



MGMT 117: Business, Ethics, and Society

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Redefine the Possible™



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Developing an Argument

Redefine the Possible™

What Is an Argument?

- The central idea of your paper, also known as the thesis statement.
- Based on your research and evidence.
- Goes beyond description and takes an explicit position on an issue.
- Stated in the introduction of the paper, and supported throughout.
- Usually presented in one or two sentences.

What Is an Argument?

- Can include clues to the reader to signal the argument, such as: “In this paper, I argue...” or “The argument of this paper is...” or “It is argued...”, etc.
- Different than a problem statement and forecasting statement.
 - Problem statement identifies the issue.
 - Forecasting statement provides the organization of the paper.

What Is the Difference Between a Good & Bad Argument

Good Arguments

- Stated clearly, using cues for the reader such as “I argue...”
- Take stand on the issue.
- Logically sound, i.e., do not use one of many logical fallacies to reason.
- Correctly apply a lens - uses a few concepts to state position.

Bad Arguments

- Stated ambiguously, and lacks cues to signal what the argument is.
- Do not take a stand on the issue.
- Engage in fallacious reasoning.
- Incorrectly apply lens, use too few or too many concepts.

A Brief Detour into Bad Arguments

- You need to be able to spot them in your own and others' writings.
- Here are several examples presented of arguments that use faulty logic.

A Brief Detour into Bad Arguments

- The examples of bad arguments were generated with ChatGPT (with prompt create an example ### logical fallacy argument about the Wells Fargo fake account scandal).
- Revisions to bad arguments were prompted by: Revise the quoted thesis statement so that it does not use the ### fallacy.

What Are Logical Fallacies?

- **Fallacies** are errors in reasoning that undermine your argument. These include use of emotion-laden language, unsound conclusions, irrelevance, diversion, ambiguity, confusion, oversimplification, erroneous comparison and contrast, etc.

Gula, R. (2007).

What Are Logical Fallacies?

- Some example **fallacies** include:
 - Slippery slope
 - Hasty generalization
 - Circular argument
 - Ad hominem
 - Straw man
 - False dilemma (either-or)
 - Genetic Fallacy
 - Appeal to the Bandwagon
 - Composition and Division

Almossawi, A. (2014).

Slippery Slope Fallacy

- A fallacy that states if one thing happens, then, through a series of small steps, a larger, more consequential event or problem will inevitably happen.

Almossawi, A. (2014).

Ex: Slippery Slope Fallacy

“If we don’t hold Wells Fargo accountable for such egregious misconduct, all financial institutions will engage in similar deceptive practices without fear of severe repercussions.”

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Ex: Slippery Slope Fallacy

Revision

“It is important to hold Wells Fargo accountable for its egregious misconduct to deter other financial institutions from engaging in similar deceptive practices.”

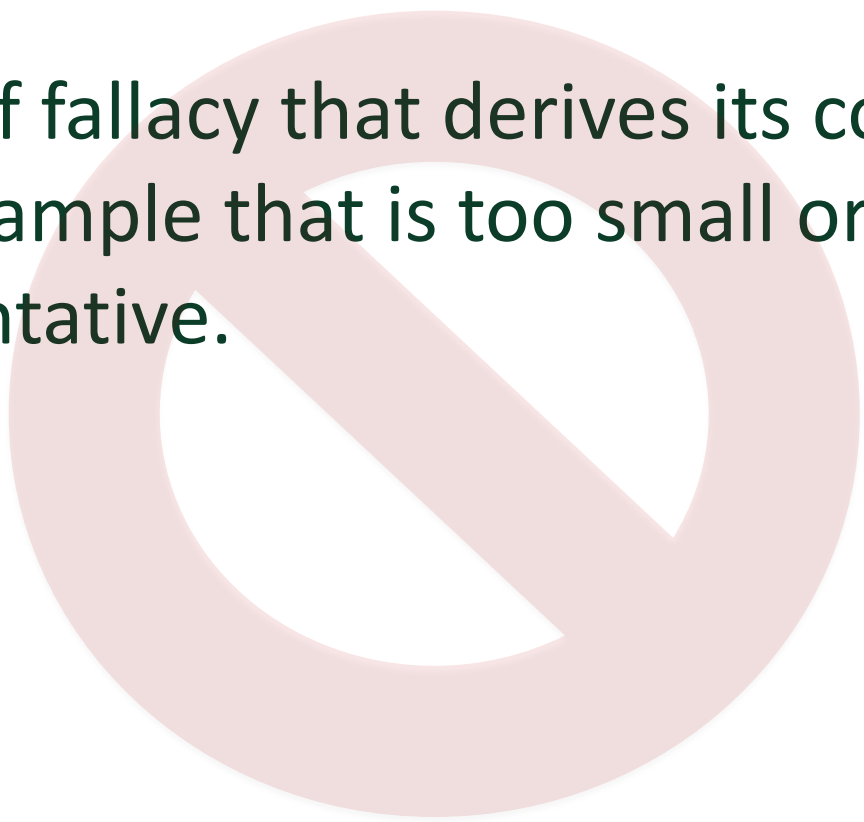
Explanation about How the Fallacy was Addressed and Impact On Argument

