

training. Motivating students to be more argumentative is not sufficient unless critical thinking, argument, and communication skills are also formulated and refined during the process.

The present study provides a positive perspective of tournament debate as an academic activity regarding ARG. Findings of this and three previous studies (Infante, 1982; Colbert, 1992, 1993) suggest that debating increases ARG in participants. Teaching students to focus on issues during disagreements enhances the value of the debate activity. Given that ARG is a subset of the assertiveness trait (Infante, 1987), these findings could imply that debating may be an effective method of assertiveness training, even for those who are already high in this trait. The present study supports Simon's (1990) preliminary finding that "debaters are in fact more assertive than their non-debating counterpart" (p. 7).

The data related to gender differences regarding ARG and VA could also have important implications. Female debater ARG scores were not significantly different than males; however, female scores were significantly lower in VA. In fact, the largest effect size observed in the study was the mean differences between female and male debater VA scores. Previous research by Infante (cited in Rancer & Dierks-Stewart, 1984) found that males were significantly more ARG than females. The current study suggests women that debate are not significantly different in the ARG trait from men, but remain significantly less VA. Hence, debating may be an effective tool to increase female assertiveness traits. This data favors a call for greater female participation in tournament debating. (Medcalf, 1984)

Finally, this study was unable to reject anecdotal claims that debaters are becoming more VA. Whether the activity attracts some individuals that are VA or it contributes to developing individual VA traits remain unclear. However, identifying individuals with high VA traits is the first step towards developing strategies to modify VA behavior. Infante, Riddle, Horvath, and Tumlin (1992) identified several distinguishing characteristic of high VAs. These include: 1) frequent use of competence attacks; 2) a belief in the less hurtful nature of competence attacks; 3) a desire to appear tough; 4) having disdain for the receiver; and 5) being unable to keep a rational discussion from degenerating into a verbal fight. With a profile of what to look for and instruments to measure it, forensic educators can develop treatment models to alleviate this destructive form of communication. Forensic events that improve ARG skills and reduce VA could provide a foundation on which treatment models for VA are developed.

Considering many former debaters elevate to socially influential positions after their education (Matlon, 1984), and the relationship between VA and negative behaviors, forensic educators should demand additional empirical research assessing the educational outcomes of competitive debating. If highly successful and VA individuals are attracted to competitive debating, the importance of forensic educators to positively influence them can not be overstated. Providing debate training designed to reduce VA to those not otherwise exposed to it, say underprivileged inner city youth, has such important social implications that forensic community needs to expand it's investigation on debater traits. Forensics educators have an important obligation to further and refine the long standing tradition of debating to the benefit of it's participants. Hopefully, this research contributes towards that ends.

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**Table 1**

**Means, Standard Deviations, t-scores, and point biserial correlations for Argumentativeness Scores**

	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>r<sub>pb</sub></u>	<u>r<sub>pb</sub><sup>2</sup></u>
Debate						
No experience	168	72.07	10.94	-5.33**	.07	.003
Experienced	311	76.97	12.25			
Policy Debate						
No experience	216	73.82	10.87	-2.87*	.02	.001
Experienced	79	79.70	11.10			
Value Debate						
No experience	404	74.31	9.91	-4.90	.05	.002
Experienced	77	80.21	10.97			
Gender						
Male	258	75.71	9.39	1.21	.008	.001
Female	210	74.58	10.6			

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 2**

**Means, Standard Deviations, t-scores, and point biserial correlations for Verbal Aggression Scores**

	<u>N</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>r<sub>pb</sub></u>	<u>r<sub>pb</sub><sup>2</sup></u>
Debate						
No experience	168	48.17	10.94	-2.60*	.01	.001
Experienced	311	51.11	12.25			
Policy Debate						
No experience	216	48.68	11.23	-2.26*	.01	.001
Experienced	79	50.43	9.77			
Value Debate						
No experience	404	50.31	11.79	1.19		
Experienced	54	46.13	12.42			
Gender						
Male	258	53.52	11.38	7.37**	.11	.01
Female	113	47.28	11.99			

