

Thinking Straight Critical Reasoning Workshop 3-1 (April 12, 2011)

I Review of Today's Assignment.

A. (Individually) Follow along with the power point presentation of answers..

C. Plenary discussion of any remaining problems.

II. A. Discussion: What was our objective in doing exercises 3.1 and 3.2?

Ultimately, to understand and evaluate real-world arguments from our reading and our conversations. A problem is that most real-world arguments are not complete deductive arguments. By reconstructing an argument so that it fits a complete deductive pattern, we are able to tell whether, by accepting the premises, we are compelled to accept the conclusion.

—Example: argument concerning sex education (quoted on p. 66)

Well, I insist—and I here follow von Hildebrand—that we parents, we married people, in no way believe sex is dirty, but we believe it is private and intimate. Therefore, it cannot endure being publicized the way mathematics or even the way health is publicized. It is quite tactful for you to go to a party and talk about your tonsils. It is not tactful—not acceptable—for you to go to a party and talk about how your wife makes love to you, not because you think it is dirty, my friends, but because you think it is intimate.

1. Sex is private and intimate.

2. ???

∴ Sex shouldn't be publicized.

The passage comes from a book entitled *Raping our Children: The Sex Education Scandal* that argues against sex education in schools. In **small group** discuss how the argument might be incorporated in a longer argument that argues against sex education

B. The remainder of the chapter moves into applying the technique to longer passages We suggest a two step process (1) make a first approximation Put the argument in your own words and simplifying it. Then (2), if necessary make it more detailed and subtle if the passage warrants it. **Examination of Example 3.12**

III Longer argumentative passages

A. In **small group** discuss the example below, then reconstruct the argument it contains by constructing a first approximation of the conclusion and supporting point in your own words, then find linking premises that fit the basic patterns or some extension of them. Be prepared to write your reconstruction on the board

*Books and magazines that use a vocabulary that deludes women into thinking themselves rebels and outlaws, on the cusp of some new freedom, misperceive our basic situation. A defect in the early thinking of the women's movement was a tendency to liberate women not for life but for life in the counterculture; when that life was over, many women found themselves in limbo. . . . If we wish to be firm-voiced and progressive about meeting our primary needs, we should not point our heads in the direction of the wrong revolution. Vague definitions such as sister, rebel and outlaw may be handy for magazines in search of a vast circulation, but are of no use to thinking adults. Sexual liberation without economic security grants women merely the right to stay marginal. Women must cease being conned into substituting fantasy sexual revolutions for political pressure or real reforms that would give us true equality. (Barbara Probst Solomon, "This Take-a-Lover Chatter Overlooks the Bottom Line" *International Herald Tribune*, 10 July 1992.)*

B. Plenary Discussion of this passage

C 1. **Individually** read the Gun-Control essay on the next page and reconstruct the arguments in paragraph 1 and paragraph 3, as well as any other you find important

2. In small group, discuss your reconstructions.
 3. Agree on a reconstruct to put on the board.
- D. Plenary discussion of results and evaluation of the argument.

License Users of Guns, Just Like Drivers of Cars
Opposing view: Only the law-abiding will submit to such
restrictions, thereby making crime easier

(By André Marrou, 1992 Libertarian Party presidential nominee)²⁵

If anti-gun laws worked, then New York and Washington, with the toughest anti-gun laws, would have the lowest crime rates. But they have the *highest*.

Conversely, crime rates plummeted up to 90% after certain cities and states—like Orlando, Fla., and Kennesaw, Ga.—allowed law-abiding citizens to carry concealed handguns.

The reason should be obvious: law-abiding citizens know and obey the law. Criminals don't care what the law is and won't obey it. So who benefits when gun ownership and use are restricted? The criminals, because decent folks are disarmed by the law, making it easier for criminals to prey upon them.

Registering guns and licensing gun owners won't reduce crime any more than registering cars and licensing drivers now reduce traffic accidents—which is to say, hardly at all.

With millions of highly restrictive laws, still about 44,000 Americans yearly die in traffic

accidents, while about 15,000 are shot to death. Since there are fewer cars than guns, cars are clearly more dangerous than guns. Should we outlaw cars?

Like cars, guns are dangerous tools. So are kitchen knives (ask John Bobbitt) and chain saws; should we register or outlaw them, or license their use? Just because something is dangerous—say climbing mountains or riding bulls—doesn't mean we should restrict its use or test and license its practitioners.

Guns are tools, not evil instruments capable of their own malevolence. A gun simply amplifies its user's power. In a rapist's hands, a gun is bad; in a law-abiding woman's hand, it's good. New York and Washington have proved that guns cannot be kept from criminal hands; shouldn't we let decent people arm themselves without licensing?

Ultimately, "gun control" is not about guns. It's about control. Beware.

25. The January 1, 1994, issue of *USA TODAY* contained an editorial titled "License Users of Guns, Just Like Drivers of Cars," which presented the position of the editorial staff. It defended the position that "as a matter of public safety and accountability, the states should require that all gun users be licensed." The André Marrou selection above presents an opposing view.