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“My greatest weakness?” I repeat, pretending to carefully consider the question the interviewer has asked me. “I’m too diligent,” I end up saying (with some apologeticness in my tone). There I go: stacking the deck in my favor for a job interview. I’ve left out that I get nervous easily and that I am sometimes a slow starter when working in a new area and that I have occasionally taken the easy way out on things when I’ve had the chance. On this occasion, the interviewer jumped right on my answer and asked “how is that supposed to be a weakness?” I end up answering truthfully, my diligence is more like a one-track-mindedness, and I end up getting the job. Stacking the deck is a common fallacy in job interviews, in meeting new people and in any sort of applications for a position. No one wants to list their weaknesses if it means they could be negatively affected by it. As a fallacy I am guilty of, stacking the deck seems all too prevalent in my day-to-day life and I hope to one day improve myself so the full hand doesn’t have any negatives that need to be hidden. But what of the other logical fallacies I see so very often around me? In hindsight, recognizing fallacies is much easier once I’ve learned about a few of them.

One of the fallacies I encounter most frequently is the slippery slope fallacy. In high school, I had friends from all walks of life. Liberal friends, conservative friends, friends who didn’t much care for political spectrums. Years after high school I still maintain contact with

several people from each side and their identities have become even more ingrained.

Unfortunately, this leads to some extremist beliefs for many of them. Specifically, former friends of mine that are deeply conservative have opinions on more liberal ideals that are more hateful than reasonable. One person I know in particular seemingly has a prejudice against anyone in the LGBT community. His belief is that the LGBT community is working together with the liberal government to break down conservative ideals and the idea of the nuclear family unit (a couple and their children). A man and a woman should make up the parental part of the family and the children should be raised according to the ideals that make this country great, he would say. Two men or two women therefore cannot be the parents and if such things are allowed what is stopping such debauchery from becoming commonplace? Next will be men or women marrying animals or inanimate objects or even children. And if a man wants to become a woman? Who's to stop him from molesting my children if he is allowed to use their gender's bathroom? Why stop at a man identifying as a woman? He might as well identify as a dog or a helicopter or another race. So the usual spiel went. Stating that being homosexual is a choice and repeatedly emphasizing his belief that "there are only two genders" was also commonplace.

Unfortunate and hateful attitudes aside, his stated beliefs stand on shaky ground due to the fact most of the things he says he takes issue with are formulations of a slippery slope fallacy in action. It is simple to recognize it as such by first following his timeline of how things will occur if gay marriage becomes commonplace. He argues that the next most likely occurrence is marriage between humans and animals or inanimate objects. His argument has immediately fallen apart as he appears to say that homosexuals are close enough to being non-human that it is not far-fetched for them to want to marry something else non-human. His belief that homosexuals are subhuman has become the true point of his statement. He wouldn't say that a

straight person would commit such atrocities as bestiality because in his mind they are “normal humans” like him. This extends further to the idea of transgender people. Saying that the next logical step in a man or woman wishing to be the gender is something as ridiculous as deciding to identify as a helicopter only reveals his belief that something is already incorrect about them deciding to identify as the opposite gender. He hasn’t proved his point in either case here because instead of stating why it is wrong to be homosexual or transgender, he has attempted to convince his audience that worse will come if such things are allowed. Additionally, he hasn’t supplied historical evidence of such things occurring. No country that has legalized gay marriage has further allowed legalization of paraphilia such as bestiality or pedophilia. Paraphilia, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, are “characterized by sexual urges or behaviors directed at non-consenting persons or those unable to consent like children, or that involve another person’s psychological distress, injury, or death.” This does not include homosexuality or bisexuality. His arguments that such things will be commonplace is merely an assumption that cannot confirm to a non-biased person that legalization of same-sex marriage will cause criminal sex acts to become normalized. Whenever this former acquaintance would make his argument, it was obvious to most listeners that didn’t already agree with him that he was speaking from a prejudiced, preconceived notion and not a factual standpoint. He was just using a slippery slope argument as well as a faulty analogy usually. However, those that already agreed with him or at least some of the things he said were more likely to find his line of thinking reasonable. In general he failed to make a successful rational argument because he provided no factual evidence and wouldn’t have been able to acknowledge any historical likelihood of such problems with the LGBT community occurring. Suffice to say, if such counterpoints were brought up his argument ended up dead in the water and usually unraveled.