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .001$

**Appendix A****ARGUMENTATIVENESS SCALE**

1	2	3	4	5
almost never true	rarely true	occasionally true	often true	almost always true

1. \_\_\_ While in an argument, I worry that the person I am arguing with will form a negative impression of me.
2. \_\_\_ Arguing over controversial issues improves my intelligence.
3. \_\_\_ I enjoy avoiding arguments.
4. \_\_\_ I am energetic and enthusiastic when I argue.
5. \_\_\_ Once I finish an argument I promise myself that I will not get into another.
6. \_\_\_ Arguing with a person creates more problems for me than it solves.
7. \_\_\_ I have a pleasant, good feeling when I win a point in an argument.
8. \_\_\_ When I finish arguing with someone I feel nervous and upset.
9. \_\_\_ I enjoy a good argument over a controversial issue.
10. \_\_\_ I get an unpleasant feeling when I realize I am about to get into an argument.
11. \_\_\_ I enjoy defending my point of view on an issue.
12. \_\_\_ I am happy when I keep an argument from happening.
13. \_\_\_ I do not like to miss the opportunity to argue a controversial issue.
14. \_\_\_ I prefer being with people who rarely disagree with me.
15. \_\_\_ I consider an argument an exciting intellectual challenge.
16. \_\_\_ I find myself unable to think of effective points during an argument.
17. \_\_\_ I feel refreshed and satisfied after an argument on a controversial issue.
18. \_\_\_ I have the ability to do well in an argument.
19. \_\_\_ I try to avoid getting into arguments.
20. \_\_\_ I feel excited when I expect that a conversation I am in is leading to an argument.



**Appendix B****Verbal Aggression Scale**

- 1.\_\_\_\_ I am extremely careful to avoid attacking individual's intelligence when I attack their ideas.
- 2.\_\_\_\_ When individuals are very stubborn, I use insults to the stubbornness.
- 3.\_\_\_\_ I try very hard to avoid having other people feel bad about themselves when I try to influence them.
- 4.\_\_\_\_ When people refuse to do a task I know is important, without good reason, I tell them they are unreasonable.
- 5.\_\_\_\_ When others do things I regard as stupid, I try to be extremely gentle with them.
- 6.\_\_\_\_ If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character.
- 7.\_\_\_\_ When people behave in ways that are in very poor taste, I insult them in order to shock them into proper behavior.
- 8.\_\_\_\_ I try to make people feel good about themselves even when their ideas are stupid.
- 9.\_\_\_\_ When people will not budge on a matter of importance I lose my temper and say rather strong things to them.
- 10.\_\_\_\_ When people criticize my shortcomings, I take it in good humor and do not try to get at them.
- 11.\_\_\_\_ When individuals insult me, I get a lot of pleasure out of really telling them off.
- 12.\_\_\_\_ When I dislike individuals greatly, I try not to show it in what I say or how I say it.
- 13.\_\_\_\_ I like poking fun at people who do things which are very stupid in order to stimulate their intelligence.
- 14.\_\_\_\_ When I attack a persons' ideas, I try not to damage their self-concepts.
- 15.\_\_\_\_ When I try to influence people, I make a great effort not to offend them.
- 16.\_\_\_\_ When people do things which are mean or cruel, I attack their character in order to help correct their behavior.
- 17.\_\_\_\_ I refuse to participate in arguments when they involve personal attacks.
- 18.\_\_\_\_ When nothing seems to work in trying to influence others, I yell and scream in order to get some movement from them.
- 19.\_\_\_\_ When I am not able to refute others' positions, I try to make them feel defensive in order to weaken their positions.
- 20.\_\_\_\_ When an argument shifts to personal attacks, I try very hard to change the subject.

