

The Culture of Spoken Arguments

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ABSTRACT: 37 arguments were selected by random sampling methods from calls to radio and television phone-in programs. I discuss whether my general theory of inference evaluation applies to them and how frequently they exemplify a recognized argument scheme. I also compare their dependence on context, their complexity and their quality to those features of a previously studied sample of 50 scholarly arguments.

KEYWORDS: spoken arguments, inference evaluation, scholarly arguments, culture, argument scheme

1. INTRODUCTION

In previous work (Hitchcock 1985, 1992, 1994, 1998) I have developed a comprehensive approach to inference evaluation, i.e. to the evaluation of the link between one or more reasons and a conclusion drawn directly from them. On this approach, one asks whether some covering generalization of the argument is non-trivially acceptable. By a *covering generalization* is meant a generalization of the material conditional whose antecedent is the conjunction of the reasons and whose consequent is the conclusion. By *being acceptable* is meant deserving acceptance; a generalization may deserve acceptance either without qualification or as holding in most cases or as holding in the absence of some exception-making circumstance (i.e. *ceteris paribus*). The acceptability of a generalization is *non-trivial* if it rests neither on the unacceptability of the conditional's antecedent nor on the unconditioned acceptability of the conditional's consequent.

The covering generalization approach to inference evaluation is an alternative to an approach that requires a good inference to be formally valid, perhaps after supplementation of the reasoning with supposed "implicit" or "unexpressed" premisses.

In one respect the covering generalization approach is more restrictive than the formal validity approach: the acceptability of the covering generalization must be non-trivial. Thus the formally valid argument 'you are sitting; you are not sitting; therefore, Tom is in the corner' (a medieval example) would have a bad inference because (a) its covering generalization 'if p and not p, then q' is acceptable only trivially, because its antecedent 'p and not p' is unacceptable, and (b) it has no other covering generalization that is non-trivially acceptable.

In other respects, the covering generalization approach is more permissive than the formal validity approach. For one thing, it counts formally invalid inferences as good when they have a covering generalization that is non-trivially acceptable as a matter of either meaning or fact or normativity. The argument 'Kim is a woman, so she is not a

bachelor' has a good inference, because the covering generalization 'if x is a woman, then x is not a bachelor' (i.e. 'no woman is a bachelor') is true by definition; I shall call such inferences '*semantically valid*'. The argument 'it is raining, so there are clouds overhead' has a good inference, because the covering generalization 'if it is raining at time x and place y, then at time x there are clouds over place y' (i.e. 'there are clouds overhead when it rains') is true as a matter of fact. The argument 'you are guilty of a heinous crime, because with malice aforethought you deliberately brought about the death of another human being without any justification' has a good inference, because the covering generalization 'if x with malice aforethought deliberately brought about the death of another human being without any justification, then x is guilty of a heinous crime' is normatively correct. I shall call inferences of the latter two types '*materially valid*'.

Another respect in which the covering generalization approach is more permissive than the formal validity approach is its allowance of overridable inferences. I use the term 'overridable', following Robert Pinto (2001, p. 28), to describe an inference that can be defeated by further information that shows that the conclusion is false or otherwise unacceptable even though the reasons offered in its support are true. A standard example is the inference 'all observed swans are white, so all swans are white', which was overridden by the discovery of the black swans of Australia. Here the covering generalization 'if all observed birds of a genus are of a certain colour, then all birds of that genus are of that colour' is true for the most part, as we can determine by reflecting on past sequences of observations of such genera of birds as penguins and ravens. So the generalization, on the approach I favour, licenses the inference that all swans are white—or at least it did so until the black swans of Australia were discovered. I shall call inferences '*probabilistically valid*' if they are licensed by a covering generalization that is true for the most part, though not always.

General evaluations, prescriptions and classifications are subject to exceptions of a different sort, namely, where special circumstances obtain. Killing another human being is morally wrong, generally speaking, but one can argue for exceptions in the case of justified defence of oneself or someone else, or more controversially in the case of voluntary euthanasia or capital punishment. So the inference 'Brutus killed Caesar, so Brutus did something morally wrong' is a good one, as far as it goes, but it can be overridden by referring to special circumstances surrounding Caesar's assassination that make it an exception to the general principle that killing another human being is morally wrong. In contrast to factual generalizations like that about the colour of birds, general principles of evaluation, prescription and classification cannot be described as true for the most part, since there is no determinate class of entities to which they apply. Rather they are described as holding '*ceteris paribus*' or 'other things being equal', meaning that they hold unless the situation to which they are being applied has some exception-making feature. I shall call inferences '*valid ceteris paribus*' if they are licensed by a generalization that holds in the absence of an exception-making circumstance.

The covering generalization approach fits our habits of reasoning and argument better than the formal validity approach. We rarely reason or argue in accordance with formally valid patterns. Further, if we think back on a just completed piece of reasoning where we have worked out a conclusion for ourselves, we will generally notice both that the reasoning is not formally valid and that we are not conscious of having mentally

suppressed an assumption whose addition as a premiss would make it formally valid. So it is implausible to hold that such reasoning uses implicit premisses, and thus implausible to hold that similar reasoning addressed to others uses implicit premisses. Further, the covering generalization approach avoids the difficulties of attributing to a piece of reasoning a premiss that is not stated in the reasoning: how do we know that such an unstated proposition is *really* part of the basis for drawing the conclusion, rather than some other non-equivalent proposition whose addition as a premiss would also make the reasoning formally valid? We could take the logical minimum, which is the material conditional whose antecedent is the conjunction of the stated reasons and whose consequent is the conclusion, but most approaches to argument reconstruction generally supply something stronger than the logical minimum, in which case the justification of the choice becomes a pressing issue. The covering generalization approach avoids the problematic aspect of argument reconstruction by making the search for an inference-licensing covering generalization part of argument evaluation, namely, the part that consists in determining whether the conclusion follows from the reasons offered in its support. A piece of reasoning to a conclusion might have many covering generalizations; the evaluative task is to discover which if any of them are acceptable, and with what qualification. It may however be necessary to supplement the stated reasons with particular information present in the immediate context of the reasoning, in order to provide a basis for constructing a plausible covering generalization, or even any generalization at all.

The claim that the covering generalization approach fits our habits of reasoning and argument is empirically testable. For a corollary of the approach is that a conclusion follows only if it has a topic in common with at least one of the reasons from which it is drawn. And, because of the non-triviality condition, an inference-licensing covering generalization must generalize over at least one such shared topic. The covering generalization approach would therefore imply, assuming that people generally reason and argue in sensible ways, that reasons used to derive a conclusion share a common topic with the conclusion. Constructing covering generalizations over such a common topic and evaluating it for acceptability should produce an evaluation of the link between reasons and conclusion that corresponds to our naive judgments arrived at independently of the covering generalization approach.

Some years ago (Hitchcock 2002), I tested the covering generalization approach for applicability to inferences in scholarly books. I used random sampling methods to extract 50 inferences from the books in English housed in the library of McMaster University, a research-intensive university. Of these 50 inferences, 49 had a common topic, and I was able to form on its basis the most plausible covering generalization I could find and use it to determine whether the argument was valid and if so in which way. I concluded that the covering generalization approach was indeed applicable to scholarly arguments.

In the present paper I test the applicability of the covering generalization approach to inferences made by people in everyday speech. For this purpose, I used methods of stratified random sampling to identify 37 inferences made by callers to radio and television talk shows broadcast in and around Hamilton, Canada in the spring of 2003. After setting out these arguments in a standard format, I searched for a topic common to the reasons and conclusion and generated what I took to be the most plausible covering

generalization over that topic, then discussed the acceptability of this generalization, using its acceptability status as basis for evaluating the argument as formally valid, semantically valid, probabilistically valid, *ceteris paribus* valid or invalid.

2. METHOD

Ten talk shows broadcast in and around Hamilton, Canada were identified. For each show, a random number generator was used to generate five start times for taping within the nine-week period from March 3 through May 4 inclusive of the year 2003. The 50 shows so chosen were taped from the start time until the end of the show, and in some cases to the beginning of the next show, as a basis for extracting inferences made by callers to the shows.

The projected sample of 50 inferences, five from each of 10 talk shows, ended up as a sample of only 37 inferences. One of the 10 programs turned out not to be a talk show at all, but a nightly business report, so its five tapings were not used. Six tapings of talk shows contained no inferences, so they too could not be used. (Incidentally, these six tapings without inferences included four of the five tapings of the only American talk show in the sample, with the result that all but one of the arguments transcribed and analysed in this study were arguments by Canadians.) Two tapings were scheduled for Good Friday, when regular programming was pre-empted, so those tapings were not made. Thus 13 of the projected 50 tapings did not produce an inference for analysis and evaluation.

In addition, on one occasion the wrong program was taped by mistake, with the result that there are six tapings of that program and only four of the other program. Two tapings contained no inferences by callers, but did contain inferences by other people, which were used instead.

In most cases, the present author and the research assistant who did the taping (Amy Ohler) transcribed the tapes independently and independently identified the first inference by a caller on each tape. Where they differed, the present author made a decision about which inference to analyze and evaluate. In some cases, the transcription was done only by Amy Ohler; in most of those cases, the present author checked the transcription against the tape and made corrections where necessary.

For this task of identification, we used the same concepts of argument and inference, and the same criteria for detecting and standardizing them, as in the previous study of inferences in scholarly books (Hitchcock 2002). A verbal inference is a discourse in which someone draws for himself or herself a conclusion on the basis of one or more premisses; in the present study, the person drawing the conclusion was invariably the person speaking, although in principle it could have been another person whose discourse was being reported, by quotation or paraphrase. Such a person could be said to state what he or she thinks, then explain why he or she thinks this; the supporting reason(s) could of course precede the conclusion. An argument is a discourse in which someone not only draws an inference for themselves but also invites their hearers to make an inference; in the present study, the author of the argument was invariably the person speaking, although it might have been another person whose argument was being reported. Further information about the criteria used to identify inferences and arguments

in discourse, including criteria used to decide on difficult cases, can be found in the preceding study (Hitchcock 2002).

A rather full transcription of the relevant portion of each taping used was made, to enable the reader of this article to appreciate the context of the inference or argument. In some cases, the inference or argument occurred in the context of a back-and-forth discussion between the talk show host and the caller, a discussion which sometimes was quite testy. Such discussions were also transcribed, to provide a small database that might be useful to other investigators interested in exploring questions about spoken inferential and argumentative discourse.

The present author then supplied a description of the context, a description of the issue addressed by the caller's inference or argument, and a preliminary analysis of its structure. The inference or argument was then extracted in the following standard form:

Premiss(es):

Conclusion:

The conclusion and each premiss were written exactly as they were spoken, with the following modifications. In the transcription, we often omitted pauses, expressions of hesitations and repetitions; where they were transcribed, they were omitted in the standardization. Inferential indicators such as '*because*' and '*so*', which were by far the most common inferential indicators in our sample, were omitted from the standardization, as were modal qualifiers like *must* and *I think that* which indicate the claimed strength of the inference from premiss(es) to conclusion. Contextual information needed to clarify the reference of pronouns, noun phrases and so on was supplied in square brackets. Material interpolated to fill out an elliptical text was put in angle brackets. In five of the 37 cases, an additional implicit premiss was supplied. Otherwise, there were no additions to or subtractions from what was spoken.

Once the inference or argument had been set out in standard form, the present author then supplied a statement and evaluation of its most plausible covering generalization. The analyses and evaluations so produced were then tabulated. In the tabulation, various features of each inference or argument were recorded by the present author: its date, the talk show program where it was uttered, the topic, the presence or absence of explicit cues in the form of premiss indicators or conclusion indicators, the type of inference indicator where there was one, how many premisses were given argumentative support, whether further consequences were drawn from the conclusion, the validity status according to the typology described in my introduction, whether it was necessary to add unstated information as an additional premiss before supplying a covering generalization, the argument scheme exemplified by the inference or argument, the strength if any claimed for the link between reasons and conclusion, the effect on the validity status of a multi-premiss inference or argument of eliminating or negating a premiss, and whether the discourse was an inference or an argument. Judgment was required in supplying unstated information as an additional premiss, selecting the covering generalization, evaluating it, classifying the result of the evaluation according to the previously mentioned typology of validity statuses, identifying an argument scheme to which the inference or argument belonged, estimating the effect on the validity status of eliminating or negating a premiss, and determining whether the speaker was arguing for some claim or merely reporting their own reasoning. Another person making the same decisions about the 37 spoken arguments and inferences might very well come up with

different entries in the tabulation and therefore with different descriptive statistics concerning them.

In cases where the inference or argument was part of a complex inference or argument, the first complete inference or argument spoken by the person was used as the basis of the evaluation using the covering generalization approach that is reported in the results section of this article. However, the other inferences in such complex discourses were also extracted in standard form and evaluated using the covering generalization approach. Those analyses and evaluations appear in the appendix to this article.

3. RESULTS

It was possible to apply the covering generalization approach to all 37 inferences and evaluations used as the basis for testing the applicability of the covering generalization approach to spoken arguments and inferences. In five of the 37 cases, it was necessary to supplement the stated reasons with additional information found in the immediate context or with background information that the audience would be easily able to supply (such as the information that after March 19 the United States was at war with Iraq but Canada was not). Application of the covering generalization approach often involved substantive judgments about the acceptability of the most plausible covering generalization, judgments that in some cases are probably controversial. Details can be found in the appendix to this article.

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the 37 spoken arguments and inferences used as a test, with respect to a number of variables: date, program, topic, verbal cues if any to the presence of an inference or argument, number of premisses, number of those premisses for which support was offered, whether a further inference was drawn from the conclusion, the validity status of the inference or argument, whether it was necessary to add one or more unstated premisses before evaluating the inference, the argument scheme if any to which the inference or argument belonged, the strength if any that the speaker claimed for the inference, the effect on the validity status of eliminating a premiss of a multi-premiss argument or inference, the effect on the validity status of negating a premiss of a multi-premiss inference or argument, and whether the discourse was an argument or an inference. Following this table there are comparisons of the results on each of a number of these parameters with results of the previous study of inferences in scholarly books.

<i>Date²</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Cue</i>	<i>#Pr</i>	<i>S?</i>	<i>C?</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>A?</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>St</i>	<i>E?</i>	<i>N?</i>	<i>A/i</i>
03-03	S	dogs	c/pa	1	0	y	p	n	ce	-	-	-	A
03-04	N	clubs	-	1	0	y	i	n	ipe	s	-	-	i
03-04	O	fries	-	5	0	n	i	n	pc	n	-	-	A

¹For a guide to the abbreviations, see the end of the table.

²All dates are in the year 2003, and in the format MM-DD.

03-04	T	taxes	c/pa	3	0	y	i	n	md	-	-	-	i
03-14	A	Iraq	-	2	1	n	i	n	pc	-	-	-	A
03-14	A	Iraq	p/pa	1	1	n	m	n	pc	-	-	-	A
03-14	N	Israel	c/pa p/pa	2	1	n	i	n	phd	n	-	-	A
03-20	B	accent	-	2	0	n	m	y	ec	-	i	i	A
03-21	A	corruption	-	2	0	n	i	n	pc	-	-	-	A
03-23	C	Iraq	c/v	6	1	n	c	n	aa	-	w	w	A
03-24	G	Iraq	-	3	0	y	i	n	gi	-	-	-	A
03-24	O	Iraq	-	1	0	n	i	y	aa	-	-	-	A
03-25	S	movies	-	1	0	n	p	n	-	-	-	-	A
03-27	G	Iraq	c/v	2	0	n	c	n	pc	-	0w	iw	A
03-28	B	Iraq	-	5	0	n	f/i/f	n	mt/ce /mt	-	---	---	A
03-28	A	violence	c/pa	1	0	n	c	n	pc	-	-	-	A
03-30	C	Iraq	-	1	0	y	s	n	ec	s	-	-	A
03-31	O	azaleas	c/pa	4	0	n	m	n	pc	s	0iw w	0iii	A
04-01	N	bankrupt	-	1	1	n	c	n	pc	-	-	-	A
04-02	T	eating	p/pa	3	0	n	i	n	pc	s	-	-	A
04-03	W	smoking	-	1	0	n	s	y	ec	-	-	-	A
04-06	C	epidemic	c/pa	3	1	n	c	n	ec	-	ww 0	ii0	i
04-09	G	epidemic	c/pa	7	1	n	i	n	ec	-	-	-	A
04-09	T	Iraq	p/pa	2	0	n	p	y	ce	n	ww	ww	A
04-11	B	smoking	-	1	0	n	c	n	aa	-	-	-	A
04-11	O	Iraq	-	1	0	n	m	n	ce	-	-	-	A
04-15	B	rewards	c/ca	1	0	y	c	n	gi	-	-	-	A
04-20	C	epidemic	c/v	4	0	y	s	n	se	-	00 wi	00 wi	A

04-23	B	epidemic	-	2	1	n	f	n	mp	-	w	w	A
04-24	G	epidemic	-	9	0	n	c	n	pc	-	000 iii0 ww	000 iii0 ww	i
04-24	S	Iraq	c/v	3	0	n	i	n	gi	n	-	-	A
04-24	T	religion	c/pa	3	0	n	c	n	pc	-	iw w	iw w	A
04-25	S	literacy	c/pa	3	0	n	i	n	cc, gi	-	-	-	i
04-25	S	Taxes	-	2	1	n	c	n	pc	-	0w	0i	A
04-28	B	shaman	-	1	0	n	i	y	aa	-	-	-	A
04-29	N	taxes	c/pa p/pa	2	0	n	f	n	mp	-	w	i	A
05-04	C	retire	c/pa	1	0	n	i	n	pc	-	-	-	A

P = program: A. APTN News (Aboriginal People’s Television Network, 8 to 9 p.m. F)

B. Bill Carroll Show (CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM, 9 to 11:50 a.m. M-F)

C. Cross-Country Checkup (CBC Radio One, Toronto 99.1 FM, 4 to 6 p.m. Sunday)

G. Roy Green Show (CHML Hamilton, 900 AM, 9 a.m. to 12 noon M-F)

N. The Nightside with Jim Richards (CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM, 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. M-F)

O. Ontario Today (CBC Radio One, Toronto 99.1 FM, 12 noon to 2 p.m. M-F)

S. Larry Silver Show (CHML Hamilton, 900 AM, 12 noon to 3 p.m. M-F)

T. Randy Taylor Show (CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM, 7 to 9 p.m. M-F)

W. Western New York Live (ABC television Buffalo, Cable 9, 4 to 5 p.m. M-F)

Cue = verbal cue to presence of inference or argument. - = none. Otherwise, before slash:

p = premiss indicator, c = conclusion indicator; after slash: pa = particle (e.g. “so”), v = verb or verb phrase (e.g. “reveals that”).

#*Pr* = number of premisses.

S? = number of premisses supported by argument

C? = inference drawn from conclusion?: y = yes, n = no.

V = validity status: c = valid ceteris paribus, f = formally valid, i = invalid, m = materially valid, p = probabilistically valid, s = semantically valid.

A? = premiss added for evaluation?: y = yes, n = no.

Type = type of argument (i.e. argument schema): - = no discernible type, cc = classification by criteria, ce = cause-to-effect reasoning, ec = evaluation by criteria, gi = generalization from instances, ipe = inference to a possible explanation, md = mathematical deduction, mp = modus ponens, mt = modus tollens, pc = prescription by criteria, phd = prediction from historical data, se = semantic entailment

St = strength of link claimed by author: n = necessitation, p = probabilification, s = suggestion, - = no claim.

E? = effect on link strength of eliminating a premiss: 0 = no change, i = invalidation, w = weakening, - = irrelevant (only one premiss, or invalid). (More than one entry reflects different effects for different premisses.)

N? = effect on link strength of denying a premiss: 0 = no change, i = invalidation, w =weakening, - = irrelevant (only one premiss, or invalid). (More than one entry reflects different effects for different premisses.)

As might be expected, a far higher percentage of inferences were invalid in the talk show sample than in the scholarly book sample: 38.5% compared to 26%. Of the valid inferences, a somewhat higher percentage of inferences were valid *ceteris paribus* in the talk show sample than in the scholarly book sample: 25.6% compared to 18%. Correspondingly, far fewer inferences were materially valid in the talk show sample than in the scholarly book sample: 10.3% compared to 34%. With respect to the other three types of validity (formal, semantic, probabilistic), there were negligible differences. In particular, rather surprisingly, four of the inferences in the talk show sample (10.3%) were formally valid: there were two *modus ponens* inferences and two *modus tollens* inferences. Table 2 shows the comparison with respect to validity status. No attempt was made to determine whether differences were statistically significant, since the application of tests of statistical significance presupposes that the samples are randomly selected from their respective populations or universes, a presupposition that the two studies do not satisfy, despite the randomization methods used in the selection of the samples. The reasons why the scholarly books sample is not a random sample of inferences in scholarly books are given in (Hitchcock 2002). The talk show sample was taken during a particular time frame, in a particular geographic location, using words spoken in all but one case by people from one country, Canada, by people speaking on talk shows. People speaking at other times or in other locations or not on talk shows had no chance of having their spoken inferences included in the talk show sample. So generalizing to spoken arguments and inferences from the present sample is problematic; at most the results are suggestive. In particular, the sample is not a random sample of all spoken inferences.

