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## A Study of Stock Issue Perception in Intercollegiate Debate by Debaters and Judges

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*University of Central Florida*



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A STUDY OF STOCK ISSUE PERCEPTION  
IN INTERCOLLEGIATE DEBATE BY  
DEBATERS AND JUDGES

BY

JOHN FREDERIC BUTLER  
B.A., Florida State University, 1967

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Communication  
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Orlando, Florida



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

One of the major changes in intercollegiate debate in recent years has been the shift of emphasis in judging. In the past a judge was expected to award the decision to the team that did, in his estimation, the better job of debating. Presently, the trend is to award the decision to the team that carries the critical issues in the debate. Wood summarizes the viewpoint of the "issues" or "balance-of-arguments" judge in Strategic Debate:

The criterion that many judges use is which team established its arguments during the debate. The "balance-of-arguments" judge listens carefully to the debate and usually takes copious notes on his flow sheet. As the debate progresses, he analyzes its basic issues and the arguments and evidence that support them. He reaches his decision by deciding which team did the better job of meeting its basic responsibilities.

For the affirmative, this means that the judge weighs the affirmative's issues. If it used a traditional need case, he asks himself if it established the need for a change, if the affirmative's proposal was shown to be capable of solving the problems of the present system, and if the advantages were maintained throughout the round. The "balance-of-arguments" judge may well award a loss to the affirmative team if any of the basic issues was significantly damaged.

If the affirmative has presented a comparative advantages case, the judge considers whether the affirmative has established that its advantages will truly be beneficial to the interested parties and whether these advantages could be expected to be gained from the affirmative's proposal. In addition, he carefully weighs the affirmative's response to the negative's plan objections



to see if serious disadvantages still remain at the end of the debate.

Whether the affirmative has met its burden of proof is the major concern of the "balance-of-arguments" critic, but he looks closely at the negative argument.

Did the negative adequately defend the present system? Did its arguments and evidence penetrate the affirmative's case? Did the negative establish the disadvantages of the affirmative's proposal?

The decision, then, may well boil down to a single issue and to which side seemed to win it. The "balance-of-arguments" judge is likely to indicate on his ballot the points that decided the debate in his mind. He is apt to be much more content-analysis oriented than other judges. He may well award the decision to a less articulate team, even though its opponents were more persuasive debaters, if that team won a really significant issue.<sup>1</sup>

The adoption of the "issues" standard of judging is reflected by such innovations as the flow sheet and the Georgetown Debate Ballot, and is probably the direct cause of ballot changes, such as the National Forensic League's adoption of a strictly constructed issues ballot for its official contests. Several prestigious tournaments, such as the "Cherry Blossom" tournament at Georgetown University, and the "Peace Tree" tournament at Emory University, have rejected the older "American Forensic Association" ballot in favor of the more recent issues ballot.

Like any effective public speaker, the debater must learn to analyze his audience. The debater's "audience," however, is frequently only a judge. Here, the task of analysis for the debater confronting an issues-oriented judge is twofold. First, he must determine which

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<sup>1</sup>Roy V. Wood, Strategic Debate (Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1968), 164.



arguments in the debate are of crucial significance and, second, he must effectively advocate those arguments to his benefit.

In the process of determining the importance of various arguments in the debate, today's debaters find themselves frequently pondering the question, "What does the judge think?" Obviously if a debater can establish common understanding of critical issues with his judge, he can significantly increase his chances of winning. Conversely, the debater who bases his argumentation on issues that appear insignificant to the judge has a high probability of defeat.

#### Statement of the Problem

Although previous stock issue studies have provided information about debater-judge issue perceptions, a number of important questions remain unclarified.

The purpose of this study is to determine the extent of debater-judge issue perception and concurrence, the effect of this concurrence on win-loss records, the emphasis given various stock issues in the comparative advantages and need case structures, the effect of experience on debater issue perceptions, and finally, to determine the accuracy of debater win-loss predictions.

This investigation will update prior research as well as provide new information about stock issue perceptions and their effects.

#### Contributory Studies

Intercollegiate debate has been the subject of numerous studies since the turn of the century. Although many of the aspects of debate that have been scrutinized do not specifically relate to this research,



studies concerning judge's qualifications, judging criteria, stock issues, general issues, and participant judging provide meaningful background.

In addition to fostering empirical studies, intercollegiate debate has also generated controversy over the process of rendering decisions. Consequently, relevant background material includes both empirical studies and subjective articles on debate.

### The Wells-O'Neill Controversy

The earliest controversy over debate judging on record is recorded in the Quarterly Journal of Speech, from 1915 to 1917. The dispute was initiated by O'Neill, who argued that the decision should be awarded to the team who did the better job of debating:

On what basis should a decision be rendered in intercollegiate debate? . . . A decision for an affirmative team should not mean that the affirmative side is right--that the affirmative team "got nearer to the truth" as it is sometimes put. It should mean that the affirmative team is on the whole composed of better debaters than the negative team. The trouble with the other basis for decisions is that before the judges can determine which side is right--which side gets nearer the truth--they must necessarily determine what is right--what the truth is. Of course the truth to any judge is the side of the question that he happens to believe in. Surely, then, a team that argues directly away from the truth has no chance against a team that argues for the truth, no matter how feebly. So the result, in any case so judged, must be that each judge will vote for the team that upholds the side of the question that he happens to favor. Then the decision records simply the private opinions of the judges on the question discussed. Anyone interested in these opinions could probably get them by mail at a great saving of time and money. The proper question to be answered by the award is, "Which university has the



better debating team?"<sup>2</sup>

O'Neill based his argument for better-job-of-debating decisions upon the assumption that the controversial nature of the debate topic would inherently prejudice any judge. Consequently, he sought to avoid prejudicial decisions by using the skill of the debaters for the basis of the decision.

The first of several responses to O'Neill appeared in July of the same year when Davis, a proponent of lay judges, responded that debate could not accurately be judged on a "point system" basis because it did not have clearly definable points of comparison "like two thoroughbred horses." He suggested that the object of debate was to accomplish something, not to be something. Pursuant to this stance, Davis argued that the duty of the judge was not to evaluate the debaters but was rather to simply determine who won the debate. He concluded that lay judges were adequate for this purpose.<sup>3</sup>

O'Neill's response came in the same issue. In it he indicted lay judges as biased and suggested that they make decisions according to their feelings about the issue being debated. He further argued that, should judges remain neutral, they would be compelled to vote for the negative because it would be impossible for the affirmative to fulfill the burden of proof during the time allotted. O'Neill predicated his argument on the concept that the affirmative team would have to answer

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<sup>2</sup>J. M. O'Neill, "A Disconcerted Editor and Others," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, I (April, 1915), 80.

<sup>3</sup>William Hawley Davis, "Debating as Related to Non-Academic Life," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, I (July, 1915), 112.



the questions in the judge's mind as well as those posed by the negative team. The adoption of such a system, he concluded, would result in "dull and lazy" negatives winning over "industrious and brilliant" affirmatives because under the circumstances the affirmative would have a hopeless case.<sup>4</sup>

To this point the controversy was centered on judges as much as judging criteria, but in 1917 Wells offered a classic refutation of O'Neill and Davis that plunged judging criteria into the center of the controversy.

Wells first dismissed the "better-job-of-debating" criteria advocated by O'Neill as being unrealistic and unworkable because of the subjective nature of quality ratings (a conclusion that is verified empirically later in this chapter). He argued that no workable system could be devised that would accurately measure the various portions of a debater's performance, and suggested that if such a system could be devised, it would be unrealistic. Reasoning that debate should provide realistic training in public speaking and rational thought, he warned that such a system would lead to a "wholly artificial style" which would train the debater to speak in conditions "utterly foreign to those circumstances which he must be prepared to meet in real life."

Wells summarized his refutation of O'Neill by concluding that:

No one credits a preacher with 80 percent for argument, 10 percent for diction, and 10 percent for presentation. Indeed, if the public speaker has learned his art, his listener will be completely oblivious to any of the

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<sup>4</sup>J. M. O'Neill, "Able Non-Debaters," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, I (July, 1915), 202-203.



elements which make up the ensemble of the address.<sup>5</sup>

The major premise of O'Neill's argument was that affirmative debaters, to win the debate, would have to answer the questions in the judge's mind as well as the attacks posed by the negative team. This would present the affirmative with an impossible burden.

Wells denied the point. He argued that a judge could determine the winner by considering only the arguments of the teams debating and not using his own ideas as a basis for judgement.<sup>6</sup>

Wells would have merely added a new voice to the controversy about judging had he stopped at this point. However, he not only refuted the previously held theories but also offered a new rationale for judging skill in debate:

Public speaking is an art, and an art is the practical application of scientific knowledge to definite purposes and objectives. Therefore, skill in "reasoning, research, and speaking" should be judged by results. In other words, proficiency in speaking and industry in research are qualities which must be cultivated in order to be convincing and persuasive. Therefore, clear and accurate expression, knowledge of debate procedure, industry in research, and good speaking do determine decisions because they aid in driving the thought home. The debater who possesses these virtues is persuasive and convincing. But, having performed their functions, having added to the argument every persuasive element which rhetorical art and scholarly industry can give clear and accurate expression, it is difficult to comprehend why these elements should receive further consideration. To do so is really to accredit them twice, and, what is far worse, to make the mechanics of debate and forensics an end in themselves, rather than to treat these elements for what they really are, namely, powerful agencies for the

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<sup>5</sup>Hugh N. Wells, "Judging Debates," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, III (October, 1917), 337.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 340-341.



transmission of thought.<sup>7</sup>

The concept that skill in debating would be given due emphasis even if the debate were judged on the basis of the case presented brought a final response from O'Neill and a rejoinder from Wells.<sup>8</sup> Neither author deviated from his original position, but their controversy had set the stage for a debate about judging criteria that is still going on today.

### Participant Judging

The concept of eliminating critic judges by allowing debaters to evaluate themselves was previously considered in the late 1930's and early 1940's, although several modern studies have also involved this issue.

Studies which contribute an answer to the question of whether debaters are capable of accurate self evaluation are of direct importance to this study because they provide background to the research question concerning the accuracy of debater's predictions of wins or losses.

Although the concept of replacing the win-loss decision of the critic-judge with the decisions of the debaters themselves was introduced by Baccus in 1937,<sup>9</sup> the first empirical study of this issue was undertaken by Lasse in 1942. In studying the use of a "quality rating

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 338-339.

<sup>8</sup>Hugh N. Wells and J. M. O'Neill, "Judging Debates," Quarterly Journal of Speech Education, IV (January, 1918), 76-92.

<sup>9</sup>Joseph Baccus, "Debaters Judge Each Other," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXII (February, 1937), 74-80.



system" as an alternative to decision debating, Lasse surveyed the Annual Hastings College High School Debate Tournament during three years: 1938, 1939, and 1940. In each debate, a "Judge's Rating Ballot" was given to the judge with the instructions that he assign each debate team and each debater a quality rating. The debaters filled out similar ballots on the teams they debated.

Although the results of this study are placed in doubt by Lasse's awarding or subtracting points from each judge's score according to the judge's "liberal or conservative tendencies" in awarding quality points, he did find that debaters and judges tended to correlate in their quality point ratings.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of Lasse's data manipulation, it can still probably be concluded that debaters can rate the performance of their opponents with a degree of accuracy. Lasse's conclusion, that "debater quality ratings" could replace judge decisions, nevertheless appears unjustified for two reasons:

1. The debaters were told that their ratings would have no effect on the outcome of the tournament. Consequently, the pressures that are concomitants of competition did not affect the debater's ratings as they would have if the ratings were utilized to determine winners and losers.

2. The process of rating opponents does not entail a judgement of whether the subject won or lost the round. Because of this, the

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<sup>10</sup>Leroy T. Lasse, "An Evaluation of the Quality Rating System in Measuring Debate Achievement," Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXVIII (December, 1942), 428.



Lasse study failed to accurately reflect the competence of debaters to determine the decision of a competitive debate.

In 1957, King and Clevenger conducted a study to determine whether college debaters could judge their own debates. The study was designed to answer two questions:

(1) Would the outcome of the tournament be substantially the same when judged by the participants as when judged by experienced critic judges? (2) If the outcome would not be the same, which of the two methods is the better?<sup>11</sup>

The authors gathered data through a questionnaire which was administered at the Eighth Annual Florida State University Invitational Debate Tournament. After the first four rounds each debater was instructed to list his name and school, the teams he had debated, the rank of each team according to strength in comparison to the other teams in the tournament, whether he felt that he won or lost the debate, and the names of the best debaters that he had met.

Of the 201 usable student decisions, 133, or 61.2 percent, agreed with the judge's decision while 68, or 38.8 percent, did not. Although 61.2 percent was higher than the 50 percent agreement that would occur by chance, a difference in nearly 39 percent of the decisions would still have altered the outcome of the tournament, had the students' ballots been used to determine the results.

A partial reason for the divergent results of the students was the fact that they were unable to accurately determine when they won or lost. Of the 201 decisions, 163, or 81.1 percent, were "win" decisions

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<sup>11</sup>Thomas R. King and Theodore Clevenger, Jr., "A Comparison of Debate Results Obtained by Participant and Critic Judging," Southern Speech Journal, XXV (Spring, 1960), 223.



and only 38, or 18.9 percent, were "loss" decisions.

A comparison of judge-debater team rankings yielded that the results were diverse.

While the judges ranked team "B" second, the debaters ranked it seventh, and team "E," ranked by the debaters as the weakest team in the tournament, was listed as fifth by the judges. Team "L," ranked twelfth by the judges, was placed second by the debaters.

