

studies and present them as if a causal connection has been demonstrated. The studies showing a correlation between violent video games and real violence offer just such an example. A debater might use these studies as the basis for claiming that banning violent video games would reduce teenage violence. Such a claim assumes a causal connection between the two variables.

It might well be that the same teenagers who have violent tendencies in real life are also drawn to video games that are violent. Accordingly, there is a strong correlation between real violence and video violence. This does not, however, prove that banning video games would change the violent tendencies of teenagers.

ARGUMENT BY DIVISION

Yet another method of reasoning uses *division*—the process of elimination to arrive at a conclusion. A computer program uses division as its method of reasoning; at every point in a computer's binary logic, the decision is always between zero and one.

Many of our everyday uses of argument also employ division. Consider the following example: "The safe in the office was robbed sometime last evening. Only Smith, Jones, and Thompson knew the combination to the safe. Smith is on vacation in Australia; Jones was with several friends the whole evening. It must have been Thompson who robbed the safe." This logic sample illustrates numerous flaws with division, which are explored later.

Following is an example of the way a debater might use division: "Iran doesn't deny that it is developing the ability to produce highly enriched uranium. Iran's motive for doing so must be either to use enriched uranium in nuclear reactors or to store material for constructing nuclear weapons. The first possibility makes no sense. After all, Iran is sitting atop one of the world's richest supplies of oil; they have less need for nuclear power than any other nation on earth. It is clear that Iran is enriching uranium in preparation for the building of nuclear weapons." Notice that the debater uses the process of establishing alternatives and then sorting/discarding the alternatives.

There are three primary questions that should be asked about argument by division:

- Have we identified all the alternatives?
- Are the alternatives mutually exclusive?
- Are there good reasons for rejecting other alternatives?

A common problem with argument by division is a failure to start with all the alternatives. Consider the previous example of the safe that has been robbed. Why do we assume that the person robbing the safe must have been one of the three with the combination? Consider the other alternatives: a professional safe cracker robbed it, the