Status	Number of spoken i/A (out of 39³)	Percentage of spoken i/A	Percentage of scholarly i/A
formally valid	4	10.3	6
semantically valid	3	7.7	14
materially valid	4	10.3	34
probabilistically valid	3	7.7	2

³The number is more than the number of passages (37) because one passage had a convergent structure with three distinct inferences to be evaluated.

valid <i>ceteris paribus</i>	10	25.6	18
invalid	15	38.5	26

In only five of the 37 inferences (13.5%) was it necessary to supplement the stated premiss or premisses with additional background information before forming a covering generalization. Rather surprisingly, the frequency of such supplementation was considerably less than the frequency of supplementation in the previous study of written arguments in books, where 13 out of the 50 inferences (26%) required supplementation before a covering generalization could be produced.

Speakers in the talk show sample used verbal cues to signal the making of an inference about as often as writers in the scholarly books sample: 53.8% of the time compared to 52%. Their repertoire of verbal cues was however much more limited than that of the writers. Only one sort of premiss indicator was used, the particle ‘because’. One sort of conclusion indicator predominated, the particle ‘so’, which occurred in 11 of the 16 cases where a conclusion indicator was used, in one case followed by the word ‘therefore’. In the remaining five cases, the following conclusion indicators occurred once each: the word ‘then’, the verb phrase ‘for that reason I believe it is justified that’, the verb phrase ‘that is why’, the verb phrase ‘that means that’, and the verb phrase ‘they found out that ... just for this reason’. Table 3 displays the comparative frequency in the two samples of various types of verbal cues to the presence of inference.

Table 3. Verbal cues to inference in scholarly books and talk shows⁴

	% none	% premiss indicator						% conclusion indicator			
		<i>part</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>ph</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>part</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>ph</i>	<i>Total</i>
books	48	20	2	2	4	6	34	12	6	-	18
talk	46.2	12.8	-	-	-	-	12.8	30.8	7.7	2.6	41.0

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the talk show inferences were more often embedded in a chain of reasoning than the scholarly book inferences. Only 4% of the inferences in the scholarly books had a premiss supported by a sub-argument, whereas 24.3% of the talk show inferences had such support. Similarly, only 10% of the inferences in the scholarly books had a corollary drawn from their conclusion, whereas 18.9% of the talk show inferences had a corollary drawn from their conclusion. In these samples at least, off-the-cuff everyday spoken reasoning turned out to be more complex vertically than the reasoning written down at leisure in scholarly books. In the scholarly book sample, the overwhelming majority of the inferences, 86%, were one-off inferences with a conclusion drawn from unsupported premisses and not further developed. In the talk show sample, only slightly more than half of the inferences, 56.8%, were so undeveloped. These results are displayed in Table 4.

⁴ Abbreviations: part = particle, v = verb, p = preposition, ph = phrase, c = colon.

	<i>% (#) with premiss supported</i>	<i>% (#) with implication drawn from conclusion</i>	<i>% (#) with both</i>	<i>% (#) with neither</i>
<i>Books</i>	4	10	0	86
<i>Talk</i>	24.3 (9)	18.9 (7)	0	56.8 (21)

The two samples were however very similar in horizontal complexity, the number of premisses offered in direct support of a conclusion. Each had about the same percentage of one-premiss inferences, two-premiss inferences, and three-premiss inferences, as shown in Table 5. On average, the scholarly book inferences had an average of 4.38 premisses, a figure exaggerated by one inference with 100 premisses; the median (middle-ranking) number of premisses was in fact two. The talk show inferences had an average of 2.51 premisses, but the median number of premisses was also two.

<i>Number of premisses</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	100
<i>books: %</i>	36	22	18	10	8	4	0	0	2
<i>talk: %</i>	37.9	24.3	18.9	5.4	5.4	2.7	2.7	2.7	0
<i>(#)</i>	(14)	(9)	(7)	(2)	(2)	(1)	(1)	(1)	(0)

An approach to argument and inference evaluation that is compatible with the covering generalization approach, though more specific, is that of argument schemes (sometimes called reasoning schemes or argumentation schemes) and critical questions. An argument scheme is a pattern of argument, typically not purely formal, which under certain conditions provides support for a conclusion drawn in accordance with it. Examples are means-end reasoning, inference to the best explanation, inductive generalization from instances, reasoning from the results of a randomized trial to a causal conclusion, and so forth. The scholarly literature includes dozens of such argument schemes. Kienpointner (1992a) uses a combinatorial approach to distinguish about 60 argument schemes (Kienpointner 1992b, p. 186). Grennan (1997) likewise uses a combinatorial approach, starting from a typology of eight kinds of claims, to identify several dozen “inductively satisfactory argument patterns” (p. 219), counting as inductively satisfactory an argument whose conclusion has a high probability conditional on the truth of its premisses. Walton, Reed and Macagno (2008) identify 96 distinct argumentation schemes. Each scheme, when fully elaborated, comes with a set of “critical questions”, satisfactory answers to which imply that an argument with that scheme justifies its conclusion, subject to its being overridden by further information. Generically, these questions concern the acceptability of the premisses of the particular argument, the acceptability of the covering generalization (which is the expression of the

scheme as a conditional whose antecedent is the conjunction of the scheme’s premisses and whose consequent is the scheme’s conclusion), and the absence of known overriding considerations. Their specific elaboration provides concrete guidance for evaluation of arguments manifesting the scheme in question. For example, critical appraisal of reports of randomized trials works by seeking answers to the critical questions associated with the scheme of reasoning from the results of a randomized trial to a causal conclusion.

It is an open question whether all inferences and arguments can be assigned to a recognized argument scheme. Combinatorial approaches promise an exhaustive classification, but the fulfillment of the promise depends on the exhaustiveness of the division of each variable into its possible values. Further, it is not clear which argument schemes are commonly exemplified in reasoning and argument, either in scholarly or everyday contexts. For pedagogical purposes, it would be useful to have some idea of which schemes are more common. The present study and its predecessor make a contribution to this question, as well as to the question of whether every inference and argument belongs to a recognized argument scheme. Table 6 displays the comparative frequency among the scholarly book inferences and the talk show inferences of the argument schemes that were exemplified at least three times in at least one of the samples. In both the present study and the previous one, inferences and arguments were assigned to an argument scheme without any preconceived typology of such schemes.

<i>argument scheme</i> ⁵	pc	ec	mepr	eg	it	dco	ce	gi	aa	Total
<i>books: %</i>	0	21.6	9.8	7.8	7.8	5.9	3.9	3.9	2.0	62.8
<i>talk: % (#)</i>	33.3 (13)	12.8 (5)	-	-	-	-	10.3 (4)	10.3 (4)	10.3 (4)	76.9 (30)

The most common argument schemes accounted for 62.8% of the 51 argument schemes in the arguments taken from scholarly books, but for 76.9% of the 39 argument schemes in the arguments uttered by callers to talk shows.⁶ The talk show speakers were thus far more stereotypical in their patterns of reasoning: more than three-quarters of the sampled arguments and inferences manifested one of just five argument schemes, whereas less than two-thirds of the inferences and arguments taken from scholarly books

⁵ Abbreviations: aa= argument by analogy, cc = classification by criteria, ce = cause-to-effect reasoning, dco = direct conclusion from observations, ec = evaluation by criteria, eg = existential generalization, gi = generalization from instances, ipe = inference to a possible explanation, it = interpretation of text(s), md = mathematical deduction, mepr = means-end practical reasoning, mp = modus ponens, mt = modus tollens, pc = prescription by criteria, phd = prediction from historical data, se = semantic entailment

⁶ The number of schemes is greater than the number of pieces of discourse in the sample because some discourses exemplify more than one scheme. In the present study, one argument could not be assigned to a scheme, one argument exemplified two schemes, and a third actually consisted of three arguments to the same conclusion.

manifested eight argument schemes. In the talk show sample, a full third of the inferences and arguments manifested a single scheme of argument, an inference from criteria to a prescription, i.e. from what is the case to what should be done. This strong concentration on reasoning from facts to desirable actions and policies is perhaps a peculiarity of the talk show format, where callers are often responding to policy questions. In the present sample, the most frequently discussed topics were the war in Iraq, which began during the study period and was the focus of 11 of the 37 arguments and inferences; and the epidemic of sudden acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), which broke out in Toronto during the study period and was the focus of five of the 37 arguments and inferences. Both topics raised many issues about what the government should be doing. Even allowing for distortions caused by the forum from which the present sample was selected, it is a reasonable guess that inferences from what is the case to what should be done occur frequently in everyday discourse, and should therefore occupy the attention of theorists of argument evaluation. In the previous study, it was possible to classify such inferences under the more specific label of means-end reasoning, which can in turn be divided into reasoning from a necessary means to a prescription and reasoning from a sufficient means to a prescription. In the present study, the 13 pieces of reasoning from factual claims to a prescription did not obviously subdivide into such more tractable specific argument schemes. Likewise, the five pieces of reasoning belonging to a related scheme, evaluation by criteria, did not obviously subdivide into tractable specific argument schemes.

The other three argument schemes occurring at least three times in the present sample are more commonly recognized: cause-to-effect reasoning, generalization from instances, and arguments by analogy.

In the theory of argument analysis it is conventional, following the lead of Beardsley (1950) and Thomas (1977), to distinguish within the class of arguments where more than one premiss is offered in direct support of a conclusion those that are “linked” from those that are “convergent”. Thomas defines an argument as linked “when it involves several reasons, each of which is helped by the other(s) to support the conclusion” (1977, p. 36), and as convergent when “each reason apparently supports the conclusion completely separately and independently of the other” (1977, p. 38). Subsequent scholarship has proposed various tests, nicely summarized and critiqued by Douglas Walton (1996, pp. 109-150), for determining whether the support relation in a multi-premiss single-inference argument is linked or convergent. One family of tests rests the decision on what happens to the strength of support when a premiss is eliminated from the argument, another on what happens to the strength of support when a premiss is negated, i.e. assumed false. There are however serious objections to the whole enterprise of classifying multi-premiss single-inference arguments according to the way the premisses do or do not work together to support the conclusion. For one thing, as Vorobej (1995) points out, any of the proposed tests may give a different result when applied to one premiss than to another, so that the argument would be in one respect linked and in another respect convergent. For another, it is not clear how to classify the structure of the support relation when the reasons as a whole do not in fact support the conclusion, i.e. the argument is invalid. Most significantly, what is the point of determining whether the argument is linked or convergent? From the point of view of evaluation of the argument, which is the ultimate goal, the question is how strong the argument is if it turns out the one of the premisses offered in direct support of the conclusion is eliminated (because we

have no good reason to accept it) or negated (because we have good reason to reject it). So, rather than asking whether the multi-premiss single inferences in the current sample are linked or convergent, I have asked of each premiss what would be the effect on the strength of support of eliminating it and what would be the effect on the strength of support of negating it. These questions make sense only for multi-premiss inferences that are valid. The results for the 23 such inferences in the present sample are displayed in Tables 7 and 8, with a comparison to the results for the 32 such inferences in the previous study. The general pattern of the comparison is that multi-premiss reasoning tended to be tighter in the scholarly books than in the talk shows, in the sense that elimination or negation of a premiss was more likely to weaken or invalidate an inference if it came from a scholarly book than if it came from a talk show. More than half (59.4%) of the multi-premiss valid inferences found in the scholarly books were weakened or invalidated if a premiss was eliminated, whereas only a quarter (26.0%) of the multi-premiss valid inferences in the talk shows were weakened or invalidated if a premiss was eliminated. Correspondingly, elimination of a premiss had no effect on the strength of support in almost half (43.5%) of the multi-premiss valid inferences in the talk shows, but in only a fifth (18.8%) of such inferences in the scholarly books. In both samples, there was a sizable proportion of hybrid multi-premiss valid inferences, where the effect of eliminating a premiss differed from one premiss to another; about a fifth (21.9%) of such inferences in books had such hybrid support, and almost a third (30.3%) in the talk shows. The pattern was similar when a premiss was negated rather than eliminated, since in many cases the effect on the strength of support is the same whether a premiss is negated or eliminated, and the few cases where negation reduces strength of support more than elimination did not differ much in frequency among the inferences taken from books than in the inferences taken from talk shows.

Effect on strength of support of eliminating a premiss⁷	% in 32 inferences in scholarly books	% (#) in 23 inferences in calls to talk shows
none	18.8	43.5 (10)
none, or weakened	9.4	13.0 (3)
none, or weakened, or invalidated	-	13.0 (3)
none or invalidated	9.4	-
weakened	28.1	21.7 (5)
weakened or invalidated	3.1	4.3 (1)
invalidated	31.3	4.3 (1)

⁷ Disjunctive entries reflect different effects from eliminating different premisses, as indicated in Table 1.

Effect on strength of support of negating a premiss⁸	% in 32 inferences in scholarly books	% (#) in 23 inferences in calls to talk shows
none	9.4	43.5 (10)
none, or weakened	9.4	-
none, or weakened, or invalidated	-	8.7 (2)
none, or strengthened, or invalidated	3.1	-
none or invalidated	9.4	13.0 (3)
weakened	21.8	13.0 (3)
weakened or invalidated	6.3	8.7 (2)
invalidated	40.6	13.0 (3)

A final point of comparison concerns the ratio of arguments to inferences in each sample. In the sample of 50 argumentative passages taken from scholarly books, all the inferences were reports of arguments offered by others, arguments that the books' authors did not endorse. In the sample of 37 argumentative passages transcribed from phone calls to talk shows, in contrast, none of the argumentative passages were reported arguments. Nevertheless, some callers appeared to be merely describing their own reasoning process, without attempting to get listeners (or the host) to buy into their reasoning. Here is an example from a woman who phoned in response to the question whether school boards are "cooking the books" by telling weak students not to take standardized tests:

I do believe that they're cooking the books, in fact they've burnt that whole dinner to a crisp! There's just nothing left. I have elementary school children and one of them had missed a lot of school in grade five, and they wanted him to go on to grade six because of his emotional well-being. This child would have never survived in grade six! So I forced the issue and wrote a letter to the school board and said, 'No, my son will repeat a year', and it was the best thing we did for him, now he's thriving beautifully. So, yeah, I think they are cooking the books, for sure. (April 25, 2003, Larry Silver Show, 900 CHML, Hamilton, about 12:55)

⁸ Disjunctive entries reflect different effects from negating different premises, as indicated in Table 1.

The qualifiers “I do believe that” and “I think” indicate that the caller is advancing her conclusion as one that she herself reached. She gives no sign of wanting to convince her audience on the basis of the reasoning she advances.

Although the reason why some inferences were not arguments differed in the books and the talk shows, the proportion of arguments was about the same, 90% in the books and 86.5% in the talk shows. Table 9 displays the comparison.

	<i>% arguments</i>	<i>% inferences</i>
<i>Books</i>	90	10
<i>Talk</i>	86.5	13.5

4. CONCLUSION

The major general conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the covering generalization approach to evaluating inferences can be applied successfully to everyday spoken inferences and arguments. Although the 39 inferences found in the talk shows may be untypical in various respects of all the spoken inferences and arguments that human beings have uttered and will utter, the fact that the covering generalization approach could be applied to all 39 inferences makes it very unlikely that there is a large class of spoken inferences and arguments to which the covering generalization approach does not apply.

It is a further question whether the covering generalization approach produces evaluations of inferences that correspond reasonably well to the evaluations produced by sophisticated reasoners, whether they use some alternative systematic approach or rely on untheorized habits of evaluation. The present study has made no attempt at such comparisons. The appendix provides the reader with an opportunity to evaluate each inference in the sample independently and compare the result to the result of applying the covering generalization approach.

It is tempting to make further generalizations about spoken inferences and arguments on the basis of this sample. But the inferences made on talk shows in the Hamilton area in the spring of 2003, mostly by callers, may be unrepresentative of spoken inferences generally, for various reasons and in various ways, many of them unknown. So one can only claim that the results suggest certain generalizations about spoken inferences. These generalizations would need to be tested against other samples of spoken inferences in order to see whether they hold up. Among the generalizations thus suggested are the following:

1. Both in spoken and in written discourse, people drawing conclusions may use inference indicators to signal that fact about half the time.
2. Both in spoken and in written discourse, the median (middle-ranking) number of reasons that people give in direct support of a conclusion is probably two. In the vast majority of cases, they give either one or two or three reasons in support of their conclusion.

3. Contrary to what one might expect, people may be more likely to use chains of reasoning in spoken discourse than in written discourse.
4. Spoken inferences may be bad more often than written inferences.
5. Contrary to what one might expect, spoken inferences may be less likely to use an implicit premiss that must be supplied from the context than are written inferences. Appeal to such “gap-filling” implicit premisses may occur about half as often in spoken discourse as it does in written discourse.
6. Most inferences, spoken or written, fall under a recognized argument scheme.
7. The most commonly exemplified patterns of reasoning in spoken discourse seem to be reasoning from facts to a prescription or evaluation, reasoning from causes to effects, generalization from instances and reasoning by analogy.
8. Contrary to what one might expect, formally valid patterns of reasoning may occur with noticeable frequency in spoken discourse, in fact, about as often as reasoning from causes to effects, generalization from instances and reasoning by analogy.
9. Inferences from more than one premiss may be loose in spoken discourse more often than in written discourse—loose in the sense that elimination or negation of a premiss makes no difference to the strength of support for the conclusion.
10. Most of the time, writers and speakers who draw an inference are trying to convince their readers or hearers to accept their conclusion on the basis of the reasons offered. But sometimes they are just reporting an inference. In written discourse, they do so by reporting another person’s argument. In spoken discourse, they do so by disclosing their own reasoning process without attempting to get their hearers to buy into it.

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APPENDIX

The following sample of spoken inferences and arguments was obtained by methods of stratified random sampling from radio and television phone-in shows receivable in Hamilton, Ontario, during the period in 2003 from March 3 to May 4, 2003. Most of the passages are transcriptions of contributions by callers. The transcripts are listed in chronological order. The list includes occasions when taping was scheduled but either did not occur or did not produce a usable inference or argument, for the reasons given.

March 3, Larry Silver Show, CHML Hamilton, 900 AM, about 1 p.m.

Context: A four-year-old boy has been attacked and killed by three Rottweillers.

Larry Silver: “Why don’t we license every dog owner? If you want to own a dog, perhaps you should be required by law to take a dog-training course. You have to take a course in order to get a gun permit, so why not?”

First caller (Yvette): “... As a whole, any industry relating to dogs and dog training isn’t regulated at the present time. So, when someone is purchasing a puppy, many times they are going to a breeder that’s just in it for profit, so the puppy’s already starting out with maybe not a good head start. Then after that they go to a trainer, and trainers aren’t regulated in most of Canada. So then you don’t even know whether the person giving you advice is fully qualified to give you advice. And, as far as I’m concerned, if I’m working with a Rottweiler or pit bull, yeah, most of them are great dogs, but they’ve gotten a lot of bad advice where people are saying ‘well, do this, do that’, and it comes out hard on the owner, and terribly on the children as well.”

Larry: “You’re a professional dog trainer?”

Yvette: “Yes, I am.”

Larry: “With what credentials?”

[Yvette says that she has been working with dogs for four years. She does in-home consultations and is currently enrolled in the psychology program at the University of Western Ontario. Larry jokes about her being a ‘shrink’ for dogs.]

Yvette: “A lot of dog training is learning theory, anything to do with the mind is psychology, so it doesn’t matter whether you’re dealing with one species to another. Actually a lot of people who call themselves behaviorists, I mean technically speaking you’re looking at someone who should have a, some form of degree in psychology.”

Larry: “Very good, that’s something to look for then, if you’re choosing a dog trainer.”

Yvette: “Well yeah, ask someone what their credentials are and if they say ‘I’m a behaviorist’, ask what the credentials are supposed to be. I know a lot of the US states you need either a master’s or a doctorate or a veterinary degree. I’d be asking someone what their credentials are and as long as they’re honest and they’re credible, that’s a big part of it.”

Larry: “So Yvette, as a dog psychologist, what was your initial reaction to the news of the four-year-old’s death this morning?”

Yvette: “I think it’s preventable. I think it’s terrible and I think there’s a lot of agencies who need to take a look at this and some recommendations need to be made.”

Larry: “What would be your number one recommendation?”

Yvette: “Legislation of trainers, legislation of breeders, programs for people that are mandatory, especially if you’re dealing with a strong, powerful breed.”

Analysis: Yvette begins with a serial argument that both establishes that many dogs start out without a good head start and explains why that is so.

Main argument:

Premiss: When someone is purchasing a puppy, many times they are going to a breeder that’s just in it for profit.

Conclusion: The puppy’s already starting out with maybe not a good head start.

Sub-argument:

Premiss: As a whole, any industry relating to dogs and dog training isn’t regulated at the present time.

Conclusion: When someone is purchasing a puppy, many times they are going to a breeder that’s just in it for profit.

Covering generalization of main argument: Pets bred by a breeder that’s just in it for profit may not be good.

Evaluation: The covering generalization is controversial. Some may defend it, on the ground that unregulated or poorly regulated profit-oriented businesses of all kinds tend to cut corners to increase their profit—a proposition for which there are many supporting examples in nursing homes, hospitals, child care centres, post-secondary institutions, and the like. Others may oppose it, on the ground that the profit motive gives business owners

an incentive to provide high-quality goods and services, so as to attract customers. The latter argument has less force in the case of products whose quality is difficult for customers to evaluate; puppies are a case in point.

Covering generalization of sub-argument: Many operators in unregulated industries are just in it for profit.

Evaluation: This covering generalization is quite plausible. An industry without regulations, especially one that does not require a large capital investment, is likely to attract operators who care only about the profit they can make and do not conform to what would be required if there were even minimal regulations.

* * * * *

March 4, The Nightside with Jim Richards, CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM, about 12:28 a.m.