The next comparison concerned the rating of individual speakers. A comparison of the highest 12 speakers selected by each group yielded that of the 18 debaters that were selected as "superior" by one or both systems, six would have received a judge award but not a debater award; five would have received a debater award but not a judge award, and seven would have received both, yielding only a 39 percent agreement figure between the two groups.<sup>12</sup>

King and Clevenger drew six conclusions from their study:

- (1) The debaters disagreed with the judges concerning the outcomes of individual debates nearly two-fifths of the time;
- (2) This disagreement seems largely traceable to the tendency of the debater to feel that he has won the debate;
- (3) Team ranks based on debater rankings were substantially different from team ranks based on judge decision, the rank order correlations being .496 and .843;
- (4) Judge and debater ratings of individual speakers differed considerably;
- (5) There was less than 40 percent agreement between outstanding debater awards based on judge ratings of individual speakers, although a Chi Square test revealed that the two rating methods were not completely independent;
- (6) It may be concluded, therefore, that the outcomes of this debate tournament would probably have been quite different if based on participant judgements than if

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 229.



based on judge decisions and ratings.<sup>13</sup>

The King-Clevenger study provided answers to several of the questions that were unanswered by Lasse. Debaters were unable to accurately predict whether they had won or lost a significant percentage of the time, and when rankings were used to select the superior speakers of the tournament, debaters agreed with judges less than 40 percent of the time.

Obviously, if debaters replaced critic judges the results of the tournament would have been altered.

The previous studies had determined that debater's evaluations of their opponents did not correspond with judge's evaluations. But what of their evaluations of themselves?

Barker undertook an extensive field study on debater's win-loss predictions in 1963. The following hypothesis was tested:

There is no meaningful relationship between a debater's self-evaluation of a debate and the judge's rating of the same debate. The general hypothesis was further divided into four sub-hypotheses. These subsidiary hypotheses were also considered: (1) There is no meaningful relationship between an inexperienced debater's self-evaluation of a debate and the judge's rating; (2) There is no meaningful relationship between an inexperienced debater's self-evaluation of a debate and the judge's rating; (3) There is no meaningful relationship between an affirmative debater's self-evaluation of a debate and the judge's rating; and (4) There is no meaningful relationship between a negative debater's self-evaluation of a debate and the judge's rating.<sup>14</sup>

A self-evaluation form which corresponded with ratings on the

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 229-230.

<sup>14</sup>Larry Barker, "A Comparative Analysis of Debater-Judge Ratings," Journal of the American Forensic Association, II (January, 1965), 17-20.



judge's ballots was given to 318 debaters in four tournaments:

Ohio University Forensic Summer Workshop Debate  
Tournament, June 17-30, 1962;

Ohio Speech League Final Tournament in Columbus,  
Ohio, March 15-16, 1963;

Final Debaters in four debate classes at Ohio  
University, May, 1963;

National Debate Tournament at West Point, New York,  
April 24-27, 1963.

The forms were turned in after each round of debate, giving a total of 1,791 forms. By contrasting the judges' ballots with the self-evaluation forms, Barker found three significant results:

(1) Neither high school nor college experienced debaters rated their performances similar to the judge.

(2) Inexperienced high school debaters tended to rate their performances conversely to the judge though not significantly so. Inexperienced college debaters showed a slight tendency to rate themselves similarly to the judge, but again this correlation was not significant.

(3) In general, debaters did not tend to evaluate their own performances in a manner similar to the judge.<sup>15</sup>

What King and Clevenger had concluded about debaters' ratings of their opponents, Barker found, also seemed to apply to debaters' evaluations of themselves. Additionally, he found that experience was not a significant factor in win-loss predictions.

Murphy and Hensley updated Lasse's findings when they determined the accuracy of win-loss predictions of high school debaters at the 1965 Oklahoma Central District High School Speech Tournament. The experiment was based on the dual hypothesis that (1) the debaters would be able to predict the correct results of their debates, and (2) the rating of individual debaters on a nine-point semantic differential scale would

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 18



correlate with that of the judges on the same scale. Data was gathered by the distribution of a ballot to the four debaters and the judge in each of 33 rounds. The ballot asked the participants to identify their team, the opposing team, the winner of the round, and to rank the opposing team on the semantic differential scale.

This study yielded several conclusions:

(1) Debaters usually thought that they won. Because of this, they were generally unable to accurately determine the outcome of the debate.

(2) Debaters only rarely felt that they lost, but when they did, they were usually right.

(3) Debaters' evaluations of opposing teams on semantic differential scales did not significantly correlate with judges' evaluations.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to replicating portions of earlier studies by Lasse and by King and Clevenger, Murphy and Hensley discovered that debater's loss predictions were more accurate than their win predictions. This conclusion potentially contributes to knowledge of debaters' predictive ability, but since Murphy and Hensley studied high school debaters, their conclusion cannot be generalized to college debaters. It is hoped that this thesis will determine whether college debaters can also predict losses accurately.

Studies on participant judging have provided valuable background for this research. From them we can conclude that:

(1) Debaters, due to their tendency to feel that they usually win, are inaccurate in their "win" predictions.

(2) Debaters differ significantly from judges in rating the performances of themselves and of their opponents.

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<sup>16</sup>Jack W. Murphy and Wayne E. Hensley, "Do Debaters Know When They Win or Lose?" Speech Teacher, XV (March, 1966), 145-147.



While contributing to our knowledge of debate, past studies have left two important questions unanswered which will be resolved by this investigation. The questions are:

- (1) Can college debaters predict losses more accurately than they can predict wins?
- (2) The previous studies fail to explain why debaters are inaccurate in their win predictions. A plausible reason for their inaccuracy could be that opposing debaters perceive different critical issues. If this is the case, their differing perceptions will be illuminated by this study.

### Judging Criteria Studies

The studies that were undertaken on participant judging established that judges and debaters frequently differ in their decisions, but they did not illuminate what the judges' criteria for reaching decisions were. In an effort to make that determination, a number of studies have attempted to isolate the judges' criteria for reaching decisions.

These studies are important because they help to define the extent and the accuracy of "better job of debating" criteria for decisions in debate and, consequently, measure its usefulness as an implement for reaching decisions.

The initial judging criteria study was done by Giffin at the University of Kansas "Heart of America" tournament. In this study, he attempted first to determine the purpose of debate by surveying college debate instructors. From the survey he concluded that debate is reputed to benefit its participants in seven ways:

- (1) To teach students to speak well; that is, to have better delivery, including good voice usage and appropriate posture and gestures;



(2) To give students greater ability to determine logically defensible arguments relative to propositions or intellectual positions they favor;

(3) To encourage students to be able to support positions held with pertinent and carefully documented factual information;

(4) To help students to perceive irrational, fallacious or irrelevant arguments advanced by other people;

(5) To teach students to phrase their concepts in clear and concise language;

(6) To increase students' abilities to analyze problems, i.e., to select groups of related concepts and issues; and

(7) To help students to achieve better organization of concepts which are related.<sup>17</sup>

A ballot which enumerated the seven values in the form of criteria was then distributed to the 34 tournament judges. Judges were asked to rate each team on a one-to-fifteen-point scale.

From a total of 175 judgements, it was found that the judges gave the following weight to each of the criteria:

1. ability to speak well (delivery)	14.65%
2. selection of logically defensible arguments (case)	19.10
3. support of arguments with information (evidence)	17.18
4. perception of irrelevant or irrational arguments (refutation)	17.00
5. phrasing of concepts clearly and concisely (language)	5.29
6. ability to analyze the topic-area (analysis)	14.78
7. ability to organize ideas into a structured whole (organization)	8.88
Total	96.88% <sup>18</sup>

The results of this analysis indicate that the judges involved in this study gave approximately 97 percent of their consideration in

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<sup>17</sup>Kim Giffin, "A Study of Criteria Employed Tournament Debate Judges," Speech Monographs, XXVI (March, 1959), 69.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 70.



arriving at decisions to criteria which were established as being desirable academic goals.

It is significant to note that Giffin's conclusions only refer to what the judges perceived that they based their conclusions upon. Since Giffin tested judges' perceptions and did not empirically weigh the influence of his seven factors in decision determinations, his study did not demonstrate whether these criteria were actually used to determine the decision.

A later study by Williams, Clark, and Wood classified this discrepancy.

In an effort to determine the effectiveness of contest ballots which charge the judge to predicate his decision on particular traits such as "analysis," "reasoning," etc., they investigated the structure of judges' assessments of contest debate.

An experimental ballot was constructed by selecting 36 terms from debate texts, articles, and ballots. Included were:

Analysis, articulation, concreteness, courtesy, enthusiasm, ethics, eye contact, facial expression, gesture, grammar, intelligibility, interestingness, logic, organization, originality of ideas, personal appearance, persuasiveness, pertinency, pitch, poise, posture, pronunciation, rate, reasoning, refutation, relevance of evidence, sincerity, spontaneity, sportsmanship, supporting material, use of figurative language, and so on.<sup>19</sup>

In order for judges to apply these terms in debate evaluation, each term was placed on a "good-bad" semantic differential scale. The

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<sup>19</sup>Frederick Williams, Ruth Ann Clark, and Barbara Sundene Wood, "Studies In The Dimensionality Of Debate Evaluation," Journal of the American Forensic Association, V (Winter, 1968), 28.



experimental ballot was subjected to a pilot study in which a high school demonstration debate was evaluated by 20 experienced judges. The results of the pilot revealed four basic dimensions of evaluation which lent themselves to clear interpretation. These were labeled as argument, vocal correctness, overall delivery, and apparent character. Subsequent testing of the four dimensions in high school and college tournaments established their viability.

By extending the study to 138 high school debates, it was concluded that judges did not give equal consideration to each of the four criteria. "Vocal correctness" and "apparent character" exerted little influence upon the judges' decisions, but "argument" and "delivery-persuasiveness" were found to be highly influential.

Argument prevailed as a major dimension across all subdivisions of the data. Of particular note, however, was the lack of independence among judges' use of the particular aspects of arguments. For example, if a debater received a favorable marking on "evidence," he would likely receive similar markings on such terms as "reasoning," "analysis," "logic," and the like. Thus, the results suggested that judges either make little differentiation among the various aspects of argument (as many ballots require), or else debaters who perform favorably on one aspect of argument are typically competent in other aspects.

Delivery-persuasiveness appeared as a major dimension mainly in the responses obtained from judges with one year or less of previous judging experience. Further, there appeared to be a pattern across levels of judging experience which suggested that the dominance of this factor replaced argument as a major factor in the case of the relatively



inexperienced judges. Thus, there was an overall implication that the focus upon delivery versus argument may be a correlate of judging experience--i.e., an inexperienced judge may focus mainly upon delivery whereas the more experienced judge will be especially sensitive to a dimension of argument in making evaluations.

Assessment of judging techniques in college tournaments at Hiram College, Butler University, State University of Iowa, Northwestern University, Indiana University, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Vermont yielded results similar to those gathered on the high school circuit.

The implications of this study yield the conclusions that experienced high school judges and most college judges assess debaters on the basis of their performance in argument alone, while inexperienced high school judges tend to gauge success more in terms of delivery and persuasiveness. Most judges apparently evaluate argument in an overall manner, and the completion of dimension-of-evaluation scales such as the one used in the American Forensic Association Form "C" ballot is largely superfluous.

This study also tends to cast doubt upon Giffin's conclusion that judges' evaluations are based upon specific "points" such as analysis and argument. Giffin's judges may have thought that they rendered decisions on the basis of seven independent ratings, but it is probable that they were more strongly influenced by argumentation than by other factors.

The previous two studies dealt with uniformity and emphasis in judging criteria, but neither study considered the influence of judging



criteria upon debaters.

The question of whether students understand judge's criteria for decisions was investigated by Verderber at the "Queen City Open Debate Tournament" in 1966. Verderber utilized an experimental format for judging at this tournament. Instead of following the standard procedure of limiting their comments to a brief critique at the end of the round, judges were instructed to inform the debaters of their criteria for awarding the decision before the round was started. They were specifically requested to explain perceptions of the effective use of evidence, analysis, reasoning, refutation, rebuttals, and delivery. After the debate, the judges were instructed to offer a brief oral critique based upon the criteria they had established in their opening statements.

At the conclusion of the tournament, 14 judges and 55 debaters returned questionnaires designed to assess the effectiveness of the new format. Twelve of the judges, 85 percent, believed that the new procedure was beneficial to the debaters, that the debaters did respond to their suggestions, that the requirements added significantly to the educational value of the tournament, and that verbalizing criteria beforehand helped make critiques more meaningful.

The debaters were equally enthusiastic. Nearly 90 percent stated that the format was beneficial to them, and 85 percent felt that it made the oral critiques more meaningful than in other tournaments. Significantly, 70 percent noted variations in the criteria used by the



various judges for reaching decisions.<sup>20</sup>

This study contributes to the background of this research in two areas. First, the fact that debaters responded to the judge's preliminary instructions indicates that the standard "post round" critique format used in debate manifests differences in judge-debater criteria for decisions. Lacking a preliminary instruction session such as the one used by Verderber, debaters apparently are frequently unaware of the judge's criteria for decisions.

Second, Verderber affirmed the findings of Williams, Clark, and Wood by determining that over two-thirds (70 percent) of the debaters surveyed noted variations in the criteria used by different judges.

Verderber's study, in conjunction with Williams, Clark, and Wood, exposes the two most critical weaknesses of the use of "better job of debating" criteria for reaching decisions. Not only do judges fail to concur with each other in their interpretations of what constitutes categories such as analysis or reasoning, but they also fail, under standard tournament practice, to inform the debaters that they judge of their criteria.

During the period from January to April, 1969, Dunne, Mack, and Pruett conducted the most extensive study on debate judging philosophy yet published.

Their survey is quoted profusely because of its relevance to this investigation. The study attempted to answer the following questions:

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<sup>20</sup>Rudolph Verderber, "Judges' Criteria and Debater Adaption: Empirical Evidence," Journal of the American Forensic Association, V (Winter, 1968), 28.



(1) Do practicing debate judges differentiate between the two theoretical methods of logical (issues) and proficiency (skills) decisions?

(2) Do debate judges who distinguish between the two methods classify themselves as logical or proficiency judges?

(3) Do debate judges use both methods or even switch from one method to another, depending on the tournament, debaters, etc.?

(4) Does a change in the method used by the individual debate judge result in a change in the decision rendered?<sup>21</sup>

After a pilot study at the University of New Mexico's "Duke City Invitational Debate Tournament," a revised questionnaire was distributed at ten intercollegiate debate tournaments throughout the nation. The tournaments were regionally grouped into three areas: the East, the Midwest, and the West. The tournaments involved in the study were:

The Big Sky Invitational Debate Tournament, University of Montana, Missoula, Montana; the Duke City Invitational Debate Tournament, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico (Pilot Questionnaire); the Fourteenth Annual Varsity Debate Tournament, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; the Illinois State University Forensic Tournament, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois; the Lassen Invitational Debate Tournament, Lassen College, Susanville, California; the Marshall-Wythe Debate Tournament, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia; the Midwest Cross-X Debate Tournament, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio; the Owen L. Coon Memorial Debate Tournament, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois; the Second Annual 1804 Debate Tournament, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio; the State of Jefferson Invitational Debate Tournament, Southern Oregon College, Ashland, Oregon; the Windy City National Debate Tournament, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois.<sup>22</sup>

At each tournament the questionnaire was distributed to the judges with their ballots. Judges were instructed to complete their

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<sup>21</sup>Dennis P. Dunne, Herschel L. Mack, and Robert Pruett, "Empirical Evidence on the 'Logical'-'Proficiency' Dichotomy in Debate Judging," Journal of the American Forensic Association, VII (Winter, 1970), 201-202.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 203.



ballots before they answered the questionnaire. Essentially, two kinds of data were gathered by the questionnaire. The first included demographic information about the judge's age, highest degree, experience as a debater and a coach, and present position. The second part of the questionnaire asked the respondent to read two statements which identified the differences in reaching decisions on the basis of "better job of debating" or "issues" criteria.

Each judge was then instructed to answer a series of questions about methods of judging intercollegiate debate.

Dunn, Mack, and Pruett reported that nearly half of all the judges sampled were in the youngest age range (21-26 years) with over 80 percent of all judges being under 40 years of age. Nearly half of the judges had attained the M.A. degree. Debating experience of the sample tended to be high, with nearly 50 percent of the judges having a total of five to eight years of combined high school and college experience. The coaching experience of the judges tended to be low, with 20 percent having had no coaching experience and the largest percentage of judges (36 percent) having had only one to three years of experience.

The data also provided answers to the four research questions. Forty-eight percent of the judges perceived a distinction between the two methods of judging, and those judges who answered negatively did so not because they failed to perceive a difference but because they felt that judging incorporated both criteria.

The greatest number of judges classified themselves as "issues" decision makers. Forty percent responded that they always used "issues"



criteria, 32 percent replied that they used both methods, depending on the situation, and 28 percent responded that they always used "better job of debating" criteria.

The third question remained unanswered because it did not lend itself to specific factors which would have acted as situational variants. The fact that 32 percent of the judges reported that they used both methods "depending on the situation," however, may indicate that judges alter their criteria according to the tournament or the debaters involved.

The fourth question inquired whether a change in the method of decision making used by the judge in a particular debate would result in a change of the decision rendered. Approximately one-fifth of the judges who agreed with the distinction would have changed their decisions if they had used a method other than the one they actually did use in the particular round of debates involved.

A comparison of the answers of the research questions with the demographic data yielded a significant conclusion. Age appeared to be a variable in the determination of judging criteria. The oldest judges tended to favor "better job of debating" criteria, whereas the younger judges supported either "issues" or combinations of both in reaching their decisions.<sup>23</sup>

This study provides a substantial basis for the present investigation of issues judging in intercollegiate debate. Whereas the Dunn, Mack, and Pruett survey demonstrated that a significant number of judges consider issues in reaching a decision, this research will

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 203-206.



determine which issues are most emphasized and will survey the amount of debater-judge agreement on which issues were most critical in the rounds surveyed.

The studies on judging criteria provide background for this research because they determined that judges perceive differences in basing decisions on "issues" and "better job of debating" criteria, and they provide insight into the practicality of the better job of debating standard.

One may conclude that "better job of debating" criteria appear to be interpreted differently by various judges and confusing to debaters and, possibly as a result of these deficiencies, that "better job of debating" criteria are used as the sole basis of decision only a little over 25 percent of the time. The exposure of the weaknesses in this system, however, does not demonstrate that issue standards are superior. Consequently, the next series of studies concern themselves with the "issues" standard of judging.

#### Early Stock Issues Studies

In 1959, Giffin and Megill instituted a study of stock issues at the "Heart of America" debate tournament at the University of Kansas.

The purposes of this research were to determine: (1) which, if any, of the stock issues were considered important by the tournament debaters; (2) which stock issue was given the greatest emphasis; and (3) if one stock issue did become important, at what point in the debate did this occur?

The authors selected five stock issues:



1. Is there a need to adopt the proposal?
2. Will the proposal meet the need indicated?
3. Can the proposal be put into effect in a practical way?
4. Can the proposal be adopted without serious disadvantages?
5. Will the plan which is presented best meet the need?<sup>24</sup>

Data was gathered through the use of a questionnaire which was submitted to each judge for each round, yielding a total of 168 usable replies.

The questionnaire instructed the judges to rate each of the stock issues from "least important" to "most important" on a ten-point scale. Judges were also requested to indicate the speech in which the major stock issue of the debate, if any, became clarified.

Tabulation of the data suggested that all five stock issues were important. The "need" issues were rated highest in relative importance, followed by "workability," "solution," and "disadvantages." Approximately two-thirds of the time, the most important issue was defined during the negative constructive speeches.

In those debates in which the most important issue was not apparent until rebuttals, plan attacks such as "workability" were clearly in the lead. This occurred in only about 15 percent of the debates surveyed, and in such instances the issue tended to emerge as "most significant" most often in the first affirmative rebuttal.

Five conclusions were drawn from the study:

1. Four stock issues are ordinarily important in

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<sup>24</sup>Kim Giffin and Kenneth Megill, "Stock Issues in Tournament Debates," Central States Speech Journal, XII (Autumn, 1960), 45.



average of above-average college tournament debates.

They are:

- a. "Need" - is there a need to adopt the proposal?
- b. "Solution" - will the proposal meet the need outlined by the affirmative team?
- c. "Workability" - can the proposal be put into effect in a practical way?
- d. "Disadvantages" - can the proposal be adopted without serious disadvantages?

2. Of highest relative importance in college tournament debates meeting the conditions of this study is the "need" issue; of only slightly less importance are the "workability" (practicality), "solution" (meeting the alleged need), and "disadvantages" issues.

3. College tournament debaters, when meeting average or above-average competition, can expect the judge to have become aware that a certain issue has become the most important one in the debate before rebuttals have commenced; on the basis of this study such could be predicted in about two debates out of three.

4. Among debaters who are average or above-average debating the negative constructive speakers on topics similar to the one employed in the debates studied may be expected to determine for the judge that the "need" issue has become the most important one in the debate.

5. In about ten to fifteen percent of such debates either "workability," "solution," or "disadvantages" may be expected to become the most important issue. In such cases this fact usually becomes apparent to the judge in the rebuttal speech of the first affirmative or the first negative, more probably in that of the first negative.<sup>25</sup>

Although Giffin and Megill contributed information about when issues tend to become important to the judge and about which debaters tend to isolate them for the judge, their study is deficient in its analysis of stock issues.

The authors placed inordinate emphasis on plan issues (the third issue duplicates the second and the fifth and is only relevant in a

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 30-31.



counterplan situation) while seriously under-representing the need issues. Their definition of the need issue blatantly ignores inherency, significance, topicality, and use of evidence. Finally, the authors excluded other case structures such as the comparative advantages structure from their survey, although this may be due to its limited use at the time of the survey.

Regardless of the comparative advantage issue, the results of the study with regard to issue emphasis are questionable. The heavy emphasis on need may derive from the combination of emphasis on "inherency," "significance," and "proven by evidence" that was unrealistically fostered by the oversimplification of the need issue.

The suggestion that "workability" is a major issue is unproven. The authors failed to include "workability" on their initial questionnaire, but they nevertheless generalized about this argument in their conclusion. Since the judges did not have the opportunity to comment on the influence of workability, it must be concluded that the author's assertion about it is unfounded.

Finally, the authors suffer from the tacit assumption that the "most important" issue is significantly more important than the "second-most important" issue. The fact that an issue is second in importance to another issue does not prevent it from exercising considerable influence on the decision.

A later study by McCroskey and Camp provided answers to some of the questions posed by Giffin and Megill. Studying certain stock issues and judging criteria at the annual Southern Speech Association Tournament in Houston, Texas, on April 8-10, 1964, the authors attempted to answer



the following questions:

1. Which stock issues tend to be the most important in judge's and debater's minds?
2. During which speech does the most important issue tend to become evident?
3. Do partners tend to agree on the major stock issues in their debates?
4. Do winning debaters tend to recognize the most important stock issue more often than losing debaters?
5. What factors contribute to a debater's ability to recognize the most important stock issue in a debate?
6. Can debaters render objective decisions in the debates in which they are participants?
7. Is there a relationship between debater and judge agreement on stock issues and decisions?
8. What is the relative importance of selected criteria in arriving at decisions in debates?
9. Does the judge's bias on the topic enter into his decision?<sup>26</sup>

The study utilized three questionnaires. Judges were requested to fill out "Form 1" for rounds three to six in the college division and rounds three and four in the high school division. On this form the judges were asked to indicate their decisions, personal opinions of the topic, the most important stock issue, and to indicate in which speech the most important stock issue became apparent. The judges were asked to consider the following stock issues:

1. Need (Is there a problem in existence which is serious enough to require action to alleviate it?)
2. Inherency (Is the cause of the problem an intrinsic part of the present system, or can it be overcome with minor modifications?)
3. Plan (Would the action suggested by the affirmative overcome the problem?)
4. Practicality (Is it reasonable to assume that the affirmative proposal could be implemented?)
5. Desirability (Would the adoption of the affirmative proposal be advantageous or disadvantageous to society?)

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<sup>26</sup>James C. McCroskey and Leon Camp, "A Study of Stock Issues, Judging Criteria, and Decisions in Debate," Southern Speech Journal, XXX (Winter, 1964), 158.



6. Counterplan (Is a substitute proposal suggested by the negative a better solution to the problem than the affirmative plan?)<sup>27</sup>

Each judge was also requested to complete "Form 2" once during the tournament.- On this form he was requested to rank from one to seven various criteria for judging debate.

Debaters were asked to complete a form that was similar to "Judge's Form 1" during rounds three through six in the college division and rounds three and four in the high school division. On this form the debaters were asked what they considered to be the most important stock issue in the debate, which side they were on, who won, how much experience they had in debate, and whether they had taken a course in argumentation and debate.

The results showed that need was rated as the most important issue by both judges and debaters in both divisions, but emphasis varied from that point.

In both divisions, the major issue was determined before the last three rebuttals.

McCroskey and Camp found that a majority of debaters agreed with their colleagues on which issue was most important.

The importance of partners agreeing on the critical issue was reflected by the fact that of the fifteen debates which pitted concurring partners against partners that disagreed about which issue was most critical, fourteen were won by the concurring team.

Neither experience nor course work in debate proved to be of assistance in determining critical issues.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 159.



TABLE 1

RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF STOCK ISSUES IN DEBATE<sup>28</sup>

Stock Issue	Judges			Debaters		
	College Division	High School Division	Total	College Division	High School Division	Total
Need	64.6%	68.8%	66.0%	73.4%	53.4%	66.4%
Inherency	16.9	3.1	12.4	15.6	4.6	11.7
Plan	13.8	12.5	13.4	8.2	20.6	12.5
Practicality	3.1	3.1	3.1	1.2	6.1	3.0
Desirability	1.5	6.3	3.1	1.6	4.6	2.7
Counterplan	0.0	6.3	2.1	0.0	10.7	3.7

TABLE 2

SPEECH IN WHICH JUDGE DETERMINED MAJOR ISSUE<sup>29</sup>

Speech	College Division	High School Division	Total
First Affirmative Constructive	18.8%	21.9%	19.8%
First Negative Constructive	31.2	15.6	26.0
Second Affirmative Constructive	25.0	28.1	26.0
Second Negative Constructive	18.8	21.9	19.8
First Negative Rebuttal	6.2	12.5	8.4
First Affirmative Rebuttal	0.0	0.0	0.0
Second Negative Rebuttal	0.0	0.0	0.0
Second Affirmative Rebuttal	0.0	0.0	0.0

Finally, debaters who concurred with the judge about which issue was most important tended to agree with his decision more than debaters that did not agree with him on the issue.

McCroskey and Camp derived thirteen conclusions from their study:

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 161.



TABLE 3

AGREEMENT ON STOCK ISSUES BY PARTNERS<sup>30</sup>

	College Division	High School Division	Total
Teams Agreeing on Issue	88	43	131
Teams Disagreeing on Issue	31	20	51

(1) The need issue is considered by both judges and debaters to be the most important issue in the majority of debates. The counterplan issue rarely assumes importance.

(2) The judge usually determines the most important issue in the debate during the constructive speeches.

(3) The debater during whose speech the judge determines the major issue in the debate tends eventually to win the decision.

(4) Partner agreement on stock issues is a significant factor in successful debating.

(5) There is a slight tendency for debaters who agree with the judge on the major stock issue to win more often than those who disagree.

(6) Experience has little or no positive effect on debater's ability to determine the major stock issue in a debate.

(7) High school debate experience may be detrimental to college debater's ability to determine the major stock issue in a debate.

(8) Course work in argumentation and/or debate has no effect on debater's ability to determine the major stock issue in a debate.

(9) Debaters cannot render objective decisions in the debates in which they are participants.

(10) The ability to determine the major stock issue in a debate will help a debater to decide whether or not he won the debate.

(11) High school and college coaches are in agreement on the relative importance of criteria in arriving at decisions in debate.

(12) Non-coaches are in substantial disagreement with coaches on relative importance of criteria in arriving at

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 161.



decisions in debate.

