
Prima Facie—A Guide to Value Debate provides readers with an introduction into what is currently the most popular form of academic debate at the collegiate level. As a policy debate educator with a desire to develop value debate coaching skills, I hoped Prima Facie would be a primer for exploring the differences between argumentation of propositions of fact/value and propositions of policy. Prima Facie, however, deals less with discovering the differences one would expect to find and focuses more on the justifications for supporting value debate over that of policy.

The excerpt of the book's preface on the back cover points to popularity as the standard for writing the book. "The continued popularity of value debate is one indication of the importance of this Lincoln/Douglas style debating on both the high school and collegiate levels further underscores the need for a critical examination of the process of value debate... Not as burdened by the specialized demands of policy debate..." (xiii) Chapter 1, the "Profile of Academic Debate," by Pelham and Watt, offers an historical background of the development of academic debate and then attempts to distinguish value and policy debating by pointing out the generalizations of policy debate as symptoms from which debate was borne. This philosophy would be fine if the content of the book emphasized true differences between the two activities, but the reality is that Prima Facie actually stresses the "similarities between debaters and the previous description of CEDA debate. However, it is believed that on a general level these descriptions are valid." (8)

This becomes the basis for the entire review of this book. Each chapter is torn between whether value debate should be similar or different from policy debate. After the initial chapter and preface argue that value debate serves different purposes and goals than policy debate—lesser time and evidence requirements, slower and more persuasive, can compete without school experience, appeals to a different group of students—because of its nature. The next chapter, "Value and Policy Debate," by Lawson, discusses the myths of value debate. Lawson notes that value debaters can do the same things that policy debaters can. He concedes that changing the type of proposition debated does not address delivery and speed concerns: "There is no inherent reason why issues of policy should be argued quickly and issues
of value argued slowly; and, CEDA's stress on delivery skills has not freed debate from the problems of rapidfire delivery.” (20) This seems inconsistent with the position taken by Pelham and Watts, although it appears to identify correctly the state of affairs in CEDA debate.

Lawson then addresses other artificial differences between policy and value debate. He argues that value debate should have topicality and definitional issues and that affirmatives have the right to defend examples of the resolutions rather than the entire resolution, just as they do in policy debate. The affirmative may go so far as to present a plan, he points out. I believe that by allowing value debate these options, it destroys the "differences" that value debate proponents say make it such a "unique" activity.

Wood and Midgley claim that the justification for this text is that past argumentation texts have not given fair treatment to debating propositions of judgment. But aside from the Chapter 3, "Topic Analysis" by Don Brownlee, there is NOT a single chapter unique to the value debate experience. Brownlee discusses how to analyze a proposition of fact/value by exploring the context of the resolution and presenting the criteria and how the facts support the criteria. However, most argumentation texts do provide a section on discovering issues for fact/value questions and include information similar to that provided by Brownlee.

Brownlee correctly argues that, "Even if the affirmative does not present a plan, per se, they cannot hold themselves or their case immune from the policy implications that may logically arise from their interpretations of the topic. . . . Just as policy resolutions are not exempt from influence and effects of values, value resolutions are not exempt from the policies they may effect." (23) This is the heart of the issue: Is there a unique advantage to debating questions of value with policy implications? Or, is it better (from an educational standpoint) to debate policy questions with value implications? Or, does it matter? Prima Facie, however, runs from this topic. What both policy and fact/value proponents should be addressing is the question of educational value for the students. Until this concern is addressed, the worth of either policy and/or value debate will be hard to discern.

The remainder of the text is a standard argumentation book written with many references to policy debate, explanations and comparisons to policy debate, and repetitive justifications for having a value analysis on such standard topics as evidence, research, refutation, testing of arguments, cross-examination, delivery, style, and ethics on debate. Even the chapters on affirmative and negative strategies do little more than rename concepts: disadvantages become value objections
and counterplans become counter values, although the implications whether policy or fact/value are the same.

Policy and value educators should realize that making artificial distinctions between two essentially similar activities is not the solution for the future. I do not suggest that real differences do not exist between policy and value debate. However, the focus of the true differences and the recognition of similarities must become the starting point for discussion if the best educational product for students is the goal. Maybe there is a necessity for having debate over both types of propositions, maybe not. But until the real issues are addressed, the academic debate will continue to lack stability and foster fragmentation. Prima Facie wants the best of both worlds. It denigrates policy debate to justify its existence when necessary, but it addresses value debate by taking many of the positive aspects that have come from policy debating over the years. Prima Facie, at best, does not address the real differences of value and policy debate, and at worst, increases misunderstandings about the true educational purposes of value debate while fostering some hasty generalizations about policy debate.

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