Context: The host, Jim Richards, reads a letter from a listener. The listener and his wife are 29 and have been married three years. On the weekends she wants to go to trendy dance clubs in the entertainment district downtown. He thinks that it is unnatural to go to a dance club with your wife.

Jim: “I don’t know. I hate going to those clubs. Daniela, do you go to those clubs? Daniela enjoys going to the clubs. You don’t agree with this guy? What, married people should be going to the dance clubs? What’s the reason for the married people to go to the ..? Most of them are pick-up joints and you can’t have any fun in there. Yep, all of a sudden you get married and you stop dancing. That’s the way it should be. There should be a ban on dancing with married people. They should actually check for ID and wedding rings at the door and not allow you in. Or allow you in but not allow you on the dance floor if you’re married. I think that’s probably the way to go.”

After comments by Jim on related issues, and a call, there is another call responding to the letter from the listener.

Caller (Nicki from Richmond Hill): “I just wanted to make this comment about ...”

Jim: “Do you go to clubs downtown, or in the Richmond Hill area?”

Nicki: “I don’t go to clubs, no, but I used to when I was a bit younger. And I think the reason why the wife wants to go to clubs is because she would prefer to feel younger again. You know, when you go to clubs, you know when you have it when you can pick up guys and stuff. I think she wants that, and the husband either doesn’t have the need or he doesn’t have it. So...”

Jim: “Or, and I think that might be part of it, or it could be where they don’t do anything any more on a Saturday night, and maybe every once in a while they just want to go out.”

Nicki: “Yeah, maybe. So I think he should give her a break and if he doesn’t enjoy not going give her that one night with the girls.”

Analysis: Nicki supports her conjecture about why the wife wants to go to dance clubs with a generalization about why women go to such clubs. She then uses the explanation to support her claim that the husband should let his wife go to dance clubs.

Main argument:

Premisses: I think the reason why the wife wants to go to [dance–DH] clubs is because she would prefer to feel younger again.

The husband either doesn’t have the need [to know that he has it–DH] or he doesn’t have it.

Conclusion: He should give her a break and if he doesn’t enjoy not going give her that one night with the girls.

Covering generalization: A husband whose wife wants to go to dance clubs because she wants to feel younger again but who either has no need to know that he has it or does not have it should give his wife a break and if he doesn’t enjoy going should give her that one night with the girls.

Subordinate argument:

Premiss: When you go to clubs, you know when you have it when you can pick up guys and stuff.

Conclusion: I think that’s why she wants it [i.e. to go to dance clubs–DH].

Covering generalization: People who engage in an activity want the consequences of that activity.

Implicit intermediate subordinate argument:

There is an implicit argument from the conclusion of the subordinate argument to the premiss of the main argument, which might be standardized as follows:

Premiss: I think that the wife wants to go to dance clubs so that she knows she has it.

Conclusion: I think that the wife prefers to feel younger.

Covering generalization: A married woman of 29 who wants to go to dance clubs so that she knows she has it prefers to feel younger.

Evaluation: The covering generalization of the main argument is clearly disputable, since there are other possible consequences of the wife’s going without the husband to dance clubs that are harmful to the husband, notably his wife’s entering into a liaison with another man. At best it is *prima facie* acceptable, licensing a presumption that is rebuttable by overriding considerations. (More abstract covering generalizations, such as the generalization that anyone who doesn’t want to join their spouse in some activity that the spouse wants them to engage in together should let the spouse engage in that activity alone, are even more disputable.)

The covering generalization of the implicit intermediate subordinate argument has the ring of psychological truth to it.

The covering generalization of the explicit subordinate argument is subject to so many counter-examples that it does not even license a presumption. Any human action has many consequences, and only a small subset of them are the intended goal of the action. To justify a claim that someone performs a particular action for a certain purpose, one needs to say more than that the action is of a type that has fulfilment of that purpose as a consequence. For example, it would help to point out that the person knows that actions of the type in question have that consequence and that the consequence in question would be welcomed by that person. Such claims are quite plausible in the particular case, but they need to be stated explicitly in order to justify the conclusion.

* * * * *

March 4, Ontario Today, CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—a government-owned national broadcasting company—DH] Radio One, Toronto, 99.1 FM, about 12:40 p.m.

Explanatory note: This program has a so-called “Talk Back” segment where taped statements by callers are played.

(Female) host: “With French bashing and in particular about how some restaurants in the United States have taken to advertising their ‘freedom fries’, eschewing the term ‘French fries’, we had a couple of calls about the origin of the term ‘French fries’. Now apparently, if you don’t like French policy with regard to Iraq or anything else, you should not avoid saying ‘French fries’, you should say it as often as possible. Our historically astute listener George in Port Credit explains.”

Caller (George): “Interesting, this discussion of the Americans frustrated with the French and changing the name of French fries. Oh, our wilful ignorance of history! I’ve been told by what I consider to be a reasonable source that the word ‘French fry’ comes from the period in which the British were coming to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland to catch fish. They would bring with them potatoes to add to their meal and they would basically deep fry the fish they caught along with the potatoes and, because they were warring with France at the time, they would in a very derogatory manner demonstrate how once they went back across the pond they would do what they could to get rid of the French and that would be to make the ‘French fry’ and the name has stuck with us. If you don’t like the French you’ve gotta call them ‘French fries’, not ‘freedom fries’. Isn’t our ignorance of history appalling?”

Comment: There are various stories about the origin of the phrase ‘French fries’, but reputable sources do not include George’s story. The story is dubious on its face, because the last period when the British were warring with the French ended in 1815, and it is unlikely that British fishermen would have the facilities prior to that date on board ship to deep-fry fish and potatoes in a vat of boiling fat.

Context: On November 8, 2002, the United Nations Security Council adopted unanimously a resolution that offered Iraq under Saddam Hussein “a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations” that had been set out in several previous resolutions. Iraq then accepted the return later that month of weapons inspectors led by Hans Blix of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and Mohamed ElBaradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency. They found none of the weapons of mass destruction that previous Security Council resolutions had required Iraq to destroy, but reported concerns about failure to document where the previously held weapons had gone. On February 24, 2003, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Spain presented a draft resolution to the Security Council of the United Nations which declared that Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it by the November 8 resolution. The purpose of the new resolution was to get Security Council authorization for a planned invasion of Iraq by the United States and the United Kingdom. The new resolution led to serious diplomatic rifts, with the United States and the United Kingdom coming under sustained criticism from France, Russia and Germany. The resolution was eventually withdrawn, with the sponsors contending that it had been sabotaged by France's threat to veto the new resolution “whatever the circumstances”, while critics of the resolution (and France itself) argued that the French position had been intentionally misrepresented and that the majority of the Security Council had opposed the proposed resolution.

The French position was articulated in a speech by the French foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin at the Security Council on February 14, 2003, after Hans Blix presented a detailed report on the progress of the weapons inspections. De Villepin detailed three major risks of a “premature recourse to the military option”, especially the “incalculable consequences for the stability of this scarred and fragile region”. He said that “the option of war might seem a priori to be the swiftest, but let us not forget that having won the war, one has to build peace”. He emphasized that “real progress is beginning to be apparent” through the inspections, and that, “given the present state of our research and intelligence, in liaison with our allies”, the alleged links between al_Qaeda and the regime in Baghdad explained by Colin Powell were not established. For the text of the address by De Villepin, see:

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/French_address_on_Iraq_at_the_UN_Security_Council .

In subsequent weeks, there was immense popular hostility in the United States to France, because of the perceived role of France in blocking approval by the Security Council of the planned invasion of Iraq. In response to this popular hostility, restaurants began relabeling the French fries on their menu as ‘freedom fries’.

Analysis: George is arguing from the alleged origin of the phrase ‘French fries’ that those who don’t like the French should call deep-fried cut potatoes ‘French fries’ rather than ‘freedom fries’.

Premises: I’ve been told by what I consider to be a reasonable source that the word ‘French fry’ comes from the period in which the British were coming to the Grand Banks of Newfoundland to catch fish.

They [sc. the British fishing on the Grand Banks] would bring with them potatoes to add to their meal.

They [sc. the British fishing on the Grand Banks] would basically deep_fry the fish they caught along with the potatoes.

Because they [sc. the British] were warring with France at the time, they would in a very derogatory manner demonstrate how once they went back across the pond they would do what they could to get rid of the French and that would be to make the 'French fry'.

The name <'French fries'> has stuck with us.

Conclusion: If you don't like the French you've gotta call them 'French fries', not 'freedom fries'.

Covering generalization: If you don't like a certain group and something is named after that group because of an original hostility to the group, then you must call that something by that name rather than changing it.

Evaluation: The prescription is absurd. The associations of a certain label are a function of its present use, not of the history of its adoption. A label that was introduced as a way of indicating hostility to a group may lose that association, in which case it no longer conveys that hostility. In any case, keeping or changing a label that includes a reference to some national group on the grounds of one's feelings towards that group is absurd. Think of "Dutch treat", "Indian giving", "Spanish fly", "German measles", and so forth.

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March 4, Randy Taylor Show (CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM), about 7:50 p.m.

Context: Toronto City Council has just approved a budget of 6.4 billion dollars, with a 3% tax increase. Randy's guest is Toronto Councillor Rob Ford, known for not spending his budget. Randy talks with Rob about his proposal for a 5% decrease. His proposed cuts include \$100,000 for free food for councilors, grants to unaudited special interest groups that protest and cause riots, and \$55,000 for a box in the SkyDome.

Caller (Dorothy in Scarborough): "I doubt if I can explain myself very well, but I'm going to try. I've heard on the radio that the average increase for taxes is 57 dollars, per house or whatever. Well, I've figured out my property's tax using last year's rate, and the problem is my assessment went from 221 to 254, so I'm going to be paying another 450 dollars, not 57 dollars. And I'm beginning to think I should sell my house and get the 254 for it."

Randy: [chuckles] "If somebody's willing to pay it, right?"

Dorothy: "Exactly."

Rob: "Absolutely."

Dorothy: "And I'm a senior and it's going to be pretty hard."

Rob: “I sympathize with you. And, you know, seniors are on fixed income. And, you know, we’ve increased taxes \$130 million in the last three years.”

Dorothy: “Yeah, but have people taken into consideration that assessments have gone up so much?”

Rob: “Nobody has.”

Analysis: Dorothy is reporting her reasoning that her taxes are going to go up by \$450 a year. Although she describes what she is doing as explaining herself, she expects her listeners to accept her conclusion on the basis of the reasons given. So it counts as an argument, one with just a single inference.

Premisses: I’ve heard on the radio that the average increase for taxes is 57 dollars, per house or whatever.

I’ve figured out my property’s tax using last year’s rate.

The problem is my assessment went from 221 to 254.

Conclusion: I’m going to be paying another 450 dollars, not 57 dollars.

Covering generalization: The increase in property taxes in Toronto in 2003 equals the difference between the product of the 2002 rate by the new assessment of the value of one’s property and the 2002 tax on that property.

Evaluation: The increase in assessment from \$221,000 to \$254,000 is \$33,000. Dorothy has used the 2002 property tax rate on her new assessment to get a property tax increase of \$450. The \$450 should therefore be $33/221$ (about 15.8%) of what she paid last year, which means that her property tax in 2002 was about \$3,100. That’s a plausible amount of property tax to pay on a house with an estimated market value of \$221,000. So her arithmetic could very well be correct.

However, the covering generalization is false. The 3% increase in property taxes approved by city council is an increase in the average revenue per property. If the assessed value of a property goes up, that increase may or may not cause the tax on that property to go up more than 3%. If the percentage increase in assessed value equals the average increase in the assessed value of properties, the property tax will go up 3%. If it is less than the average increase, the property tax will go up less than 3%. If it is more than the average increase, the property tax will go up more than 3%.

The councillor is being dishonest in saying that nobody has taken into account that assessments have gone up so much. The formula for calculating property taxes automatically takes into account increases in assessments.

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March 7, Randy Taylor Show (CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM), from 8:38 to 10 p.m.

Randy's guest was Howard Berg, who calls himself the world's fastest reader.⁹ Callers phoned in to ask Berg to solve their problems. They did not advance any arguments. Nor did Berg.

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March 11, Western New York Live, ABC television Buffalo, Cable 9

Taping began at 4:04 p.m. The topic was pain management. Callers asked questions, but advanced no arguments.

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March 14, Contact, APTN (Aboriginal People's Television Network, a Canada-wide cable channel), about 8:10 p.m.

Topic: "War on Iraq: Why should aboriginal people care?"

Caller # 1 (Sherry): "I think aboriginal people should care on one point and then they shouldn't care on another point. I think we should sit back and wait."

Host: "What do you mean?"

Sherry: "What do I mean?"

Host: "Stay neutral?"

Sherry: "Yeah, I think so. As we all know, we're aboriginal people, right? And we believe in peace, like look at all our treaties and they're made through peace."

Host: "Some people would say that standing by neutrally is a luxury that the other people who are in the heart of the conflict can't afford."

Sherry: "Well, I mean, I care. I feel sorry for those people because we've been through that, right? We've experienced centuries of that assimilation and stuff like that, and I do feel for the Iraqi people. I think like President Bush, right? He is acting like a terrorist himself, you know, and I know it's sad that they have to fight like that."

Analysis: Sherry's remarks include the skeleton of an argument for her claim that aboriginal people should sit back and wait to see what happens in the war on Iraq, a claim that she agrees to be interpreted as staying neutral, i.e. neither favouring the invasion of Iraq nor opposing it. She supports it with the claim that aboriginal people believe in peace, a claim that she supports in turn with the aboriginal treaties made through peace.

⁹See <http://www.mrreader.com/>; visited 2009 04 11.

Main argument:

Premises: We're aboriginal people.

We believe in peace.

Conclusion: We should sit back and wait <to see what happens in the war on Iraq>.

Covering generalization for main argument: Any group that believes in peace should sit back and wait to see what happens when a war is about to start.

Evaluation: As the host's clarification indicates, the caller is arguing that aboriginal people should not take sides in the debate about the imminent invasion of Iraq. Her stated conclusion however goes beyond the advice not to get engaged, and extends to doing nothing to express opposition to it or to try to stop it. Depending on the circumstances, one could reasonably argue that any group that was seriously interested in seeing peace in the world should do what it can to prevent wars from starting. Indeed, it could reasonably be argued that it is part of what it means to really believe in peace, as opposed to paying lip-service to peace, that the believer does what is feasible to prevent war from occurring. In mid-March of 2003, there were massive world-wide demonstrations against the looming invasion, in which aboriginal people could have participated (and probably did, to some extent). These demonstrations perhaps stiffened the resolve of countries with seats on the Security Council of the United Nations to refuse to support the US-UK-Spain resolution that would have authorized the anticipated invasion of Iraq. The caller's idea that believing in peace means sitting back and waiting whenever a war is about to break out involves a very passive conception of what it means to believe in peace.

Sub-argument:

Premiss: Look at all our treaties.

They're made through peace.

Conclusion: We believe in peace.

Covering generalization: Any group that has entered into agreements made through peace believes in peace.

Evaluation: This generalization too has obvious exceptions. For example, a belligerent group can enter into agreements "made through peace" because it calculates that going to war would be less advantageous to it than reaching an agreement. In particular, some North American aboriginal groups were notoriously warlike before their contact with Europeans—for example, the Five Nations (Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga and Seneca) that formed the Iroquois Confederacy about a century before their contact with Europeans at the urging of The Great Peacemaker. Another type of exception would be a group that made treaties "through peace" but later became belligerent; the fact that someone's ancestors believed in peace does not necessarily mean that that person believes in peace.

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March 14, Contact, APTN (Aboriginal People's Television Network, a Canada-wide cable channel), about 8:50 p.m.

Topic: "War on Iraq: Why should aboriginal people care?"

Gilbert: "They should be concerned about it because it has a lot of effect on all of us from all over. I'm from a little island, just south of Prince Rupert¹⁰ here, and we have to travel by boat and all our food and our gas is going up high now, we can't even afford to go anywhere—where we always go—and go get our own seafood and stuff.

"I never had much education but I've been watching this news about Iraq and seeing all these kids and there's gonna be a lot of innocent kids from both—from all—sides that are loved ones, and people are gonna die from this war, even here you know. And the racism's pretty bad. And if this war ever starts it's gonna be worse. You hear about, you hear about on the news where these people in another city not too far from us here, where the Hindus are getting shot right in the street and it's all got a lot to do with this Iraq thing here, and that's one thing I'm worried about, 'cause you know, in every city there's a lot of people from all over—like here in Prince Rupert, there's people from all over living here and we get along with each other and you know if that war ever starts, we're gonna have little wars in all communities and that's gonna be hard on all of us."

Analysis: Gilbert advances a serial argument why aboriginal people should care about the anticipated war on Iraq. His sub-argument for his main premiss could be interpreted to include the entire second paragraph, with its lurid predictions of racist mini-wars breaking out all over Canada. To keep the analysis simple, that part of his call is ignored in the following analysis.

Main argument:

Premiss: The war on Iraq has a lot of effect on all of us aboriginal people from all over.

Conclusion: We aboriginal people should be concerned about the war on Iraq

Covering generalization: Any group should be concerned about any event that has a lot of effect on all of them from all over.

Evaluation: The covering generalization is plausible if "effect" is taken to mean "bad effect". The caller's prediction of racist mini-wars in his own part of Canada indicates that he has bad effects in mind.

Sub-argument:

Premisses: I'm from a little island, just south of Prince Rupert here.

We have to travel by boat and all our food and our gas is going up high now.

We can't even afford to go anywhere—where we always go—and go get our own seafood and stuff.

Unstated background information: I am an aboriginal person.

¹⁰Prince Rupert is a city on an island just off the coast of British Columbia, almost 500 miles north of Vancouver.

Conclusion: The war on Iraq has a lot of effect on all of us aboriginal people from all over.

Covering generalization: If their food and gas prices are going up for a remote sub-group of people from a remote little island and they can't afford to go where they usually go to get their own seafood, then the war on Iraq is having a lot of effect on that entire people.

Evaluation: The covering generalization in effect claims that the experience of the caller's band is representative of all bands of aboriginal people in North America. But the remoteness of his band may in fact make it unrepresentative in terms of the impact of the looming war on Iraq. Less remote bands that are not so affected by the rising price of gas might have been experiencing very few effects from the forthcoming war.

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March 14, The Nightside with Jim Richards, CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM, about 11:35 p.m.

Context: Pro-Palestinian students are staging an occupation at York University in Toronto. A caller makes a number of points about relations between Jews and Palestinians.

Caller (Allen): "The thing at York University, I think you would agree, is crossing the line."

Jim: "Sure."

Allen: "Because that's unfortunately, whether it's Palestinian or real left-wingers they have this thing. I think it's very bad. This occupation should be over. I've been in Israel six times. My father was born there. I know the streets of Jerusalem."

Jim: "Yeah. Sure."

Allen: "I used to walk through the Arab souk and speak to people, but I'll tell you this much. When people blow up themselves, OK, in the city where my sister and her kids live, and when people did it in India a few days ago and killed Hindus, OK, when they did it in the Philippines, all for some reason very interestingly Muslim extremists. So, um, that's never gonna be resolved in dialogue, because these people are, I'm sorry to say, extremists are total animals. And I think you'd agree, because if you'd listen to any radio station in any part of North America that talks about discussions of Palestine..."

Jim: "All right, you know what, Allen, with all due respect, you've kind of hijacked the topic. You've taken it pretty far off..."

Allen: "Well, that's the purpose, right?"

Jim: "Pardon me."

Allen: “That’s what they do. They hijack...”

Jim: “All right. Well, actually, it’s not supposed to work that way. But thank you for your call. I appreciate it. I know what you’re saying. but, um, it’s way off topic.”

Analysis: As the host notes, the caller abruptly switches from the topic of the occupation at a local university by pro-Palestinian students to the issue of whether the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is ever going to be resolved in dialogue. He supports this claim by noting that people blowing themselves up in various parts of the world are Muslim extremists. His attempt to elaborate on this argument with reference to discussions of Palestine on radio stations in North America is cut off by the host, on the ground that the caller has gone off topic.

Argument:

Premises: When people blow up themselves in the city where my sister and her kids live, and when people did it in India a few days ago and killed Hindus, [and] when they did it in the Philippines, all [the people who blew themselves up–DH] for some reason very interestingly [were] Muslim extremists.

Extremists are total animals.

Conclusion: That [the Israeli-Palestinian conflict] is never going to be resolved in dialogue.

Covering generalization: A conflict is never going to be resolved in dialogue if some proponents of one side are total animals.

Evaluation: It’s not quite clear what a total animal is. If a total animal is a person who is not prepared to engage constructively in dialogue, then the covering generalization is plausible; however, it would have exceptions where people who are “total animals” change their behaviour or they are not numerous enough to prevent resolution of the conflict through dialogue. If the covering generalization is accepted, the evaluation of the argument would then shift to the question whether extremists are total animals in this sense. That is, are extremists unprepared to engage constructively in dialogue? Here again the caller’s terminology is vague. What does he mean by an extremist? People who blow themselves up in order to kill other people count as extremists, in his lexicon. Are such people unprepared to engage constructively in dialogue? To answer this question, we need to ask why they engage in these tactics, for example, whether they are rejecting possibilities for dialogue that are open to them (or to the leading spokespeople for the cause that they support). There are historical examples of groups engaging in extreme actions who later enter into a dialogue that resolves their conflict; a recent example of the sort is the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland. People can change. The caller needs more evidence to support his claim, which effectively implies that Israel should make no attempt to resolve its conflict with the Palestinians through dialogue, but should rely simply on force. It is worth noting that a similar argument could be made on the basis of the extremist actions in the West Bank of some people in the Israeli settler movement; that argument would imply that Palestinians should use force rather than

dialogue in their dealings with Israel, in the form for example of suicide bombings or rocket attacks.

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March 20, The Bill Carroll Show, CFRB, Toronto, 1010 AM, about 11:50 a.m.

Note: This show was taped by mistake, instead of the Roy Green Show on 900 CHML.

Context: Much of the show was pre-empted by live coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the invasion of Iraq by American, British and other troops, which began the previous day. The live coverage included an interview by CBS news anchor Dan Rather of correspondent Scott Pelley in Kuwait, in which Pelley described US missile attacks on Iraq, as well as a news conference in Washington by US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld. A news broadcast reported scepticism by Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien that there actually were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Asked by a reporter what kind of proof he would accept, Chrétien replied, "I don't know. A proof is a proof. What kind of a proof? It's a proof. A proof is a proof, and when you have a good proof, it's because it's proven."¹¹ In a segment where callers were given a maximum of 10 seconds to make a point, the following exchange occurred:

Caller (Robert in Markham): "Yes, the different is the difference, and if it's different, then there's a difference."

Bill: "A proof is a proof is a proof, is a proof is a proof is a proof, a proof. Ah, blah, blah, blah... What I meant was ...' It really sounds like ..., it really sounds like they hired someone to do the prime minister's voice, to deliberately make up, when you hear clips like this, you don't have to have [inaudible] that stuff, because you couldn't actually sit down in a studio and come up with a better clip that makes fun of our prime minister. But this is actually our prime minister."

Soon after, a caller complained about the host's parody of the Canadian prime minister.

Caller (Vera in Oakville): "Bill, I'm making comment about you making that disgusting comment about our prime minister and his French accent. That's disgusting. You know, he had a polio when he was young, that's way he speaks.¹² And also, you think you have how to fix the problem in the whole world. You never even been into these countries that supposedly America liberates You disgust me, Bill."

Bill Carroll: "I was not making fun of the prime minister's French Canadian accent. I was making fun of the fact that he nervously got caught in his own rhetoric and now

¹¹ The reply is on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aX6XMlldkRU> .

¹² In fact, Jean Chrétien had Bell's palsy in his youth, a paralysis of a facial nerve resulting in inability to control facial muscles on the affected side.

wants to take it back but doesn't dare take it back.. To suggest that I would make fun of somebody who has a French Canadian accent ...”

Vera: “Well, you sounded like that.”

Bill: “... and then go home to my French-Canadian fiancée is ridiculous beyond the pale.”

Premisses: He [Jean Chrétien–DH] had polio when he was young.

That [the way you imitated his voice–DH] is the way he speaks.

Conclusion: Your comment about our prime minister and his French accent is disgusting.

Implicit premiss (countered by the host in his reply): Your comment about our prime minister and his French accent made fun of his accent.

Covering generalization: To make fun of the accent of someone who had polio when he was young and speaks in a certain way is disgusting.

Evaluation: The covering generalization expresses a reasonable attitude. The questionable part of the caller's argument is its implicit assumption that the host's satirical restatement of the prime minister's inept answer was making fun of his accent.

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March 21, Contact, APTN (Aboriginal People's Television Network, a Canada-wide cable channel), about 8:45 p.m.

Topic: “Who's making money off aboriginal misery?”

Caller (Trevor): “I heard a lot of talk about blaming government agencies, lawyers, front-line workers, and we just don't have enough dollars to deal with the problems of the native peoples. And I'm right at the band level right now. What I would like to question is the chief and councils. By the time the dollars come from the government, they take their administration fees or kickbacks from the government or whatever and here we blame these white agencies. Why do we blame them when bands at the band level are given dollars to deal with problems of our people?”

Analysis: This is an example of an argument whose conclusion is a question. The force of the *why* question is to express disagreement with blaming the white agencies from which money comes to aboriginal bands.

Premiss: By the time the dollars come from the government, the [i.e. our–DH] chief and councils take their administration fees or kickbacks from the government or whatever. We blame these white agencies.

Conclusion: Why do we blame these white agencies when bands at the band level are given dollars to deal with the problems of our people?

Covering generalization: If a group blames the agencies from which money comes to deal with the group's problems, but the leaders of the group take their administration fees or kickbacks, why does the group blame those agencies?

Evaluation: The general question is legitimate if, but only if, the administration fees and kickbacks are excessive and the agencies' grants are adequate. In the particular case of aboriginal misery in Canada, there are serious questions about the adequacy of federal government support for aboriginal communities, for whose infrastructure and educational and social services the federal government has responsibility. Even if the administration fees and "kickbacks" taken by band leaders are excessive, it would still be legitimate to blame the granting agencies.

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March 23, Cross Country Checkup, CBC Radio One, Toronto 99.1 FM, about 4:20 p.m.

Program: Cross Country Checkup is a two-hour English-language Canada-wide phone-in show broadcast on Sunday afternoons by Canada's government-owned Canadian Broadcasting Corporation on its Radio One FM network and also on its television news network, Newsworld. The host on this particular afternoon was Rex Murphy, a newspaper columnist and television commentator.

Context: The United States and its coalition partners invaded Iraq the previous Wednesday, March 19.

Issues: What is your opinion of the war: its conduct so far and its implications, where Canada stands, what it means for relationships in the region and for concepts of international terror?

Caller (John McMullen from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia): "... I'd like to say that, do we justify the US action and the coalition that are working with them? Let's take the father's comments of a US serviceman that died. And within 24 hours of him dying he spoke out against the protestors."

Rex: "Did he really? I never saw that."

John: "And there was an interview, and he said, 'You know, my son, I believe in what he died for, and I believe in what he did for mankind. And I ask the protestors to think about what they're standing up for.' You know, the man that they're going after over there and his regime is the same man that looked after his own people with chemical weapons, the Kurds; he killed men, women and children. And we ask ourselves: Were we justified in standing up against Nazi Germany and Japan in the Second World War? And what took place with the Jewish people and the extermination of the Jewish people? And I ask how many of these protestors today believe that the Holocaust even happened. And what are their views on what he did to the Kurdish people?"

Rex: “Do you find this a very difficult issue to come to terms with? Are you comfortable taking sides? What’s your own experience in trying to figure this one out?”

John: “Well, I do believe that in the past what’s happened in Iraq is really happening. And I look back at what happened during the Second World War and I really ask myself a question: ‘Why wasn’t something done for the Jewish people that were exterminated?’ And I say these things are happening in that country. And for that reason I believe it is justified that this action is taking place. Just look at what he’s done in Kuwait and what he did to the global environment in the oil fires and as well as the fires that are burning today.

“And the other thing, Rex, is the murder and the torture and the rape that’s taking place in Iraq presently. The UN had failed to deal with that issue itself and thirteen years have proven it. And I’d also like to say that the global media must stand up tall now and show when this conflict is over the documented proof of what truly happened.”

Analysis: John justifies the invasion of Iraq by analogy to actions that he thinks should have been taken during the Second World War on behalf of the Jewish people that were exterminated in the Holocaust. He lists atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Premisses: The man that the United States and the coalition that are working with them are going after over there in Iraq [Saddam Hussein] and his regime is the same man that killed the Kurds—men, women and children—with chemical weapons.

During the Second World War, why wasn’t something done for the Jewish people that were exterminated?

These things [killing with chemical weapons] are happening in that country.

Just look at what he’s [Saddam Hussein has—DH] done in Kuwait and what he did to the global environment in the oil fires and as well as the fires that are burning today.

The other thing is the murder and the torture and the rape that’s taking place in Iraq presently.

The UN had failed to deal with that issue <of murder and torture and rape> itself <before the invasion on March 19>.

Conclusion: It is justified that this action [the invasion of Iraq—DH] is taking place.

Covering generalization: What would have been justified to prevent the extermination of the Jewish people during the Second World War is justified as a response to equally horrendous atrocities committed by a government.

Evaluation: The covering generalization has strong presumptive force. The presumption could be overridden by absence of one or more of the factors, in addition to a just cause, that have been regarded since Augustine in the fourth century as necessary conditions for a just war: last resort, legitimate authority, reasonable prospect of success, right intention, proportionality, comparative justice.

Sub-argument:

Premiss: <The UN had had> thirteen years <since the First Gulf War to deal with murder and torture and rape>.

Conclusion: The UN had failed to deal with that issue <of murder and torture and rape> itself <before the invasion on March 19>.

Covering generalization: If a pattern of reprehensible actions continues for thirteen years during which an organization had responsibility for stopping them, then the organization has failed to deal with them.

Evaluation: The covering generalization is reasonable. One may legitimately question, however, whether the United Nations had a mandate to stop murder and torture and rape in Iraq.

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March 24, The Roy Green Show, CHML, Hamilton, 900 AM, about 10:35 a.m

(*Note:* This taping was originally scheduled for March 21.)

Context: The host discusses with two retired Canadian military officers, Major-General Clive Addy and Colonel Alain-Michel Pellerin, the mixed signals coming from the Canadian government on Canadian involvement in the war on Iraq. Canada has two ships in the Persian Gulf protecting coalition ships involved in the war, and there are members of the Canadian armed forces serving with United States units in Iraq. The guests are critical of Canada's failure to give official support to this involvement by becoming part of the coalition engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Caller (Mike): "Good morning Roy. I've got the answer to where the Chrétien government is getting the 80 percent approval rate for their war stance. It's gotta be our socially engineered children, especially our university kids."

Roy: "Well, you know, there was an interesting point made in a column about students who protest, and it was: well, they're supposed to because they're students, they're still learning. I don't know if that's gratuitous or not but, I mean, when you're young you do tend to protest and ..."

Mike: "And?"

Roy: "Well, there's social engineering gone wrong, of course."

Mike: "Exactly."

Roy: "Of course."

Mike: "I've even talked to a young person from my church and he's just repeating what he's been taught. He has no clue, no facts, no basis, no history, and they're just repeating what they've been taught. And uh, you know, my view on this whole thing, you know, I always go down to the bottom line, and the bottom line is, it's capitalism against

this dictatorship nonsense and communism. I mean, how can you not support the US on this? I can't understand it.”

Analysis: The caller is advancing a causal explanation of the 80% approval rating for the Canadian government's decision not to be part of the coalition of forces invading Iraqi. He blames this approval on “social engineering” of Canadian children, especially those at university. He supports the claim of social engineering by arguing on the basis of one example that young people in Canada are just repeating what they have been taught.

Sub-argument:

Premisses: I talked to a young person from my church.

This young person is just repeating what he's been taught.

He [this young person–DH] has no clue, no facts, no basis, no history.

Conclusion: They [Canadian young people–DH] are just repeating what they have been taught <without any facts, basis of history>.

Covering generalization: What is true of one young Canadian is true of all young Canadians.

Evaluation: This generalization has lots of obvious exceptions, so does not deserve to license the caller's inference. Even restrictions to what young Canadians say would not protect it from numerous counter-examples.

Main argument:

Premiss: Canadian young people are just repeating what they have been taught <without any facts, basis of history>.

Conclusion: There is social engineering of Canadian young people.

Covering generalization: There is social engineering of those who just repeat what they have been taught without any facts, basis or history.

Evaluation: Whether this generalization is true depends on what is meant by “social engineering”. If the phrase does not imply a person or group doing the engineering, then it is obviously true, even as a matter of definition. If it implies that somebody is doing the engineering, then it has exceptions. Not every social trend has been consciously engineered.

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March 24, Ontario Today, CBC Radio One, Toronto, 99.1 FM, about 12:20 p.m.

Explanatory note: The following comment on the “Talk Back Line” concerned CBC coverage of the war in Iraq.

Host: “Well, there weren't a lot of comments on the Talk Back Line about Ontario Today programming over the past few days because there hasn't been a lot of Ontario Today

programming to talk about. But a few of you have weighed in on what you have been listening to. Here's a sample."

Caller: "Don Williams from St. Catharines. When is the CBC going back to regular radio broadcasting? This is ridiculous. Several days now of nothing but war. If Canada was at war, United States was not, you would not hear a thing on the American stations. CBC is trying to increase their listenership, to the younger people. They're going to lose what they want, if they did win. It's absolutely ridiculous. I have been a long-time listener of CBC and I'm about to give it up. Thank you."

Analysis: The caller claims that it is ridiculous for the CBC to scrap its regular programming for days to cover the Iraq war. He offers as a single supporting reason that, if Canada was at war and the United States was not, you would not hear a thing on the American stations. He clearly expects his audience to be aware that the United States is a belligerent in the Iraq war but Canada is not, and also that the CBC is a Canadian radio broadcasting network.

Premiss: If Canada was at war, <and the> United States was not, you would not hear a thing on the American stations <about the war>.

Unstated premisses: The United States is at war in Iraq.

Canada is not at war in Iraq.

The CBC is a Canadian broadcasting network.

Conclusion: It is ridiculous for the CBC to have several days of nothing but <the Iraq> war and not have regular radio broadcasting.

Covering generalization: It is ridiculous for a broadcasting network in country A to have several days of nothing but a war in which country B but not country A is at war, and to not have regular radio broadcasting when you would not hear a thing on the radio stations of country B if country A was at war but country B was not.

Evaluation: The hypothetical stated premiss could be challenged. For example, in September 1939 Canada was at war but the United States was not. If radio logs are available from the time, they might very well show considerable coverage on American radio stations of the war in Europe. Similarly for World War I, which Canada entered in August 1914 but the United States did not enter until 1917. It is unlikely, however, that American radio stations would have pre-empted all regular programming for war coverage at those times. On the other hand, contemporary technology makes such blanket coverage possible when it was not possible in those earlier wars.

The covering generalization has obvious exceptions. If a war in which some country B is a belligerent but country A is not has serious consequences for the people of country A, then it is not ridiculous for a broadcasting network in country A to give the war blanket coverage, pre-empting regular programming, even if you would not hear a thing on the radio stations of country B about a war in which country A but not country B was at war. The silence of the radio stations of country B in such a situation might be justified, in virtue of the lack of serious consequences for the people of country B from such a war (e.g. the silence of radio stations about the guerrilla war in East Timor during

the 1980s), or it might be unjustified. The fact that the silence in the reverse case might be unjustified does not make it ridiculous for a broadcasting network in country A to give blanket coverage to a war in which country B but not country A is at war.

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March 25, Larry Silver Show, CHML Hamilton, 900 AM, about 1:40 p.m.

Issue: What movie classics would you not want to see re-made?

Context: The topic is occasioned by a report that Hollywood couple Jennifer Lopez (J. Lo) and her fiancé Ben Affleck have secured a deal to remake the classic movie Casablanca.

Caller (Bill): “I wish you would have had a program on just before Easter about movies, because it drives me up the wall. I’m seventy years old and I’ve been around a long while to watch movies and it drives me up the wall, Easter after Easter, when they stick ‘The Ten Commandments’ on. The ten commandments got nothing to do with Easter. Easter is a Christian holiday, and the ten commandments got nothing to do with Christianity, well, in the sense that, well you know what I mean. I don’t mean that they’re totally different, or that they’re not related but, I just wish somebody would come along and explain to me why they put ‘The Ten Commandments’ on at Easter when it’s got nothing to do with Easter or Jesus Christ – he wasn’t even born then.”

Analysis: There is not much of an argument here. The caller is expressing his exasperation about the repeated showing of the movie ‘The Ten Commandments’ at Easter, and explaining why he feels this exasperation: Easter is a Christian holiday, and the ten commandments have nothing to do with Christianity. There is a short argument at the end in support of the claim that the ten commandments have nothing to do with Easter or Jesus Christ.

Premiss: He [Jesus Chris–DH] wasn’t even born then [at the time depicted in ‘The Ten Commandments’–DH].

Conclusion: ‘The Ten Commandments’ has got nothing to do with Easter or Jesus Christ.

Covering generalization: A movie has nothing to do with someone who wasn’t even born at the time depicted in it.

Evaluation: One can imagine exceptions to the generalization, for example, if a movie depicted a past event that was crucial to the person born later. For example, a movie about Karl Marx might be appropriate on the occasion of Lenin’s birthday. In general, however, the generalization is plausible, and the caller’s exasperation understandable.

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March 26, The Nightside with Jim Richards, CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM, starting at 10:04 p.m.

There were no arguments on the tape from this show. Callers phoned in with stories of things that plugged up their toilet: a deodorant can, a dead fish, cotton balls, a dead hamster, live mice. Entertaining, but not argumentative.

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March 27, The Roy Green Show, CHML, Hamilton, 900 AM, about 10:35 a.m.

Context: Tony Blair, prime minister of the United Kingdom, made a rhetorically powerful defence in the British parliament of his government's decision to join with the United States in the coalition that invaded Iraq starting on March 19. The Canadian government under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien declined to be part of the coalition. The talk show host, Roy Green, has received more than 1,000 e-mail messages about Canada's participation in the war, an unprecedented number of comments.

Caller (Don): "I'm glad actually that I get a chance to talk to you, particularly because of the caller two calls ago who talked about the economic blackmail and everything else. I think that's a consequence of decisions that this country didn't take. The real problem is that I think there's certain times in history that are moments in history that leaders of countries either catch or miss. And our country has missed a moment in history. I was very sceptical leading up to the war and everything else, and I listened to Bush and I listened to Blair and everything else. And Tony Blair is the one person who has really shown the three characteristics that a leader needs to have..."

[Roy Green interrupts to announce that his station will carry live a news conference at 11 a.m. by George Bush and Tony Blair.]

Don: "A leader in these moments of history has to show leadership, courage and statesmanship. And if there was one leader who had an excuse not to go to war, it was Tony Blair and that's why I was glad you mentioned the polls."

Roy: "And if you look at the history of his party, the Labour Party, much to the left of Canada's NDP traditionally, there would be every reason for Mr. Blair to have adopted a we-will-not-go stance if he were simply mired in a political philosophy. He refuses to do that. From day one he's been a pragmatist. And it's because of Tony Blair's pragmatism coupled with the Conservatives' ineffective governing of the UK in the last two years of John Major's ... non-prime-ministerial functioning that that's the reason they got elected."

Don: "His one statement convinced me, Roy, and I don't know whether you... It may be a statement that is worth playing over and over again, when they were debating in parliament. And if I can paraphrase him, what he said was: 'Knowing what I know each day, and seeing what I see each day, I cannot and will not stand by. And knowing what I know, if I do nothing, and one day I know the tragedy will occur, to say that I could have done something, I cannot and will not live with that.' And that is what this country has missed. That is why what the UK and the US is doing is right. And it is why there's been

such an outburst in Canada, because ordinary Canadian understand what is right. It's not about economics, it's not about our relationships with the US. At certain times in history you have to say, 'this is right'."

Analysis: Don is arguing that the invasion of Iraq is right. He uses a paraphrase of Tony Blair's remarks to the British Parliament as his justification, a justification that convinced him. To bring out the full force of his argument would require a rather generous paraphrase.

Premises: The invasion of Iraq is an opportunity to prevent a tragedy. If countries do nothing and the tragedy occurs, we will not be able to live with ourselves.

Conclusion: The invasion of Iraq is right.

Covering generalization: An action is right if it is an opportunity to prevent a tragedy whose occurrence if nothing is done would leave one unable to live with oneself.

Evaluation: Despite its rhetorical power, the covering generalization at best licenses a presumption that an action meeting the condition is right. For there might be other features of a particular situation that militate against taking advantage of an opportunity to prevent a tragedy. For example, there might be obvious negative consequences of taking such advantage, and there might be other ways to prevent the tragedy that have fewer negative consequences. In the case in question, where the tragedy envisaged was the development by Iraq of nuclear weapons and their subsequent transmission to terrorists, an alternative opportunity was allow the United Nations inspectors to continue searching in Iraq for evidence of a nuclear weapons program.

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March 28, The Bill Carroll Show, CFRB, Toronto, 1010 AM, about 11:40 a.m.

Context: There is fighting on battlefields in Iraq.

Bill Carroll: "Your thoughts about what's happening on the battlefield in Iraq. Children with guns. Reports of families being told they will be murdered if they don't fight. And this latest story out of Basra this morning: Members of Britain's 7th Armoured Brigade trying to neutralize fire from the enemy when civilians, couple of thousand of them, were trying to leave the city. They got caught in the middle and shot on, mortar fire and machine gun fire on a thousand or so Iraqi civilians, in what I guess appears to be an effort to keep them in the city. Don't forget that Saddam Hussein's Defence Minister said this morning that they fully intended to stay in the cities and hide behind civilians. That is their acknowledged strategy in this war. They will not come out to fight. They are going to hide behind civilians and say, 'Come in and get us.' That's their strategy. So it shouldn't surprise you that you try to keep civilians from escaping, because they're the very cover that you need. Are you convinced now that Saddam Hussein is not a civilized man, and that he's willing to do anything, including killing his own people if need be, to hang on to power?"

Caller (David in Mississauga): “I think you will make a very poor soldier if you put a gun on his head or on his family and say, ‘Go and fight’. We have to acknowledge that the Iraqis are fighting an aggression whether rightly or wrongly. They think that they are going to be occupied. And even the US army generals are acknowledging that they are having a stiff resistance. You do not get stiff resistance from soldiers who are under duress.”

Bill Carroll: “Well, you’re kind of guessing, though. Right, David? You don’t know whether this is true or not.”

David: “I’m not guessing. There’s no question of guessing. I mean, everybody’s saying that they’re getting stiff resistance. I’m not making it up.”

Bill Carroll: “So, David, you’re calling me from Iraq and you know that Saddam Hussein’s people are not putting guns to the backs of soldiers and making them fight. You know that.”

David: “Do you know that? Have you seen that?”

