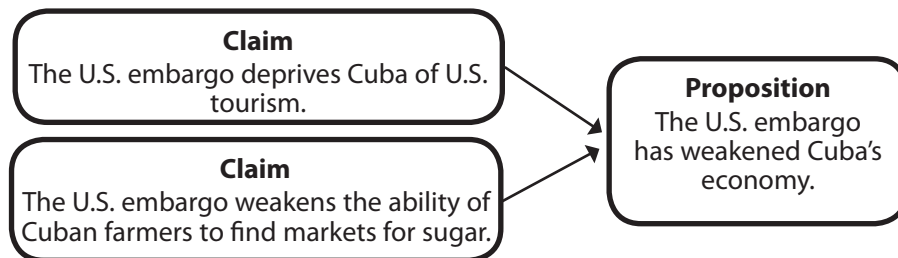


PROPOSITIONS OF RELATIONSHIP

Propositions of relationship go beyond describing objects to asserting how certain objects are related to others. Two of the most important kinds of propositions of relationship are propositions of cause and effect and propositions of similarity. For example, the proposition that “the U.S. embargo of Cuba has weakened the Cuban economy” is an assertion about the relationship between two things: the U.S. embargo of Cuba and the Cuban economy. The statement suggests that these two are related to each other by cause and effect. The cause is the U.S. embargo of Cuba and the effect is a weakened Cuban economy.

This cause-and-effect proposition, like all propositions, must be controversial. Here, the controversy surrounds the cause for Cuba’s weakened economy. Some assert that Cuba’s economy has suffered because of Fidel Castro’s particular form of communism rather than because of U.S. trade policies. The argument, then, is one of relationship between what caused the effect of a failing Cuban economy.

To support such a proposition, you might argue that several elements of the Cuban economy are weaker than they would be except for the U.S. embargo. For instance, you might argue that the embargo deprives Cuba of U.S. tourism and that it weakens the ability of Cuban farmers to find markets for their crops such as sugar. As we can see in the diagram below, you can use these arguments to create an argument of cause-and-effect relationship:



Another kind of proposition of relationship suggests that two things are related to each other not because one thing causes the other, but because the two are similar. An example of such a proposition of similarity is the statement: “the U.S. embargo of Cuba is the Berlin Wall of the Post–Cold War Period.”³ Such a proposition does not literally mean that the Cuban embargo is the Berlin Wall, because, taken literally, the statement would be preposterous. Rather, the proposition suggests that the actions of the U.S.S.R. to cut off East Berlin from the rest of the world were similar to the actions of the United States to cut off Cuba.

Another example of a proposition of similarity is the statement that “capital punishment is essentially the same as murder.” This is a proposition of similarity suggesting that capital punishment and murder are comparable because they share essential characteristics. This proposition is supported by claims that both capital punishment and murder are premeditated acts of taking of a human life. The diagram below illustrates this example: