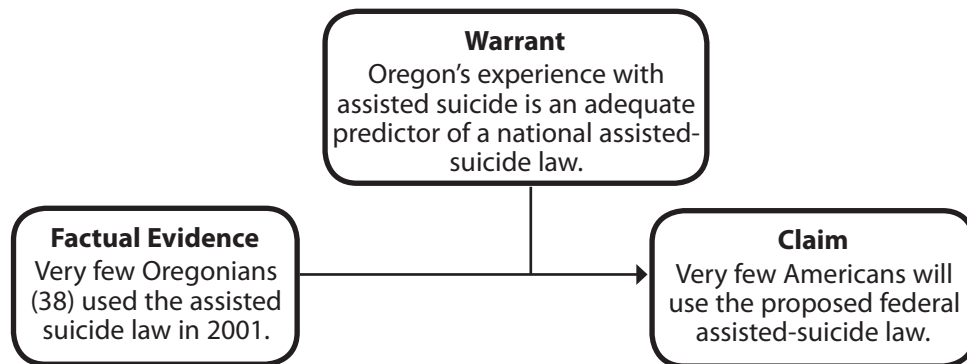


beyond general research and develop a plan for researching facts on their specific debate topic. We say more about developing a research plan for a topic in Chapter 12.

As an illustration of how you could use facts as evidence, consider a claim that a federal law supporting physician-assisted suicide would not significantly increase the suicide rate in the United States. Such a law is only in effect in the Netherlands and the state of Oregon in the United States. As a result, the claim cannot be directly supported by observable data because such data is scant. To support the claim, a debater might look for one or more examples where physician-assisted suicide had been tried with similar results. For instance, the state of Oregon does have an assisted suicide law and according to the *Statesman Journal*, the daily newspaper of Oregon's capital, Salem, only 38 Oregonians who were diagnosed with terminal illnesses availed themselves of physician-assisted suicide in 2002.<sup>2</sup> The following diagram shows how the debater could use such evidence to support this argument:



A variety of kinds of factual evidence is useful in preparing to support claims and propositions. We will discuss examples and illustrations, historical descriptions, and statistics and descriptions of empirical studies, but this list does not begin to exhaust the kinds of facts available to debaters.

**Examples and illustrations** are factual data used to make specific statements about more general topics. You can use a series of examples to prove a general rule and employ an illustration to elucidate or clarify it. For instance, a debater wanting to argue that embargos generally do not include a ban on food products might cite several examples such as those provided by the American Association for World Health: “Few other embargoes in recent history—including those targeting Iran, Libya, South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Chile or Iraq—have included an outright ban on the sale of food.”<sup>3</sup>

The persuasiveness of the argument depends in part on the number of examples the debater can produce and whether they are representative. In other words, the number and representativeness of the examples are the criteria that decide whether the examples support the general rule that embargos do not include bans on food products. By giving several representative examples, a debater is more apt to convince the audience that the claim is a reasonable one.

Having given those examples, a debater can then make the argument even more persuasive by providing a vivid illustration. Illustrations function dif-