Rogers & Luong's first article (1999) and their recent one (1999b) advocate using legal materials. In their most recent article (1999b) they also respond to my criticisms of using legal materials in debate (Ludlum, 1999). Hopefully, in this fourth discussion of the issue, we can reach a middle ground which is agreeable to both sides, and practical for high school debate.

In this essay, I will first explain the "Ludlum Standard" mentioned by Rogers & Luong. Second, I will identify where we have common ground, which may even surprise Rogers & Luong. Third, I will briefly explain an example of the misuse of legal materials that I see as common under current practices. I will then explore the main issues of my original position: published opinions should not be used; legal dictionaries should not be used; and legal journals can be used with some important caveats; the use of legal materials is not practical and not fair; and the use of legal materials is bad for debate. I will also respond to the criticism of Rogers & Luong. I will conclude with a proposal for a new area of common ground.

What is the Ludlum Standard?

Rogers & Luong do not make the Ludlum Standard explicit. I think they mean to say that if materials are abused, they should be banned. I would redefine it, as I may have misinterpreted their view. I am certain they have misunderstood mine. I would define the Ludlum standard as: tell the truth.

In my view, and I am sure in the view of Rogers and Luong, and all others who value the activity, telling the truth is an absolute precondition to winning in debate. People who lie should not be rewarded. This is obvious, but should be stated as an area of common ground for all involved.

I am not trying to train everyone to be a lawyer. We have far too many already. Nor am I trying to predict dire circumstances. The world will not end in a nuclear holocaust. Correction. It might end in a nuclear holocaust, there is no way to predict. But I am certain nothing anyone reads in a debate round will have any affect on it.

My entire position is that the way legal dictionaries and court cases are used in a way that is accidentally or intentionally dishonest. Debaters using legal dictionaries and court cases are not honest in the way this information is presented. They avoid or neglect to mention the context. Once the context is examined, it is nothing short of a miracle if these materials really apply to the debate resolution at hand. That is why I advocate banning their use.

The Middle Ground

Rogers & Luong (1999b) advocate using legal materials for four reasons: understanding the topic, generating ideas for affirmative and negative, finding real world examples, and using limited but substantive quotations. We have a great deal of common ground. In fact, we agree on all but the last one.

We can agree to read everything available to prepare. The better-prepared debater will most always succeed. Those debaters will be better prepared to see the "big picture" and notice the problems where they are implicit to the case. The better read debater is also better at asking questions and better at quickly organizing thoughts, two very important skills in competition.

I am not advocating that we padlock the doors to the law library. Nor should we confiscate legal materials of debaters. I simply argue that these materials should not be used in competition, meaning, in the debate round itself. Reading legal materials to prepare for the debate is good, as is all research on the topic. Some will be less than fruitful, and many will be tedious and boring, but that is for you to discover.

Ideally, you should know everything about a topic before debating it, but this is not practical. You must get what information you can, from the sources available, and within the time allowed for the activity. That means you get information from every possible source, including the material you cannot and should not expect to use in competition. For example, I also advocate inter-viewing people in the area. Most are willing to volunteer for a talk about the specific subject -- and will add valuable insight into the topic. But you cannot use this interview as evidence in competition. The same argument applied to legal dictionaries and most court opinions.

While I encourage you to read legal materials, I do not share Rogers & Luong's optimism in finding many prosaic legal opinions. Law professors spend their entire careers trying to find enough prosaic cases on a specific subject to fill a textbook. When you look, you find most textbooks repeat the same cases because there are so few lucid descriptions that are not bogged down by legalese. I have much more experience reading legal materials, and have probably read all of the prose-filled ones and now must be content reading the dull and mundane ones, which are far more common.

We also agree that context is important, if not essential to the process of debate. I think much of our disagreement is based on a common law student misunderstanding of the context of legal materials.

Here Is What I See In Debates

Rogers & Luong describe that LD debate is not technical in nature, but reflects a general understanding of the issues and involves a more general discussion (p. 17). I can imagine these debates, highly trained teenage philosophers calmly discussing the resolution while sipping tea, discussing the important events in the Philharmonic, the development of modern art, and men's fashion, and only having the sparse use of evidence. As a frequent judge of high school debate, I do not see these calm, reasoned, and non-evidenced discussions. Below is my perception of the debates I judge.

