

The first part of this chapter discussed how to construct arguments supporting simple value propositions and comparative value propositions. In both cases, combining descriptive, relational, and evaluative claims can support these propositions. Any debater who can describe, relate, and evaluate can support a proposition of value. The remainder of the chapter describes how to construct arguments to oppose such propositions.

CONSTRUCTING AN ARGUMENT TO OPPOSE VALUE PROPOSITIONS

Debaters opposing value propositions can use a variety of constructive arguments. The following suggestions do not begin to exhaust the possibilities but do provide starting points for thinking about kinds of arguments. In the sections that follow, we illustrate arguments with respect to description, relationship, and evaluation.

ARGUMENTS WITH RESPECT TO DESCRIPTION

The affirmative will have described, either explicitly or implicitly, some features of the object of evaluation. These descriptions provide fertile ground for the negative to argue. The negative can do so in at least two ways: denying the features described by the affirmative or by describing some other features the affirmative ignored.

Denying the features described by the affirmative. As we learned in the first part of this chapter, describing the features of the object of evaluation is not trivial. The features chosen as well as the way they are described are important to the way the argument will unfold.

Reconsider the affirmative action argument. In that example, the affirmative argued that a central feature of affirmative action was employment quotas that require an employer to hire a certain number of minority workers. The negative can construct an argument that completely rejects the feature of employment quotas. For instance, you might argue that quotas are required only of U.S. businesses with a long history of discriminatory hiring practices. Otherwise quotas are not a required part of affirmative action in the United States. Furthermore, “the adoption of quotas in employment is unlawful in the U[nited] K[ingdom]. Employers may not deliberately predetermine the numbers of workers based on gender, race, religion or sexual orientation.”⁷ If you are able to deny the features really exist in the object of evaluation, you have an especially powerful argument. However, the negative is not usually in a position to assert that the affirmative has claimed a nonexistent feature. Another descriptive argument the negative can construct involves describing other features of the object of evaluation.

Describe other features ignored by the affirmative. Sometimes the affirmative will not describe all of the features of an object. It will ordinarily describe only those features it can link to the kind of effects that support its side of the proposition. In such cases, the negative has the advantage of describing other features, which can later be related to values supporting its side. Describing other features the affirmative ignored does not inherently undermine the affir-