(13) Delivery should not be included as one of the items on debate ballots.<sup>31</sup>

McCroskey and Camp contributed significantly to knowledge of stock issues in debate, but their study suffered from several deficiencies. Like Giffin and Megill, McCroskey and Camp only measured the most significant stock issue. Seldom are debates won on the basis of only one issue, so their failure to account for the influence of other stock issues detracts from the value of their conclusions.

A second deficiency in the study is that McCroskey and Camp, though not as severely as Giffin and Megill, overemphasized "plan" issues while underemphasizing "need" issues. Although the study included a category for inherency, it failed to include topicality or evidence. Consequently, these three categories were tacitly included in the "catch-all" category of "need." The result of this is that the authors' conclusions about "need" cannot accurately be generalized because the need category consists of several divergent factors and conclusions that apply to one may not apply to another.

The "plan" category suffers from many of the problems that were experienced by Giffin and Megill. The third issue, "plan," is ambiguously defined and appears to replicate the fourth, "practicality." Finally, the inclusion of four "plan issues" as opposed to only two "need" issues appears to have placed inordinate emphasis on plan-oriented issues.

Both Giffin and Megill and McCroskey and Camp have added to

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 167-168.



our knowledge of stock issues in debate, but both studies share the common deficiency of labeling the general categories of "need" and "plan" as issues. Although "plan" and "need" are both general labels for parts of the debate case, both consist of issues. Neither is an issue. Resultantly, generalizations about either as an issue are inaccurate.

Finally, additional study of stock issues could yield information about factors which were not considered by previous studies such as issues in comparative advantages cases, the importance of "topicality," "significance," and "evidence," whether opponents agree on issues, and the accuracy of college debater's loss predictions.

#### General Issue Studies

The most recent effort to study debater's issue perceptions was undertaken by Hatfield and Koestline, who studied the issue perceptions of the high school debaters in attendance at the University of Georgia Summer Debate Institute from August 1 to August 15, 1971.<sup>32</sup>

Through the use of a questionnaire, the authors attempted to examine the relationships between a debater's ability to perceive the critical issues in a debate round and his sex, debate experience, position, and win/loss record. The questionnaire was distributed during round one of two tournaments--one at the beginning of the workshop and one at the end.

Data from the questionnaire was divided into categories of sex,

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<sup>32</sup>John D. Hatfield and Norman Koestline, "An Empirical Study of Decision and Issue Perceptions of High School Debaters," Unpublished Study, University of Georgia, (1971), 1.



debate experience, position, and win/loss record. Although Hatfield and Koestline derived 13 interpretations from it, only four are relevant to this study:

(5) There was no significant relationship between the accuracy of a debater's perception of the critical issues and the debater's sex.

(6) There was no significant relationship between the accuracy of a debater's perception of critical issues and a debater's experience.

(7) There was no significant relationship between the accuracy of a debater's perception of critical issues and the debater's position.

(8) There was no significant relationship between the accuracy of a debater's perception of critical issues and the debater's win/loss record.<sup>33</sup>

Although the Hatfield-Koestline study provides valuable background information for this investigation, it differs from the current effort in the following ways:

1. Hatfield and Koestline studied high school debaters whereas this study studies college debaters.

2. Hatfield and Koestline used actual issues, i.e., the judge and the debaters wrote down the issues that they considered critical. This research uses stock issues which are circled by the participants. The latter method is superior for empirical comparisons because it frees the author from the necessity of interpreting the responses of the participants.

3. This investigation provides answers to several questions that were not considered by Hatfield and Koestline.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 3.



### Conclusion

Past studies have made significant historical and empirical contributions to our knowledge of debater's and judge's perceptions of the factors involved in reaching decisions in competitive debate. Previous studies on judging criteria and participant judging as well as later "stock" and "general" issue studies have each contributed to the stock of knowledge about decision making in debate. By providing answers to questions not considered by these earlier studies and by updating certain of their results, it is hoped that this research will contribute positively to our knowledge in this area.

### Significance of the Study

This study contributes to our knowledge of intercollegiate debate in several areas.

First, it updates previous studies. Past "stock issue" investigations are becoming outdated, the most recent one having been conducted nearly a decade ago.

Second, deficiencies exist in early investigations. No previous research has evaluated the effect of the comparative advantages case on stock issues. This is significant because of the differing emphasis and burdens inherent in this case structure. Additionally, no prior study has considered the stock issues of significance, topicality, or evidence.

Finally, previous investigations tended to combine several stock issues into one category, rendering accurate assessment of many of their



results impossible.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, answers will be provided by this study to several important questions concerning stock issues in debates. These questions are discussed later in this investigation.

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<sup>34</sup>This deficiency is explained on Page 34.



## CHAPTER II

### PROCEDURE

#### Research Questions

During the past ten years, several studies have been concerned with judging and issues in intercollegiate debate. The purpose of this investigation was to replicate portions of certain of these studies and to consider some questions which were not previously examined. Specifically, this research was designed to provide answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent do debaters and judges concur in their perceptions of critical issues in rounds of competitive debate?
2. To what extent do colleagues concur in their perceptions of critical issues in rounds of competitive debate?
3. To what extent do opponents concur in their perceptions of critical issues in rounds of competitive debate?
4. Is there a correlation between the extent of a team's agreement with the judge's critical issue perceptions and its tendency to win debates?
5. Is there a correlation between the extent of agreement on critical issue perceptions by colleagues and their team's tendency to win debates?
6. Do debaters and judges tend to perceive certain specific



issues to be important more often than others?

7. Are the same issues perceived as important in the comparative advantage case as in the need case?

8. Is experience a factor in debater's concurrence with judge's issue perceptions?

9. Are debater's predictions of losses more accurate than their predictions of wins?

#### Development of the Research Questions

The questions posed in this study represent an attempt to update and extend earlier research concerning issue perception in inter-collegiate debate. The first two questions attempted to measure the agreement on critical issues between debate colleagues and their judges. Although little previous research had been done in this area, a study by McCroskey and Camp contributed some background to the current survey. McCroskey and Camp studied colleague agreement and debater-judge agreement at the Annual Southern Speech Association Tournament in April, 1964. On the basis of their results, they concluded that: (1) "partner agreement on stock issues is a significant factor in successful debating" and (2) "there is a slight tendency for debaters who agree with the judge on the major stock issue to win more often than those who disagree."<sup>35</sup> An examination of McCroskey and Camp's methodology, however, raised two questions about their results. First, McCroskey and Camp measured agreement on only one major issue in the

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<sup>35</sup> McCroskey and Camp, "A Study of Stock Issues, Judging Criteria, and Decisions in Debate," pp. 167-168.



round. Such procedure implies that most debates, if they do not contain only one major issue, are at least usually resolved by one.

Interestingly, McCroskey and Camp never attempted to validate such an inference. In fact, no justification was provided for the selection of only one major issue.

The present study differed from McCroskey and Camp's survey in the number of issues that judges and debaters selected. The decision to use the three most critical issues, as determined by the respondents, instead of the one most critical issue used by the previous study was predicated upon current issues theory. Although virtually every debate text that discusses issues speaks of them in plural terms, perhaps the most concise justification for using several issues is suggested by Thompson: "The first responsibility of the student who becomes a judge is to award the decision to the team that does the better job of debating. . . . His basic consideration is the argumentation on the several issues."<sup>36</sup> Significantly, none of the debate texts studied suggested that debates were usually decided by only one major issue. Although such decisions certainly are rendered, they are rare.

The use of one issue also posed a second problem because it tended to oversimplify McCroskey and Camp's comparisons. Because the subjects of the earlier study could pick only one issue, they had to be dichotomized as "agreeing" or "disagreeing" with their colleague or judge. Although such classifications provided for easy statistical comparisons, they failed to measure the extent of agreement or

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<sup>36</sup>Wayne N. Thompson, Modern Argumentation and Debate (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 340.



disagreement among the subjects. Consequently, debaters that were classified as "disagreeing" with their colleague or judge could have disagreed on one, two, or three issues, and debaters that were classified as "agreeing" could occupy the same range of possibilities. Thus, it is conceivable that the McCroskey and Camp study demonstrated an unrealistic dichotomizing into absolute agreement or disagreement when no such absolute really existed. If this was the case, the more diverse comparisons allowed by the procedure of the present study should yield more accurate results.

The third research question, while not considered by previous investigation, was advanced to measure the extent of concurrence on critical issues by debaters and their opponents. Knowledge of the extent of such concurrence is necessary because it would allow for a determination of the extent of clash on critical issues that occurs in intercollegiate debate. This determination would probably reflect the significance of critical issues as they are actually debated in competition better than the studies on colleague agreement or debater-judge agreement because it shows the opinion of both teams about the critical issues in the round.

The fourth question emerged as a result of McCroskey and Camp's previously discussed "one major issue" study. This investigation found that teams which concurred with the judge's perceptions tended to defeat opponents that did not.<sup>37</sup> Their results, however, were not statistically significant. It was hypothesized that the lack of significance could

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<sup>37</sup>McCroskey and Camp, "A Study of Stock Issues, Judging Criteria, and Decisions in Debate," pp. 167-168.



have resulted from the use of only one issue, since such procedure may have oversimplified the debater-judge comparisons. If oversimplification did result from the use of one issue, it is possible that the more varied comparisons that would result from three-issue choices would provide a wider range of comparisons and result in more accurate determinations of debater-judge agreement. More accurate determinations, consequently, would potentially increase the power of the experiment and possibly yield significant results.

Question five attempted to replicate McCroskey and Camp's results on colleague concurrence which found that colleague agreement on the most critical issue proved to exercise significant influence on team's win-loss records. The present study attempted to determine the effects of colleague agreement on win-loss records when three issues were used instead of one. A second reason for replicating this portion of McCroskey and Camp's research was to determine if the recent increased use of the "issues" standard of judging might have resulted in differing patterns of colleague agreement since their study was completed.

Question six attempted to extend the findings of two previous studies on the importance of various critical issues in debate. Giffin and Megill initiated the first study of this subject at the 1959 University of Kansas "Heart of America" tournament. The study attempted to determine (1) which, if any, stock issues were given important consideration by the debaters surveyed and (2) which stock issue was given the greatest consideration. Five stock issues, need, plan-meets-need, workability, disadvantages, and counterplan, were studied in the



survey.<sup>38</sup> In 1964, McCroskey and Camp essentially replicated the Griffin-Megill study, but they studied the stock issues of need, inherency, plan, practicality, desirability, and counterplan.<sup>39</sup> A full review of both studies is contained in the "early stock issues" section of the first chapter of this investigation,<sup>40</sup> but both authors found that "need" was the most important issue in their surveys. Because of the differing issues and definitions used in the two surveys, direct comparisons on the other issues were of only limited value.

The present investigation attempted to extend the results of the two earlier studies in several areas. First, the new stock issues of "significance," "topicality," and "disproven by evidence" were added to the issues that were previously used, while "need" and "plan" were deleted. These changes were made to provide for a more accurate appraisal of the common stock issues in debate by deleting general "catch-all" terms such as "need" and substituting the issues that comprise them. The earlier studies that used "need" or "plan" as issues were ambiguous and duplicative because both "need" and "plan" consist of issues rather than being issues themselves. Consequently, deleting these categories for the more specific areas of "significance," "topicality," and "disproven by evidence" resulted in a more accurate measurement of the importance of individual stock issues. The

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<sup>38</sup>Griffin and Megill, "Stock Issues in Tournament Debates," pp. 67-71.

<sup>39</sup>McCroskey and Camp, "A Study of Stock Issues, Judging Criteria, and Decisions in Debate," p. 159.

<sup>40</sup>These studies are discussed on Pages 25-34.



counterplan issue was also deleted because the two previous studies had shown that it rarely assumed importance and no current evidence indicated an increase in its influence. These changes in the questionnaire corrected a second major fault in the procedure of the two earlier studies since they more nearly "balanced" the number of "case" issues with the number of "plan" issues. Unlike the two previous studies which had utilized "plan" issues practically to the exclusion of "case" issues,<sup>41</sup> the present study used four "case" issues ("topicality," "inherency," "significance," and "evidence") and three "plan" issues ("plan-meets-need," "disadvantages," and "workability"). In summary, the sixth research question removed certain ambiguous or insignificant stock issue categories utilized by previous studies and substituted more precise stock issue categories.

The seventh question attempted to assess the influence of case structure on the importance of stock issues. This question attempted to determine if the same stock issues were perceived as critical in need cases as in comparative advantage cases. Although this question had not been considered by prior research, possibly because of the recency of the comparative advantage structure, it was considered to possess significance because of the differing emphasis in the two case structures. The cases vary in their emphasis of inherency and significance, both issues being applied to substantiate "harm" in the need case but to prove "comparative benefit" in the comparative advantages case. Consequently, it is possible that although both cases

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<sup>41</sup> Giffin and Megill used one case issue, the ambiguous category of "need," and four plan issues; McCroskey and Camp used two case issues, "need" and "inherency," and four plan issues.



must meet the same criteria to be considered *prima facie*, the differing emphasis of the two structures might result in differing importance of their various issues.

Question eight attempted to access the influence of experience upon debaters' issue perceptions. This question replicated McCroskey and Camp's earlier study but, unlike McCroskey and Camp, it held judge experience constant. McCroskey and Camp had compared debaters' issue perceptions with the perception of their judges and had found that experience was not a significant factor in debaters' ability to determine the major stock issue. Since McCroskey and Camp compared all the debaters in their survey with their judges, it was hypothesized that the differing degrees of experience of the judges in their sample could have affected the results. In an effort to stabilize the influence of judges' experience, the present study held judge experience constant by only utilizing the most experienced judges for comparison with both experienced and inexperienced debaters.

The ninth question emerged as an attempt to examine the accuracy of college debaters' loss predictions. Although previous research had substantiated that debaters' win predictions are grossly inaccurate,<sup>42</sup> Murphy and Hensley discovered that high school debaters were usually correct in their "loss" predictions.<sup>43</sup> This question represented an effort to determine if Murphy and Hensley's conclusions could be

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<sup>42</sup> King and Clevenger, "A Comparison of Debate Results Obtained by Participant and Critic Judging," 229.

