What Are the Value Conflicts and Assumptions?

CSIT 58 Chapter 5
A reason can be true and not support the conclusion.

The government should require that ergonomically designed computer equipment and furniture be provided to workers. This will decrease the incidence of repetitive stress injury, eye strain, headache, and neck and back pain.
The argument makes sense if you believe that it is the responsibility of government to look after the welfare of the individual.

What if you believe that it is the individual’s responsibility to take care of his own welfare? To provide for his own health and safety by demanding it from the employer or switching jobs if he can’t handle it?
Assumptions

In all arguments the writer will make assumptions. Assumptions can be:

- Hidden or unstated
- Taken for granted.
- Influential in determining the conclusion
- Necessary, if the reasoning is to make sense
- Potentially deceptive.
Value Assumptions

- A person’s values influence the reasons he provides and the conclusion.

- Look for value assumptions that are:
  - needed in order for the reason(s) to support the conclusions
  - necessary for a reason to be true.
The Assumption is Necessary

The reasons will logically support the conclusion only if the value assumption is added to the reasoning.

Reason
Online gambling feeds addictions.

Value Assumption
Public safety is more important than freedom of choice.

Conclusion
Online gambling should not be legalized.
Defining Values

Values are ideas that people see as worthwhile. They provide standards of conduct by which we measure the quality of human behavior.
Some Commonly Held Values
(You’ll see a bigger list in the Assignment)

adventure
autonomy
comfort
coopération
creativity
equal opportunity
flexibility
genosity
honesty
novelty
patriotism

ambition
needs of the collective
individual responsibility
courage
equality of condition
excellence
freedom of speech
harmony
justice
order
peace

privacy
security
tolerance
wisdom
rationality
spontaneity
tradition
competition
Value Conflict

Value conflicts arise when people give different priorities to each value. What are the conflicts?

- Should DNA information be kept in a national database for police departments to access?
- Should schools and libraries be required to provide equal access to computers for the disabled?
- Is Microsoft a monopoly that should be broken up because they have an unfair advantage as the producers of the Windows system software?
Conflicts

- Should DNA information be kept in a national database for police departments to access?
  Privacy vs. security
- Should schools and libraries be required to provide equal access to computers for the disabled?
  Equal opportunity vs. Individual Responsibility
- Is Microsoft a monopoly that should be broken up because they have an unfair advantage as the producers of the Windows system software?
  Competition vs. Fairness
Typical Conflicts

Loyalty-Honesty
Competition-Cooperation
Freedom of Speech-Security
Equality-Individualism
Achievement-Learning
Security-Excitement
Generosity-Material success
Rationality-spontaneity
Tradition-novelty
Individual Responsibility-Collective Responsibility
Efficiency-Social stability
Value Assumption

A value assumption is an implicit (embedded) preference for one value over another in a particular context.

Also called value judgment, value preference or value priority.

How do you find them?
Clues for Identifying

- Investigate the author’s background
- Use reverse role-playing. Take the opposite position.
- Look for common value conflicts. There may be more than one.
- Ask “Why do the consequences of the author’s position seem so important to him or her?”
- Search for similar social controversies to find analogous value assumptions
Look at the Author’s Background

A clue can come from the value preferences usually held by a person like the writer. What interests does such a person naturally wish to protect?

- doctor
- politician
- computer professional
- marketer
- college professor
- student
- longshoreman
- etc.
An Example

During a recent dockworkers labor action, the *Los Angeles Times* presented this conflict:

- ILWU wants to control data on shipping.
- Shipping companies want the data to be on the Internet.

Value social stability (union jobs) vs. automation/efficiency
Consequences as Clues

Each position with respect to an issue leads to different consequences or outcomes. How desirable a consequence is depends on the writer’s or reader’s value preferences.

*Anonymous digital cash should not go into widespread use because government control of cash stabilizes the economy.*
Consequence Example

Digital cash is designed to be an electronic replacement for cash that is stored on your PC and spent on the Internet-without leaving a trail to its source.

The previous statement assumes that stability from government control of the monetary system is a more important consequence than the freedom of consumers to purchase goods anonymously (not using a credit card number).
Common Value Conflicts

The same value conflicts surface in many different social controversies and are easy to identify:

*Individual freedom vs. respect for others*

Should Nazi groups have web sites?

*Public Safety vs. individual responsibility*

Should watching TV while driving be illegal?
Similar Value Conflicts

Many issues share important characteristics:

- Should face-recognition software be used in public places to identify terrorists?
- Should the FBI be allowed to monitor e-mail messages?
- Should information about child molesters be published on the internet (Megan’s Law)?

Can you identify a value conflict that exists in all of these?

Hint: they all involve the government knowing things about you and doing things with the information.
Ethics

- The textbook doesn’t discuss ethics.
- Ethics or morals are a stronger form of values that reflect right or wrong behavior, or good and evil. Is it stealing?

Your friend in the neighboring apartment can’t afford to pay for broadband Internet access. He’s taking an online class and can’t keep up with the work without it. He wants to run a cable out the window of your apartment to his so he can use yours.
Excuses or Rationalizations

When people violate their ethics or values, they often rationalize it with something like the following:

*The ends justify the means*
*It’s not illegal*
*I did it for you*
*He did it to me first*
*Nobody got hurt*
*Everyone else does it*
*I didn’t get any money for it*
*I deserve it*
Practice With Values
The assignment and discussion for this module ask you to think about the values held by different people.
You have to set your own values aside and look at things from another point of view.

End of lecture