# DEVELOPING FIELD-DEPENDENT CRITERIA IN NON-POLICY DEBATE

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In any decision-making situation, the criterion provides the yardstick by which we measure the relative merits of the various choices which confront us. For example, we may decide to buy a car for any number of "reasons"—it costs very little to operate, it promises to last a long time with low maintenance expenses, it will have excellent resale value, or it has the color and styling we desire. Whatever reason or group of reasons we have for purchasing a particular car illustrates the yardstick or criterion we used to determine how to make the judgment. Together with clarifying definitions, establishing a clear criterion is the critical first step in any rational, consensual decision-making process.

In the context of non-policy academic debate,<sup>1</sup> the criterion generally performs three particular, important functions: (1) it clarifies the process by which a decision will be made by specifying the standard(s) for making that judgment; (2) it helps identify the potential issues of the debate by focusing dispute on the standard or standards used to make the required judgment; (3) it guides the development of a complete and coherent case by helping the debater determine what claims must be constructed to demonstrate the required judgment.<sup>2</sup> Because the criterion is such an integral component of non-policy judgment, it functions as a stock issue in all non-policy debates, influences how each substantive issue of every non-policy debate is resolved, and can even be the primary "voting issue" of the debate. For each of these reasons, the criterion is widely recognized to be an indispensable component of non-policy debate (Brownlee, 1987; Cole, Boggs and Twohy; Gill; Hill, 1991; Wilbanks and Church; Zarefsky).

Significant scholarship about the criterion in non-policy debate has focused upon clarifying the theoretical foundations from which the criterion should be constructed. Some theorists have demonstrated that the widespread practice of using a "highest value" such as "life" or the "quality of life" as the criterion is a-theoretical (Micken and Micken), and can adversely affect reasoned decision-making (Gill; Sheffield). As an alternative to such criteria, other writers have argued that we should use Toulmin's concept of argument fields as the theoretical grounding for developing the criterion in non-policy debate (Brownlee 1987, 1989; Hill; Warnick; Sheffield). Using argument fields, non-policy debaters would be required to develop a field-dependent criterion, a practice that would overcome most of the limitations of simply using a "highest value" criterion (Hill; Sheffield).

However, while the case has been made for using field-dependent criteria in non-policy debate, we have not yet seen a systematic description of how debaters might use the argument fields construct to develop such criteria. As a result, debaters have not demonstrated a fundamental understanding of the general concept of argument fields (Cantrill), nor have they demonstrated the ability to productively utilize Toulmin's concept to develop their criteria (Hill; Murphy and Murphy; Sheffield).



The purpose of this essay is to explain and illustrate how debaters might go about the process of operationalizing the argument fields construct to develop their own criterion. We will approach that task by presenting a three-stage process debaters should follow: (1) Identify the components of the resolution; (2) Construct the argument field; and (3) Develop field-dependent standards. For stage one, we will identify the primary components of a non-policy debate resolution and explain how each affects development of an appropriate criterion. In stage two, we will briefly explain the nature of "argument field" as it relates to the use of criterion, and illustrate the two primary ways argument fields can be constructed in non-policy debate. For stage three, we will briefly discuss the two subsidiary theoretical constructs of "argument fields"—field-dependence and field-invariant—as well as the distinction between "standards" and "criterion." Following that, we will outline the development of field-dependent standards. Hopefully, this three-stage process will serve to make existing theory about the criterion more useful for the non-policy debate community.

### **Stage One: Identifying the Components of the Resolution**

Stage one of the process always consists of identifying the primary components of the resolution. This stage is not complicated, but it is essential. If the components of the resolution are not properly identified, it is impossible to rationally construct the criterion.