Bill Carroll: “No, I don’t. But I’m willing to look at history. It’s not unprecedented for all armies to shoot deserters, to put a gun on the backs of their soldiers and say, ‘If you retreat, you are going to be shot.’”

David: “Those armies always lost, and that’s what my point is. You don’t make good soldiers by putting them down.”

Structure of David’s argument: This argument has a convergent structure, with a number of independent reasons being given for the implicit conclusion that the Iraqi soldiers are not fighting under duress.

First argument:

Premiss: I think you will make a very poor soldier if you put a gun on his head or on his family and say, “Go and fight”.

Conclusion: The Iraqi soldiers are not fighting under duress.

Covering generalization: The Iraqi soldiers are not fighting under any conditions that will make a very poor soldier.

Evaluation: The covering generalization assumes that the Iraqi soldiers are not very poor soldiers. The caller supports this claim later with an appeal to the authority of US army generals who acknowledge that they are getting stiff resistance.

Second argument:

Premises: We have to acknowledge that the Iraqis are fighting an aggression whether rightly or wrongly.

The Iraqis think that they are going to be occupied.
Conclusion: The Iraqis are not fighting under duress.

Covering generalization: A group of soldiers that are fighting an aggression and think that they are going to be occupied are not fighting under duress.

Evaluation: The generalization is questionable. While fighting an aggression and thinking one is going to be occupied provides motivation for fighting, one might also be fighting under duress.

Third argument:

Premises: Even the US army generals are acknowledging that they are having a stiff resistance.

You do not get stiff resistance from soldiers who are under duress.

Conclusion: The Iraqi soldiers are not under duress.

Covering generalization: A true conditional with a false consequent has a false antecedent.

Evaluation: Allowing for the appeal to the authority of the opposing army's generals, the argument is formally valid. The second premiss has the force of a conditional: if soldiers are under duress, they do not put up stiff resistance. The first premiss cites the opposing army generals as authorities for denying the consequent of that conditional. The conclusion therefore follows logically. The focus of the evaluation is on the truth of the conditional.

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March 28, Contact, APTN (Aboriginal People's Television Network, a Canada-wide cable channel), about 8:05 p.m.

Topic: "Domestic violence: How do we stop it?"

Caller (Kahienes): "If we're looking at domestic violence and the native or aboriginal community, I think it's symptomatic of where our community's health is at and it needs to be approached community-wide and if you're gonna encourage people to come forward to learn to heal, to grow, I think victims and victimizers suffer the same pain, so you need to encourage people seeking help, seeking guidance in uncovering and breaking those three golden rules of don't talk about it, don't trust anybody and don't feel anything. You have to empower them by having a community-wide approach that is acceptable to seek help and not look at it like an illness. I know there's many models to approach victimizers and victims but I think we need to go back to our roots, and our culture, the answers are there."

Analysis: The caller supports part of her system of beliefs about domestic violence in Canada's aboriginal communities with an appeal to the pain shared by victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

Premiss: Victims <of domestic violence in aboriginal communities> and victimizers suffer the same pain.

Conclusion #1: If you're gonna encourage people to come forward to learn to heal, to grow, you need to encourage people seeking help <in dealing with domestic violence>, seeking guidance in uncovering and breaking those three golden rules of don't talk about it, don't trust anybody and don't feel anything.

Conclusion #2: You have to empower them [people seeking help in dealing with domestic violence–DH] by having a community-wide approach that is acceptable to seek help and not look at it like an illness.

First covering generalization: When victims and victimizers in a community suffer the same pain from a crime, and the community has a culture of not talking about this crime, not trusting anybody and not feeling anything, if you are going to encourage people to come forward to heal and grow, you need to encourage people seeking help and guidance.

Evaluation: The generalization is plausible psychologically. It is subject to rebuttal, for example if encouraging people to seek help and guidance conflicted with providing support and protection to victims.

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March 30, Cross Country Checkup, CBC Radio One, Toronto 99.1 FM, about 4:40 p.m.

Context: On March 26, the ambassador of the United States to Canada, Paul Cellucci, in a speech to the Economic Club of Toronto, a business group, expressed the disappointment of the United States that Canada had not joined the United States in the invasion of Iraq. He said:

... there is disappointment in Washington and in the United States that Canada is not supporting us fully. Like Canada, we very much wanted the United Nations to be a relevant and effective body. But once those efforts failed, we no longer saw things from a multilateral perspective. For us, now, it is much more basic than that. It is about family.

There is no security threat to Canada that the United States would not be ready, willing and able to help with. There would be no debate. There would be no hesitation. We would be there for Canada, part of our family. That is why so many in the United States are disappointed and upset that Canada is not fully supporting us now.

Ironically, the Canadian naval vessels, aircraft and personnel in the Persian Gulf I mentioned earlier who are fighting terrorism will provide more

support indirectly to this war in Iraq than most of the 46 countries that are fully supporting our efforts there.

We are at war to liberate Iraq, to protect the people of the United States and other countries from the devastating impact of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction being used by terrorists or the Iraqi government to kill thousands of innocent civilians. This is a direct security threat to the people of the United States.

That is why we feel so strongly about this and why we are so disappointed that Canada is not fully supporting us.¹³

Meanwhile, the leader of the Official Opposition in Canada's House of Commons, Stephen Harper, was publicly criticizing the Canadian government for its failure to send troops to Iraq as part of the U.S.-led coalition. He also criticized cabinet members in the Liberal government for making comments about the United States action in Iraq that he described as "anti-American". A few days after the present phone-in show, on April 3, Mr. Harper tabled the following motion in the House of Commons on behalf of his party, the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance:

That the House of Commons express its regret and apologize for offensive and inappropriate statements made against the United States of America by certain Members of this House; that it reaffirm the United States to be Canada's closest friend and ally and hope that the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq is successful in removing Saddam Hussein's regime from power; and that the House urge the Government of Canada to assist the coalition in the reconstruction of Iraq.¹⁴

Issue (as posed by Rex): "Talking about Ambassador Celluci's remarks this week, what did you think of them? Do you think that the war in Iraq is changing US-Canada relations and if so in which direction?"

Caller (Eric Davies from Bowen Island, BC): "Well, my concern is ... which has been continually ... the stress level has been rising during the week, because in my view I just found that the whole question has been inflamed from, you know, within this country's borders and not from without. And I think that probably most Americans are not even aware of it, if not, not even talking about it. Um, I see it as the right-wing element in the country, um, jumping on the bandwagon and purposely inflaming the whole situation. Um ..."

Rex: "What do you think of the Alliance stand on this, though?"

Eric: "Well, I think it's personally pathetic. And I think Stephen Harper has mentioned the anti-American word probably tenfold than any other Canadian in the country in the

¹³http://ottawa.usembassy.gov/content/textonly.asp?section=embconsul&document=cellucci_030325; accessed 2009 03 25.

¹⁴<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=808116&Language E&Mode=1&Parl=37&Ses=2>; accessed 2007 03 15.

last week. And of course, uh, administration in the US is going to jump on that. And I think that, uh, that is the situation. Uh, I think there's what, maybe 70%, of the American population is perhaps for the war, some of those reluctantly. Well, if 20% are against United States, that's easily over the entire population of our country that are against it down there. I think we have to keep things in perspective. My view on Cellucci's comments are that first of all he doesn't have any business commenting on the comments of Ralph Klein, who, if you know him, in this country seems to automatically go against anything the federal government wants to say and continues to try to propagate, you know, outdated anti-western sentiment, and the same with Ernie Eves on that bandwagon. But I just feel that, uh, with Harper and the Alliance and Stockwell Day's comments that it's inappropriate. I think it's not an anti-Americanism as such. There's certainly a degree of anti-George-W.-Bush-administration in this country, and I think you would find that there would be a very high proportion of United States citizens that feel the same way. And so the anti-American word unfortunately, which we have just been hit over the head with it by Harper, implies Americans in general, the American public, and I don't think Canadians feel that way."

Analysis: The last part of the caller's comments is a serial argument that the comments of Harper and the Alliance and Stockwell Day about anti-Americanism are inappropriate. The immediate support for this claim is that an unspecified "it" is not an anti-Americanism as such. This premiss is in turn supported by a collection of claims about public opinion in Canada and what the word 'anti-American' means.

Main argument:

Premiss: It [the criticism by many Canadians of the US invasion of Iraq?–DH] is not an anti-Americanism as such.

Conclusion: The comments of Harper and the Alliance and Stockwell Day [that statements by Liberal Cabinet ministers are anti-American?–DH] are inappropriate.

Covering generalization: It is inappropriate to attach a label to certain statements if the statements do not merit the label as such.

Evaluation: As stated, the generalization is true by definition. The argument did however require considerable elaboration before a covering generalization could be detected.

Sub-argument:

Premisses: There's certainly a degree of anti-George-W.-Bush-administration in this country [Canada–DH].

I think you would find that there would be a very high proportion of United States citizens that feel the same way.

The anti-American word implies Americans in general, the American public.

I don't think Canadians feel that way [opposed to Americans in general].

Conclusion: .It [the criticism by many Canadians of the US invasion of Iraq?–DH] is not an anti-Americanism as such.

Covering generalization: If some citizens of country A are opposed to the administration of country B, and a high proportion of citizens of country B feel the same way about the administration of country B, and a word connoting opposition to country B implies opposition to citizens of country B in general, and citizens of country A do not feel opposition to citizens of country B in general, then the word connoting opposition to country B does not apply as such to the citizens of country A opposed to the administration of country B.

Evaluation: The generalization is true by definition.

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March 31, Ontario Today, CBC Radio One, Toronto, 99.1 FM, taped from 1 to 2 p.m.

The phone-in segment of the program was a gardening program, where callers phoned in with their gardening problems to get advice from a gardening specialist. The callers advanced no arguments, so I use instead an argument by the gardening specialist: Ed Lawrence, the horticultural specialist with the official residences section of the National Capital Commission.

Jan from Woodford (near Owen Sound): “I have a question about azaleas. I was given this gorgeous azalea, but the name says it’s called Promise, and it’s a Keepsake azalea by Joger. It says that it can go outdoors if the temperature does not fall below 30 degrees Fahrenheit. Now, I’m in Woodford, I’m near Owen Sound. We get a heck of a lot of snow. My ground doesn’t freeze, I’ve got a lot of springs here. But I’m wondering if I can put it outside, and where and how.”

Ed Lawrence: “Boy. You can. It’s always going to be dicey. You would keep the root system going. If you don’t get that famous Owen Sound snow cover early in the season, you’re going to definitely be getting down below 30 degrees Fahrenheit, or minus one Celsius is what you’re looking at as a critical temperature. Well, you can fall far below that without any problem, and if you don’t have a snow cover, the plant completely covered up to protect it, even with that bottom heat of the springs and enough ambient soil temperature to keep the root system going, you’ll lose the top. So my suggestion would be: Keep it in a pot. Put it outside into an area that gets morning sun or mottled sun throughout the day but is cool through the hottest part of the day. It wants a good bright light, but it can’t get too hot either, because if it does you’ll really abort the bud production, so you won’t get the flower buds being produced on it for following years. It’s quite happy to stay in the same pot for a couple of years, but when it starts to get too pot-bound if you can move it from the plastic pot into a clay pot one size larger and use just a peat-based soil is fine for it. I tend to amend it about 25% maximum with a sharp sand; pine needles, spruce needles, cedar foliage, dried and mixed in with that, works very nicely as well. It’s a very fine root system. It does like a slightly acidic condition, so the peat-based or the incorporation of any of the evergreen foliage in with your soil will do it a world of good.”

Analysis:

Premises: If you don't get that famous Owen Sound snow cover early in the season, you're going to definitely be getting down below 30 degrees Fahrenheit.

[30 degrees Fahrenheit,] or minus one Celsius, is what you're looking at as a critical temperature.

You can fall far below that [30 degrees Fahrenheit, or minus one Celsius—DH] without any problem.

If [you can fall far below 30 degrees Fahrenheit, or minus one Celsius, and—DH] you don't have a snow cover, the plant completely covered up to protect it, even with that bottom heat of the springs and enough ambient soil temperature to keep the root system going, you'll lose the top.

Conclusion: <If you want to put it outside>, keep it in a pot.

Covering generalization: If you want to put a plant outside in a region where you can lose the top of the plant because it gets too cold, you should keep the plant in a pot.

Evaluation: The specialist knows what he is talking about.

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April 1, The Nightside with Jim Richards, CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM, about 11:30 p.m.

Context: Air Canada has filed for bankruptcy protection. Its chief executive officer (CEO), Robert Milton, is trying to get concessions from the unions representing the airline's workers.

Caller (Mike): "I was wondering how much of Robert Milton's million-dollar salary he's going to give up to help save the airline."

Jim: "Yeah, I mean, you're right, I mean, he has to take some leadership role if he's asking everybody else to..."

Mike: "How can he take a leadership role? He's not a leader. The company's in a mess, he's the big noise at top, so the head should roll."

Jim: "Let's be honest though. I mean the fact that they're in this predicament, most airlines in the United States are in the same predicament after September the 11th and..."

Mike: "You're right, but he's had enough time to turn it around now. If they really want to save Air Canada, turn it over to British Airways, let them run it."

Analysis: In response to the host's framing of his suggestion that the CEO give up some of his salary to help save Air Canada as a suggestion that the CEO take a leadership role, the caller argues that the CEO cannot take a leadership role, on the ground that he is not a leader. This argument is followed by another argument that the CEO should be fired. The relationship between the two arguments is not entirely clear, but it seems that the second

argument is meant to support the premiss of the first argument that the CEO is not a leader. We can thus detect an implicit intermediate argument from the conclusion of the second argument to the premiss of the first argument.

Main argument:

Premiss: He [Robert Milton–DH] is not a leader.

Conclusion: How can he [Robert Milton] take a leadership role?

Covering generalization: How can someone who is not a leader take a leadership role?

Evaluation: The covering generalization is quite plausible. Evaluation of this argument therefore focuses on its premiss.

Subordinate argument

Premisses: The company [Air Canada–DH] is in a mess.

He [Robert Milton–DH] is the big noise at top.

Conclusion: The head [of Robert Milton–DH] should roll.

Covering generalization: The head of the big noise at the top of a company that is in a mess should roll.

Evaluation: The covering generalization is doubtful. It all depends, as the host says, on whether the “big noise” at the top was responsible for getting the company in a mess. If so, the generalization is plausible, and licenses a presumption in favour of firing the “big noise”. If not, the fact that a company is in a mess provides no basis for firing its CEO.

Implicit intermediate subordinate argument:

Premiss: The head [of Robert Milton–DH] should roll.

Conclusion: He [Robert Milton–DH] is not a leader.

Covering generalization: A CEO whose head should roll is not a leader.

Evaluation: This generalization is quite plausible. Its plausibility supports the postulation of this implicit argument.

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April 2, Randy Taylor Show (CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM), about 8:40 p.m.

Context: At the beginning of his show, Randy interviews Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, which at the time was the Official Opposition in the Ontario legislature. Later in the year 2003, Mr. McGuinty became premier of the province, a position he still occupied in 2009, when this article was written. McGuinty states in his interview that the province has been focusing too many of its efforts in health care “downstream”. The big negative influences, he says, are smoking, poor eating, and lack of regular exercise. He describes Liberal Party proposals to increase cigarette taxes, ban

junk food from elementary schools, and require exercise in schools. Randy comments that it “sounds like a move in the right direction”.

Randy’s next guest is nutritionist Dr. Joey Shulman, author of *Winning the Food Fight – Every Parent’s Guide to Raising a Healthy, Happy Child* (Wiley, 2003). Dr. Shulman tells him that the reason she wrote a book on pediatric nutrition was her observation in her practice of children with problems responding to nutritional changes. This information, she says, is not getting out to the masses. Every parent deserves to have it. The book is meant to educate people on what eating well means.

Caller (Ann in Toronto): “I’m a teacher in Toronto, and I am really frustrated, because it’s so important to get this message out. Perhaps if some parents see this book, it may help. Maybe we can, uh, use it at meetings, because our schools are getting more and more vending machines with both snacks in some and then the other vending machines ..”

Randy: “Are you elementary or ...”

Ann: “Elementary.”

Randy: “You are, because ...”

Ann: “JK to 8.”

Randy: “... Dalton McGuinty was on ...”

Ann: “Yes.”

Randy: “...at the beginning of the hour and was talking about that. I do want to ... I am going to give out Mr. McGuinty’s ..., because, you know, this is one of the first times we’ve ever heard a politician come forward with an idea like this. So I’m going to be giving out Mr. McGuinty’s e-mail address and if people want to e-mail him and say, you know, ‘Kudos, go for it’, um ...”

Ann: “Perhaps he could get some of these copies of this book and have them sent to the school, because... But the other side ... And unfortunately, we’ve got to win the fight I guess through education, because the economic side is they have the vending machines, um, as fundraising. And they’re put there, and a percentage goes to the school board, and that’s why they’re there. I think most people know they’re not good, but for the school that’s the only source of fundraising they have.”

Dr. Shulman: “I know, it’s so infuriating.”

Ann: “It is.”

Dr. Shulman: “It really is, and I hear you, Ann, and I hope that you do e-mail Mr. McGuinty, and the thing is that we know it is great revenue to the school system, but I

can tell you it's a backwards approach because it's going to slap us in the face in five [inaudible] when we're spending millions of millions more on health care."

Ann: "Well, maybe the government can send out your book, because I don't know, um, sort of coming from the staff it doesn't do anything. It's got to come from..."

Randy: "Yes."

Dr. Shulman: "Thanks for the call."

Randy: "Good point. Thank you, Ann."

Analysis: Ann endorses the proposal to ban junk food from schools, and urges education of parents, for example through distribution of the guest's book, as a means of putting pressure on the school board to take junk food out of the vending machines. She argues that education is needed to overcome the financial incentives to keep the vending machines in the schools.

Premises: The schools have the vending machines [with snacks–DH] as fundraising. A percentage [of the proceeds from the sales from the vending machines–DH] goes to the school board.

For the school that's the only source of fundraising they have.

Conclusion: We've got to win the fight [to get the vending machines with junk food out of the schools–DH] through education.

Covering generalization: People who want to eliminate an institution's only source of fundraising must do so through education.

Evaluation: One can think of other methods than education for getting an institution to eliminate its only source of fundraising. A direct appeal to those responsible for running the institution might work, especially if the institution were given enough financial support that it did not need to do fundraising. So might legal action seeking compensation for damages caused by the institution's use of the particular source of fundraising. So might political agitation by groups organized to support elimination of the source of fundraising (or by previously existing groups, such as parents' groups in the present case). The caller has not thought through all the possible ways of overcoming financial motives for continuing with an objectionable policy.

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April 3, Western New York Live, ABC television Buffalo, Cable 9, about 4:15 p.m.

Topic of phone_in segment: Ban on smoking in public places under consideration in Buffalo

Caller (Mike): “Yeah, I think everybody in charge is overstepping their bounds a little bit. I feel that as a business owner, if I own a bar, I should be able to make my establishment a smoking establishment, put up signs and if you’re a non-smoker, don’t come into my bar.”

Analysis: Mike’s statement is not much more than an expression of opinion. However, one can extract a modest argument from it by treating the first sentence as his claim and his second sentence as a supporting reason.

Premiss: As a business owner, if I own a bar, I should be able to make my establishment a smoking establishment, put up signs and if you’re a non-smoker, don’t come into my bar.

Unstated background information: The people in charge are proposing as part of the proposed ban on smoking in public places to ban smoking in bars.

Conclusion: Everybody in charge is overstepping their bounds a little bit.

Covering generalization: Anybody who proposes to ban something that somebody should be able to do is overstepping their bounds a little bit.

Evaluation: The conclusion follows, given the unstated background information that is the context of the phone-in segment of this show. The controversial part of this argument is the stated premiss, which ignores the effect of second-hand smoke on the bar’s employees and non-smoking customers.

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April 6, Cross Country Checkup, CBC Radio One, Toronto 99.1 FM, about 4:50 p.m.

Context: Between February and September 2003 Health Canada reported 438 probable or suspect cases of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in Canada resulting in 43 deaths, primarily in the Greater Toronto Area. In Toronto, there were several “super-spreading” events, instances when a few individuals were responsible for infecting a large number of others. During the epidemic, more than 15,000 persons in Toronto with an epidemiologic exposure to SARS were instructed to remain in voluntary quarantine. Quarantined persons were instructed not to leave their homes or have visitors. They were told to wash their hands frequently, to wear masks when in the same room as other household members, not to share personal items (e.g., towels, drinking cups, or cutlery), and to sleep in separate rooms. In addition, they were instructed to measure their temperature twice daily. If any symptoms of SARS developed, they were to call Toronto Public Health or Telehealth Ontario for instructions.

The host, Rex Murphy, had as his guest Dr. Sheila Basrur, medical officer of health for the city of Toronto.

Issue (as posed by Rex): “Do you feel threatened by SARS and are you satisfied with the response to it?”

Caller (Réjean Cournoyer in Halifax): “Frankly, I’m a little concerned about the media’s treatment of the situation. I think it’s being sensationalised to a degree. And I think it’s the media’s responsibility to help us get some perspective on the whole thing, you know. And I think that there are dozens if not hundreds of viruses that kill people with weakened immune systems in Canada and around the world every year, namely the ’flu. So I’m just a little concerned about the perspective we’re all getting.”

Rex: “Is Réjean on the mark here?”

Dr. Basrur: “He is absolutely correct. There are many, many health-related conditions that have a greater toll on our society than SARS. That doesn’t make this something we can ignore. But it does need to be put in perspective.”