- Statement removed exaggerated prediction that all financial institutions would engage in ethical misconduct.
- There is still a position/stance – accountability creates deterrence.

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Hasty Generalization Fallacy

- A type of fallacy that derives its conclusion from a sample that is too small or not representative.



Ex: Hasty Generalization Fallacy

“The Wells Fargo fake account scandal demonstrates that all large banks are corrupt and cannot be trusted. Since Wells Fargo engaged in unethical behavior, it follows that all large banks follow similar practices. Therefore, it is wise to avoid banking with any large bank.”

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Ex: Hasty Generalization Fallacy

Revision

“The Wells Fargo fake account scandal raises concerns about the ethical practices within a large bank. It is important to consider the individual reputation of each bank before making decisions about where to bank.”

Explanation about How the Fallacy was Addressed and Impact On Argument

- Revision focuses on how Wells Fargo is an example of unethical practices, rather than a sweeping generalization..
- There is a position/stance – but this has located responsibility with individual consumers.

Circular Argument Fallacy

- A type of fallacy where the writer restates the argument rather than providing evidence. A type of begging the question.

Almossawi, A. (2014).

Ex: Circular Argument Fallacy

“Wells Fargo cannot be trusted because they were involved in the fake account scandal. We know that the fake account scandal proves Wells Fargo cannot be trusted because it shows they engaged in unethical behavior.”

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Ex: Circular Argument Fallacy



The fake account scandal proves they cannot be trusted because they engaged in unethical behavior.

Wells Fargo cannot be trusted because they were involved in the fake account scandal.

Ex: Circular Argument Fallacy

Revision

"The involvement of Wells Fargo in the fake account scandal raises valid concerns about their trustworthiness. The unethical behavior exhibited by the bank calls into question their reliability and warrants careful evaluation of their practices."

Explanation about How the Fallacy was Addressed and Impact On Argument

- Revision avoids making a circular argument by not conflating one of the premises with the conclusion.
- Stance is to evaluate the organization's practices. Still very general.

Ad Hominem Fallacy

- A type of fallacy that attacks a person or entity rather than the argument, to divert the topic and discredit the person/entity. It is a type of red herring (redirects the topic away from the original proposition).

Almossawi, A. (2014).

Ex: Ad Hominem Fallacy

“The Wells Fargo fake account scandal is just another example of corporate greed and corruption. It's not surprising that a bank with such a tarnished reputation would engage in such unethical behavior. After all, their executives have always been known to be dishonest and manipulative. Therefore, we should not trust anything that Wells Fargo says or does.”

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Ex: Ad Hominem Fallacy

Revision

“The Wells Fargo fake account scandal raises concerns about the company’s ethics and highlights the need to scrutinize carefully the actions and statements of financial institutions.”

Explanation about How the Fallacy was Addressed and Impact On Argument

- Revision addresses the issue of corporate ethics rather than relying on personal attacks against company executives.
- Stance is very general – to scrutinize the actions of financial institutions.

Straw Man Fallacy

- A type of fallacy in which the writer oversimplifies an opponent's position and attacks the oversimplification rather than the actual argument. Also a type of red herring (redirects the topic away from the original proposition).