In order to be debatable, every non-policy resolution must have two major components: an object of focus and a judgmental term. The object of focus is the entity (e.g. person, concept, event) which is being judged or evaluated. The judgmental (or valuative) term specifies the judgment or evaluation which the advocate is required to make about that object of focus. For example, in the resolution, *Resolved: that continued U.S. covert involvement in Central America would be undesirable*, "continued U.S. covert involvement in Central America" is the object of focus because it is the phenomenon being evaluated or judged. The judgmental term is "undesirable," because that term specifies the judgment—(it is undesirable/it is not undesirable)—to be made about "continued U.S. covert involvement."

Two other components may be included in non-policy resolutions: a situational qualifier and/or a judgmental qualifier. A situational qualifier specifies the situation within which we are to judge the object of focus. For example, in the resolution, *Resolved: that significantly stronger third party participation in the United States Presidential elections would benefit the political process*, the phrase "the political process" is a situational qualifier because it describes the situation within which the object of focus is placed. That is, it requires that the judgment ("would benefit") be made in reference to the relationship between "significantly stronger third party participation in the United States Presidential elections" (object of focus) and "the political process" (situational qualifier). A situational qualifier will be particularly important for identifying the argument field.

A judgmental qualifier is a term or phrase which clarifies the nature of the judgment to be made. For example, in the resolution *Resolved: that the United States Supreme Court, on balance, has granted excessive power to law enforcement agencies*, the phrase "on-balance" is the judgmental qualifier. "On balance" specifies that the judgment (excessive) must be warranted by the totality of the actions of the United States Supreme Court (object of focus).



Although identifying the components of the resolution is not particularly difficult, it is nonetheless critical to the process of developing the criterion. Identifying the object of focus is important because it is the component of the resolution for which an argument field must be constructed. Identifying the judgmental term is important because it specifies the judgment for which the field-dependent criterion must be formulated. Identifying the situational qualifier is important because it clarifies the specific situation in which the judgment is to be made and affects how a field-dependent criterion will be formulated. The judgmental qualifier is important because it specifies the force of the judgment to be made. Put simply, it is impossible to develop an appropriate criterion without first determining what is being judged, what judgment must be made, the situation in which it must be made, and the nature of that judgment.

### **Stage Two: Constructing the Argument Field**

Stage two in developing the criterion is to construct the argument field. In a general sense, the field is the perspective from which the object of focus is being judged, or what the object of focus is being judged "as" (Hill; Warnick). Determining the argument field is a crucial step in developing the criterion in non-policy debate.<sup>3</sup>

Two distinct methods of defining the argument field have been suggested for non-policy debate, the discipline-based construction and the purpose-based construction. To use the discipline-based construction, one needs to identify either the discipline of the experts who study the object of focus, or the general discipline in which the object of focus is most regularly considered to be a focus of study (Brownlee, 1987, 1989). For example, in the resolution, *Resolved: that compulsory national service for all qualified United States citizens is desirable*, the object of focus—"compulsory national service for all qualified citizens"—might be judged within the field of "public policy" if the preponderance of expert sources who discuss the object of focus are policy analysts, or if the object of focus is most frequently studied within the discipline of policy analysis. However, if most of the evidence about compulsory national service came from politicians, or if it was most frequently studied in the discipline of political science, then the object of focus might be said to reside in the field of "political science." Similarly, in the resolution, *Resolved: that United States higher education has sacrificed quality for institutional survival*, the object of focus—"United States higher education"—might be judged within the field of "education" if the preponderance of sources of evidence about that object of focus are "education experts," or if the discipline of "education" is that in which the object of focus is most frequently studied. Typically in non-policy debate, discipline-based constructions would give us argument fields such as "public policy," "law," "economics," "criminal justice," "political science," "ethics," or "government." Such argument fields would tend to mirror the disciplines which have been created at colleges and universities.

An alternative to the discipline-based construction is the purpose-based construction. To use the purpose-based construction, one needs to determine what specific purpose or function the object of focus performs (Hill; Warnick). That is, one conceives of the object of focus as a vehicle for achieving a particular outcome, and that purpose or function then defines the argument field of the object of focus. For example, in one recent non-policy debate