It is common for resolutions to be of the type "_____ is justified" or "_____ is moral." Use your own memory to determine the exact number. They are plentiful. Inevitably some debaters will use Corpus Juris Secundum (CIS) or Words and Phrases to define "is." When you look, it gives a variety of definitions of the word. Some refer to
the past. Some define the word in the present sense. Some indicate the word has a future significance. I have seen debaters use each and every one of these different definitions when it was advantageous. I have also frequently seen and read all the definitions, only to conclude that "is" means "any time." This way, such a proponent could offer any historical timeframe or example to prove the resolution.

I would bet my life that none of these debaters read the cases to which these definitions refer. The problem is these definitions are content specific, referring only to anti-trust cases or labor discrimination cases. Others are geographically specific, those being used in different states and not by others. But the students do not do this. They instead make a blanket statement, "the book says ____," without any reference to the cases or even knowledge that these supporting cases exist.

**Cases Are Misused As Evidence**

Rogers & Luong (1999b) state that I am "quibbling about jurisdiction." I am not. Jurisdiction is vitally important in understanding the published court opinions. *Jurisdiction Is Part Of The Context*. Rogers & Luong miss the point. Consider this condensed example of what I see when students attempt to use court opinions in debates.

If a Wisconsin judge says, "vouchers are fine" he means within Wisconsin law or the Wisconsin State constitution. But when you read the quote, it likely says

**Vouchers are consistent with the law and with the constitution.**

The published opinion does not repeat the words "in Wisconsin" over and over again, but that is clearly what it means. However, this understanding but that is lost if you ignore or do not understand the context. This "mistake" about jurisdiction allows a debater to falsely over-claim the evidence, whether innocently or intentionally. Only if you understand the jurisdiction do you understand the real argument being made by the court.

That is why I am so stymied when Rogers & Luong claim that jurisdiction is not important, that it is just some lawyer babble, and debaters should not be held to the same standards as attorneys. It is not lawyer babble. Jurisdiction/context is part of the content of the cases. It supplements the meaning of the words written. Without the jurisdiction, the context is lost. The truth is lost.

**Jurisdiction is part of the context.** When a court defines a term such as "commercial speech" or "tribal sovereignty" or "gun control," they do so within a specific context. Judges and lawyers do not pick "vocabulary days" and go into court to determine the infinite numbers of definitions for political speech. It does not work that way.

The courts do not exist to provide proving grounds for dictionaries or debaters. People do not hire attorneys, sue each other, and go to court, and therefore give court opportunities to give written opinions over disputes about the number of possible meanings for "academic freedom." The case, and therefore the written opinion, will have a specific context from the facts and the law of that jurisdiction. The context might be as limited as, in Arizona, "commercial speech" as used in the Arizona Newspapers Regulation Act means _____.

As such, the rationale (reasoning) for that opinion may or may not apply at all to another dispute, depending on how similar the facts and the law of the current dispute resemble those of the published opinion. There are numerous clues within the cases that indicate this rationale will be limited to these specific facts.

I think this is relatively straightforward. My business law students can comprehend this after the first lecture. I am personally shocked and amazed that a law student, least of all a student at one of America's premier law schools, cannot comprehend this. I think Rogers is being disingenuous by not admitting this obvious fact, precisely because this argument prevents students from using court opinions ethically in competition, which is what she and Luong advocate.

Perhaps I am being too harsh on Rogers & Luong. When I thought back, I realized that one day I was a baby lawyer, just out of law school, thinking I knew everything. The first thing my mentor did was take my law school textbooks and throw them in the closet, with the instruction "don't take those out till I tell you." He never told me to get them out. They may be handy for an occasional Jeopardy question, but in real life (and real law practice) their only purpose is to teach vocabulary and statute construction.

In America we have fifty laboratories of democracy. Each one has its own rules for everything. Many are similar, many are complete opposites. That is why the jurisdiction of the cases is so important. Some states (such as Oklahoma) have guaranteed protection against searches and seizures. Some states have only the protection afforded by the U.S. Supreme Court decisions and no more. Oklahoma State court decisions will be more protective against searches because the state constitutional protection is in addition to the federally guaranteed protection. Therefore, when you read Oklahoma cases on illegal searches, they will be more protective of personal privacy than other states.

This does not imply that Oklahoma judges are "correct" and other state judges are "wrong" about privacy. If you just read quotes from the cases it would appear so. But if you understand the context of the cases and the applicable laws, you understand why their views are different. Note the word "different" not "wrong."