Réjean: “And it’s quite awful, in my opinion, when I hear of stories coming out of Toronto where people’s livelihoods and businesses are going under as a result of this and I think the media has a responsibility to put things in perspective.”

Analysis: The caller expresses his concern about the media’s treatment of the SARS epidemic, and explains his concern. His explanation is at the same time a justification for being concerned about the media treatment. He offers a very brief piece of evidence in support of his claim: that there are dozens if not hundreds of viruses that kill people with weakened immune systems every year.

Main argument:

Premisses: It [the SARS epidemic–DH] is being sensationalised to a degree <in the media–DH>.

It’s the media’s responsibility to help us get some perspective on the whole thing [the SARS epidemic–DH].

There are dozens if not hundreds of viruses that kill people with weakened immune systems in Canada and around the world every year.

Conclusion: I’m just a little concerned about the media’s treatment of the situation [i.e. the SARS epidemic–DH].

Covering generalization: If the media is sensationalising a situation to a degree when it has a responsibility to put it in perspective, and the situation is similar to dozens if not hundreds of similar situations, then we should be concerned about the media’s treatment of the situation.

Evaluation: The covering generalization is plausible, but the caller understates the severity of the SARS epidemic by implicitly classifying it as just another virus like a ’flu virus, dozens if not hundreds of which kill people with weakened immune systems every year. The mortality rate from SARS, at about 10%, was much higher than that of any other known viral infection, and SARS killed people with strong immune systems. It was

a serious threat to global public health, and health authorities around the world with the support of their governments introduced extreme measures to contain and eliminate the virus, measures not taken with any 'flu virus or cold virus.

Sub-argument:

Premiss: The 'flu <is a virus that kills people with weakened immune systems in Canada and around the world every year>.

Conclusion: There are dozens if not hundreds of viruses that kill people with weakened immune systems in Canada and around the world every year.

Covering generalization: If one thing does something, there are dozens if not hundreds of things of the same type that do the same thing.

Evaluation: A very poor inference. One swallow does not make a summer, nor does one virus (or family of viruses) make dozens if not hundreds of them. To establish the claim, the caller needed to point out that there are dozens of 'flu viruses.

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April 9, The Roy Green Show, CHML, Hamilton, 900 AM, about 11:30 a.m.

Context: For information about the SARS epidemic, discussed in this call, see the description at the beginning of the entry for Cross Country Checkup on April 6.

The caller below about the SARS epidemic refers also to Walkerton and the West Nile virus.

The Walkerton incident to which she refers is a series of events that accompanied the contamination of the water supply of the town of Walkerton, Ontario, (population about 5,000) by E. coli bacteria in May 2000. The water supply for the town of Walkerton was operated by the Walkerton Public Utilities Commission. The water supply became contaminated with the highly dangerous O157:H7 strain of E. coli bacteria, from farm runoff into an adjacent well that was known for years to be vulnerable to contamination. Starting May 15, 2000, many residents of the town of about 5,000 began to simultaneously experience bloody diarrhoea, gastrointestinal infections and other symptoms of E. coli infection. For days the Walkerton Public Utilities Commission insisted the water supply was "OK" despite being in possession of laboratory tests that had found evidence of contamination. On May 21, an escalation in the number of patients with similar symptoms finally spurred the region's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Murray McQuigge, to issue a boil water advisory, warning residents not to drink the water. At least seven people died directly from drinking the E. coli contaminated water, and about 2,500 became ill.

The West Nile virus mainly infects humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. In 2002, according to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Ontario had 396 reported probable or confirmed cases of human West Nile virus infection and a dozen deaths potentially attributable to West Nile virus, more cases than in any other Canadian province. Spurred on by potential class action suits arguing that Ontarians were ill-informed about the virus, the provincial government announced on 22 March,

2003, a 6-year, multi-pronged West Nile virus action plan, including a multi-million-dollar, multi-media public education campaign.

Caller (Gina from Toronto): “Hi. I wanted to speak about the SARS.”

Roy: “Yes, go ahead, please.”

Gina: “OK. On the weekend they had... were looking for court orders for two people who had not obeyed the quarantine. They now have a student who cut short her quarantine after ten days to write an exam. She’s now ill, and they have now 25 students and a teacher, I believe. So, considering how the government mishandled Walkerton and the East Nile virus, where... it’s worked out OK with SARS, I realize they’re not saying an epidemic, but last week before they really, really knew and the TTC [Toronto Transit Commission–DH] driver wanted to wear a mask, where was their union? They said their hands were tied, that they can’t do anything when the Board of Health says this, but why do people so blindly believe government officials?”

Roy: “Well, you know, I think when it comes to an issue like SARS, you do look to official explanations and official sources...”

Gina: “Yes. Just like Walkerton and the East Nile virus, which they mishandled.”

Roy: “West Nile.”

Gina: “West Nile virus, I’m sorry. Which they mishandled. So why do you want to believe them now? I mean, what if these people who they’re trying to get a court order for, who disobeyed the quarantine, this person, what if they rode the bus? Like, what’s the big deal with the bus driver wanting to wear a mask?”

Roy: “Well, I’m with you. I couldn’t believe.., and really, I think the TTC bus drivers who wanted to wear a mask should have been entitled to do so.”

Gina: “Well, a person had pneumonia last year. If they’re exposed to anything at all like that, they’re finished.”

Roy: “You know what I heard.”

Gina: “They’re telling you that people who die have another health problem.”

Roy: “Gina, you know what else I heard: that Air Canada, on its Hong Kong flights, refused to let its flight attendants to wear even gloves.”

Gina: “Well, I heard in Vancouver that people who unload the baggage can wear them.”

Roy: “Well, I heard that Air Canada refused to allow its flight attendants to wear gloves. Some had wanted to wear masks. They said no to masks and they said no to gloves, and those were on flights to and from Hong Kong.”

Gina: “Why should the union so blindly believe the government? That’s all I’m saying. Look what happened in Walkerton, now they’re going to spend a million point four for the West Nile virus. Maybe they didn’t have to spend that much, maybe those people who are still ill today from it didn’t have to be ill.”

Roy: “Gina, thanks for the call.”

Gina: “Thank you.”

Analysis: The caller’s order of presentation and manner of expression are so convoluted that it is at first difficult to figure out how her statements hang together. Her main point, expressed in the form of a rhetorical question (“Where was the TTC driver’s union?”) was that the union let down the bus driver in Toronto who wanted to wear a mask.

Main argument:

Premisses: On the weekend they [Toronto public health authorities–DH] were looking for court orders for two people who had not obeyed the quarantine.

They [Toronto public health authorities–DH] now have a student who cut short her quarantine after ten days to write an exam.

She’s [the student who cut short her quarantine after ten days to write an exam is–DH] now ill.

They [Toronto public health authorities–DH] have now 25 students and a teacher, I believe<, under quarantine–DH>.

Last week, before they [the public health authorities–DH] really, really knew [that SARS was not an epidemic–DH], a TTC bus driver wanted to wear a mask [while driving his bus–DH].

They [the TTC bus driver’s union–DH] said their hands were tied, that they can’t do anything when the Board of Health says this [that it is unnecessary for people going about in public in Toronto to wear a mask–DH].

Why do people so blindly believe government officials <on public health crises–DH>?

Conclusion: Where was their [the TTC bus drivers’-DH] union?

Covering generalization: If people exposed to a SARS-infected person are disobeying the quarantine and one of those people has gotten ill with the result that 26 more people are under quarantine and an employee wanted to wear a mask before the public health authorities knew that SARS was not an epidemic and the employee’s union says that they can’t do anything when the Board of Health says that people do not need to wear a mask in public and there is a serious question about whether to believe government officials on public health crises, then where was the employee’s union?

Evaluation: It’s a good question, but the union is bound by its collective agreement and the pattern of arbitration rulings on similar past incidents. In order to win a grievance

against discipline of an employee for refusing to abide by the employer's instruction not to wear a mask, the union must be able to show good reason to wear a mask.

Sub-argument:

Premiss: The government mishandled Walkerton and the East Nile virus.

Intermediate conclusion: Why do people so blindly believe government officials <on public health crises–DH>?

Covering generalization: Why do people so blindly believe what government officials say on public health crises when officials of the same government mishandled previous public health crises?

Evaluation: This too is a very good question, and in this case it licenses the inference to the question that is the caller's intermediate conclusion.

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April 9, Randy Taylor Show (CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM), 7:21 p.m.

Context: On this day, United States armed forces took control of Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, after Iraqi government officials and military forces melted away after taking heavy losses in three weeks of fighting. In an event shown on television screens around the world, a group of U.S. Marines toppled a huge statue of deposed dictator Saddam Hussein in the centre of Baghdad as a small group of cheering Iraqis looked on.

Issue (posed by Randy): "What do you think the Iraqi people have been through to be cheering like they were today?"

Note: The tape begins in the middle of a conversation between Randy and a caller named David.

Caller (David): "... a great democracy like [unintelligible], I don't know what else they can do."

Randy: "David, do you believe—and I'm not defending the position, I'm merely asking this question of you—do you believe that it's possible that many weapons along with many senior Iraqi military officials have crossed the border into Syria?"

David: "Absolutely not."

Randy: "You don't believe that's possible."

David: "No, because I mean the Americans have satellites up and down Iraq's back, they have the borders checked, and if you tell me that they're going to transport drums and drums of chemical weapons, I think—I mean, you have to be pretty stupid to believe that."

Randy: “No, it doesn’t make me stupid, David. And just to clarify a point for you, sir, those satellite images...”

David: “Yeah.”

Randy: “Those aren’t X-ray cameras.”

David: “OK, fine. They’ve got to take them across to Syria or somebody else. Right?”

Randy: “If I drive by you in my car, can you tell me if I have golf clubs in my trunk or not?”

David: “No. My question to you is then that this whole exercise has been futile because we are supposed to be afraid of those weapons of mass destruction, [unintelligible].”

Randy: “I’m trying to make a very clear point to you, David, that it’s impossible from a satellite image to tell what is in a truck going over the border to Syria. That’s the point. Until those satellite cameras are the X-ray ones. Remember. On the back of comic books? You people used to buy those X-ray cameras, and you thought you could see through your girl’s clothes. Remember those? Maybe they’ve got those on the satellites now.”

Analysis: The caller gets under the host’s skin by implying that the host is stupid to believe that Iraqi armed forces may have transported drums and drums of chemical weapons across the border into Syria. The caller supports his claim by citing American satellite surveillance and border control.

Premisses:

The Americans have satellites up and down Iraq’s back.

They [the Americans–DH] have the borders [of Iraq–DH] checked.

Conclusion:

It’s absolutely impossible that many weapons along with many senior Iraqi military officials have crossed the border [from Iraq–DH] into Syria.

Unstated background information:

The Americans have invaded Iraq.

Syria is a neighbour of Iraq.

Unstated assumption:

The Americans have not detected Iraqi weapons or military officials crossing the border into Syria.

Covering generalization: If one country has invaded another, has satellites up and down its back and has its borders checked, it’s absolutely impossible that many weapons along

with many senior military officials of the invaded country have crossed its border into a neighbouring country without being detected by the invaders.

Evaluation: To make the covering generalization at all plausible, one must add as a premiss the assumption, which the caller neither states nor supports, that the Americans have not detected Iraqi weapons or military officials crossing the border into Syria. Otherwise the information in the premisses about American surveillance of Iraq would offer no support to the conclusion. Even with the added assumption, the strong modal qualifier ‘absolutely impossible’ is unwarranted, as the host brings out with his example of detecting whether there are golf clubs in the trunk of a car. A surreptitious flight of many weapons and many senior military officials would be hard to conceal from an invader with satellite scrutiny and checks at the borders, but perhaps not impossible.

One can also question the premiss that the Americans have the borders checked. They might not have managed to have complete control over the long open border between Syria and Iraq, only three weeks after the start of the invasion.

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April 11, The Bill Carroll Show, CFRB, Toronto, 1010 AM, about 10:15 a.m.

Context: The host, Bill Carroll, raises an issue about a surgeon’s refusal to operate on smokers.

Bill: “There is a doctor in Northern Ontario, a surgeon, who refuses to operate on smokers. Even if it could save their lives, he simply refuses to do it. Yeah. And apparently the Ontario medical watchdog, College of Physicians and Surgeons, says: That’s fair, that’s OK, because there’s a lot of clinical evidence that shows that people who smoke and have surgery run into all kinds of complications. And so this doctor in Northern Ontario, I think it’s Timmins, is saying, ‘If you don’t quit 4 to 6 weeks before the surgery, I’m not doing it!’

“I’m a little uneasy with this, I have to tell you. I love picking on smokers—my favourite pastime, because you guys tick me off, blowing your smoke in my face. Standing in front of the offices, I’ve got to go through this <coughs> ‘Excuse me, I’ve got to get to work.’ Can’t sit down in a bar and have a drink without wheezing half the night. You know how I feel about smokers. But I also have some sympathy for you in that this is a legal product, it’s addictive—we’ve known that for a very long time, and yet we still sell it, and we gladly take your tax dollars. I don’t think you can tell someone that because they have a legal addiction you’re not going to operate on them. Even for me, that’s off-the-scale wrong. And that’s all I want to say about it....

“We talked about this a year ago, about a Winnipeg family physician who wouldn’t even deal with a patient if they didn’t stop smoking in three months. Well, I kind of understand that. But we’re not talking about surgery that could in many cases be life-saving. I’ve got an addiction here. It’s not easy to quit. Some people will just simply smoke their whole lives. They’ll never overcome the addiction. And I understand that you’re more likely to suffer terrible complications if you’re a smoker rather than a non-smoker. But is it really a doctor’s job to say I’m not going to operate on you until you

change your life-style? I mean, where does this end? ‘Bill, you’re eating too much chocolate, so...’ ‘Well, it’s a legal product. I’m a little addicted to it. I know I’m being bad but, hey, I’m dying here. Help me out.’ ‘No, not until you stop eating chocolate.’ I suspect if it was life or death I could stop eating chocolate, but it doesn’t have the same addiction ... power over you that nicotine does. I’m uneasy with it. How about you?”

Caller (Dave on the 427): “Bill I just don’t see it as any different than the Shouldice Clinic not doing a hernia operation until you lose a certain amount of weight. To me it makes sense.”

Bill: “Yeah, again now you’re talking about eating, and that’s a very difficult thing for people to do as well. Losing weight’s not easy, but I think quitting smoking’s a lot tougher.”

Dave: “Well, perhaps it is. But, you know, you can’t say one health concern is good and one is bad.”

Bill: “Thank you, Dave. Bob in Leaside wants to make a similar point....”

Caller #2 (Bob in Leaside): “Yeah, very similar. There’s certain procedures requiring you not to eat or drink before the surgery for a certain amount of time. And there’s clearly medical reasons for that.”

Bill: “Yeah, but not eating or drinking for 12 hours or something before surgery is a little easier to do than not smoking for six weeks.”

Bob: “The point is not how easy is it for the patient to do, it’s what effect does it have on the patient’s outcome.”

Bill: “So your argument I guess, and the last caller’s argument, is: this doctor’s not necessarily saying you have to quit smoking forever. He’s saying: You’re pre-op, you have to stop for a certain amount of time to make the surgery go well.”

Bob: “That’s right.”

Bill: “Right, Bob, yeah. I gotta tell you. This rarely happens—somebody make note of the fact. I’m somewhat persuaded by that. But I’ve got a caveat to it. But I think the doctor has to be very aggressive in helping you kick this habit for six weeks. Because the first six weeks are the hardest. It’d be easier to ask someone to quit smoking after the surgery, I think, than before. Now the poor guy’s going into surgery, he’s really nervous, he’s upset, and now he’s gotta stop. It’s an interesting one.”

Analysis: The conversation is a rare example of somebody being persuaded by argument to change his position. Both callers use arguments by analogy to defend the surgeon’s decision not to operate on smokers unless they stop smoking four to six weeks before the surgery—a decision based on clinical evidence that people who smoke and have surgery

run into all sorts of complications. Dave compares the decision to the Shouldice Clinic's requirement that a certain patient lose weight before undergoing a hernia operation, and Bob to a requirement not to eat or drink for a certain length of time before surgery. Both make clear that the point of the comparison is the improved outcome of the surgery if the requirement is met. Both brush aside the difference in difficulty of meeting the requirement as beside the point.

Premiss: I just don't see it [saying, 'If you don't quit smoking 4 to 6 weeks before the surgery, I'm not doing it!'-DH] as any different than the Shouldice Clinic not doing a hernia operation until you lose a certain amount of weight.

Conclusion: To me it [saying, 'If you don't quit smoking 4 to 6 weeks before the surgery, I'm not doing it!'-DH] makes sense.

Covering generalization: To me anything makes sense that I just don't see as any different than the Shouldice Clinic not doing a hernia operation until you lose a certain amount of weight.

Evaluation: As phrased, the generalization is a report of a personal impression. If the personal qualifiers are removed, the claim of similarity ("not ... any different") would need to be qualified by a phrase such as "with respect to the medical necessity of the requirement for a good outcome" in order for the covering generalization to be justified. The caller's subsequent reference to health concerns indicates that such a qualification is a reasonable interpretation of his implicit inference license. The caller has thus advanced a strong argument, and the host is wise to be persuaded by it.

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April 11, Ontario Today, CBC Radio One, Toronto, 99.1 FM, about 1:35 p.m.

Context: The program was broadcast live from the Memorial Sports Centre in Fort Frances, Ontario, a town with many ties to the town of International Falls, Minnesota, just on the other side of the border between Canada and the United States. Reflecting concern in Canada about hostility from the United States because of Canada's refusal to join the coalition that invaded Iraq, the program interviewed local people, including the deputy mayor of International Falls and the mayor of Fort Frances, about the ties between the two communities. The question of the day, to which callers were invited to respond, was: "How does Canada build and maintain a strong relationship with the United States?"

Host: "... I think I might be mangling a town here, the name... But Phyllis is on the line. Hello, Phyllis."

Caller (Phyllis): "Yes."

Host: "Where are you phoning from?"

Phyllis: "It's Badjeros, Badjeros, Ontario."

Host: “OK. Where’s that?”

Phyllis: “It’s about 20 miles or so from Collingwood.”

Host: “OK. So what do you think? How does Canada build and maintain a strong relationship with the United States.”

Phyllis: “Well, only if Canada is strong in its own right. And that’s the only way you’ll build a strong relationship with the United States. Otherwise we’ll be a satellite, like what we are now. The only reason they wanted our approval for to go there is to make them look good, ’cause they are on an illegal war, as far as I’m concerned. In fact, it’s not a war. If you let the UN spend three months hunting out weapons for God’s sake, and after that then say, ‘Get out, we’ll find the ones that you couldn’t find supposedly’, then wonder why they didn’t get anybody shooting at them, well, you know.”

Host: “Phyllis, the argument about whether it was a formally declared war and whether it was legal or illegal will go on for some time. But now that—and I don’t want to get ahead of myself here—but now that it appears that the tide has turned in Iraq...”

Phyllis: “Well, no, the tide hasn’t turned. They’re in charge, of course, because they have more weapons and that. But they’re only making more people angry at them over there because of the way they treat ...”

Host: “Phyllis, again, we’re really off topic here. We’re talking about Canadians’ relationship with Americans on all fronts. Is that important to you?”

Phyllis: “We have a case in court right now where we’re supposed to be neighbours. And I have friends in United States. They’ve been friends for 50 years. And you don’t always like your neighbours, especially when they’re doing things you don’t want. We have a case in court where there’s four or five kids here kicked another one to death, and their friends never bothered to come up and tell anything, or even inform the police about the poor guy who was laying there dying.”

Host: “OK, Phyllis, I’m going to hold you there here, because it is sometimes dangerous to be talking about cases that are before the courts. So I’m going to hold you on that point, and we’ll move on to Ed in London.”

Analysis: Phyllis gives a brief argument for her position on how Canada builds and maintains a strong relationship with the United States.

Premiss: “Otherwise [i.e. if Canada is not strong in its own right–DH] we’ll [i.e. Canada will–DH] be a satellite [of the United States–DH], like what we are now.”

Conclusion: “Only if Canada is strong in its own right will you [i.e. Canada will–DH] build a strong relationship with the United States.”

Covering generalization: For any proposition p : If Canada will be a satellite of the United States like it is now if not p , then Canada will build a strong relationship with the United States only if p .

This covering generalization is equivalent to the proposition that Canada will build a strong relationship with the United States only if it will not be a satellite like it is now. This proposition could in turn be generalized to the proposition that a country that is a satellite of another country does not have a strong relationship with that other country.

Evaluation: The premiss assumes that Canada is at the time of the call a satellite of the United States, an assumption that could be disputed. Setting aside this possible dispute, the covering generalization is quite reasonable.

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April 14, Western New York Live, ABC television Buffalo, Cable 9

Taping began at 4:13 p.m. The topic was fitness, with an aerobic instructor as a guest. Callers asked questions, but advanced no arguments.

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April 15, The Bill Carroll Show, CFRB, Toronto, 1010 AM, about 9:50 a.m.

Context: Air Canada has announced that it will charge people in the Aeroplan frequent flyer program who book a reward flight \$25 for the booking and a fuel surcharge up to \$50.

Bill: "I'm not gonna give you a comment about it... Without much comment from the host, let me just say this, and then you can call me... According to the National Post version of this story, ... 'Air Canada will begin charging members of its Aeroplan frequent flyer program a 25 dollar charge each time they book a reward flight, as well as a fuel surcharge that could add another 50 dollars to the price of a return ticket. The move could help the struggling airline generate tens of millions of dollars in revenue per year.' Let me say that again because I don't see any callers yet... Air Canada is gonna charge you 75 dollars to start cashing in your air miles in their so-called reward program."

