiders are looking to get ahead. If your prospect is an outsider, you need to stress the ways in which forensics can advance one's career. You do not need to be as superficial with the stereotypical outsider as with the stereotypical collegiate; you can talk about the importance on-the-job of critical thinking skills as well as how impressed a prospective employer might be with a list of forensics awards on the student's resume. Nonetheless, you should stress the "real" gains the outsider can realize through forensics participation. Outsiders are almost as quick to calculate advantages vs. disadvantages as collegiates; therefore, beware of conducting an especially demanding program if it is populated predominantly by outsiders.

New outsiders of the first sort (the "Alex Keaton" sort) respond to the same appeals as do the earlier outsiders. However, they are not as docile: they will require a "hard sell": a forensics director's ethos will not sway them; they need data--what are the costs; how sure are the benefits. New outsiders of the second sort (the non-traditional sort) also respond positively to sensitivity toward their situation, and how their

situation does not always match-up well with the traditions, academic and otherwise, of institutions of higher learning. If your prospect is this kind of new outsider, you must demonstrate such sensitivity and be willing to intervene on behalf of the student, so as to make forensics participation possible. Will you develop a list of reliable child care providers for participants' use? Will you work with others in forensics to change schedules tailored for "traditional" college students to agendas that work for the "non-traditional"? Will you "get it" when older students (especially older women) argue that experiential "evidence" ought not be deemed irrelevant by debaters and debate judges? From my conversations with the very few forensics directors who work with new outsiders, I am convinced coaching them can be very rewarding. However, I am also struck by the level of sensitivity and flexibility these few forensics educators have learned to exhibit. I am furthermore struck by how these educators have learned to accept the fact that forensics may logistically work for a non-traditional new outsider one semester, but not the next. Therefore, those who are into building forensics empires may find recruiting new outsiders frustrating.

One question may well arise in many readers' minds: can a forensics program director recruit from all four cultures if all four are to be found at his or her school? The answer, I think, is "Yes"; however, such a director would have to be aware that he or she could seem to be sending mixed messages to the squad as a whole if he or she is not careful. For example, telling the rebel that debaters will research in-depth and assuring the collegiate and the outsider that forensics will not consume an unwarranted amount of time may well put the program director in a position that seems contradictory.

### *Intra-Squad Conflicts*

Forensics squads are notorious for in-fighting. And I do not plan on suggesting that Horowitz' work allows us to understand more than just a bit of the conflict. However, Horowitz' work on undergraduate cultures does indeed give educators

a filter—a new filter—through which to see some of the problems.

Conflict can arise between squad members when the workload to be shared is not. This conflict can be complicated when the members who are in conflict with each other come from different undergraduate cultures and therefore have different kinds of motivation. Not all conflicts, however, concern workload: there is traditional hostility among the cultures that may surface during the day-to-day work of the squad. Rebels, for example, are seeking learning or meaning and, sometimes, act toward the collegiate culture with cynicism, if not hostility. Collegians, on the other hand, are very quick to turn the resources of their culture against rebels—ostracizing them, labeling them "nerds" or "geeks." Often a collegian will lose status in his or her peers' eyes by working closely with a rebel—unless the collegiate occasionally shows his or her contempt. Similarly, outsiders/new outsiders and collegians do not get along, for it's these grade-grubbing outsiders/new outsiders who really "wreck the curve." Also, these outsiders/new outsiders simply do not possess those things—car, clothes, vacation money—that make one valuable in the eyes of the collegiate. As a result, collegians may act in a demeaning manner toward their outsider/new outsider peers; furthermore, they may well lose status in their collegiate peers' eyes by working with an outsider or new outsider. This potential loss of status will further diminish the collegiate's motivation. On the other hand, outsiders/new outsiders may resent the privileges most collegians have or act as if some aspects of collegiate life (e.g. fraternity initiation; homecoming float competition) are silly or unimportant. Horowitz' work then gives the forensics director a new way to understand interpersonal conflicts that previously might have been dismissed as simply—too simply—"not getting along."

The forensics director also needs to recognize that he or she was once a member of one of these undergraduate cultures and therefore may share certain values with some squad members against other members. For example, many forensics

educators were once "rebels." Therefore, they were intrinsically motivated to engage in forensics and they may well be intrinsically motivated to coach. Many such educators, however, can make a squad management error if they assume that what motivated them will motivate all of their students. Put another way, the educators may be far more motivated in exploring South Asia in depth than their policy debaters. Rather than bemoan the debaters' lack of intellectual curiosity, these program directors need to try to understand what does motivate their students and coach accordingly. To do otherwise would, in Horowitz' terms, reflect an unexamined belief in cultural superiority.

### *The History of Forensics*

Horowitz does not offer static pictures of undergraduate cultures; rather, she, as an historian, talks about how the cultures themselves and the overall picture have changed since the Eighteenth Century. If one takes her history, especially what she has to say about the post-1960 period, and maps it onto what has happened in intercollegiate forensics, one arrives at an interesting hypothesis.