This means the states have different rules, and the differences in those rules are implicit (not explicit) in the published opinions. That is why it is impossible for the lay person to read these cases and understand their meaning. For each case there are numerous implicit legal factors at work.

That is why Rogers and Luong do not support my view about the context of cases. Ms. Rogers has not yet learned these details, and will not likely learn them until after law school. This is not about acting like a lawyer instead of acting like a debater. It is about reading materials and coming away with an accurate and in context understanding of those materials. It is about the truth. But this idea of context is not limited to legal publications.

The same is true for all professions. My sister-in-law is a pharmacist. I was thumbing through her reference book, as she termed "the bible for drug treatment." While not understanding most of it, I did notice one group of drugs that listed the only potential side effects as coma and death. I thought this was unusual. There was also a note under this listing with a red star.

I thought the red star must be an important reference, but did not know what it could be. I asked. The red star is just a memory device to remind the pharmacist of food interactions. With this specific medicine, taking wine or cheese (cheese, no kidding) would be fatal. I asked why the guide did not list this, since avoiding death sounds like serious business. She indicated "any remotely competent pharmacist would..."
Lack Training Criticism

I argued in my first essay (Ludlum, 1999) that teachers and students alike lack a good legal understanding, and are therefore unable to train others to read court cases. Rogers & Luong criticize my view by providing the best proof that my view is incorrect. Rogers & Luong claim that it is easy to teach legal research to students, since Jack Perella of Santa Rosa Junior College has done the same (p. 19).

But they ignore the real premise of my argument. Attorneys can do this. Non-attorneys cannot. The reason why it worked for Jack Perella is BECAUSE HE IS AN ATTORNEY. He has the academic background which can help students understand cases they read, understand the context and the issues involved. When his students are headed down the wrong path, he can help them because he is trained as an attorney.

What percentage of high school coaches has an educational background just like Mr. Perella's or mine? It is unrealistic to think that Mr. Perella and myself (and presumably Ms. Rogers) can train every teacher to do legal research. And reading a book about it will not help, although I predict someone, likely Rogers & Luong, will enter the market with a new book and video explaining how to do legal research for debate. That may benefit the sellers of the book, but it will not benefit the activity.

Further, how can Rogers and Luong advocate everyone without training jump up and rush to read court cases when Rogers & Luong themselves seem blind to such simple ideas as context and jurisdiction in published cases? If a (I assume) highly trained law student at one of America's premier law schools cannot comprehend it, how can they expect someone with no training to instantly grasp it?

That leaves us with two possibilities. Ban the materials, as I advocate. Second, we could advocate their use, and hope and pray that everyone can be tutored by Ms. Rogers on legal research, or be left to make countless mistakes. While allowing them may be advantageous for students of Ms. Rogers, it would harm everyone who does not have an attorney to help train them in legal research.

Potential for Abuse Criticism

I argue (1999) that the potential for abuse (intentional and non-intentional) is so large that legal material should be banned. Rogers & Luong (1999b) counter that there is "virtually no risk they will be..."
abused (p.17). Rogers & Luong certainly see the world through rose colored glasses. They have been abused, they are abused now, and they will be abused in the future unless we do something. The fact that Rogers & Luong do not understand the abuse does not mean it does not exist. If there really was no abuse, why did Rogers & Luong need to advocate their use in these two articles? Why are they even discussing this issue if it is impossible to abuse these materials?

The first thing I have to explain to many clients is "being illegal does not make it impossible." Assuming we ban legal materials does not make the problem go away. It simply provides for a solution to a problem that already exists. Rogers & Luong make an even bigger leap of faith, assuming if legal materials are allowed they will not be abused, even if there is no rule against it, nor any check on the abuse.

Rogers & Luong are also contradictory on this position, since they acknowledge that legal definitions were abused in college debate (as Ulrich's 1985 article among others shows). This obviously contradicts their previous position, that there is virtually no risk of these materials being abused.

They further this specious argument by claiming that the abuse of legal definitions existed only in 1985, and was miraculously remedied (p. 18). This claim is completely false and it would be a leap of faith to assume this was a casual error. Problems of abuse of legal definitions still occur in college debate, as can be shown by anyone judging a college tournament. If you doubt my observations, you can ask any college coach. To be sure, the article by Ulrich, many others, and myself (Ludlum, 1992) provide ammunition against the abusers. But punishment does not mean the violations of the rules stop. It simply provides a remedy for the abuse of the rules.

