

tion of truth with many possible answers. Was it because of cigarette advertising? Peer pressure? The dynamics of Linda's family? Dynamics in the culture (for example, white American youths are seven times more likely to smoke than are African-American youths)? Truth issues generally take one of the three following forms:

1. **Definitional issues.** Does this particular case fit into a particular category? (Is bungee jumping a "carnival ride" for purposes of state safety regulations? Is tobacco a "drug" and therefore under the jurisdiction of the Federal Drug Administration?)
2. **Causal issues.** What are the causes or consequences of this phenomenon? (Does the current welfare system encourage teenage pregnancy? Has the war in Iraq made America safer against terrorists?)
3. **Resemblance or precedence issues.** Is this phenomenon like or analogous to some other phenomenon? (Is U.S. involvement in Iraq like U.S. involvement in Vietnam? Is killing a starling like killing a rat?)

Rational arguments can involve disputes about values as well as truth. Family disagreements about what car to buy typically revolve around competing values: What is most important? Looks? Performance? Safety? Economy? Comfort? Dependability? Prestige? Similarly, many public issues ask people to choose among competing value systems: Whose values should be adopted in a given situation: Those of corporations or environmentalists? Of the fetus or the pregnant woman? Of owners or laborers? Of the individual or the state? Values issues usually fall in one of the following two categories:

1. **Evaluation issues.** How good is this particular member of its class? Is this action morally good or bad? (Was Ronald Reagan a great president? Which computer system best meets the company's needs? Is the death penalty morally wrong?)
2. **Policy issues.** Should we take this action? (Should Congress pass stricter gun control laws? Should health insurance policies cover eating disorders?)

See Chapter 15 for a fuller discussion of evaluation arguments and Chapter 16 for more on policy issues.

### **Delayed-Thesis and Rogerian Arguments**

Classical arguments are usually closed form with the writer's thesis stated prominently at the end of the introduction. Classical argument works best for neutral audiences weighing all sides of an issue or for somewhat-opposed audiences who are willing to listen to other views. However, when you address a highly resistant audience, one where your point of view seems especially threatening to your audience's values and beliefs, classical argument can seem too blunt and aggressive. In such cases, a *delayed-thesis argument* works best. In such an argument you don't state your actual thesis until the conclusion. The body of the paper extends your sympathy to the reader's views, shows how troubling the issue is to you, and leads the reader gradually toward your position.

A special kind of delayed-thesis argument is called *Rogerian argument*, named after psychologist Carl Rogers, who specialized in helping people with widely divergent views learn to talk to each other. The principle of Rogerian communication is that listeners must show empathy toward each other's worldviews and make every attempt to build bridges toward each other. In planning a Rogerian argument,

instead of asking, “What reasons and evidence will convince my reader to adopt my claim?”, you ask, “What is it about my view that especially threatens my reader? How can I reduce this threat?” Using a Rogerian strategy, the writer summarizes the audience’s point of view fairly and charitably, demonstrating the ability to listen and understand the audience’s views. The writer then reduces the threat of his or her own position by showing how both writer and resistant audience share many basic values. The key to successful Rogerian argument, besides the art of listening, is the ability to point out areas of agreement between the writer’s and the reader’s positions. Then the writer seeks a compromise between the two views.

As an example, if you support a woman’s right to choose abortion and you are arguing with someone completely opposed to abortion, you’re unlikely to convert your reader, but you may reduce the level of resistance. You begin this process by summarizing your reader’s position sympathetically, stressing your shared values. You might say, for example, that you also value babies; that you also are appalled by people who treat abortion as a form of birth control; that you also worry that the easy acceptance of abortion diminishes the value society places on human life; and that you also agree that accepting abortion lightly can lead to lack of sexual responsibility. Building bridges like these between you and your readers makes it more likely that they will listen to you when you present your own position.

### ***Avoiding Informal Fallacies***

Informal fallacies are instances of murky reasoning that can cloud an argument and lead to unsound conclusions. Because they can crop up unintentionally in anyone’s writing, and because advertisers and hucksters often use them intentionally to deceive, it is a good idea to learn to recognize the more common fallacies.

***Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc (After This, Therefore Because of This).*** This fallacy involves mistaking sequence for cause. Just because one event happens before another event doesn’t mean the first event caused the second. The connection may be coincidental, or some unknown third event may have caused both of these events.

**Example** For years I suffered from agonizing abdominal itching. Then I tried Smith’s pills. Almost overnight my abdominal itching ceased. Smith’s pills work wonders.

**Hasty Generalization.** Closely related to the *post hoc* fallacy is the hasty generalization, which refers to claims based on insufficient or unrepresentative data.

**Example** The food stamp program supports mostly freeloaders. Let me tell you about my worthless neighbor.

**False Analogy.** Analogical arguments are tricky because there are, almost always, significant differences between the two things being compared. If the two things differ greatly, the analogy can mislead rather than clarify.

**Example** You can’t force a kid to become a musician any more than you can force a tulip to become a rose.