Almossawi, A. (2014).

Ex: Straw Man Fallacy

Those who criticize Wells Fargo's handling of the fake account scandal are just being overly sensitive and exaggerating the situation. They portray the bank as a criminal enterprise intentionally defrauding millions of customers, when in reality, it was just a few employees making mistakes. By misrepresenting the critics' claims and blowing the issue out of proportion, they are unfairly attacking Wells Fargo and disregarding the bank's overall contributions to the economy.

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Ex: Straw Man Fallacy

Revision

“Critics of Wells Fargo's handling of the fake account scandal highlight legitimate concerns about the bank's actions. It is important to assess the scope of the misconduct and its impact on customers, while also considering Wells Fargo's broader contributions to the economy.”

Explanation about How the Fallacy was Addressed and Impact On Argument

- Revision makes a more balanced argument by addressing the validity of the concerns, while not misrepresenting critics' claims.
- Stance is still fairly general – to assess the scope of misconduct and weight it with the company's contributions.

False Dilemma Fallacy

- A type of fallacy that presents two possible categories and assumes that everything within the scope of the discussion is part of that set. It is based on unwarranted assumptions in that it simplifies the argument to two choices – either this or that, when there other potential options.

Almossawi, A. (2014).

Ex: False Dilemma Fallacy

“In the Wells Fargo fake account scandal, either the bank intentionally defrauded customers or it was an innocent mistake caused by a few rogue employees. Since there is no concrete evidence of deliberate intent, we must conclude that it was just a case of a few bad apples and not systemic wrongdoing. Therefore, we can dismiss any allegations of widespread unethical behavior within Wells Fargo.”

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Ex: False Dilemma Fallacy

Revision

“The Wells Fargo fake account scandal requires a careful examination of the bank's actions to determine the extent of wrongdoing and potential systemic issues.”

Explanation about How the Fallacy was Addressed and Impact On Argument

- Revision avoids the false dilemma fallacy by recognizing potential varying degrees of wrongdoing beyond a simple binary choice.
- Stance is to evaluate the bank's actions – still very general.

Genetic Fallacy

- A type of fallacy that is committed when an idea is devalued or defended based on the origins. It is a type of red herring (redirects the topic away from the original proposition).

Almossawi, A. (2014).

Ex: Genetic Fallacy

“The Wells Fargo fake account scandal is irrelevant because the bank has a long history of successful operations and positive contributions to the economy. Just because they made a mistake in this instance does not diminish their overall credibility and reputation. Therefore, we should disregard the scandal and continue to view Wells Fargo as a trustworthy institution.”

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Ex: Genetic Fallacy

Revision

“The Wells Fargo fake account scandal should be evaluated independently, considering both the bank's history of successful operations and positive contributions to the economy, as well as the significance of the specific misconduct in this instance.”

Explanation about How the Fallacy was Addressed and Impact On Argument

- Revision avoids genetic fallacy by expressing the need to evaluate the scandal independent of the organization's past history and positive contributions.
- Stance is still fairly general – to assess the scope of misconduct and weight it with the company's contributions.

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Appeal to the Bandwagon Fallacy

- A type of fallacy that urges acceptance of the argument based on the number of people (majority) who hold the view. It is a type of red herring (redirects the topic away from the original proposition).

Almossawi, A. (2014).

Ex: Appeal to the Bandwagon Fallacy

“Everyone is criticizing Wells Fargo for the fake account scandal, so it must be true that the bank is guilty of widespread fraud. Since the majority of people believe it, we should also join in condemning the bank without questioning the validity of the claims.”

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Ex: Appeal to the Bandwagon Fallacy

Revision

“The widespread criticism of Wells Fargo regarding the fake account scandal raises important concerns that warrant careful examination. Nevertheless, it is essential to independently assess the validity of the claims before passing judgment on the bank.”

Explanation about How the Fallacy was Addressed and Impact On Argument

- Revision addresses widespread criticism of Wells Fargo, but then underscores the need for an independent evaluation.
- Stance is too general/generic.

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Composition and Division Fallacies

- **Composition fallacy:** A type of fallacy that draws generalizations about the whole based on an attribute of the component parts.
- **Division fallacy:** A type of fallacy that draws inferences about parts based on an attribute of the whole.
- Both types are based on unwarranted assumptions.

Almossawi, A. (2014).

Ex: Composition and Division Fallacies

Composition Fallacy

“Individual employees at Wells Fargo engaged in fraudulent practices with the fake account scandal. Therefore, it can be concluded that the entire organization of Wells Fargo is corrupt and unethical.”

Division Fallacy

“Wells Fargo engaged in unethical practices with the fake account scandal. Therefore, all individual employees within the organization must also be corrupt and untrustworthy.”

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Ex: Composition and Division Fallacies

Revision - Composition

“The involvement of individual employees in fraudulent practices during the fake account scandal raises concerns about the ethics within certain divisions of Wells Fargo.”

Explanation about How the Fallacy was Addressed and Impact On Argument

- Revision no longer draws conclusion about ethical practices across the entire organization.
- Stance is very general.

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Ex: Composition and Division Fallacies

Revision - Division

“The involvement of Wells Fargo in unethical practices during the fake account scandal raises concerns about the integrity of the organization.”

Explanation about How the Fallacy was Addressed and Impact On Argument

- Revision no longer draws conclusion about all individuals in the organization.
- Stance is very general.

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There Are Many More Fallacies

- Further reading:
 - Almossawi, A. (2014). An illustrated book of bad arguments: Lear the lost art of making sense.
<https://bookofbadarguments.com/>
 - Gula, R.J. (2007). Nonsense: Red herrings, straw men, and sacred cows: How we abuse logic in our everyday language.

Example Argument – Address How or Why The WF Scandal Happened

- In this paper, I argue that the Wells Fargo fraudulent account scandal was the result of a hyper-competitive organizational culture. In this culture, managers communicated unattainable sales goals to staff and failed to respond to concerns about unethical behaviors resulting from those goals. Misalignment between organizational rewards and punishments contributed to pressure, and led to employees' unethical behavior.

Fuller, R.P.

Example Problem Statement – Define the WF Ethical Issue

- The ethical problem under examination is the Wells Fargo fraudulent account scandal. In 2013, it was discovered that Wells Fargo had opened more than 1.5 million deposit accounts and processed more than 500,000 credit card applications without the permission of account holders. These unauthorized accounts had negative consequences for account holders- such as incurring fees or impacting credit scores.

Example Forecasting Statement – Address the Order of the Paper

- This paper starts by overviewing organizational culture and the impact on ethical or unethical behavior. Then, it provides background on the Wells Fargo case study and analyzes the fraudulent account scandal to address how it happened as the result of a hypercompetitive culture. Recommendations are made to improve the organization's “broken” culture.

Fuller, R.P.

Example Argument – Address How or Why The WF Scandal Happened

- In this paper, I argue that the Wells Fargo fraudulent account scandal was the result of the organization's weak ethical infrastructure. In this case, informal systems of communication, surveillance, and sanctioning were inconsistent with and more powerful than the formal systems, and contributed to unethical behaviors by managers and employees.

Fuller, R.P.

Example Forecasting Statement – Address the Order of the Paper

- This paper starts with an explanation of ethical infrastructure and the relationship to ethical behavior. Then, it provides background on the Wells Fargo case study and analyzes the fraudulent account scandal to address how it happened as the result of weak ethical infrastructure. Recommendations are made to improve the organization's ethical infrastructure through informal systems, formal systems, and organizational climate.

Fuller, R.P.

Example Argument – Address How or Why The WF Scandal Happened

- In this paper, I argue that the moral mum effect contributed to the Wells Fargo fraudulent account scandal. In this case, managers did not regularly engage in moral talk or establish trust with their subordinates. The absence of moral talk and trust in turn created an environment where employees were uncomfortable expressing upward ethical dissent.

Fuller, R.P.

Example Forecasting Statement – Address the Order of the Paper

- This paper starts by overviewing the moral mum effect and its relationship to ethical behavior. Then, it provides background on the Wells Fargo case study and analyzes the fraudulent account scandal to address how it happened as the result of lack of trust and regular moral talk. Recommendations are made to create an environment that supports upward ethical dissent by establishing trust and regular moral talk.

Fuller, R.P.