

## Section 1A: Homework Solutions

August 31, 2005

Decide whether each of the following makes sense:

5. Bob and Susan could not have been making an argument, because they were not shouting at each other.

**Solution:**

This statement does **not make sense**. Arguments can take place without shouting.

□

10. Your argument suffers from a fallacy, but I think your conclusion is true.

**Solution:**

This statement **makes sense**. An argument may suffer a fallacy, but still be true. An example would be:

“David is a bad person, for I have never seen him do anything good.”

The conclusion “David committed a crime” may be true; however, this argument suffers from an appeal to ignorance fallacy.

□

For the following:

- (a) Identify the premise(s) and conclusion.
- (b) Explain how the fallacy occurs in the argument.
- (c) Make up your own example of another argument that suffers from the same fallacy.

13. (Appeal to Ignorance) There is no proof that global warming will have any bad consequences for our society, so we have no reason to be concerned about it.

**Solution:**

(a) Premise: No proof exists that global warming has bad consequences.

Conclusion: We need not be concerned.

(b) Just because something is not proven, does not mean it is false. This is a classic appeal to ignorance fallacy.

(c) At the students' discretion.

□

**17. (Personal Attack)** Lawyer to jury: The prosecution wants you to believe this witness, but you cannot trust him because he is a convicted drug dealer.

**Solution:**

(a) Premise: The witness was convicted of dealing drugs.

Conclusion: The witness is not trustworthy.

(b) Even those convicted of dealing drugs can potentially be trustworthy.

(c) At students' discretion.

□

**18. (Circular Reasoning)** Schools must implement a zero tolerance policy toward drug use, because any tolerance of drugs is unacceptable.

**Solution:**

(a) Premise: Any tolerance of drugs is not acceptable.

Conclusion: Schools should have a zero tolerance policy.

(b) The conclusion is merely a restatement of the premise. No argument is actually made; the premise is just rephrased.

(c) At students' discretion.

□

**20. (Straw Man)** A politician states: The opponents of my health care plan think that it is OK for poor people to lack medical care.

(a) Premise: The opponents oppose the politician's health care plan.

Conclusion: The opponents think it is OK for poor people to lack medical care.

(b) It is more likely that the opponents oppose the politician's health care plan on other grounds than those which he suggests. (The politician is twisting the words of this opponents).

(c) At students' discretion.

□

Identify the premises and conclusions of the following arguments and explain why each are deceptive.

**27.** I believe in telepathy because no one has ever proven that it does not exist.

Premise: No one has proven telepathy does not exist.  
Conclusion: I believe in telepathy.  
Deception: Just because something has not been proven does not mean it is untrue.

□

**30.** Violent crime by youth has risen in virtual lockstep with increased violence on television, thus proving that television violence leads to real violence.

**Solution:**

Premise: Violent crime by youth has risen along with increased television violence.

Conclusion: Television violence leads to real violence.

Deception: Just showing that a correlation exists between violent crime and television violence is insufficient to **prove** (show without any possibility of doubt) that one results in the other or vice versa, since other factors may be present. However, it does **suggest** a relationship exists between the two factors.

□

**32.** On average, boys score higher than girls on standardized mathematics tests (such as the SAT), which proves that boys have a greater aptitude for mathematics than girls. Similarly, girls score higher on verbal tests, proving that girls are better at verbal skills.

**Solution:**

We only consider the first sentence, noting the second is analogous in argument structure.

Premise: Boys score higher than girls on standardized mathematics tests.

Conclusion: Boys have a greater aptitude for mathematics than girls.

Deception: A standardized test is a specific type of aptitude measurement. We may not make general conclusions such as “boys are better than girls at mathematics” based on specific examples.

□