

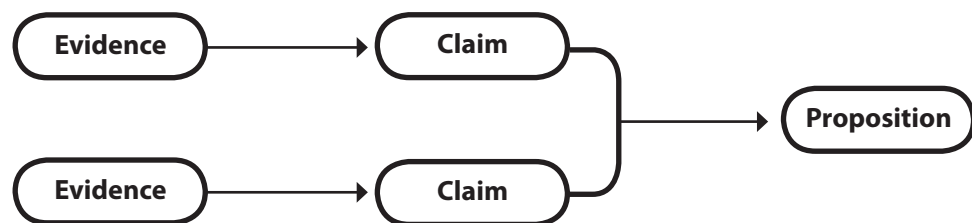
probability needed to prove the claim; the .05 level of confidence, for example, is a less rigorous force than the .01 level of confidence. When social scientists say their claim was supported to the .05 level of confidence, they are predicting that in 100 attempts to repeat their study, similar results would occur in at least 95 cases. In the case of the .01 level of confidence, the prediction is 99 of 100 cases. In the statement of everyday claims, we sometimes use words and phrases such as *possibly*, *worthy of consideration*, *probably*, or *certainly* to register the various degrees of force everyday claims may carry.

The degree of force a claim carries affects the amount of commitment an audience needs before they accept the claim. To say that a person is guilty “beyond a reasonable doubt and to a moral certainty” requires a greater degree of commitment than saying that the person’s guilt is based on the “preponderance of evidence.” To commit to the language “beyond a reasonable doubt and to a moral certainty,” you would need to believe that the chances of the claim being false were very slim indeed. However, commitment to a claim including the phrase “by the preponderance of evidence” simply means you believe the chances that the claim is true are better than the chances that the claim is false. The second is an easier claim to prove because it requires less commitment on the part of the audience.

DISTINGUISHING CLAIMS AND PROPOSITIONS

A controversial statement supported with evidence and warrants is called a claim, and a debater can combine several claims to advocate a proposition. The main difference between claims and propositions is that claims are narrower statements used to support broader propositions. Thus, the term *proposition* refers to the ultimate or final claim a debater is making. A proposition is usually supported by combining several claims.

Earlier we learned that evidence is the starting point a debater uses to support a claim. Similarly, claims are the starting points an arguer uses to support propositions. Thus, a debater might use two or more claims to support a proposition as shown in the following illustration:



For instance, when arguing about gun control, a debater might need to combine claims to advocate a proposition. The first claim might be that “handguns are frequently used in crimes of passion” and the second that “handguns are frequently involved in accidental shootings.” She could then combine these two claims to support the proposition that “possession of handguns should be illegal.” The relationship between these claims and the proposition is illustrated below: