

## GMAT AWA Sample Essay

### Analysis of An Argument

"The recent surge in violence in the southern part of the city is a result of a shortage of police officers and an absence of leadership on the part of the city council. In order to rectify the burgeoning growth of crime that threatens the community, the city council must address this issue seriously. Instead of spending time on peripheral issues such as education quality, community vitality, and job opportunity, the city council must realize that the crime issue is serious and double the police force, even if this action requires budget cuts from other city programs."

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In the argument above, the author concludes that the city council is not doing its job well and needs to focus on expanding significantly the police force in order to combat recent growth in the level of crime. The premise of the argument is that crime is expanding while the city council focuses on ostensibly unrelated matters such as education reform. However, the argument is flawed because it falsely assumes that the city council's efforts to improve quality of life are entirely unrelated to levels of violence and it assumes that the crime problem can be solved by merely increasing the police force.

First, the argument wrongly assumes that issues of educational opportunity, community vitality, and job availability have no bearing on crime. However, the author fails to support this assumption. It is entirely possible that the crime level spiked due to a recent and sizeable layoff at a major nearby factory that pushed countless citizens out of work and onto the streets. With individuals struggling to survive, it should come as no surprise that people are turning to crime.

Second, the reasoning in the editorial is flawed because it erroneously assumes that increasing the police force will directly address the root of the crime problem and reduce the level of crime. Yet, a landmark study published in early 2008 showed that increasing the size of a police force beyond a certain point provides extremely small marginal returns in the reduction of crime. Given the fact that the local police force is already above this threshold, the editorial's author wrongly assumed that a doubling of the police force will materially decrease the crime rate.

Moreover, the argument could be improved by appealing to the city's history with fighting crime and managing the size of its police force. In particular, approximately 25 years ago, the city council faced a situation very similar to the one it faces today: a rising crime rate and growing spending on community development. The city council decided to increase the size of its after-school programs' budget by about 75% and this reduced crime dramatically. Faced with the same situation today, the city council should follow the path it took 25 years ago.

In conclusion, the argument in the newspaper editorial is flawed because it assumes that educational opportunity, job availability, and community vitality are not related to the level of crime a community experiences. Moreover, the argument wrongly concludes that an increase in the police force will address the root issue behind the crime, which the argument assumes is an inadequate number of police officers.

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