Prior to 1960, intercollegiate forensics was primarily debate, debate that culminated each season at, first, West Point and, then, the National Debate Tournament. Debate. As practiced in this era, it had broad appeal. It offered the collegiate status and something for the resume; it offered the rebel a thorough exploration of an important public policy issue; and it offered the outsider marketable skills and experience. But NDT debate changed and began entailing more and more of a time commitment. As it did, it began losing its appeal to two of these three cultures. NDT debate triggered the collegiate's and the outsider's internal weighing procedures, and the gains were found by many not to match the necessary expenditure of time and energy. NDT debate was left with rebels as its base, and rebels are not very numerous and are easily lured away from debate by compelling classes and, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, by compelling sociopolitical activity.

CEDA, with its promise of avoiding the NDT

excesses, appealed to many of the outsiders; peer-run parliamentary debate, with its "collegiate" "literary society" atmosphere, appealed to many of the college men and women. Thus, as NDT participation dropped, CEDA and the American Parliamentary Debate Association (APDA) membership climbed. The true "growth industry," however, was probably neither of these genres of debate but individual events, which could be pitched to appeal to collegiates, rebels, and outsiders.

Parliamentary debate seems to be holding its own, probably because it is often found at schools dominated by the collegiate culture. CEDA, however, seems to be losing ground now. As CEDA repeats many of the mistakes of NDT, it is losing the primarily extrinsically motivated participants it had. The American Debate Association (ADA), because its member coaches have made a concerted effort to keep the policy debate activity accessible to as many novice and junior varsity debaters as possible, is keeping some collegiates and outsiders involved. However, I predict it is only a matter of time before ADA goes the way of CEDA and NDT and drives all but rebels away. And all three of these debate genres may be on the verge of driving even the rebels away, because they are emphasizing the in-depth investigation of the specific debate topic less and semantics, theory, and worn-out advantage/disadvantage scenarios more.

Again, the true "growth industry" may well be individual events, especially since individual events thus far seem, on a practical level, more accessible to the non-traditional new outsiders, who, studies tell us, will become increasingly numerous in the decades ahead. And what may well be the death knell for non-parliamentary debate is the gradual expansion of Lincoln-Douglas debate within the context of individual events tournaments. This NFA recognized activity promises a carefully limited but nonetheless "juicy" topic each semester; thus it would appeal to collegiates, rebels, and outsiders. And, within the context of the culture of an individual events tournament, L-D debate might escape the evidence mania which makes NDT,

CEDA, and ADA seem alien to the more experiential-oriented new outsiders and attract these nontraditional students as well.

What Horowitz' work may offer then is an explanation for what we have seen—and may see—in intercollegiate forensics in the last half of this century. A great deal of what I've said, especially my prediction about L-D debate, is highly conjectural. It is, however, not the idle conjecture of the forensic coaches' late-night gatherings in hotels and motels across America; rather, it is conjecture based on a fine piece of historical scholarship, a piece whose descriptions and narrations are so compelling not only because of the artifacts Horowitz cites but because her descriptions and narrations ring true.

Their ringing true also gives some comfort. What goes right and goes wrong at a particular school and, furthermore, the trends—especially the declines—that characterize intercollegiate forensics have as much to do with undergraduate cultures as the hard work of directors. In my own case, I've become convinced that creating a highly-competitive NDT debate program at a school dominated by the collegiate culture is highly unlikely no matter what I do. So, instead of bemoaning my failure, I have proceeded onward and tried to create a forensics program that meshes with the dominant undergraduate culture. I've also almost stopped worrying about the demise of debate nationally, seeing it as inevitable because the undergraduate cultures that will dominate in the decades ahead simply will not buy into debate as it is presently practiced. Since I can't change present practice alone (or even with a few others), I'm almost ready to resign traditional debate to history and begin training dramatic duos. I'm very definitely interested in examining Lincoln-Douglas debate as an option.

I recommend Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz' *Campus Life* to all. Whether you're interested in how Horowitz' conclusions relate to forensics or not, it's a "good read." I hope, however, you will consider Horowitz' work—both her descriptions of the four undergraduate cultures and her historical

account of their development and interaction more seriously. Forensics directors work with undergraduates more closely than most faculty members do; therefore, forensics directors must deal with the undergraduate culture at their institutions more directly than most faculty members do. Horowitz' work helps forensics directors undertake this task. Designing a program, recruiting participants, and understanding intra-squad conflict will be easier if Horowitz' work is used as a guide. Similarly, understanding what has happened and is happening in intercollegiate forensics will be easier—and less discomfoting—with Horowitz' work in mind.

One needs, of course, to read all of Horowitz' appropriate disclaimers. Her data base was large but not huge; she unabashedly generalizes on the assumption that we all realize that not all members of an undergraduate culture fit her descriptions perfectly. Nonetheless, she succeeds in making how students have socially constructed the cultures at their undergraduate institutions stunningly—at times, amusingly—clear. Given how closely forensics directors work with students, they need to grasp this social construction. Otherwise, they may be trapped working in an academic environment they assume exists but really does not.

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