<sup>43</sup> Murphy and Hensley, "Do Debaters Know When They Win or Lose?" 145-147.



generalized to college debaters.

### Application of the Questionnaire

A questionnaire was utilized to provide answers to the research questions. Two versions of the questionnaire, a judge's questionnaire (see Appendix A) and a debater's questionnaire (see Appendix B), were employed.

Answers to the first four research questions were provided by question "six" on the debater's questionnaire and section "B" on the judge's questionnaire. These items sought information on which three of the issues were most critical in the round. The issues were divided into "need" and "comparative advantage" formats with each section offering seven potential issues:

#### NEED CASE

1. Case was (was not) topical
2. Need was (was not) inherent
3. Need was (was not) disproven by evidence
4. Need was (was not) significant
5. Plan was (was not) disadvantageous
6. Plan did (did not) meet need
7. Plan was (was not) workable
8. Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

#### COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES CASE

1. Advantages could (could not) be inherently accrued under the present system
2. Advantages were (were not) significant
3. Advantages accrued (did not accrue) from a non-topical plank of the plan
4. Advantages were (were not) disproven by evidence
5. Plan was (was not) disadvantageous
6. Plan did (did not) accrue advantages
7. Plan was (was not) workable



8. Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Answers to the first four questions were provided by comparing debaters' issue perceptions and win-loss records (where applicable) with those of their judges, colleagues, and opponents. Question five dealt with colleague agreement on issue perceptions. Answers were provided by comparing colleague agreement with the decision in the round. Teams were categorized as agreeing on three, two, one, or none of the issues. The win-loss percentage of each category was then compared with the other categories. Question six attempted to determine the relative importance of each issue from the perspectives of the judges and debaters. The data for this question was provided by totaling the number of responses for each issue by the debaters and judges. The most important issues were operationally defined as those issues which received the most responses.

Data for question seven was gathered by determining whether debaters and judges completed the section on the need or comparative advantage case. This item attempted to compare issue emphasis in cases using the need structure with cases using the comparative advantages structure. Data was gathered by totaling the number of responses for each issue in each category and comparing data for each case structure. This allowed for comparisons to be made between the issues chosen by debaters using the need case and those utilizing the comparative advantage case.

Question eight sought to compare debaters' issue perceptions with judges' issue perceptions. This question attempted to study the amount of agreement between judges' and debaters' perceptions by using the



debater's experience in college debate as an independent variable. "Inexperienced" and "experienced" debaters were operationally defined according to the number of years of college experience that they had, with debaters in their first year of college debate defined as "inexperienced" and those with over one year of experience defined as "experienced." These definitions of "experience" and "inexperience" were the same ones that were used by McCroskey and Camp in their earlier investigation; consequently, they enabled comparisons to be undertaken between the results gathered in answer to question eight and the data reported by McCroskey and Camp.

Question nine dealt with debaters' "loss" perceptions. Data for this question was gathered by contrasting debaters' "win" predictions with debaters' "loss" predictions and comparing the two categories with the judges' decisions in the rounds.

#### Questionnaire Distribution

Data for this study were obtained through the use of questionnaires which were distributed to judges and debaters in randomly selected debates at four intercollegiate debate tournaments.<sup>44</sup>

The debater's questionnaire consisted of six questions. Questions one through five provided data on the debater's experience, win-loss records, positions, and perceptions of who won. Question six determined which three issues were considered most important by the respondent.

Judges' questionnaires were distributed in the same rounds as

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<sup>44</sup>See Appendices A and B.



the debaters' questionnaires. Judges were queried about position, experience in debating and judging, number of rounds judged during the 1971-72 season, and who won the round. Like the debaters, they were also requested to circle the three most important issues.

The tournaments utilized by this study were: The West Georgia College Invitational Debate Tournament; The Citadel Invitational Debate Tournament; The Azalea Debate Tournament, Springhill College; and the Georgia Bullpup Invitational, University of Georgia. The teams at these four tournaments represented colleges and universities from 23 states.

In order to avoid duplication, questionnaires were distributed during only one round of each tournament. Instructions on completing the questionnaires were given orally at each tournament. Additionally, written instructions were included with the questionnaires at all tournaments. To facilitate accuracy, questionnaires were distributed during the first round of debate.

Before the questionnaires were distributed at these tournaments, a pilot study was undertaken to evaluate their reliability and validity.

#### Pilot Study

The tournament selected for the pilot study was the Florida Intercollegiate Forensic Association State Tournament. This contest was selected because it was large enough to yield a good sample and because it provided both experienced and inexperienced debaters. The tournament was attended by 70 debaters from 14 junior colleges, colleges, and universities. Schools in attendance were: Brevard Community College, Broward Community College, Florida College, Florida State University,



Florida Technological University, University of South Florida, University of Florida, Miami-Dade Junior College (North), Pensacola Junior College, Polk Community College, St. John's River Junior College, Santa Fe Junior College, Stetson University, and Valencia Community College. Thirty debaters competed in the varsity division, and 40 participated in the novice division.

An examination of the pilot data resulted in several changes in the questionnaires. A fourth question was added to the judge's questionnaire. This item, inadvertently not contained originally, posed the question, "Which team do you think won the round?" Its addition was necessitated because judges' decisions were needed to determine the answers to research questions four and five.<sup>45</sup> The plan-meets-need category of the comparative advantages section of the debater's and judge's questionnaires was changed to read "plan accrues advantages." This change was needed because the structure of the comparative advantages case does not attempt to solve harms (needs); instead it attempts to offer a better solution than the status quo is capable of achieving. Consequently, the comparative advantages structure emphasizes the plan's ability to guarantee the attainment of the advocated advantage instead of the solution to harms. The major alteration consisted of a change in the instructions to the "issues selection" portion of both the judge's and debater's questionnaire. The new directions requested the subjects to indicate which three issues were most important in the round. This change was necessitated because the previous directions, which

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<sup>45</sup>These questions are listed on Page 33.



instructed judges and debaters to circle all the critical issues that they considered important, tended to result in the subjects circling different numbers of issues. This made it impossible to derive meaningful conclusions from the data because research questions one, two, three, four, five, and eight all required specific comparisons among respondents to derive their answers. The comparisons could only be accomplished if the individuals sampled utilized a common number of choices, since variant numbers of selections cannot be specifically compared. The alteration resulted in an improved questionnaire since it allowed for comparisons of selected issues without the oversimplification inherent when only one issue is used.

Aside from the change in the directions to the issues section, the questionnaires remained essentially the same.

#### Selection of Tournaments

The four tournaments selected for this survey were chosen because they represented a cross section of debate and provided for a balance between varsity and novice competition.

The tournaments hosted by Springhill College and The Citadel included divisions for both varsity and novice debaters. The tournament held at the University of Georgia included only a novice division, and West Georgia's tournament hosted both novice and varsity debaters in an open division.<sup>46</sup>

These four tournaments were chosen because they attracted schools

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<sup>46</sup>Open tournaments do not separate debaters into varsity or novice categories. Consequently, these contests allow experienced and inexperienced debaters to compete in the same division.



with and without scholarship programs, high debate budgets, large debate squads, and other factors that could potentially effect a survey of this nature. Consequently, this study avoided the pitfalls inherent in surveys that use only high pressure tournaments which tend to attract only high-powered competitors or easy tournaments which are usually attended by weaker squads.

The first tournament surveyed was the West Georgia College Invitational Debate Tournament. The tournament offered open competition and was attended by 50 two-man debate teams from 28 colleges and universities. The schools attending the tournament were: Auburn University, Carson-Newman College, The Citadel, Clemson University, Dartmouth College, Emory University, Enterprise College, Florida Technological University, Fordham University, Fort Valley State College, Georgia Southern University, Georgia State University, University of Georgia, Harding College, Mercer University, Middle Tennessee State University, Mississippi State University, University of Missouri at St. Louis, University of Montevallo, New York University, Samford University, Southwestern Louisiana University, Stetson University, University of Tennessee, Tulane University, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Augusta College, and Jefferson State College.

One-hundred debater questionnaires and 25 judge questionnaires were distributed during the first round of the tournament. Of the 20 judge questionnaires that were returned, 15 were correctly completed. Seventy-two debater questionnaires were returned, with 60 of them adequately completed and paired with the questionnaires of the judges.

At this point, an explanation of what constitutes a properly



completed questionnaire is in order. For the questionnaires to be usable, three criteria had to be met. First, they had to be at least partially filled out. Some of the subjects tended to ignore the "issues" sections, and when this occurred, it made comparisons with the other debaters or the judge in the round impossible. Second, the subjects had to follow directions properly. When a debater or a judge circled other than three of the critical issues listed on the questionnaire, it was impossible to compare his results with those of the others in the round. Finally, when judge errors occurred the results were particularly unfortunate. Since the consequences of judge errors will be discussed in detail when they are related to specific results, it is sufficient at this point to explain that, in many cases, when the judge failed to follow instructions, his error neutralized the usefulness of four properly completed debater questionnaires. Errors such as these accounted for the improperly completed questionnaires at the West Georgia tournament as well as those from the other tournaments utilized for this investigation.

The second tournament surveyed was hosted by the University of Georgia from February 4 through February 6, 1972. A novice division tournament, it drew 96 first and second-year debaters from 27 colleges and universities. Schools in attendance were as follows: West Georgia College, Samford University, Middle Tennessee State University, Florida Technological University, University of Alabama, Wake Forrest University, Western Illinois University, Texas Christian University, Bellarmine, University of South Alabama, University of Georgia, Pensacola Junior College, Springhill College, East Carolina University, Dartmouth, the United States Naval Academy, William and Mary College, Bethany College,



University of Wisconsin, Greensboro College, Vanderbilt University, Florida State University, Brockport College, Georgia Southern College, and Davidson University.

Questionnaires distributed to judges and debaters in the first round yielded 21 properly completed judge's forms out of a possible 24, and 84 properly completed debater's forms out of a possible 96.

The third tournament surveyed was Springhill College's "Azalea Debate Tournament," February 11-12, 1972. This tournament consisted of both a novice and a varsity division, with 52 novice debaters and 36 varsity debaters competing. The colleges and universities in attendance were as follows: West Georgia College, Louisiana State University at New Orleans, University of South Florida, Mississippi State College for Women, Southern Methodist University, University of Florida, Mississippi State University, University of South Alabama, University of Iowa, University of Alabama, Louisiana State University, Florida Technological University, Western Kentucky University, University of Southern Mississippi, Lake City Community College, William Carey College, Gulf Coast Community College, Enterprise State Junior College, and Springhill College.

Questionnaires were distributed in the first round to 88 debaters and 22 judges. Out of 17 returned judge's ballots and 62 returned debater's ballots, 14 and 49, respectively, proved useful.

The final tournament to be investigated was hosted by The Citadel on February 25 and 26, 1972. The tournament was attended by 60 debaters in the varsity division and 120 in the novice division. The following colleges and universities were in attendance: American University,



Auburn University, Austin Peay State University, Broward Community College, Duke University, East Tennessee State University, Emory University, University of Florida, Florida Technological University, Georgia State University, Henderson State College, University of Kentucky, Lenoir Rhyne College, Madison College, Marietta College, Mercer University, Miami-Dade Junior College (South), Middle Tennessee State University, Morehead State University, Morris Harvey College, University of North Carolina at Asheville, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, University of Notre Dame, Ohio University, Pembroke State University, Pfeiffer College, University of Richmond, Savannah State College, St. Anselm's College, St. Petersburg Junior College, University of South Carolina, University of South Florida, Stetson University, University of Tennessee, Tennessee Technological University, Tulane University, Virginia Military Institute, Wake Forrest University, West Georgia College, and Wingate College.

Although questionnaires were distributed to all the debaters and judges, a mistake in the tally room mixed many of the questionnaires together and rendered them useless. In spite of this, 12 completed judge's questionnaires and 43 completed debater's questionnaires were obtained.

Since some colleges and universities attended several of the tournaments used for this survey, it is probable that some debaters and judges filled out questionnaires more than once. Consequently, some duplication of results may have occurred. In order for the duplication to be harmful, however, the same team (most schools have several teams)



would have had to debate the same opponents that they debated in the initial round surveyed. They would have had to carry the same case, and their opponents would have to use the same arguments that they used before. Finally, they would have to be judged by the same judge that evaluated them the first time. The chances of this happening are somewhat remote, and since virtually every other study of this nature potentially suffered considerably more duplication than this one, the amount of harm arising from duplication in this survey can probably be dismissed as minimal.

In summary, data for this study were obtained first through the use of a pilot study which resulted in alterations in the questionnaire, and then through a survey of four intercollegiate debate tournaments. The questionnaire, which measured the issue and win-loss perceptions of judges and debaters, was distributed to a total of 512 varsity and novice debaters and 128 judges. Usable questionnaires were returned from 76 judges and 304 debaters. The tournaments surveyed represented 130 colleges and universities from 23 states.



## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

When the tournament surveys were completed, the data gathered from the questionnaires were combined and tabulated. This process, in addition to facilitating the answering of the research questions, also enabled generalizations to be made about the demographic characteristics of the judges and debaters that were surveyed.

#### Characteristics of Judges

In order to determine certain characteristics of the judges, data were gathered on the years of experience, number of rounds judged, and current status of the judges surveyed.

#### Experience

Table 4 indicates the judges' responses to the question, "For how many years have you been involved in debating or debate judging?" Of the 75 judges responding, a majority of 68 percent replied that they had a minimum of seven years experience. Only one judge was attending his first tournament. Eight percent of the judges had been involved in debate for one-two years, 10.6 percent for three-four years, 12 percent for five-six years, 24 percent for seven-eight years, 13.3 percent for nine-ten years, and nearly one-third, 30.6 percent, had been involved for over ten years.