Four callers express outrage, and complain about the difficulty of getting the flights they want when they cash in their reward miles.

Bill: "... Barbara from Mississauga is the only one with this point of view so far. And I want to put her on before I talk to a spokesperson for Aeroplan, just to make her [the spokesperson for Aeroplan-DH] feel a little better. Barbara, you don't agree..."

Barbara (from Mississauga): "No, I don't. You're talking about a reward plan that you're getting free flights on. OK? And my daughter has taken advantage of this, so it is

available and if you do it properly you can get it. So you're gonna have to pay 50 dollars to go to Calgary or Edmonton or wherever. What are you whining about? Give me a break."

Bill: "I'll tell you what, though. I'm not involved in any rewards programs, because I think they're annoying and stupid. And I think they should just lower the prices."

Barbara: "But that means you have the money to do it. My daughter doesn't have that kind of money, and she's gone on them."

Bill: "She obviously has the money to collect the points along the way."

Barbara: "She did it on a business basis. So she can collect her business points ..."

Bill: "That's a whole other issue, because to my mind those points belong to the business that paid for the flights."

Barbara: "Well, the business made them available to her. That's a different issue."

Bill: "But, Barbara, the only rewards program I have is my Visa. I get points on my Visa Gold card and every 10 years I can get, like, a toaster oven or something. And if they said to me, you can get your toaster oven but now you've got to pay 15 bucks, I'd say, oh, what, how is that a reward?"

Barbara: "But a toaster oven costs \$40."

Bill: "People have been collecting the points all along with a certain understanding, and now you go and change it on them."

Barbara: "What is 50 dollars when you will be paying 600? Come on!"

Bill: "Thank you, Barbara. Barbara is forgetting that you also have to pay for the flights to earn that. Just because her daughter's rippin' off the company doesn't mean we can all do that. Now, that is ruppin' off the company. We'll do a whole talk show on that. But I can't believe people use for personal uses the air miles that they gather when the company's paying for their flights."

Analysis: Barbara's initial argument might be standardized as follows:

Sub-argument:

Premiss: My daughter has taken advantage of this <reward plan that gives you free flights>.

Conclusion: It [the Aeroplan reward plan that gives you free flights–DH] is available and if you do it properly you can get it.

Covering generalization: Any reward plan that one person has taken advantage of is available and if you do it properly you can get it.

Evaluation: This covering generalization at least licenses a presumption, which could be defeated if there were special circumstances enabling a particular person to take advantage of the plan or the plan has been subsequently cancelled, and so forth. Because of the nature of reward plans, which are set up with general rules applying to all their participants, one instance is enough to establish a universal generalization.

Main argument:

Premises: You're talking about a reward plan that you're getting free flights on.

It [the Aeroplan reward plan that gives you free flights–DH] is available and if you do it properly you can get it.

Conclusion: Having to pay 50 dollars to go to Calgary or Edmonton or wherever [when you use the reward plan to get a free flight–DH] is nothing to whine about..

Covering generalization: When you're getting a free flight, having to pay \$50 is nothing to whine about. (The conclusion as stated needed expansion by the bracketed clause in order to get a component common to premises and conclusion over which one could generalize.)

Evaluation: The generalization is self-contradictory, since a flight is not free if you have to pay something for it. The argument would have been better expressed in terms of what you are saving by using the reward plan: if you are saving \$600, having to pay \$50 is nothing to whine about.

The subsequent exchange is of interest because of the host's attempts to divert the discussion to another issue (whether rewards programs make sense or it would be better just to have lower prices, whether the caller's daughter is cheating her employer by using points collected on business trips for personal travel), the caller's engagement with these diversions, the host's argument by analogy for the unfairness of the booking charge and fuel surcharge (\$15 to cash in your reward points for a toaster oven) and the caller's response to that, and the host's final riposte after cutting off the caller. The sequence shows a pattern of bullying by the host.

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April 17, Western New York Live, ABC television Buffalo, Cable 9

Taping began at 4 p.m. The topic was the HIV/AIDS epidemic and how it is affecting Buffalo. Callers advanced no arguments.

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April 18, Ontario Today, CBC Radio One, Toronto 99.1 FM

Taping of this show was supposed to start at 12:07 p.m. Since it was Good Friday, the show was pre-empted by holiday programming. An original intention to start taping the following Monday at the same time was not carried out.

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April 18, Contact, APTN (Aboriginal People's Television Network, a Canada-wide cable channel)

Taping was to start at 8:24 p.m. Since it was Good Friday, the program was replaced by holiday programming. An original intention to start taping at the same time when the program was next broadcast was not carried out.

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April 20, Cross Country Checkup, CBC Radio One, Toronto 99.1 FM, about 4:30 p.m.

Issue (posed by Rex Murphy, host): "Are you worried about SARS?"

Context: For an overview of the SARS epidemic, see the description at the beginning of the entry for Cross Country Checkup on April 6.

In his introductory remarks, Rex points out that the outbreak getting more serious. In Toronto there have been setbacks. The disease is no longer contained in hospitals. Sunnybrook Hospital has been effectively shut down, and 14 people are now dead. It is a major problem worldwide. China admitted it was not forthcoming on getting the word out. Other countries are putting up travel advisories, and Canada is one of the countries being warned against. In Toronto people are being advised to stay home if they have any of the symptoms of SARS. Can the disease be stopped? What is the threat? Researchers are looking for a vaccine. SARS has overburdened the medical system. Health care workers among first to be affected. Economically, it could be a serious blow. There has been a decline in business and tourist travel to Canada, and especially Toronto.

Rex: "How serious do you think the SARS outbreak is? What do you think of the government's efforts? Do you think it can be contained? Is enough being done? Are you worried about SARS?"

Rex's guest is Dr. Donald Low, chief microbiologist at Toronto's Mt. Sinai Hospital. Dr. Low describes the situation as "critical" and says that public health authorities are worried about it. He reviews the known history of the outbreak in Toronto since the arrival of the "index case" on February 23 from Hong Kong. Symptoms are a headache, feeling unwell and muscle aches, followed a day later by a fever and a day after that by a cough and pneumonia. He states that the disease will kill 4 to 5 % of the people infected, and that other infected people will have a serious illness. SARS is putting infected front-line health workers into hospital for two or three weeks.

Dr. Low: “If you are feeling unwell and have a flu-like illness, put yourself in quarantine for a day or two. Do not expose family members or people in the workplace. If symptoms persist, seek care in a SARS clinic or a hospital emergency department. If it is likely you have it, you will be admitted to hospital and we will give you drugs to try to minimize the complications of pneumonia.”

Rex: “Is it still possible to contain the disease?”

Dr. Low: “We can’t assume it is impossible. We can’t stop trying to eradicate it. There is still an opportunity to do that. We cannot accept that we can allow it to be in our community. We will continue to try to eradicate it. It is too important a disease to give up on.”

Dr. Low goes on to describe the therapies used to help those infected with SARS, as well as other centres where SARS has appeared.

Rex: “SARS, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. What are your concerns? Questions or comments can be directed to Dr. Low.”

Caller (Rean Cross from Toronto): “I have some concerns about the ongoing impact of SARS. I understand the reasons for many of the containment measures that have been put into place, and I think that everyone is to be applauded for the job that we’ve done of keeping it as contained as we have so far. But I’m concerned about the ongoing impact of the incredibly tight restrictions that are on hospitals right now. My particular area of concern is for pregnant women and women who are labouring. I’m a doula, which is a non-clinical support person. I work with women during their pregnancy and attend to them during labour and birth, in a non-clinical supportive role. That means that I’m not considered a health care professional by many people, and it means that currently I’m unable to accompany my clients with them when they go to hospital to have their babies. Women are generally allowed one support person under the current climate, which means, you know, that they’re falling into that compassionate area where they are allowed to have somebody with them in the hospital, and if they don’t have another partner with them then I can go. But if they have a husband or a wife or a partner of some kind to go with them, then I can’t go, because they’re only allowed to have one person. So that’s putting a lot of strain on me professionally and on my fellow doulas, because obviously, you know, if we’re not doing our jobs we’re not making a living. But I’m more concerned about what’s happening to women and their experience of childbirth in a time of crisis and the way that their choices are being limited by this. You know, we’re talking about people who are in a very low-risk exposure situation. In most hospitals in the Toronto area, labour and delivery is a separate section, sometimes a separate floor, and it’s very low risk of exposure, and I’m concerned about how long can we keep this kind of situation going.”

Dr. Low: “We are in a crisis. We have adopted Draconian, very difficult measures. It is difficult to split hairs when you are managing a large institution like a hospital. These things will be relaxed over the next week or so.”

Analysis: The caller is expressing her concerns about the impact of the restrictions in hospitals on the ability of doulas to make a living and on the limitation of the choices of women giving birth in hospitals. Her explanation of the way in which the restrictions have these effects can at the same time be construed as evidence that they are occurring, in a kind of sub-argument. Her concluding remarks about the low risk of exposure in the labour and delivery sections of Toronto hospitals indicate that she is arguing for a relaxing of the restrictions that are giving rise to her concerns.

Sub-sub-argument:

Premisses: I'm a doula, which is a non-clinical support person.

I work with women during their pregnancy and attend to them during labour and birth, in a non-clinical supportive role.

I'm not considered a health care professional by many people.

Women going to hospital to have their babies are generally allowed only one support person under the current climate.

Conclusions: If women going to hospital to have their babies don't have another partner with them then I can go.

If women going to hospital to have their babies have a husband or a wife or a partner of some kind to go with them, then I can't go.

Covering generalization: If a rule allows only one other person of a certain kind to accompany a person in a certain situation, and one person of that kind is already accompanying a person in that kind of situation, then another person of the same kind cannot accompany the person in that situation.

Evaluation: This covering generalization is practically a logical truth.

Sub-argument:

Premisses: If women going to hospital to have their babies have a husband or a wife or a partner of some kind to go with them, then I can't go.

If we doulas are not doing our jobs we're not making a living.

Conclusion: The fact that currently I'm unable to accompany my clients when they go to hospital to have their babies is putting a lot of strain on me professionally and on my fellow doulas.

Covering generalization: Anything that prevents members of a certain occupation from making a living puts a lot of strain on them.

Evaluation: The covering generalization is a truism.

Second sub-argument:

Premiss: In most hospitals in the Toronto area, labour and delivery is a separate section, sometimes a separate floor.

Conclusion: We're talking about people who are in a very low-risk exposure situation.

Covering generalization: People who are in a separate section and sometimes a separate floor of a hospital are at very low risk of infection by someone in the hospital with an infectious disease.

Evaluation: As stated, the generalization is subject to exceptions, namely, those cases where the infected person is in the very section or floor that the people are in. A charitable construal of the argument would add as unstated premisses that patients don't come into the labour and delivery section of a hospital with symptoms of SARS and that health care personnel in the labour and delivery section of a hospital do not work as well in other parts of the hospital.

Main argument:

Premisses: The fact that currently I'm unable to accompany my clients when they go to hospital to have their babies is putting a lot of strain on me professionally and on my fellow doulas.

I'm more concerned about what's happening to women and their experience of childbirth in a time of crisis and the way that their choices are being limited by this.

We're talking about people who are in a very low-risk exposure situation.

I'm concerned about how long can we keep this kind of situation going.

Implicit conclusion: The rule that women going to hospital to have their babies are generally allowed only one support person should be relaxed.

Covering generalization: Any public health rule designed to eliminate risk should be relaxed if it puts a strain on people in a certain occupation, limits individual choices and is eliminating a very low risk.

Evaluation: This generalization has at best presumptive validity. In other words, it should be accepted only with an implicit qualifier: 'unless there is some overriding consideration'. Dr. Low immediately provides such an overriding consideration: the practical difficulty of making fine distinctions when you are dealing with a suddenly emergent major public health crisis.

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April 21, Western New York Live, ABC television Buffalo, Cable 9

Taping began at 4:32 p.m. The phone-in portion of the show was over when taping began.

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April 23 The Bill Carroll Show, CFRB, Toronto, 1010 AM, about 11:45 a.m.

The usual phone-in segment of the Bill Carroll Show was pre-empted by live coverage of a news conference at Toronto City Hall on a travel advisory by the World Health

Organization recommending that people planning to travel to Toronto consider postponing all but essential travel.

Context: The World Health Organization (WHO), based in Geneva, issued a travel advisory on April 23, 2003, recommending that persons planning to travel to Toronto “consider postponing all but essential travel”, giving the following rationale:

The outbreak in this area [of Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)–DH] has continued to grow in magnitude and has affected groups outside the initial risk groups of hospital workers, their families and other close person-to-person contacts, although all the cases reported have identified links to known SARS cases. In addition, a small number of persons with SARS, now in other countries in the world, appear to have acquired the infection while in Toronto. On the basis of this information, WHO is also including Toronto in the extension of its SARS-related travel advice.¹⁵

SARS was a new contagious viral infection, caused by a virus in the family that causes the common cold. It turned out to have a mortality rate of about 10%.

Mel Lastman (mayor of Toronto): “Everyone here knows that the World Health Organization issued a travel advisory this morning that recommended postponing all but essential trips or travel to Toronto. I am shocked that the medical evidence before us does not support this advisory, and I am told they have never issued an advisory like this before in their history. In fact, I don’t even know, and nobody here even knows, if they’ve ever been here. I can’t believe they issued a press release saying they’re not coming back for three weeks. I want them here tomorrow. I want them to investigate Toronto tomorrow. I think they’re doing this city and this country a disservice. Dr. Basrur will elaborate, but I can tell you definitely we are in better shape today than we have been in a month. Both the Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization have said that we are managing the situation exceptionally well. They just said this yesterday. Where did this group come from? Who did they see? Who did they talk to? Did they go to our hospitals? Did they go to our clinics? Did they go anywhere? They sit somewhere—I understand Geneva, I don’t even know where the hell they came from, but Geneva or some place—and they make decisions. Let me be clear. If it’s safe to live in Toronto, it’s safe to come to Toronto. It’s safe to visit the city. This city is... Just look outside. Look at the kids playing. Look at everybody going to work. Look at the malls. Look at how busy... Look at the Eaton Centre, and see what’s going on and see all the people there. Well, the hockey game didn’t have an empty seat—not yesterday’s <laughter from the audience [Toronto lost to Philadelphia by a score of 6 to 1–DH.]>. Yesterday’s was a shock. This isn’t a city in the grips of fear and panic. This is a city of two and a half million people who are going about their business the same way they always did.... That said, today’s advisory does underscore the need for everyone to follow the chief medical officer’s health instructions. Wash your hands a hundred times if need be, and if you have been exposed to SARS stay in quarantine. You’re jeopardizing other people when you go

¹⁵ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2003/np7/en/> ; accessed 2009 02 21.

out, and you are hurting your city and you are hurting your relatives by this word getting out. Stay in quarantine, because we're gonna look for you and we're gonna get you if you don't. ..."

Analysis: The mayor argues that it's safe to visit Toronto, on the ground that, if it's safe to live in Toronto, it's safe to come to Toronto. He then invites the audience to see for themselves what people are doing in Toronto, from which he draws the twofold conclusion that Toronto is not a city in the grips of fear and panic, but a city of two and a half million people going about their business in the way they always did. He then undercuts his message by warning people who have been exposed to SARS to stay in quarantine, pragmatically implicating by the act of issuing this stern warning that there are probably people who have been told to stay in quarantine because they may have been infected by the SARS virus wandering around the city exposing passersby to the possibility of infection.

The mayor starts with his main argument:

Main argument:

Premisses: If it's safe to live in Toronto, it's safe to come to Toronto.

This city is <safe to live in>.

Conclusion: It's safe to visit the city.

Analytical note: The mayor does not complete his sentence beginning "This city is", but immediately launches into an itemization of signs of the normality of everyday life in Toronto at the time, from which he infers that Toronto is not a city in the grip of fear and panic but a city of 2.5 million people going about their business as they always did. This argument is best conceived in the context as support for a claim that Toronto is safe to live in. And that claim is a plausible continuation of the mayor's unfinished sentence, which thus provides the second premiss of a formally valid argument.

Covering generalization: A true conditional with a true antecedent has a true consequent.

Evaluation: The argument is formally valid, since it has a true covering generalization.

The mayor then advances a sub-argument:

Sub-argument:

Premisses: Look at the kids playing <in Toronto today>.

Look at everybody going to work <in Toronto today>.

Look at the malls <in Toronto today>.

Look at the Eaton Centre <in Toronto today>, and see what's going on and see all the people there.

The hockey game didn't have an empty seat <in Toronto yesterday>.

Conclusions: This [Toronto–DH] isn't a city in the grips of fear and panic.

This [Toronto–DH] is a city of two and a half million people who are going about their business the same way they always did.

Covering generalization: Any city in which kids are playing, everybody is going to work, people are in the malls and professional sports matches don't have an empty seat is a city of people not in the grips of fear and panic, who are going about their business the same way they always did.

Evaluation: This covering generalization is almost true by definition, in that the activities described in the antecedent (i.e. in the premisses of the argument) are criteria of normal life in a big city.

The obvious link between the sub-argument and the main argument is that the conclusion of the sub-argument is intended to support the partially stated second premiss of the main argument:

Linking sub-argument:

Premisses: This [Toronto–DH] isn't a city in the grips of fear and panic.

This [Toronto–DH] is a city of two and a half million people who are going about their business the same way they always did.

Conclusion: This city [Toronto–DH] is safe to live in.

Covering generalization: A city that is not in the grips of fear and panic but whose two and a half million people are going about their business in the same way they always did is safe to live in.

Evaluation: The generalization is at best true for the most part, since the population of a large city may be in danger without realizing it and not be in the grip of fear and panic.

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April 24, The Roy Green Show, CHML, Hamilton, 900 AM, about 10:40

Context: For the World Health Organization travel advisory that people postpone travel to Toronto for all but essential purposes, see the description of the context of the April 23 news conference carried live on CFRB in Toronto.

Roy: "World Health Organization issuing a travel advisory for Toronto, 'don't go unless it's essential', and it has sparked the ire of people in Toronto, the business community, the political community. Well, the question I have to ask is: where was Mel Lastman in all of this? Where was Toronto council? Doug Holiday telling us that last week they had the opportunity, Council, to talk about SARS and they did not! Where was the Federal Health Minister, Ann McLellan? I mean, snoozing on the job. So the images that the World Health Organization sees, you know, 192 countries of the United Nations, are hospital closures, school closures, quarantines, stats showing Canada ranking number two in the world for SARS cases, television and newspapers displaying images of people wearing masks, and silence from elected leaders—that's where you get the kind of situation that you do that we got from the World Health Organization.

"Here's Adele. Good morning."

Caller (Adele): "Good morning."

Roy: "How are you?"

Caller (Adele): "I'm fine. Yourself?"

Roy: “I’m well, thank you.”

Adele: “Good. I was just calling to say that I’m a regional sales manager for a retailer where our home office is in Toronto and we have stores throughout Canada and we have had the national sales meeting booked for May and it was in Toronto and it was cancelled because of the SARS. We had a lot of ... Our company is both corporately and franchise-owned, and a lot of the franchisees from outside Ontario were calling with concerns about coming into Toronto because of the SARS.

Roy: “And how do you react to that personally?”

Adele: “Well, you know what? I really think it was the right decision. Our CEO just basically said: ‘You know, if one person gets it and gets sick then it’s not worth it, and we don’t want to take a chance. Our people are an important commodity, and we’re just not willing to take the chance right now.’ And I think it was the right decision.”

Roy: “You’re comfortable with that. You feel more comfortable with that.”

Adele: “I do. I absolutely do.”

Analysis: The caller is endorsing an argument by the CEO of her employer for cancelling a national sales meeting booked for May in Toronto.

Premises: I’m a regional sales manager for a retailer.

Our home office is in Toronto.

We have stores throughout Canada.

We have had the national sales meeting booked for May.

It [the national sales meeting booked for May–DH] was in Toronto.

It [the national sales meeting booked for May–DH] was cancelled because of the SARS.

Our company is both corporately and franchise-owned.

A lot of the franchisees from outside Ontario were calling with concerns about coming into Toronto because of the SARS.

Our CEO just basically said: ‘You know, if one person gets it and gets sick then it’s not worth it, and we don’t want to take a chance. Our people are an important commodity, and we’re just not willing to take the chance right now.’

Conclusion: I think it [cancelling the national sales meeting in Toronto–DH] was the right decision.

Covering generalization: It was the right decision for a retailer with stores throughout Canada, both corporately and franchise-owned, whose franchisees were calling with concerns about coming into Toronto because of the SARS and whose CEO said that it’s not worth one person getting sick to cancel a national sales meeting scheduled for May 2003 in Toronto.

Evaluation: The generalization establishes a presumption that the decision was the right one, but the presumption could be overridden if there were more important reasons for going ahead with the sales meeting.

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April 24, Larry Silver Show, CHML Hamilton, 900 AM, about 12:40 p.m.

Context: On April 13, United States Marines rescued American prisoners of war during house raids in Samara, Iraq. The rescued prisoners included a woman, Shoshanna Johnson. Johnson, a food service specialist with the 507th Maintenance Company of the United States Army, had been captured in an ambush on March 23. Another soldier in her unit, Jessica Lynch, a supply clerk, was captured at the same time as Johnson and was later recovered from a hospital in Nasiriyah in Iraq, where she was recovering from wounds.

Issue: The role of women in the US Armed Forces.