There was no magic wand waved in 1985, which remedied all problems of legal definitions, as Rogers & Luong suggest. During this period, I was a college debater and shortly thereafter a college coach. There was no magic wand in 1985. I would have noticed it. If my math is correct, Rogers should have been in grammar school during this time. She makes no explanation of what, when, or how this miracle occurred. I can state from being there, it did not. The problems of legal materials are, have been, and continue to be a problem in college debate. We should learn from their example, not repeat their mistakes.

Not Practical

In this argument, I criticize legal materials because they are expensive, and not every school can afford them. Rogers and Luong (1999b) that this is not an issue of expense, that I must be blind, even doubting that I read their article (p. 19). Rest assured that I did read it, which is why I am critical of it.

This argument shows the pinnacle of ivory tower naivete’. Rogers & Luong state that internet research is "free." You simply turn on your computer, go on line, and save all these legal materials on disc. Rogers & Luong lack a basic understanding of economics or are so sheltered by academe to ignore real world economic issues. Just because internet research is free to Rogers & Luong does not mean it is free to everyone.

To make use of Rogers & Luong's suggestion, you need a computer. Computers cost money. They may be provided for free to Harvard students, but in the real world, computers cost money. To get these web sites, you need a telephone line and internet access service. While these may be free to Harvard students the rest of the world has to pay for them. Even then, some of the legal materials sites are not free, and most, which claim to be free, are only free for a certain time period, after which you have to buy a membership.

Of my discussions with debate coaches (I have a mailing list of 11,000), I find that most have no financial support from schools. Teachers with computers are those who can afford to buy their own computer to let their students use. And most principals will scream at the idea of you putting in a private phone line (even at your own expense) to hook up to the internet. One student looks up a dirty picture on the internet, and the next day it is in the newspaper, and someone has to get fired. Some schools have computers for all, and plenty of internet access. They are the exception.

I deal with schools daily that do not have access to a fax machine. This is not to say that the debate coach does not have a fax machine. There is not one in the entire high school. Some coaches laugh aloud about materials on CD-ROM, claiming "what am I going to do with those?" Many schools have computers, but computers so out of date that they will only work on DOS shell (if anyone can remember those days).

Rogers & Luong's claim that computer research will eliminate printing costs is also dubious (p. 34). If you do save all these legal materials on disc, you will eventually have to print them out. You cannot show up to a tournament with a handful of computer discs and hope to be successful.

Likely, as is my experience, computer research will be printed out several times. They will be printed once to be edited, since they cannot be edited on the computer, as all the students in the class share the computer. Once read, they will then be edited, and printed again, to be put into briefs or cases. Likely, they will be formed into briefs and re-printed in brief form from the computer. Each one of these costs money. It may be a slight savings over cheap copies, but it is far from free.

Will this change in the future? I certainly expect so. I expect by the time my children attend high school (first grade and pre-kindergarten now), computers will be so plentiful, they will likely be built into the desks. But the future is not now. Currently, only teachers with significant pocket change will have a computer and online access of their own.

Rogers & Luong's advice to get the $20 a month internet and computer deal is reprehensible. When you read the fine print, those "deals" are not cheap. The service is shoddy, and the computers will be long out of date before the long-term payments stop. Read the fine print. Coincidentally, this is my same advice for legal dictionaries and court opinions, read the fine print. Not surprisingly, Rogers & Luong ignore the fine print in both.

Rogers & Luong (1999b) also claim that the financial elitism that I discuss is a myth. They support this by arguing that small colleges are now dominant, where they could not be years ago (p. 34). Again, Rogers & Luong try to support their position by telling only half the truth. Financial elitism has devastated NDT debate. While it is true smaller colleges can be in the top 20 in NDT debate, it is because the numbers have dropped. During the 1970's, NDT reached an all time high of about 400 colleges. When I competed in the 1980's, this had dropped to less than 200. The last time I checked, there were less than 60 schools active in NDT; the numbers are dropping.

Bad for Debate

On this issue, Rogers & Luong (1999b) comment about "their favorite argument" of mine, something about needing stacks of information, and the information being heavy to carry. I do not remember this
argument, and I doubt I made much an issue about the carrying capacity of debaters. Personally, I would like each debater to have a wheelbarrow full of evidence, especially all available Power Punch briefs. I assume that Rogers & Luong like this argument since it does not involve any context issue, for which they have no answer other than to hope the issue dissolves into space.