In addition to being experienced in debate evaluation, judges



TABLE 4  
JUDGES' EXPERIENCE IN DEBATE

Experience (Years)	Number	Percentage
0	1	1.3
1-2	6	8.0
3-4	8	10.7
5-6	9	12.0
7-8	18	24.0
9-10	10	13.3
Over 10	23	30.7
Total	75	100.0

also tended to have considerable exposure to debates on the topic that was currently debated, as is demonstrated by table 5.

TABLE 5  
NUMBER OF ROUNDS JUDGED ON THE  
CURRENT DEBATE TOPIC

Number of Rounds	Number of Judges	Percentage
Less than 7	9	12.0
7-20	12	16.0
21-30	7	9.3
31-40	8	10.7
Over 40	39	52.0
Total	75	100.0

In response to the question, "Approximately how many rounds have you judged this year?" 52 percent of the 75 judges responding replied that they had judged over 40 rounds, 10.6 percent had judged 31-40, 9.3 percent from 21-30, 16 percent from 7-20, and only 12 percent had judged less than six.



## Position

The status of the judges surveyed is reflected by table 6.

TABLE 6  
JUDGES' STATUS

Position	Number	Percentage
Debate Coach	44	58.7
Graduate Assistant	22	29.3
Hired Judge	7	9.3
Other	2	2.7
Total	75	100.0

Fifty-eight percent of the judging was done by professionals who were directors of debate or forensics at their institutions. Graduate assistants composed another 30 percent, with hired judges responsible for 9.3 percent. Only 2.6 percent of the judges, a speech teacher and a "faculty member" fell into the "other" category.

In lieu of this data, most of the judges surveyed appear to have been coaches or graduate assistants in debate. Ninety-one percent had at least three years of coaching experience, and 75 percent had judged at least 21 rounds on the current topic.

Characteristics of Debaters

Data were gathered on subjects' experience in debate in high school and college as well as on their estimated win-loss records for the year.



## Experience

It was determined that 67 percent of the debaters surveyed had debated for at least one year in high school, and that 36 percent had at least three years of high school experience. Table 7 indicates the experience breakdown as follows:

TABLE 7  
DEBATERS' HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Years of Experience	Number	Percentage
0	79	32.7
1	28	11.6
2	47	19.4
3	56	23.1
4	32	13.2
Total	242	100.0

Of the 242 debaters that responded to the question, "How many years did you debate in high school?" 32.6 percent replied that they had no high school experience, 11.6 percent had debated for one year, 19.4 percent for two, 23.1 percent for three, and 13.2 percent had four years of high school experience.

The majority of the debaters sampled were in their first year of college debate. Table 8 demonstrates that of the 240 debaters that responded to the question, "How many years, including this year, have you debated in college?" 62.4 percent replied that they were in their first year of intercollegiate debate, 22.9 percent were in their second, 12.5 percent in their third, and only 2.1 percent in their fourth.



TABLE 8  
DEBATERS' COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

Years of Experience	Number of Debaters	Percentage
1	150	62.5
2	55	22.9
3	30	12.5
4	5	2.1
Total	240	100.0

#### Win-Loss Records

The third question attempted to measure the subject's win-loss records. This item posed the question, "What has been your approximate percentage of wins this year?" Respondents were instructed to indicate whether their win record was 0-25 percent, 25-50 percent, 50-75 percent, or 75-100 percent.

Although the responses appear lopsided and were in fact discounted in figuring results because of their poor face value, it is possible that over 60 percent of the debaters surveyed did rank in the upper two quartiles. Nevertheless, the fact that under 10 percent of the debaters placed themselves in the lowest quartile and over 50 percent of them answered that they were in the "50-75 percent" win category appeared dubious. The results, shown by table 9, were as follows: Of the 293 debaters that responded to the question, 10.2 percent answered that their win-loss average was from 75-100 percent. The majority of responses, 52.5 percent, fell into the 50-75 percent category, with 29.2 percent reporting a 25-50 percent average and 8.5 percent responding to the 0-25 percent category.



TABLE 9  
DEBATERS' WIN-LOSS RECORDS

Percentage of Wins	Number	Percentage
0-25%	25	8.5
25-50%	86	29.0
50-75%	152	52.5
75-100%	30	10.0
Total	293	100.0

In light of the data reported, although most of the debaters surveyed had high school experience in debate, only one-third had over one year of college experience. Fortunately, the extent of the sample proved great enough to allow for comparisons between experienced and inexperienced debaters by maintaining the standard operational definition of "experienced" debaters as those with over one year of college experience and "inexperienced" debaters as those presently in their first year of college debate.<sup>47</sup>

#### Research Question Results

##### Debater-Judge Agreement on Critical Issues

After the compilation of demographic data was completed, the issues sections of the questionnaires were tabulated to facilitate answers to the research questions.

The first question attempted to establish the extent of debater's and judge's concurrence on critical issues in rounds of competitive debate. Data to answer this question were gathered by comparing each

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<sup>47</sup>This definition was initially used by McCroskey and Camp in 1964.



debater's issue selections with those selected by the judge who evaluated his round. For statistical purposes, debaters were then categorized as agreeing with the judge on three, two, one, or no issues. When debaters circled other than three issues, they were not included in the sample for this question. Judges who departed from the "three issues standard" were also deleted, which resulted in dropping the four debaters that they judged.

Limiting the sample to those debaters and judges who indicated only three issues yielded 143 debaters whose issue perceptions could be compared with their judge's issue perceptions. The results indicated a high degree of concurrence, with 57 percent of the debaters agreeing with the judge on at least two of the three issues, and with less than 10 percent perceiving none of the issues that the judge selected as critical:

TABLE 10

DEBATER AGREEMENT WITH JUDGE'S  
ISSUE PERCEPTIONS

Number of Issues Agreed Upon	Number of Debaters	Percentage
0	10	7.0
1	52	36.0
2	65	45.0
3	17	12.0
Total	143	100.0

Table 10 indicates that 12 percent of the debaters agreed with the judge on all three issues, 45 percent agreed on two of the three issues, 36 percent on one, and only 7 percent listed no agreement.



The results also indicated greater agreement on issues between negative debaters and judges than between affirmative debaters and judges, but this is probably explained by the fact that, in the tournaments surveyed, judges awarded negative teams the decision 62.4 percent of the time.

Position may have affected the issue perceptions of the debaters. Although first affirmative, first negative, and second negative debaters tended to agree with the judge on at least two issues approximately 65 percent of the time, the second affirmative debaters sampled concurred in only 37 percent of the debates. This trend could be explained in terms of the low affirmative win percentage, 37.4 percent, and proved not to be statistically significant.

Data on the first question indicates a high degree of concurrence between judge's and debater's critical issue perceptions.

#### The Effect of Debater-Judge Concurrence

Do teams that agree with the judge's critical issue perceptions more than their opponents tend to win the debate? To provide an answer to this question, data were gathered on the issue perceptions and win-loss records on 82 affirmative and negative teams and 41 judges. The issue perceptions of both team members were totalled and compared with the perceptions of the judge. This comparison enabled each team in the round to be classified as agreeing with the judge either more, less, or the same number of times as its opponent. The extent of agreement was then compared to the decision rendered by the judge. To facilitate comparison, teams that agreed upon the same number of issues as their



opponents were deleted from the sample, leaving 60 teams. The extent of issues agreement with the judge of the winning teams was then compared with that of the losing teams. The results of the comparison demonstrated that, in the rounds surveyed, teams that agreed with the judge more than their opponents won 80 percent of the time. Conversely, teams that agreed with the judge's issue perceptions less than their opponents won only 20 percent of their rounds. These differences in perceptual accuracy were significant at the .001 level ( $\chi^2 = 19.27$ ).

#### Colleague Agreement on Issues

The third question attempted to determine the extent of debate colleagues' agreement on critical issues. Seventy-four affirmative and negative teams were surveyed to provide data on this question. The two members of each team were categorized according to the extent of their agreement on the issues. The results, reflected by table 11, revealed that slightly over three-fourths of the debaters agreed with their colleagues on at least two of the three issues and that only one team failed to agree on any of the issues. Twenty-four percent of the colleagues agreed on all three major issues, 51.3 percent agreed on two, 23 percent agreed on one, and only one team, 1.4 percent, failed to agree on any of the issues. Consequently, it can be concluded that three out of four debaters agreed with their colleagues on a minimum of two of the three issues.

#### The Effect of Colleague Concurrence

The next research question attempted to evaluate the influence of colleague agreement on win-loss records. The answer to this question



TABLE 11  
COLLEAGUE AGREEMENT ON ISSUES

Number of Issues Agreed Upon	Number of Teams	Percentage
0	1	1.4
1	17	23.0
2	38	51.3
3	18	24.3
Total	74	100.0

was determined by comparing the win-loss records for the teams surveyed with the extent of agreement on issues of the two team members. Thirty-six colleagues agreed on all three issues, 76 agreed on two, 35 on one, and only one team failed to agree on any of the issues. The 18 teams that agreed on all three of the issues compiled a record of ten wins and eight losses, the teams that agreed on two of the three had a record of 22 wins and 16 losses, and the teams that agreed on one or no issues compiled a record of seven wins and eleven losses. Although the difference was not statistically significant, the data revealed that the teams that agreed on at least two issues tended to have a slightly better win-loss record than the teams that agreed on less than two issues.

#### Agreement Between Opponents

The fifth question attempted to measure the amount of agreement on critical issues by opponents in competitive debate. Data were gathered by comparing the issue selections of each debater with those of his two opponents in 36 debates. This resulted in a determination of



the extent of issues agreement between the 143 debaters surveyed and their opponents. The data were divided into eight categories to facilitate comparisons.

The first category compared the issue perceptions of the first affirmative debaters with those of the first negative debaters. The results of the comparison are reflected by table 12:

TABLE 12  
FIRST AFFIRMATIVE-FIRST NEGATIVE  
ISSUE AGREEMENT

Number of Issues Agreed Upon	Number of Pairs	Percentage
0	0	0.0
1	12	33.3
2	20	55.6
3	4	11.1
Total	36	100.0

Of the 36 first affirmative-first negative "pairings," 11 percent agreed on all three issues, 55.4 percent on two, and 33.2 percent on one. All of the first affirmative and first negative debaters sampled agreed on at least two of the possible three.

The second comparison was between first affirmative and second negative opponents. The results of the data are indicated by table 13. Of the 35 available "pairings," 11.4 percent concurred on all three issues, 42.8 percent agreed on two, 34.2 percent agreed on one, and four pairs, 11.4 percent, failed to agree on any of the issues. The agreement between first affirmative and second negative debaters was somewhat less



TABLE 13

FIRST AFFIRMATIVE-SECOND NEGATIVE  
ISSUE AGREEMENT

Number of Issues Agreed Upon	Number of Pairs	Percentage
0	4	11.4
1	12	34.3
2	15	42.9
3	4	11.4
Total	35	100.0

than that of the first affirmatives with the first negatives, since only slightly more than a majority, approximately 54 percent, agreed on at least two issues.

The next two comparisons determined the extent of issues agreement between second affirmative debaters and their opponents. Seventy-one percent of the second affirmative debaters concurred with two of their first negative opponent's three issue perceptions.

TABLE 14

SECOND AFFIRMATIVE-FIRST NEGATIVE  
ISSUE AGREEMENT

Number of Issues Agreed Upon	Number of Pairs	Percentage
0	1	2.7
1	10	26.3
2	23	60.5
3	4	10.5
Total	38	100.0

As is demonstrated by table 14, of the 38 available "pairings," 10.5



percent agreed on all three issues, 60.5 percent on two, 26.3 percent on one, and only one "pair," 2.6 percent, failed to agree on any of the issues.

Concurrence between the second affirmative and second negative debaters was less than that between the second affirmatives and first negatives, although again nearly two-thirds of the sampled "pairs" agreed on at least two issues, as is indicated by table 15:

TABLE 15

SECOND AFFIRMATIVE-SECOND NEGATIVE  
ISSUE AGREEMENT

Number of Issues Agreed Upon	Number of Pairs	Percentage
0	3	8.3
1	11	30.6
2	16	44.4
3	6	16.7
Total	36	100.0

Concurrence on all three issues was achieved by 16.6 percent of the pairs, 44.3 percent concurred on two, 30.5 percent on one, and 8.3 percent failed to reach any agreement.

The data indicates that opponents tend to agree on at least one issue, and frequently on two.

Debater-Judge Agreement on the Importance  
of Stock Issues

The sixth research question attempted to determine the extent of similarity between the issues most often perceived as critical by the



judges and the most often perceived as critical by debaters. This item asked, "Do debaters and judges tend to designate certain critical issues more often than others?" The answer to this question was obtained by comparing the judges' responses with the debaters' responses. The results were examined to determine the similarity of the issues that were most often selected by debaters and judges.

The data indicated that debaters and judges tended to choose certain issues more often than others. For purposes of comparison, the seven issues could be divided into (1) issues that applied to the case structure, and (2) issues that applied to the plan. Case issues were "significance," "inherency," "topicality," and "evidence." Plan issues consisted of "plan-meets-need," "workability," and "disadvantages." Both judges and debaters selected case-oriented issues more than they selected plan-oriented issues, but each of the seven issues was generally chosen at least 10 percent of the time.

The sixth research question is directly related to the seventh and, consequently, its results are considered more fully in the answer to the seventh question, which asked, "Are the same issues chosen most often for the comparative advantages case as for the need case?" The answer to this question was obtained by extracting the judges' choices of issues for both case structures and comparing them with the choices of the debaters. Judges' issue choices for both cases are compared in table 16.