Larry Silver states that the role of women in the US military changed in 1994, with most elite jobs in combat and aircraft missions open to them. This was a step beyond their role in the 1991 Gulf War. The biggest change was in the US navy, which opened up roles for women on combat ships: aircraft, carriers, cruisers and destroyers. The capture of Shoshonna Johnson shocked her family, who thought she was a cook. “It shocks me too. It makes me uncomfortable. I don’t deny that women have the capability of serving in the military, I just don’t want them to become prisoners of war. And I’m not trying to be gallant, or chivalrous, I just think there’s something that’s man’s work.”

First Caller (Dan): “I was really amazed and surprised when the Canadians and the Americans first recruited females for combat roles. I think the Israelis proved, I’m not sure if it was after ’48 or ’67 that they took women out of combat areas – they still have them in the military – but when any of them were killed beside the men, it completely demoralized the men. And they found out that it doesn’t work having men and women fighting together just for that reason: if a female gets killed beside an infantryman, he’s completely demoralized – they almost have to take him out of action”.

Larry: “Sure, you know, I can relate to that. I understand that.”

Dan: “Well, after the Israeli history, I don’t know why the Americans and Canadians—unless there was pressure from the feminists, or what it was—but I think Canada still trains females in infantry and I hope they never have to go into battle.”

Larry: “I hope so too. I’d hate to see that. And I’m not—you know, you understand, Dan—I’m not saying that women aren’t capable.”

Dan: “No, neither am I, because they proved themselves in the Second World War, in all the areas, driving trucks and everything, in mechanics, in radar, all those combat roles, but not facing the enemy face to face with bayonets.”

Larry: “Thank you, Dan. I appreciate your call.”

Analysis: The caller uses the experience of the Israeli armed forces to argue that it doesn't work to have men and women fighting together in combat roles.

Premises: After '48 or '67 they [the Israeli authorities–DH] took women out of combat areas <in the armed forces>.

When any of them [women in the Israeli armed forces in combat roles–DH] were killed beside the men, it completely demoralized the men.

They [the military officers] almost have to take him [a man serving in a combat unit beside a woman soldier who has just been killed] out of action

Conclusion: It doesn't work having men and women fighting together <in a combat unit>.

Covering generalization: An arrangement in a combat unit doesn't work if it was tried in Israel and led some soldiers to be completely demoralized when someone in the unit was killed.

Evaluation: The covering generalization has two components, that it doesn't work to have an arrangement in a combat unit that leads its members to become completely demoralized when a member of the unit is killed, and that the experience in the Israeli armed forces is representative of what would happen if the practice of having women in combat roles was duplicated elsewhere. The first component is plausible. The second component is more dubious, since the difference in response to the killing of a female combat soldier and the killing of a male combat soldier is likely to reflect cultural attitudes towards women that could differ from time to time and place to place. If it were an established practice for women to serve in combat roles, their fellow soldiers might not react any differently to their being killed in combat than to a fellow male soldier being killed in combat.

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April 24, Randy Taylor Show (CFRB Toronto, 1010 AM), about 7:10 p.m.

Issue (as framed by Randy): “Is this what God really wants?”

Context: Newspapers have published photographs of Shia pilgrims in Iraq cutting themselves with swords and daggers and covering themselves in blood. One picture published on this day showed a little boy, only about six years old, covered in blood with a dagger raised up in the air.

Randy: “All these people are marching around and cutting themselves. And I don't get it. There are many religions with bizarre and questionable practices, one being the Catholic

Church. And I can say this, because I was raised a Catholic. When I was a kid, we went to church every day. Every day. My brothers were altar boys. My father worked very, very hard in the church, and helped build one church actually. But I can't imagine God being impressed with the billions of dollars that's spent on their places of worship. I just don't imagine that. I've read the Ten Commandments. And it doesn't say, 'Take all the money you can that should go to the poor and downtrodden and buy a gold chalice.' I've looked over this. 'You shall not bear false witness. You shall not steal. You shall not covet your neighbour's house. Thou shalt not kill.' It doesn't say in there: 'Build a big palace for me and put my name on the front of it.' I just don't understand it...

"If there were an example of how it should be, I guess I would point to Mother Teresa, as far as someone who had it right. I think that God was embodied in a woman like that. 1946, on a train journey from Calcutta, Mother Teresa received what she termed a call within a call. And that gave rise to the Missionaries of Charity. The aim of the mission? Their creed was to quench the infinite thirst of Jesus on the cross for love and souls by labouring at the salvation and sanctification of the poorest of the poor. And, boy, if there was anyone who ever walked the walk, that lady was it, religion or no religion. 1979, Mother Teresa was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. By that same year there were 158 Missionaries of Charity foundations. Those foundations reached Communist countries in 1979 with a house in Zagreb, Croatia, and in 1980 with a house in East Berlin. They continued to expand through the 1980s and 1990s with houses in almost all Communist nations, including 15 foundations in the former Soviet Union. On Christmas Eve 1985 Mother Teresa opened Gift of Love in New York. That was her first house for AIDS patients. In the coming years that house would then be followed by others in the United States and elsewhere devoted specifically to helping out those people with AIDS. From the late 80s to the 90s, in poor health, she travelled all over the world continuing her work. By 1997 her sisters numbered nearly 4,000 and were established in almost 600 foundations in 123 countries. This very, very tiny woman after a summer of travelling rural New York and Washington in a weak state of health returned to Calcutta in July of 1997. September the 5th, she passed away at the mother house. She received a state funeral. Hundreds of thousands of people from all classes and religions from India and abroad paid their respects, including presidents, prime ministers, queens and special envoys.

"And getting back to the question at hand: Is this what God really wants? I would say yes.

"Helen in Toronto, hi. Hello, Helen."

Caller (Helen in Toronto): "Hello."

Randy: "Yes, go ahead."

Helen: "I just dissent to your comment that the Catholic religion has been .. I don't know how you expressed it, I haven't got a tape. I can't ... the worst rituals or something like that?"

Randy: "No, I said there are many religions with bizarre and questionable practices."

Helen: “Aha, bizarre and questionable practices. What is it about the Catholic religion that you find so bizarre and questionable?”

Randy: “Just the amount of money that is sunk into the religion itself, ma’am. And I was raised a Catholic.”

Helen: “You don’t know how much money is sunk in other religions. So I wouldn’t talk. Ask a Jewish friend, ask your Muslim family.”

Randy: “I’m not here to defend anyone. I’m...”

Helen: “I know, you’re here to criticize the Catholics, and you always jump on them. I don’t know why, being a former Catholic.”

Randy: “I’m ...”

Helen: “OK, this is all I have to say. There are religions that are far worse:

Randy: “OK, so...”

Helen: “are far richer, spend far more money and have far more influence politically.”

Randy: “So if bearing... Do you want to have a discussion, or do you want to just hang up?”

Helen: “I just want to hang up, because I don’t believe.. I can’t follow your train of thought, I’m just shocked to hear this. OK?”

Randy: “Really, with the billions of dollars that the Catholic Church spends on the religion itself rather than doing the work of someone like Mother Teresa and helping out the poor?”

Helen: “There are millions of people who do this [unintelligible]

Randy: “Don’t you think?”

Helen: “recognized, but she is going to be a saint.”

Randy: “Do you not think...”

Helen: “[unintelligible] they think. However, there are other religions ..”

Randy: “Oh boy...”

Helen: “.. that spend just as much and ...”

Randy: “Your religion really didn’t teach you any manners, did it, Helen?”

Helen: “Oh, yes, I’ve been taught quite a few.”

Randy: “Really?”

Helen: “Yes.”

Randy: “Do you want to have a discussion, or do you want to just talk all over me?”

Helen: “Thank you very much, I just don’t like your comments, sir.”

Randy: “Well, I don’t like your Catholic Church, ma’am. So there you go.”

Randy (after cutting off Helen): “There are many people in the Catholic Church who do tremendous work. My aunt is a nun.”

Analysis: Both the host’s long preamble and the acrimonious exchange between him and the caller raise many issues for analysis. For this exercise, I focus on the argument which the caller deploys at the beginning of her call against the host’s claim that the Catholic Church has bizarre and questionable practices. She begins by getting him to clarify what it is about the Catholic religion that he finds so bizarre and questionable, in the process shifting his claim from one about the Catholic Church to one about the Catholic religion, a shift that he does not comment on. Having gotten him to state that what he finds bizarre and questionable about the Catholic religion is the amount of money that is sunk into the religion itself, she then deploys an elegant argument against the host’s right to make that claim.

Premises: You don’t know how much money is sunk in other religions [than the Catholic religion–DH].

Ask a Jewish friend.

Ask your Muslim family.

Conclusion: [If I were you–DH] I wouldn’t talk [about the amount of money sunk into the Catholic religion being bizarre and questionable].

Covering generalization: If I didn’t know how one religion compared to others in a certain respect, I would not talk about that religion being bizarre and questionable in that respect.

Evaluation: The covering generalization assumes that a feature shared by several religions is not bizarre and questionable. The assumption may be doubted, but the commonality of a feature does at least create a presumption that it is not bizarre. It still might be questionable.

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April 25, Larry Silver Show, CHML Hamilton, 900 AM, about 12:55 p.m.

Context: Larry is discussing the results of the grade 10 literacy test: 28% of the students in Ontario who took the test, failed it. Callers have let Larry know that some parents received letters from the school, asking them not to allow their child to take the literacy test, because their child will not pass it at this time.

Larry's question: "Are they cooking the books?"

Caller (Jeanette): "I do believe that they're cooking the books, in fact they've burnt that whole dinner to a crisp! There's just nothing left. I have elementary school children and one of them had missed a lot of school in grade five, and they wanted him to go on to grade six because of his emotional well-being. This child would have never survived in grade six! So I forced the issue and wrote a letter to the school board and said, 'No, my son will repeat a year', and it was the best thing we did for him, now he's thriving beautifully. So, yeah, I think they are cooking the books, for sure."

Analysis: The caller uses the case of her son being promoted to grade six when he would not have survived as evidence that the school board is "cooking the books".

Premiss: My son missed a lot of school in grade five.

They [the school authorities–DH] wanted him [my son–DH] to go on to grade six because of his emotional well-being.

The child [my son–DH] would have never survived in grade six.

Conclusion: They [the school authorities] are cooking the books.

Covering generalization: A school system that wants a child to go on to the next grade because of his emotional well-being after he missed a lot of school in the previous grade and would never survive in that grade is cooking the books.

Evaluation: The covering generalization has two aspects, an interpretation of the case as an example of cooking the books and a generalization from the case. In both respects, it is weak. As for the generalization, a single case of an action that could vary quite a lot from one situation to another is very weak evidence that the sort of action in question is common. As for the interpretation, a desire for a child to advance to the next grade that is rooted in a concern for his emotional well-being does not sound like cooking the books. The emotional well-being of the child is a legitimate concern in making decisions about advancing to the next grade in elementary school, and the caller's description of the desire is quite compatible with the authorities' believing that her son would manage academically in grade six despite having missed a lot of school in grade five.

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April 25, Larry Silver Show, CHML Hamilton, 900 AM, about 1:45 p.m.

Context: Canadians must file their income tax return by April 30.

Larry: “Did you really spend 25 or 30 bucks for the software to file electronically? ... I don’t know why you have to put a stamp on anyway.”

E-mail message from a listener (Trevor in London): “It’s better to have to pay at the end of the year. It’s your money. Why donate it to the government all year? Keep your cash until you must hand it over. You might as well earn interest on your money rather than our friends at the CCRA [Canada Customs and Revenue Agency–DH] earning interest on it, right?”

Analysis: The listener argues for a system where people are asked to pay income tax at the end of the year. (Such a system would replace the present system in Canada, where some people have the tax deducted automatically from their pay cheque and others make quarterly payments based on their estimated income.) After making his claim, the listener makes a series of statements that somehow support it. It’s not entirely clear how. One possible interpretation is that the incomplete sentence “Keep your cash until you must hand it over” is a repetition of the main claim, and that it is preceded by a serial supporting argument and an additional direct supporting reason that works with the main premiss of the serial argument.

Main argument:

Premisses: Why donate it <the money you owe in income tax> to the government all year?

You might as well earn interest on your money rather than our friends at the CCRA [Canada Customs and Revenue Agency–DH] earning interest on it.

Conclusion: It’s better to have to pay <your income tax–DH> at the end of the year.[= <You should be able to> keep your cash until you must hand it over.]

Covering generalization: If there’s no reason to donate a tax to the government all year and you might as well earn interest on the money owed rather than the tax collection agency earning it, then it’s better to keep the money owed until you must hand it over.

Evaluation: The generalization is quite plausible. The weakness of the argument is in the first premiss, which is expressed in the form of a question.

Sub-argument:

Premiss: It’s [the money you owe in income tax is–DH] your money.

Conclusion: Why donate it <the money you owe in income tax> to the government all year?

Covering generalization: Why should you donate money you owe in tax to the government all year when it is your money?

Evaluation: The premiss is a rhetorical question, to which the writer expects the recipient of his message to respond, “There’s no reason.” But of course there is a reason. Tax

systems are set up so that taxpayers are obliged to pay the tax at the time that they do something taxable (import an item on which there is a customs duty, buy some good or service on which there is a consumption tax, earn taxable income, make a taxable profit, etc.). The fact that income tax returns are filed only once a year, some months after the end of the year for which the income is being reported, does not mean that the income tax is due by the deadline for filing the return. Further, if the system were to change so that income tax was only due by the filing deadline, income tax rates would need to go up to give the government the same amount of revenue to operate. The argument is a bad argument.

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April 28, The Bill Carroll Show, CFRB, Toronto, 1010 AM, about 11:55 a.m.

Context: A shaman from Ecuador was reported to have received a one-year conditional sentence after he was found to have cost a woman her life as a result of a ceremony he performed. Juan Uyunkar, 49, was ordered to perform 150 hours of community service, to reside in the area of Wikwemikong, observe a curfew and not leave Ontario for one year. He may continue to perform healing ceremonies, but is forbidden to continue using the hallucinogen ayahuasca, also known as harmaline, a banned substance in Canada. His son Edgar, 22, was ordered to return to Ecuador within 14 days. The two men were arrested following the death of Jane Maiangowi, 71, a beloved elder in the native community of Wikwemikong (population 3,000) on the eastern shore of Manitoulin Island overlooking Georgian Bay. The Uyunkars pleaded guilty to one charge each of administering a noxious substance and trafficking in an illegal drug.

A diabetic, Ms. Maiangowi went off her medication as instructed by the Uyunkars before and during a three_day ceremony in October, 2001. She, along with about 50 other participants, drank copious amounts of a mixture of ayahuasca and nicotine, designed to induce vomiting. Some participants agreed to receive enemas. On the third night of the ceremony in October, 2001, Mrs. Maiangowi died of nicotine poisoning.

The talk show host, Bill Carroll, commented that the sentence did not seem enough to him. Callers were given a maximum of 10 seconds to make a point on this news item. Lloyd in Mississauga made the following comment: “How many times has licensed doctor prescribed conventional medicine and it kills the patient?”

Premiss: Licensed doctors have often prescribed conventional medicine that kills the patient.

Conclusion: The conditional sentence of one year for the Ecuadorean shaman whose ceremony resulted in a woman’s death is reasonable.

Analysis: The caller’s rhetorical question presents a challenge for the argument analyst. The question is posed in such a way as to indicate that its author expects his hearers to answer it in a certain way. But it is not clear precisely what answer he expects to be provided. Further, since his question is supposed to be a comment on the Ecuadorean shaman, and he does not even mention the shaman, it is best interpreted as inviting an inference to some conclusion about the shaman. But the caller does not make clear what

conclusion he expects the hearer to draw. Thus the caller is doubly evasive. He does not make any explicit claim about doctors prescribing conventional medicine, nor does he make explicit what conclusion about the shaman he draws from his implicit claim about doctors.

Covering generalization: It is reasonable for practitioners of alternative medicine to get a conditional sentence for doing what licensed doctors often do.

Evaluation: The acceptability of the covering generalization depends partly on what is a reasonable response to the action when it is performed by licensed doctors. Even if one adds as an unstated premiss the generally known background information that licensed doctors are not penalized when they prescribe conventional medicine that kills the patient, the revised covering generalization with the added phrase ‘without penalty’ is still questionable, since there is a difference between an evidence-based competent treatment that nevertheless results in a patient’s death and an incompetent treatment that is known to be harmful. Licensed physicians who harm their patients by prescribing treatments that are known to be harmful are subject to disciplinary action as well as to malpractice suits.

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April 29, The Nightside with Richard Syrett, CFRB 1010 AM, about 11:40 p.m.

Context: The deadline in Canada for filing your income tax return is April 30. Richard’s guest is Ken McMordie, under his alias “Byrun Fox”, a co-founder in 1999 of the Canadian De-Tax Group, which claims to show Canadians safe, legal and effective ways out of paying income tax. According to one article, this group claims that federal income tax in Canada is a fraud.¹⁶ The following call took place after several minutes of discussion between Richard and Byrun, as well as some calls.

Nicola: “You said that the actual original document doesn’t exist or hasn’t been recorded as existing, right?”

Byrun: “You mean the Income Tax Act.”

Nicola: “Yeah. Well, then, what stops them from changing the act then? Right. Because if there is no more original document, what stops them from changing it?”

Byrun: “That’s a very good point. What you’re raising is the issue of how do you nail it to the wall, type of thing. If they are continually changing it, continually making it difficult

¹⁶Nate Hendley, “Death before taxes! (the De_Tax Group claims common law should protect tax_evaders from prosecution)” *This Magazine* 33/5 (March/April 2000). http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286_27356226_ITM ; accessed 2009-04-26.

to get certified copies and to get back to an original, how do we have anything to compare it to?”

Analysis: The caller draws a conclusion from the claim of the guest that there is no actual original document called the Income Tax Act.

Premises: You said that the Income Tax Act doesn't exist or hasn't been recorded as existing.

If there is no more original document, what stops them from changing it?

Conclusion: What stops them from changing the Income Tax Act?

Covering generalization: A true conditional with a true antecedent has a true consequent.

Evaluation: This argument shows that spoken arguments are sometimes formally valid. Allowing for the framing of her first premiss by its attribution to the guest, and her formulation of her conclusion as a rhetorical question with the expected answer “Nothing”, her argument is clearly a *modus ponens* argument. (An alternative analysis would treat her introduction of the second premiss by the word “because” following the statement of her conclusion as an appeal to what Toulmin calls her warrant, in which case the evaluation of the inference would focus on the acceptability of this conditional. The conditional is in fact questionable, because there is no need for a document with the original text of a frequently amended act to prevent government officials from changing the act as amended. It is enough for there to be a documentation of the amendments along the way.)

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May 4, Cross Country Checkup, CBC Radio One, Toronto 99.1 FM, about 4:40 p.m.

Context: The host, Rex Murphy, is interviewing his guest, who is an expert on aging. The expert is warning that older people are going to have to work, or the economy will go downhill.

Question/issue (posed by Rex): “Should people have to retire at age 65? If so, why? If not, why not?”

Caller (Dan Simpson from Chatham, Ontario): “I had a couple of points that I wanted to make. In particular, relating to what the gentleman just said, it's my observation that fecundity is directly tied to free time, and so therefore it would make sense that the younger people should be relieved of the burden of having to work in exchange for their ability to create more families. And then it would be that, because of the age that we're living to now, we would pick up midstream and start working at maybe, say, when our children were old enough.”

Rex: “So reverse the pattern? Instead of going to work at 18 or 20, and even 25 or 30, start entering the workforce in what we at least now call midlife. Is that the idea?”

Dan: “Sure. 35. Why not 35?”

Rex: “And those that are working would be supporting those that are not working?”

Dan: “Yeah. It’s reversing the process, because I mean civilizations operate this way much, I would think, over time, anyway, you know, with the peaks and valleys. It’s just ...”

Rex (interrupting): “OK, apart though from a complete overall refashioning of the way we’re doing things, just go to the present minute as we are today, should people be retiring at 65 or not?”

Dan: “Well, OK, I don’t think people should be retiring at 65, no.”

Rex: “And why not?”

Dan: “Well because we’re living longer and its costing more to maintain benefits and we should have fair benefits you know. But I would say this too, that, being young, it’s the time of adventure, it is the time, the sort of heroic time of entry into the adult world, and with some maturity, I think the workforce would be even more motivated.”

Analysis: The caller does not answer the question, but starts right in with an argument, clearly marked by the conclusion indicator “and so, therefore”, that younger people should be relieved of the burden to work in exchange for their ability to create more families. The proposal apparently addresses the concern expressed by the guest about the prospective decline in the proportion of the population in the traditional working age, from 19 to 65.

Argument:

Premiss: Fecundity is directly tied to free time.

Conclusion: It would make sense that the younger people should be relieved of the burden of having to work in exchange for their ability to create more families.

Covering generalization: In exchange for ability to create more families, people should be given anything to which fecundity is directly tied.

Evaluation: This policy recommendation is so extreme that it takes little thought to see why it should be rejected. In the first place, it takes fecundity, or creating more families, as a desirable goal; however, it would depend on a society’s circumstances at a particular period whether creating more families was desirable. In the second place, it takes this goal as overriding; while one might then go on to ask whether a more qualified covering generalization with a *ceteris paribus* clause would be acceptable, the case to which the principle is being applied is one in which other things are clearly *not* equal, since letting young people retire on a government pension in order to raise their families would clearly have enormous financial costs. In the third place, the phrase “directly tied” is ambiguous

between a correlation and a cause-effect relationship, and makes no mention of the strength of the correlation or causal relationship; some qualification that the benefit given be a major contributor to fecundity would seem indicated.