Rogers and Luong (1999b) further argue that the "Ludlum Standard" will lead to no evidence at all, since every academic group could complain students do not understand their materials fully (p. 34). This is haphazard thinking at best.

I did NOT claim that students could not understand the material. If you take the time to decipher the terminology, and research the applicable state statutes, the cases are not that challenging. Tedious and outright boring most of the time, but not challenging.

Understanding is not the problem. I am saying that students are taking the material OUT OF CONTEXT accidentally or intentionally, an issue which Rogers & Luong have ignored and dismissed as silly in both their essays. Context is not silly, and it is not quibbling. Context is about telling the truth.

If asking people to tell the truth is paternalism, I plead guilty. The "Ludlum Standard" as Rogers & Luong call it, should be used in debate. Our activity depends on students telling the truth, and not just preventing fabrication of evidence. Evidence read in competition should be in context. If it is not, actions should be taken.

Rogers & Luong’s description of LD is insulting and degrading to those who participate in it and judge it. LD is not a hodgepodge of students generally talking about vague ideas and concepts about how society should look. If it were, we would not need time limits, or tournaments. LD debate is a form of competition, and the pressures of that competition entice people to do things they might not otherwise do, such as take materials out of context when it gives them a strategic advantage.

A New Middle Ground

I propose a new middle ground, which should appease Rogers’ need to use her newly acquired legal knowledge and still maintain an ethical, in context, discussion of the issues.

We should still prohibit the use of CJS and Words and Phrases. At a minimum, we should require the proponents of such definitions to provide a copy of the case(s) cited by these sources which match the resolution.

As for the use of court cases as quotes in competition, I advocate that we limit them to only using United States Supreme Court cases. Why, you may ask?

There are several advantages to using only U.S. Supreme Court opinions. First, the U.S. Supreme Court is the final arbiter of constitutional issues. As such, the opinion by the Supreme Court is the most highly regarded.

Secondly, the U.S. Supreme Court is the court most likely to hear cases in the subject areas of debate topics. They are the final review for all constitutional cases, such as free speech, gun control, privacy, and a host of other value and policy topics. While none of the cases will discuss the issue of "substantially changing U.S. policy on privacy" there will be cases that deal with specific privacy issues.

Third, U.S. Supreme Court opinions are professionally written. The Supreme Court has a large staff of law students and young attorneys to write and re-write, and re-re-write the opinions to get them correct. Very few other courts have the staff for so much attention to detail. Most other courts are over-burdened and do not have the time to spend on re-drafting opinions. They are lucky to keep their heads above water.

Fourth, U.S. Supreme Court opinions can be accessed without the use of a heaven-sent computer. The public affairs office of the Court can mail copies of specific opinions to those who call and request them. The public affairs office is not a remote research office for you to use. If you ask for a specific (recent) case, they will send you a copy. You cannot call them to ask for "everything about privacy" and expect a response. A recent U.S. Supreme Court opinion will be better written and more definitive than any other court opinion you will be able to find.

Fifth, by using only U.S. Supreme Court opinions, there are no state issues dealing with fairness and access to materials. U.S. Supreme Court opinions are available to all without cost. Such is not the case with most recent state court opinions or federal opinions, for which you must purchase a slip opinion service, which makes the computers look cheap by comparison.

My last reason for supporting the use of U.S. Supreme Court opinions is that people will be familiar with them. You do not have to be a lawyer to have heard about the Supreme Court or its decisions. I cannot imagine that you can find anyone (smart enough to participate in debate) who has not heard of Roe v. Wade. I would bet every novice policy debater knows about the Brown decision and its effects.

With these opinions out in the mainstream, the potential for a student to overclaim the evidence or take it out of context are minimized, if not eliminated. If a student reads a card from the Brown decision which the student claims supports the legalization of slavery, everyone will know it is out of context, including the lay judges. The same cannot be said for obscure state reports, and any of the 3,000,000+ published opinions already in circulation from courts other than the U.S. Supreme Court.

In summary, what have we concluded about using legal materials? First, legal journals are fine, with the caveat to find out information about the author. Second, legal dictionaries (Corpus Juris Secundum and Words and Phrases) should not be used. Short of a ban of using direct quotes from court cases, I propose a middle ground of only using the published opinions of U.S. Supreme Court cases in competition. We can ensure access and use of a new wealth of materials without compromising the truth in the process.

Endnotes


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