Judges' issue perceptions tended to place greater emphasis on case-related issues in both the need (60 percent) and comparative advantage (65 percent) structures. Generally, two of the three issues



TABLE 16

JUDGES' ISSUE SELECTIONS FOR COMPARATIVE  
ADVANTAGE AND NEED CASES

Issues		Need Case			Comparative Advantage Case		
Case Issues	Number	Percentage	Rank	Number	Percentage	Rank	
Topicality	4	5.5	5	8	11.1	5 (tie)	
Inherency	12	16.5	2 (tie)	16	22.2	1	
Evidence	12	16.5	2 (tie)	11	15.3	3	
Significance	16	22	1	12	16.7	2	
<u>Plan Issues</u>							
Disadvantages	9	12.3	6	8	11.1	5 (tie)	
Plan-Meets-Need	12	16.5	2 (tie)	8 <sup>(a)</sup>	11.1	5 (tie)	
Workability	8	11	7	9	12.5	4	

(a) Plan-meets-need was phrased as "plan-accrues-advantages" in the comparative advantage section of the questionnaire.

chosen by judges were case oriented. Although the order of their choices varied, judges tended to pick inherency and significance as the most important issues. In the need case, these two issues accounted for 38.5 percent of the judges' selections, and in the comparative advantages case they were selected 38 percent of the time. Topicality was chosen less than the other case issues under both structures. The "disproven by evidence" category was chosen by judges about one-sixth of the time in both cases.

Plan-oriented issues, although not chosen as often as case-oriented issues, proved to be a definite factor in judges' decisions. Plan issues tended to be selected as among the three most critical issues about one-third of the time, with judges choosing either



disadvantages, plan-meets-need, or workability 40 percent of the time for the need structure and 34 percent of the time for the comparative advantages approach.

Debaters' selections tended to be similar to the judges' selections. Table 17 summarizes the results of the debaters' choices:

TABLE 17

DEBATERS' ISSUE SELECTIONS FOR COMPARATIVE  
ADVANTAGE AND NEED CASES

Issues		Need Case			Comparative Advantages Case		
Case Issues	Number	Percentage	Rank	Number	Percentage	Rank	
Topicality	26	10.7	4	15	6.4	7	
Inherency	47	19.4	2	53	22.5	1 (tie)	
Evidence	24	10	6	25	10.6	5 (tie)	
<u>Significance</u>	61	25.2	1	53	22.5	1 (tie)	
<u>Plan Issues</u>							
Disadvantages	25	10.3	5	33	14	3	
Plan-Meets-Need	39	16.1	3	21 <sup>(a)</sup>	13	4	
Workability	20	8.2	7	35	10.6	5 (tie)	

(a) Plan-meets-need was phrased as "plan-accrues-advantages" in the comparative advantage section of the questionnaire.

Like the judges, debaters tended to emphasize case-oriented issues over plan-oriented issues, with case issues accounting for 65 percent of their selections for the need structure and 62 percent for the comparative advantages structure. Approximately one-third of the time, debaters chose plan issues for a rate of 34.6 percent for need cases and 37.6 percent for comparative advantages cases.

Individual issue selections by debaters generally followed the



patterns established by the judges. Inherency and significance were chosen most often, for a combined total of 44.6 percent for the need structure and 45 percent for the comparative advantages structure. Although "topicality" was ranked slightly higher than "disproven by evidence," "disadvantages," and "workability" in the need structure, the differences in the four rankings were not significant. Topicality was rated seventh in the comparative advantages structure. Plan-oriented issues were given approximately the same emphasis under both structures.

In summary for questions six and seven, the data indicates that debaters and judges choose certain stock issues more often than others. Both judges and debaters indicated that the significance and inherency issues assumed critical importance more often than other issues. This was true for both case structures. Although slight differences in emphasis occurred between the need and comparative advantage cases, they were found to be insignificant. Generally speaking, the same issues were perceived as critical in both structures.

#### Experience as a Factor in Issue Perception

The next question concerned the issue perceptions of experienced and inexperienced debaters. This item, utilizing judge agreement as a dependent variable, attempted to access the impact of experience upon debaters' critical issue perceptions. "Experienced" debaters were operationally defined as "debaters with more than one full year of college experience" and inexperienced debaters as "debaters competing in their first year of intercollegiate debate." Only judges with a minimum of nine years experience who had judged at least 40 rounds of



of debate on the current topic were utilized for the comparison, and data was obtained by comparing the perceptions of experienced and inexperienced debaters with those of experienced judges. Consequently, the sample of debaters was limited to the 18 experienced and 31 inexperienced debaters who had been judged by judges with a minimum of nine years and 40 current rounds experience.

The comparisons of the issue perceptions of the 18 experienced debaters with those of the ten experienced judges indicated a high level of agreement between experienced judges and experienced debaters:

TABLE 18  
EXPERIENCED DEBATER-EXPERIENCED JUDGE  
ISSUE AGREEMENT

Number of Issues Agreed Upon	Number of Debates	Percentage
0	0	0.0
1	3	16.7
2	9	50.0
3	6	33.3
Total	18	100.0

Table 18 demonstrates that one-third of the experienced debaters, 33.3 percent, agreed with the judge on all three issues, with 50 percent agreeing on two, and 16.7 percent on one. All of the experienced debaters agreed with the judge on at least one issue, and over 80 percent of them agreed with him on two or more.

Although the difference was not statistically significant, the comparison of the perceptions of inexperienced debaters with those of



their 13 judges indicated that experience may be a factor in debaters' issue perceptions:

TABLE 19  
INEXPERIENCED DEBATER-EXPERIENCED JUDGE  
ISSUE AGREEMENT

Number of Issues Agreed Upon	Number of Debates	Percentage
0	2	6.5
1	11	35.5
2	13	42.0
3	5	16.0
Total	31	100.0

Table 19 shows that only about one-sixth of the inexperienced debaters, 16 percent, agreed with their experienced judges on all three issues, with 42 percent agreeing on two, 35 percent on one, and 6 percent failing to agree on any.

It can be concluded that the data demonstrated a slight trend which may indicate that experience is a factor in debaters' issue perceptions, but the trend was not statistically significant.

#### The Accuracy of Debaters' Loss Predictions

The final research question attempted to access the accuracy of debaters' loss predictions. The 257 debaters that had completed this category were classified according to whether they perceived that they had won or lost the round surveyed. It was discovered that 90 percent of the debaters felt that they had won their rounds, 229 having marked their own team as the winner of the debate. Only 28 debaters, 11



percent, indicated that they had lost. For purposes of comparison, an initial determination of the accuracy of debaters' "win" predictions was undertaken. The results showed that the debaters were incorrect in their "win" predictions 48.3 percent of the time. Correct predictions, advanced by 118 debaters, accounted for 51.3 percent of the sample. It was concluded that debaters' predictions of wins were inaccurate approximately 50 percent of the time. The next step was to determine the accuracy of debaters' loss predictions and compare their accuracy with their win predictions.

Only 28 debaters indicated that they had lost the round, but 19 of them, 68 percent, were correct in their predictions. Nine debaters, 32 percent, felt that they had lost when they had actually won.

A comparison of the rate of accuracy of debaters' win predictions and loss predictions yielded an observable difference. While debaters' win predictions were accurate only about half of the time, their loss predictions were correct slightly over two-thirds of the time. This trend did not prove to be statistically significant, but it may indicate a tendency toward greater accuracy of loss predictions than win predictions by college debaters.

A brief summary of the data indicates that debaters tend to concur with their judges, colleagues, and opponents in their perceptions of critical issues. Teams that concur with their judges' issue perceptions tend to defeat teams that do not. Certain issues are chosen more often as critical by participants and judges in both the comparative advantage and need case, and slight trends may indicate that: (1) experienced debaters concur more with judges' issue



perceptions than inexperienced debaters, and (2) debaters' "loss" predictions may be more accurate than their "win" predictions.



## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

This investigation considered nine research questions. The present chapter will discuss them in terms of the five major categories of issue concurrence, win-loss record, frequency of issue selection, experience and issue perceptions, and debaters' loss predictions.

#### Issue Concurrence

The first three research questions can be considered under the major category of "issue concurrence." The data received from these three questions lead to several interesting observations. First, the results revealed a high degree of concurrence on issue perceptions by judges, opponents, and colleagues. Since debaters demonstrate a propensity to agree among themselves and with their judges on critical issues, the data suggests that "issues" judging may be a viable method for reaching decisions in intercollegiate debate.

Secondly, since the results demonstrated that, in most debates, the issues are evident to the participants and the judge, this may suggest that judges can render decisions by determining which side won each of the critical issues. Although this process is subjective to a degree, it is considerably less so than the "better job of debating" standard of judging which demands that the judge evaluate each participant in terms of the categories of reasoning, analysis, refutation, and delivery.



A third implication of the results of the first three research questions is that currently popular "better job of debating" ballots such as the American Forensic Association "Form C" ballot do not accurately reflect effective criteria for rendering decisions in debate. Such ballots instruct the judge to use subjective categories such as analysis, reasoning, delivery, and refutation in reaching the decision. Unfortunately, judges fail to give each category of the "better job of debating" criteria equal emphasis and tend to ignore certain categories altogether.<sup>48</sup> Finally, unlike the high debater-judge concurrence on critical issues, debaters tend not to understand judges' criteria for decisions when they use the "better job of debating" standard.<sup>49</sup>

These findings would indicate that "better job of debating" ballots should be replaced by ballots that reflect "issues" criteria for decisions. Such a replacement would facilitate better and more understandable decisions in intercollegiate debate.

Although the selection of three issues by judges and debaters probably represents a more realistic procedure than the selection of only one as was used in prior studies, at least one important question was raised by the present methodology. Debaters and judges were not instructed to select the three issues in order of importance. Consequently, this study suffers from the implicit assumption that each of the three issues were of equal importance. Whether or not this is true,

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<sup>48</sup>Williams, Clark, and Wood, "Studies In The Dimensionality of Debate Evaluation," p. 98.

<sup>49</sup>Verderber, "Judges' Criteria and Debater Adaption: Empirical Evidence," p. 30.



or whether some of the issues generated more influence than the others that were chosen, is a question for future research.

#### Concurrence and Win-Loss Record

Questions four and five attempted to measure the influence of issue perceptions on decisions rendered in competitive debate. Measuring the effects of colleague agreement and debater-judge agreement on issue perceptions, the data suggests that colleague agreement had little influence on the decision rendered.

This result was interesting because it differs substantially from the 1964 McCroskey and Camp study of stock issues. McCroskey and Camp instructed debaters to select the one stock issue that proved most critical from a group of issues that included need, inherency, plan, practicality, desirability, and counterplan. They found that of the 15 debates which pitted concurring partners against partners that disagreed about which issue was critical, 14 were won by the concurring team. They concluded that "partner agreement on stock issues is a significant factor in successful debating."<sup>50</sup>

This study differed from McCroskey and Camp's survey in several areas, but it is difficult to equate the divergent results with any methodological difference. The present study, through the inclusion of the issues of "significance," "topicality," and "evidence," used a larger selection of stock issues than did McCroskey and Camp. It also differed in the number of issues that were selected, participants being instructed

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<sup>50</sup>McCroskey and Camp, "A Study of Stock Issues, Judging Criteria, and Decisions in Debate," p. 167.



to select three issues instead of one.

Although these differences could have contributed to the divergent results of the two studies, it is probable that procedural variations represent the major reason for the difference. Since McCroskey and Camp requested debaters select only one major issue, every team in their survey could be dichotomized as either "concurring" or "disagreeing" on the critical issue. This facilitated a comparison of the debates in which a "concurring" team debated a "disagreeing" team and enabled the authors to generalize about the impact of concurrence and disagreement on debaters' win-loss records.

In the present survey, debater agreement was measured in "degrees" of three, two, one, or zero. Although 18 teams agreed on all three issues, they all debated opponents that agreed on three, two, or one. Consequently, the colleagues determinations of the "most important issue" was not surveyed by this study. It is possible, therefore, that had the debaters surveyed been instructed to select the most critical issue instead of the three most critical issues, the results of this study would have concurred with those of McCroskey and Camp.

At best, the conclusion of the McCroskey-Camp study that "partner agreement on stock issues is a significant factor in successful debating"<sup>51</sup> is modified by the present study. If McCroskey and Camp were correct in their conclusion, increasing colleague agreement from concurrence on one issue to concurrence on three should have greatly increased the power of the impact of colleague agreement upon the decision

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 167.



rendered in the round. No such increase occurred. It can, therefore, be concluded that if McCroskey and Camp's findings are valid, they only apply when colleagues concur or disagree on one major issue. Unfortunately, this conclusion has little predictive validity in competitive debate, which usually consists of several major points of clash. Whatever the academic value of their findings on colleague agreement on one major issue, McCroskey and Camp's conclusion was not supported by this study.

Although colleague agreement was not found to be a significant factor in decision determination, the extent of a team's agreement with its judge's critical issue perceptions proved to significantly affect the outcome of the round. McCroskey and Camp had discovered a slight trend in the same direction, but their study failed to gain statistical significance.<sup>52</sup> Again, procedure probably accounts for the difference. Since the teams surveyed by McCroskey and Camp were dichotomized as agreeing or disagreeing with the judge on one major issue, it was impossible to measure the extent of their concurrence on other significant issues in the round. Consequently, teams that were classified as agreeing with the judge in the McCroskey-Camp study could have agreed with him on only one of several important issues in the round and disagreed with him on the others.

The present study offered a wider scale for the determination of debater-judge issue agreement. This procedural difference in the issue selections of the two studies probably accounts for McCroskey and Camp's

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 162.



failure to achieve significance as well as its attainment by the present survey.

The data indicates that teams which concur with the judges' issue perceptions tend to defeat those teams which do not. Initially, those results appear to uncover a new form of judging bias, for if teams which agree with the judges' issue perceptions tend to defeat teams which do not agree, then apparently a decisive factor in determining decisions in debate is the judge's subjective choice of which issues are most important. Before resurrecting Wells' forecasts of such an occurrence, however, a closer look is necessary. Certainly the judge's subjective evaluations play a part in his determination of which issues are most critical. But since the debaters introduce the issues to the judge, it would appear that their presentation would be of primary importance in convincing the judge of the significance of their arguments. Consequently, perhaps the most significant conclusion that can be drawn from the second major category is that debaters' ability to convince the judge of the importance of the issues that they advocate may be critical in determining the winner of the round. Coaches, too, should consider the importance of teaching debaters to convince the judge of the significance of their arguments, for if the judge does not perceive a debater's argument as important, its influence will be considerably decreased.