However, this same acquaintance had a friend who subscribed to the kind of “alt-right” way of thinking that many such hateful indoctrinations have been born from. If this other fellow was present at one of these events that the aforementioned debate was taking place, he had his own ideas to present on the subject. “Well, gay marriage has been legalized,” he might say, “but not all of us want our kids to think it is okay to be gay. After all, they’ll end up being mentally ill and they’ll abuse drugs and alcohol like other homosexuals.” “Show us some evidence,” the opposed would chime in. This time, there was evidence to be found. Specifically, the fact that homosexuality was a mental disorder according to the American Psychiatric Association until 1973 and statistics regarding levels of substance abuse in the LGBT community. Replying that the declaration that homosexuality is a mental illness was removed by the APA and they now state that it is just as healthy as being heterosexual may solve that part of the argument but the statistics are seemingly more difficult to process. However, a study done in the last few years by Ilan H. Meyer determined that high levels of stress from being a minority and a heavily prejudiced against one at that is the detrimental factor that causes higher levels of substance abuse. Meyer, a “Distinguished Senior Scholar of Public Policy” at the Williams Institute for Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy at UCLA’s School of Law” explains in the article that, “stigma, prejudice, and discrimination create a hostile and stressful social environment that causes mental health problems.” After discovering this, it is apparent that the argument here is a straw man fallacy. My acquaintance’s friend has told us that homosexuality is bad because homosexuals are a group of drug-using, mentally ill but this idea of a homosexual acting this way is not the majority of the LGBT community nor does it confirm that they are harmful people. In fact, believing this himself only contributes to their further marginalization which can have more dire consequences for their community. Again, to listeners who don’t take issue with

the LGBT community, this idea of a straw man and the way in which it causes a self-fulfilling prophecy is an obvious fallacy and argument that shouldn't be perpetrated. It still confirms biases held by conservative listeners but overall can't be considered a successful and rational argument because it is based on a character invented by my acquaintance's friend in order to decry the idea of a member of the LGBT community as a damaged individual.

Arguments over sexuality and its effect on society aren't the only place I see logical fallacies. I see them among close friends as well. Sweeping generalizations are especially common. Recently, I mentioned to a friend that I was applying for a job. "What job?" "I'm applying to be a nursing assistant at a retirement home." "Ah," he said. "Good money and women." This comment took me by surprise and I asked him to clarify his statement. "Well, you're working in healthcare. Everyone knows you make beaucoup bucks in healthcare jobs. And all your coworkers will be women, probably Asian women as well." The sweeping generalizations were heavily distributed here, obviously. My new job had the same amount of men as women working there and only two of the employees were of Asian descent. Additionally, I wasn't doing the job for the paycheck fortunately because it was less per hour than what an average In-N-Out employee would make. If a census was done of all healthcare jobs in the nation, it might be shown that a majority of the jobs were held by Asian women who make an above average yearly salary. However, even if this was confirmed, the distribution of this subset of healthcare workers would not end with a majority of such people in each healthcare setting nationwide. The existence of the few hospitals and assisted living facilities I've worked in alone has confirmed that this stereotype cannot be a correct generalization. I myself have been guilty of certain generalizations as well but at least in this case the sweeping nature of it was

obvious to me due to personal experience. Thus my friend's "argument" wasn't rational: not all healthcare jobs will have the racial and financial makeup that he expects.

Fallacies are a dangerous issue. Whether they are used on purpose or unconsciously, they can create harmful issues if they are used to spread ideas without being recognized as fallacies. Being educated on the subject of fallacies can help combat this as fallacies come in many forms that can be difficult to spot if they are seemingly sound reasoning. Hopefully in the future I am able to see these in myself and others and improve the logic in my life.