

Directions: Use the template to fully reconstruct the reasoning of the example below. In addition, identify (a) the subject, (b) the main issue(s) and five of the following errors, using the associated method of identification on the Index of Criticisms. Note, in this example do not assume that the rationales link to specific paragraphs.

Ad hominem  
Equivocation  
Innuendo  
Red Herring  
Straw Man  
Weak Comparison  
Weak Distinction

Example 1 (Adapted from Slate Magazine)

Last month, the *London Independent* ran a story about the cell phones causing brain tumors, and the Breast Cancer Fund released a report on carcinogenic chemicals women should avoid, chief among them: pesticides, power lines, and solvents. Their message is clear: the natural world is less toxic and more healthful than the industrial one. The best way to avoid cancer is to eschew technology, buy only organic produce, drink unpasteurized milk from specialty dairies, eat lots of fiber to cleanse the colon of carcinogens, and avoid inexpensive cosmetics. To protect one's family, in short, become a paranoid consumer of everyday "artificial" products.

With dubious links between cancer and cell phones offered as worry candy, we forget serious natural causes of cancer like sunlight, which is clearly linked to deadly melanomas. For years, manufacturers have touted the anti-cancer benefits of sunscreen. But how many people realize that the principle cause of skin cancer (aka: melanoma) is UV-A radiation, which isn't blocked by sunscreen at all? The Food and Drug Administration does not even consider UV-A in its labeling requirements for this product.

This obsession with man-made toxins not only reflects a small-minded view of cancer's causes but hints at a worrisome theme in American public health. Our scattershot approach to preventing cancer subscribes to the cult of personal responsibility, albeit with a recent eco-friendly twist: To really help themselves, goes the thinking, people must take charge of their health and avoid cancer-causing, artificial products. We're starting to believe that cancer mostly is prevented by informing individuals to change their consumption habits—not by proactive, broad-based public-health measures like widespread vaccination or agricultural reform. This is as misguided as telling consumers that they can bring global warming to a screeching halt by simply reusing their shopping bags and recycling their empty Evian bottles.

We need a policy that encourages people to pay attention to the real culprits. For example, most women today are infected with human papilloma virus, which is a necessary precondition for about half a million cervical cancers. These numbers dwarf those associated with DES exposure. To prevent HPV infection—and later cancer—people must be vaccinated before their sexual debuts, preferably as pre-adolescents. Yet several state legislatures have withdrawn bills encouraging vaccination and fewer than half now have HPV education programs.

The dominant strategy of cancer prevention by alarmist publicizing of man-made carcinogens, regardless of their relative importance does far more harm than good. Of course those who create this publicity will deny any responsibility for strategy; they are selling newspapers, after all, not educating children or crafting public policy. This may be true, but they can not be let off the hook so easily. Information is a precious commodity, and those who trade in it have a much greater responsibility than other businesses to insure the quality of their product.

**Example 1**

**Subject:** The subject of this article is the public understanding of the causes of cancer.

**Issue(s):** The issue is whether or not the media is aiding the public in the way it reports news about cancer.

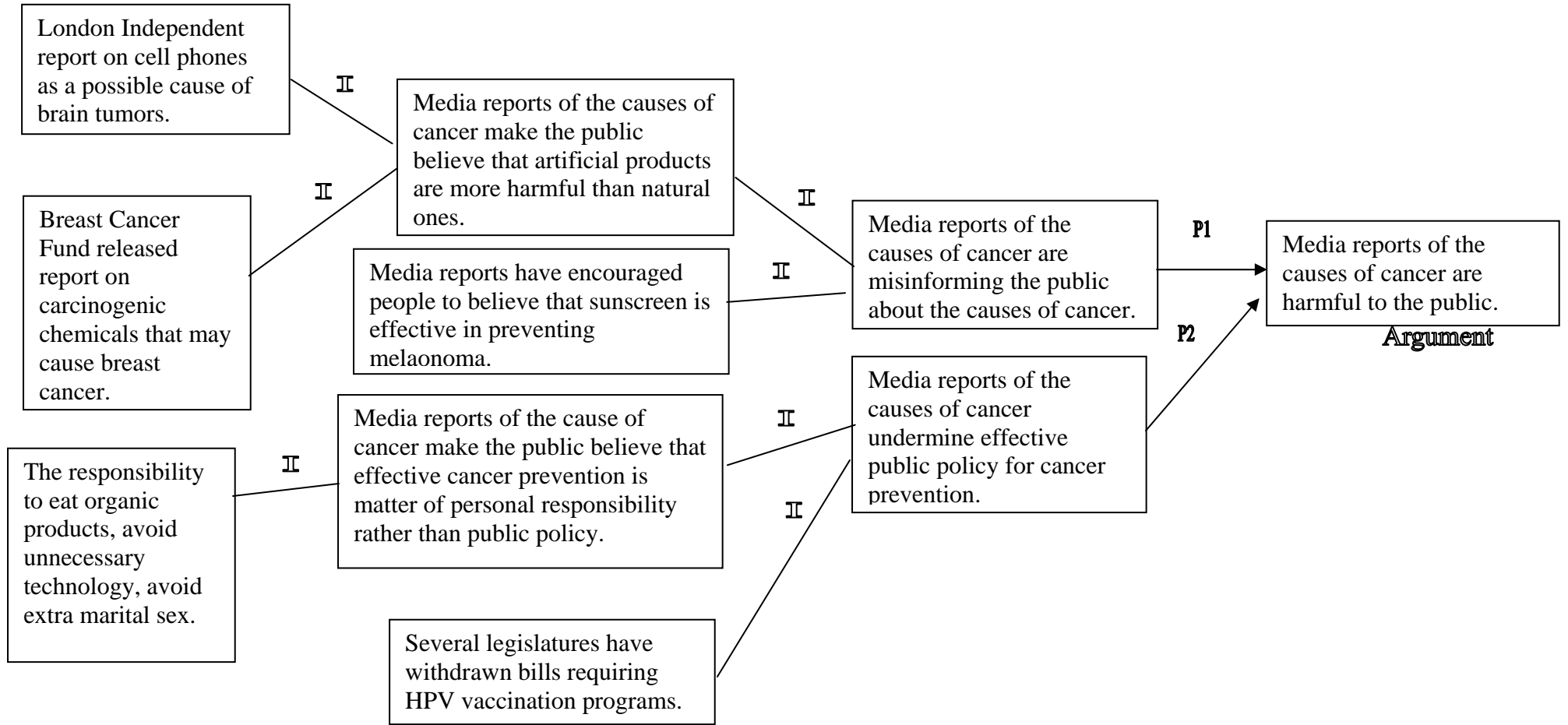
**Error 1:** In the first paragraph the author commits a straw man. The author identifies two media reports on cancer arising from the use of technology. He then characterizes these reports in a weakened form as sending a message that all or most cancer arises from the use of technology.