#### Frequency of Issue Selections

Questions six and seven served to gather data on the frequency with which debaters and judges selected the various issues. The results suggest several conclusions, the first of which concerns case structure.



The comparative advantage case has inspired controversy since its origination and is still the subject of argument in debate circles today. The arguments have usually been concerned with the legitimacy of the comparative advantage structure.<sup>53</sup> However legitimate the comparative advantage case may be, its structure does differ from the need case. Thompson described the difference as follows:

Much of the instruction on the need-plan case is applicable to the comparative advantages approach, but the differences are significant. First, the rationale is different. Whereas in a need-plan case the basic reasoning is that something unsatisfactory demands a change, in the comparative advantages format the basic point is that the status quo is essentially all right but that things could be better. The movement in the one is from bad to change to good; in the other, from satisfactory to modification to better. The time for the one is the past and the present; evidence of badness comes from these two periods. The time for the other is the present and the future; proof of improvement must look ahead. Evidence for the need-plan case can be factual with little need for inference; proof for the comparative advantages case must be largely inferential.

Second, the approach and the organization are different. The introduction to the comparative advantages case should include a presentation of the proposed modifications of the status quo. The remainder of the constructive case is a series of areas of argument in each of which the affirmative plan would be superior to a continuation of present circumstances.

Third, the obligations are different. Brock lists four obligations for the comparative advantages affirmative:

...first, it must accept the goals and basic assumptions of present policies; second, it must present a plan which is basically compatible with the present system; third, it must prove that these goals will be achieved to a significantly greater degree than under the present policies; fourth, it must be prepared to prove that conditions would improve more by adopting the affirmative plan than they

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<sup>53</sup>Wood, Strategic Debate, pp. 86-87..



would by implementing any action which is precluded by the affirmative proposal.<sup>54</sup>

Still another obligation is that of choosing comparative advantages that are based on provisions of the plan that are consistent with the inherent nature of the proposition. The test is whether the provision is both compatible with the change embodied in the resolution and incompatible with the continuation of the status quo.<sup>55</sup>

Because of the differing structure of the need and comparative advantage cases, this investigation attempted to determine whether different critical issues assumed importance for the two cases. The results showed that the same issues were chosen most often for both structures. The similarity in the importance of the critical issues seems to indicate that the philosophical difference in the two cases does not alter the basic burdens of each case. The fact that the same issues assumed importance under both comparative advantages and need cases appears to demonstrate that debaters and judges feel that each case must win the same issues to gain the decision. Any structural differences that do exist in the two cases were not reflected in the selection of critical issues.

Certain issues were chosen more often than others. Debaters and judges both picked inherency and significance more often than the other issues for both the need and comparative advantage cases. Initially, the consistent choice of these two issues leads one to assume that inherency

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<sup>54</sup>Bernard L. Brock, "The Comparative Advantages Case," Speech Teacher, XVI (March, 1967), 120. Quoted in Wayne N. Thompson, Modern Argumentation and Debate (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 86.

<sup>55</sup>Wayne N. Thompson, Modern Argumentation and Debate (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 86-87.



and significance are the two most critical issues, and this may be the case. A close examination of this conclusion, however, raises a problem. The emphasis on these two issues may have resulted from the nature of the topic debated.<sup>56</sup> Since the topic debated during the investigation appeared to encourage both significance and inherency attacks, it is possible that their emphasis in this investigation resulted from the wording of the proposition and not from any special eminence of these two issues. On the other hand, on face value these issues do appear to be the two most emphasized issues in intercollegiate debate, but the resolution of this question is a matter for future research.

Secondly, the data indicates that case-oriented issues, those issues that dealt with the "need" or "advantages," appear to have been emphasized more than plan-oriented issues, those issues that dealt with the workability and disadvantages of the plan. The results demonstrated that judges and debaters selected case-oriented issues nearly twice as often as plan-oriented issues. The obvious conclusion from this is that judges and debaters feel that case-oriented issues are more important than plan-oriented issues. While this may be correct, it could also be the result of the proposition debated during this survey. Like the question raised concerning issue emphasis, more research is needed before a definite conclusion can be formulated.

#### Experience and Issue Perceptions

The data gathered in answer to the eighth research question

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<sup>56</sup>The intercollegiate debate topic for 1971-72 was "Resolved that greater controls should be imposed on the gathering and utilization of information about U. S. citizens by government agencies."



indicates that experience in debate does not influence debaters' concurrence with judges' issue perceptions, for although experienced debaters tended to agree with their judges more than inexperienced debaters, the difference in agreement for the two groups was not significant.

This result can be attributed to one of two factors. First, in spite of what one might suppose, experience may not be a factor in accurate issue perception at all. Although this conclusion is supported by prior research,<sup>57</sup> there is an indication that other factors may be affecting the situation. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, this investigation utilized a relatively small sample of experienced debaters. This group may not have been extensive enough to expose the influence of experience and, consequently, the trend toward more accurate perception by experienced debaters lacked significance because of the limited sample.

If experience in debate does not improve the debater's ability to select critical issues, this may indicate that debate coaches should spend more time instructing their charges in the methods of separating important issues from insignificant ones. Whether such instruction should be initiated, or whether the present investigation suffers from a type two error, however, can be clarified only by additional research.

#### Debater's Loss Predictions

One of the criteria for effective communication is that the speaker must learn to accurately assess the effect of his message upon

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<sup>57</sup>McCroskey and Camp, "A Study of Stock Issues, Judging Criteria, and Decisions in Debate," p. 168.



the audience and its subsequent acceptance or rejection by them. This process can only succeed if the speaker is able to objectively evaluate the effect of his communication upon the audience. The final research question attempted to determine if debaters were able to make objective assessments of their performances. Since previous studies had conclusively demonstrated that debater's "win" assessments were inaccurate,<sup>58</sup> this survey attempted to investigate the accuracy of debater's "loss" predictions. The data indicated that, although debater's predictions of losses tended to be slightly more accurate than their predictions of wins, they were not significantly so.

Debaters are apparently poor judges of their own performances. Ego involvement is probably largely responsible for this, but whatever the cause of the phenomenon, apparently most debaters need to improve their self-evaluation ability.

#### Implications for Future Research

Several questions considered by this investigation suggest avenues for future research.

The data gathered to answer the eighth question indicated that debate experience is not a significant factor in issue perception. This may be valid, but it is possible that the limited number of experienced debaters that were studied prevented accurate investigation of the effect of experience on issue perceptions. It is also possible that the operational definition of experience used by this study, which determined

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<sup>58</sup>King and Clevenger, "A Comparison of Debate Results Obtained by Participant and Critic Judging," p. 229.



experience on the basis of years of participation in intercollegiate debate would provide for a more accurate determination of the effect of experience on issue perception, but this question must be answered by future research.

The second question raised by this investigation concerns the importance of certain stock issues. The data gathered for questions six and seven indicated that significance and inherency were chosen most often for both the comparative advantage and need case structures. These results may indicate that significance and inherency are the two most important stock issues in intercollegiate debate, but it should be noted that this study was limited to debates on the 1971-72 intercollegiate debate topic. Consequently, further investigation is needed to determine if the issues of significance and inherency would be selected as most important under a different topic.

The same problem applies to debater's and judge's selections of case issues more than plan issues. Although the data gathered in this investigation suggests that case-oriented arguments are considered to be more important by debaters and judges than plan-oriented arguments, it is possible that this emphasis was the result of the specific topic debated and, consequently, would differ if another topic were employed. Whether or not this emphasis was the result of the influence of the current debate topic can only be resolved by future study.

A third question for future consideration concerns the procedure of selecting three issues without regard for their order of importance. The data for this study indicated several significant differences from the results of previous research, but it is possible that these variations



may have resulted from this investigation's failure to discriminate between the importance of the issues selected by the participants. Consequently, additional research is needed to determine if a rank-order selection of issues by debaters and judges would produce different results.

The comparative advantage case has long been a subject of controversy, but little empirical study of this structure has been undertaken. While this investigation determined that the same stock issues tended to assume importance for both the comparative advantage and need cases, more research is needed about other aspects of the comparative advantage case to determine if empirical differences in the two structures exist.

The present investigation has hopefully contributed to an increased understanding of stock issue perceptions in intercollegiate debate, but much work remains concerning the relationship of variables such as experience and topical influences on judge's and debater's issue perceptions. Consequently, further empirical efforts will be needed to provide answers to these questions.

### Conclusion

The high incidence of agreement on critical issues by judges, colleagues, and opponents suggested in this investigation may indicate that many participants and judges probably are familiar with the balance-of-arguments standard of judging. Debaters and coaches should note, however, that even the most unbiased judges are necessarily subjective in their selection of which issues significantly influence the decision.



This possible bias was also reflected by the data gathered for questions four and five, which attempted to measure the influence of debater-judge agreement and colleague agreement on decisions in debate. The data indicated that agreement between partners on which issues were important did not significantly influence judge's decisions, but that teams which concurred with judge's issue perceptions tended to defeat teams which did not.

Consequently, the data suggests that debaters may be advised to center their argumentation around a few well developed points of contention instead of attempting to inundate their judges with many weakly developed points of clash, for it appears that teams which influence their judges to accept their major arguments tend to defeat teams whose arguments are perceived as insignificant.

The sixth and seventh questions attempted to determine the frequency of issue selections by judges and debaters for the need and comparative advantage case structures. The data indicated that, in both structures, certain issues were chosen more often than others by debaters and judges. Specifically, both groups tended to select case-oriented issues over plan-oriented ones and both picked the issues of significance and inherency more often than other issues. Although topical influences may have been responsible for the frequency of selection of certain issues, it may be that significance and inherency are inevitably selected as being more important than other issues by judges and debaters. If this is the case, debate coaches should instruct their charges to develop extensive inherency and significance argument and to utilize them frequently in intercollegiate debate. The data also indicates that



debaters should emphasize case issues more than plan issues. Consequently, second negative debaters should perhaps be advised to devote some of their refutation to case-oriented attacks instead of spending their entire time on plan attacks, as is presently customary.

Finally, comparisons of the issues selected for comparative advantage cases with those chosen for need cases revealed no significant differences in issue selections for the two structures. The implication of this data is that, whatever the academic differences of the two cases, no measurable difference exists in their basic burdens. Consequently, debaters should be advised that the same issues assume importance for each case, and that the differing structures of the two formats do not enable either case to avoid its basic prima facie obligations.

Stock issues in debate have been a topic of scholarly interest since the early Twentieth Century. It is hoped that this investigation has provided a better understanding of the influence of judge's and debater's stock issue perceptions, and, consequently, has made a contribution to our knowledge of intercollegiate debate.



## APPENDIX A

## JUDGE'S QUESTIONNAIRE

This is a questionnaire designed to study the criterion for decisions in debate. Please return it with your ballot after you have filled it out.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

A. PLEASE CIRCLE THE CORRECT RESPONSE

1. Are you a: debate coach graduate assistant  
hired judge other (please explain)
- 
2. For how many years have you been involved in debating or debate judging?  
0 1-2 3-4 5-6 7-8 9-10 above 10
3. Approximately how many rounds have you judged this year?  
less than 6 7-20 21-30 31-40 above 40
4. Which team won?  
Affirmative Negative

B. PLEASE SELECT THE APPROPRIATE CASE STRUCTURE AND CIRCLE THE THREE MAIN ISSUES THAT YOU FEEL WERE CRITICAL TO THE DECISION IN THE DEBATE. PLEASE FILL OUT THE SECTION THAT CORRESPONDS TO THE AFFIRMATIVE CASE THAT WAS USED. IF THEY USED A NEED CASE, DO SECTION I: IF A COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES CASE, DO SECTION II.

## I. NEED CASE

- a. Case was (was not) topical
- b. Need was (was not) inherent
- c. Need was (was not) disproven by evidence
- d. Need was (was not) significant
- e. Plan was (was not) disadvantageous
- f. Plan did (did not) meet need
- g. Plan was (was not) workable
- h. Other (please explain)



II. COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES CASE

- a. Advantages could (could not) be inherently accrued under the present system
  - b. Advantages were (were not) significant
  - c. Advantages accrued (did not accrue) from a non-topical plank of the plan
  - d. Advantages were (were not) disproven by evidence
  - e. Plan was (was not) disadvantageous
  - f. Plan did (did not) accrue advantages
  - g. Plan was (was not) workable
  - h. Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- 
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION



## APPENDIX B

### DEBATER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

This is a questionnaire designed to study the criterion for decisions in debate. Please return it to your judge after you have filled it out.

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the correct response. Please note that question six has two parts, but that you should only fill out the section that applies to this round. Section 6-A concerns the need case, while section 6-B concerns the comparative advantages case; therefore, if the affirmative team carried a need case, fill out 6-A. If it used the advantages approach, fill out 6-B.

### DEBATER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

#### A. PLEASE CIRCLE THE CORRECT RESPONSE

1. How many years did you debate in high school?  
0            1            2            3            4
2. How many years, including this year, have you debated in college?  
1            2            3            4
3. What has been your approximate percentage of wins this year?  
0-25%        25-50%        50-75%        75-100%
4. What position did you debate this round?  
1st affirmative    2nd affirmative    1st negative    2nd negative
5. Which team do you think won the round?  
Affirmative        Negative
6. Which three main issues were most critical in determining the winner?

#### A. NEED CASE

1. Case was (was not) topical
2. Need was (was not) inherent
3. Need was (was not) disproven by evidence
4. Need was (was not) significant
5. Plan was (was not) disadvantageous
6. Plan did (did not) meet need
7. Plan was (was not) workable



8. Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES CASE

1. Advantages could (could not) be inherently accrued under the present system
  2. Advantages were (were not) significant
  3. Advantages accrued (did not accrue) from a non-topical plank of the plan
  4. Advantages were (were not) disproven by evidence
  5. Plan was (was not) disadvantageous
  6. Plan did (did not) accrue advantages
  7. Plan was (was not) workable
  8. Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



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