

English 286
Claims & Warrants

1. Read the following:

Frank, Thomas. "Why Johnny Can't Dissent." *The Baffler* #6, 1995. Rpt. in *The Cultural Resistance Reader*. Ed. Stephen Duncombe. New York: Verso, 2002. 316-327.

2. Construct an analysis of all the claims and warrants you see in Frank's article. Your analysis must be **non-paragraphed**: for instance, a table, an outline, or a chart.

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Argumentation

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Claims and Warrants- "Why Johnny Can't Dissent"

Claim: Our notion about what's wrong with American life and how the figures responsible are to be confronted haven't changed much in thirty years.

Warrant: Something's wrong with America life

Warrant: American's have notions about what's wrong with American life

- Frank is making the assumptions that something is wrong with American life or that Americans believe something is wrong with it because he makes his claim without first identifying any problems.
- This could be problematic if the reader does not see any problems with American life in general

Claim: The "countercultural idea" holds that the paramount ailment of our society is conformity and Americans see this idea as the problem with society.

Warrant: Conformity is a bad thing

- If conformity is an ailment, they Frank is implying that it is bad.
- If the reader does not agree, he/she separates from the term "Americans" even if he/she is an American

Claim: Since the Establishment (conformity) requires homogeneity, it is necessary to revolt by embracing diverse lifestyles, seeking immediate gratification and breaking the rules.

Warrant: Americans don't usually embrace diverse lifestyles, seek immediate gratification or break rules.

- If revolting is doing those things then Frank is assuming that all conformity is exclusive

Claim: The Beats are patron saints of the countercultural idea and their frenzied style and merry alienation still have a grip on the American imagination.

Warrant: The frenzied style and merry alienation of the Beats had a grip on the American imagination in the past.

- If the reader doesn't agree that the Beats ever had a grip on his/her imagination this could present a discrepancy
- But Frank asserts their influence so confidently, that readers may just accept their influence as fact

Claim: No one wants you to think they're serious today.

Warrant: In the past, certain people wanted to be taken seriously.

- Everyone used to want to be taken seriously is the assumption
- The claim is pretty broad but based on a major assumption

Claim: Consumerism is no longer about conformity, but about difference.

Warrant: Consumerism cannot be about both conformity and difference.

- Frank is making a clear cut distinction between conformity and difference

Claim: Businessmen are using the rule breaking mentality to appeal to the public and make money.

Warrant: People buy items that have slogans that relate to their values

- By making this claim, Frank is assuming that consumers decide what products they buy based on the producers who appeal to their values.

Claim: Instead of using the counterculture idea to resist, corporate America has adopted the idea as its money-making doctrine and as such, the idea can no longer be used as a form of resistance.

Warrant: Americans do not resist from being an active consumer

- This is a strong claim because it can be backed up by Frank's examples within the text.
- Since businessmen are making money, his assumption is that Americans aren't resisting. It will be hard for a reader to dispute that warrant.

Claim: Cultural dissent is no longer that. Popular American culture has turned into the very culture which Americans used to use as a means of dissenting.

Warrant: Americans still used the same means of dissenting as they did in the past.

- Frank is assuming that American have not changed their ways of resistance
- Does not leave room for consideration of other ways of dissenting
- Could resistance of difference be the new means to dissent?