**Error 2:** In the second paragraph the author equivocates on the term "skin cancer". He strongly suggests that skin cancer in general is not prevented by sunscreen. However, this is true only of the rare form of skin cancer called melanoma. Sunscreen does provide some protection from the more common form called basal cell carcinoma. By equivocating on these two different senses of the term, the author makes the reader think that sunscreen has no value in protecting against skin cancer of any kind.

**Error 3:** In the third paragraph the author makes a weak comparison between telling people they can prevent cancer by making responsible personal choices, and telling the public they can prevent global warming by making responsible personal choices. The author is correct in claiming that these problems are similar insofar as they both must be dealt with at the public policy level. However, an individual is actually far more able to diminish the likelihood of getting cancer through personal choices than to diminish global warming through personal choices. For example, the choice not to smoke has a very significant impact on a person's likelihood of getting lung cancer.

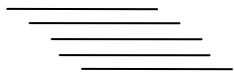
**Error 4:** In the final paragraph the author commits an ad Hominem. He attempts to refute or undermine media reports on the causes of cancer by attempting to discredit the media as having no interest in the truth, and only having interest in selling their product.

**Error 5:** In the final paragraph the author makes a weak distinction between businesses that sell information and businesses that sell other products, claiming that the former has a greater responsibility to the public than the latter to insure the integrity of their product. He gives no reason for thinking this. It seems that company that builds motor vehicles, bridges, or children's toys has just as much responsibility to make sure their products are safe.

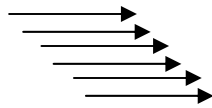


P1: If x misinforms y, then x causes harm to y.  
 P2: If x undermines effective strategy y for dealing with problem z, then x is harmful to those who suffer from problem z.

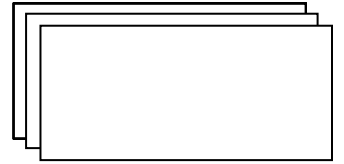
II  
II II  
II II



P1 P2 P3 P4  
P5 P6 P7 P8

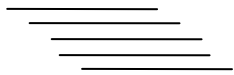


Explanation  
Argument  
Explanation  
Argument

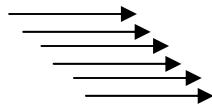


P1: P2: P3: P4: P5:
---------------------------------

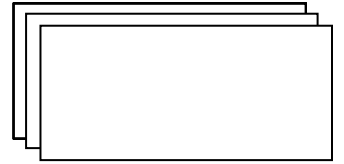
II  
II II  
II II



P1 P2 P3 P4  
P5 P6 P7 P8

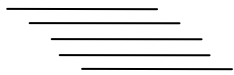


Explanation  
Argument  
Explanation  
Argument

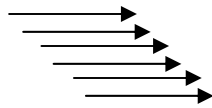


P1: P2: P3: P4: P5:
---------------------------------

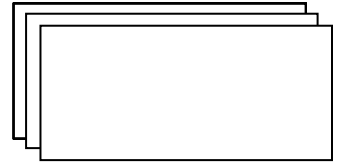
II  
II II  
II II



P1 P2 P3 P4  
P5 P6 P7 P8



Explanation  
Argument  
Explanation  
Argument



P1: P2: P3: P4: P5:
---------------------------------