

1.2841Country X contains many rivers that flow down from its high mountains. These rivers have been dammed to harness the hydroelectric power that can be derived from this resource. Enough power is generated to create a reserve that is more than enough to meet the country's year-round energy needs. Yet, citizens of Country X often experience power shortages or even outages.

Which of the following, if true, best explains the situation described above?

- ☐ The flow of the rivers is heavier in the spring than at other times of year.
- ☐ Citizens of Country X rely heavily on electronic appliances in their homes.
- ☐ Country X has not invested in alternate sources of energy.
- ☐ Most of the electricity generated in Country X is sold to other countries.
- ☐ Some of the most powerful rivers in Country X have yet to be dammed.

The hydroelectric dams in Country X generate "more than enough" power "to meet the country's year-round energy needs." Yet, Country X still experiences shortages and outages. Our task is to find an answer that explains this apparent contradiction.

(A) The argument specifies that Country X generates a "reserve" of power that is capable of meeting "the country's year-round energy needs." Seasonal fluctuations, then, are out of scope.

(B) The argument states that the dams provide "more than enough" power "to meet the country's year-round energy needs" - including a reliance on electric appliances.

(C) This choice is irrelevant; the topic is why the country experiences shortages even though the current energy system provides "more than enough" energy.

(D) CORRECT. If the electricity produced is sold to other countries, then there may not be enough left to accommodate the needs of Country X citizens.

(E) This would just mean that the country has the potential to produce even more power than it already does; it does not address a potential cause of shortages or outages.

2.2920In the city of Cantville, a high school earns the "Young Women in Science" award for a given year if at least ten of its **FEMALE** students participate in that year's state science exposition. Last year, 80 percent of all high schools in Cantville's District 1 earned this award, while only 63 percent of all high schools in the city's District 2 earned the same award. Furthermore, these percentages have remained at or near those respective levels throughout the entire twelve years since the award was instituted. It is clear, then, that the high schools in District 1 do a better job of encouraging girls to pursue science than do the high schools in District 2.

Which of the following is assumed in the argument above?

- ☐ Students in District 1 have more free time to pursue science projects than do students in District 2.
- ☐ The overall population of District 1 is not substantially larger than that of District 2.
- ☐ The average high school in District 2 does not have more students than does the average high school in District 1.
- ☐ District 1 does not have significantly fewer all-male high schools than does District 2.
- ☐ School is the primary source of encouragement for students' pursuit of science.

(1) *Identify the Question Type*

The problem explicitly asks for an assumption, so this is a Find Assumption question.

(2) *Deconstruct the Argument*

The argument presents a statistical discrepancy: 80 percent of high schools in Cantville's District 1 have sent at least ten female students to the state science exposition, yet only 63 percent of high schools in the city's District 2 have done the same. The argument uses this statistic to conclude that high schools in District 1 are more active than those in District 2 in encouraging young women to pursue science.

(3) *State the Goal*

The reasoning in the argument is based on the idea that the difference in these percentages signifies a corresponding difference in the schools' encouragement of their female science students. For that to be the case, there must not be any other viable explanation for the discrepancy. The argument thus must assume that anything that would provide a different explanation for the discrepancy is false.

(4) *Work from Wrong to Right*

(A) If true, this statement would help explain the discrepancy in a way unrelated to the schools' encouragement of students: namely, because the students in District 1 have more free time, they are more likely to be able to pursue science irrespective of the level of encouragement they receive at school. Therefore, not only is this statement not an assumption, but the argument must in fact assume that it is *not* true.

(B) The overall populations of the districts are not useful in evaluating the argument, since nothing about the number of students in either district may be reliably inferred from such information. For instance, it could be the case that one district has a much larger proportion of senior citizens than does the other.

(C) Negative statements are often easier to look at through negation. If the average school in District 2 *does* have more students than the average school in District 1, then it should be even easier for schools in District 2 to find 10 female students to compete in the science fair. That would make it more likely that District 1 does a better job of encouraging girls to pursue science. Because the negation of the statement *supports* the argument, the original wording must not support the argument. Hence, it cannot be an assumption that the argument relies upon.

(D) CORRECT. This statement is required by the argument. If it is false -- i.e., if District 2 has significantly more all-male high schools -- then we would have an alternate explanation for the difference in statistics, because the all-male schools would be unable to qualify for the award.

(E) The argument does assume that school plays a role in encouraging (female) students to pursue science, but does not require the notion that school is the *primary* source of that encouragement.

3.2896 John: In several months of going to the Apex **HEALTH CLUB** almost every day in the early-morning hours, I have seen almost no one using the weight-training equipment designed to help increase muscle mass. Almost everyone uses only aerobic exercise machines, which are designed to help people burn fat. The Blown company is best known for dietary supplement products aimed at people trying to **GAIN MUSCLE MASS**, so Blown's plan to advertise just outside of the entrance to Apex **HEALTH CLUB** is ill-conceived. Each of the following, if true, weakens John's argument EXCEPT

- ☐ Most of Apex **HEALTH CLUB'S** members work in nearby buildings whose exercise rooms contain aerobic exercise machines of higher quality than those at the club.
- ☐ Most members of Apex Health Club are aware that weight training is generally ineffective for individuals who have not consumed a pre-training meal 3 to 4 hours beforehand, while **FAT-BURNING** exercise is most effective after eight or more hours of fasting.
- ☐ Many members of Apex Health Club who do not train with weights share a household with people who are trying to increase muscle mass.
- ☐ Customers of a nearby store that specializes in weight-training equipment must walk past the entrance of Apex Health Club to enter the store.
- ☐ Blown has recently begun to produce fat-burning products aimed at aerobic exercisers.

1) Identify the Question Type

The "weakens" and "if true" language indicate that this is a Weaken question. The word "EXCEPT" indicates that four answer choices will weaken the conclusion and the fifth answer (the "odd one out") will be the correct answer. This "odd one out" answer might strengthen the conclusion or it might not affect the conclusion at all, but it will not weaken the conclusion.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

In his regular visits to Apex Health Club, which have occurred primarily or exclusively in the early-morning hours, John has observed that almost all members present use only the fat-burning aerobic exercise machines, and not the weight-training equipment to build muscle mass. Since the Blown company is best known for supplements aimed at people trying to build muscle mass, John concludes that placing advertisements just outside of Apex Health Club is not a good plan.

(3) State the Goal

To weaken John's argument, we need reasons why it *would* still make sense for Blown to advertise at the health club, despite John's observations. It would help to understand the assumptions in John's reasoning. He's assuming that those members he sees are representative of the general membership of the club at all hours. He's assuming that those who see the advertisements outside the club will be the same people he sees inside the club during early-morning hours. He's also assuming that the products advertised will be those for which Blown is "best known" (supplements for people who want to build muscle mass) and which do not seem to be of value to the members John is observing inside the club (people who want to burn fat).

Any answer choice that attacks one of these assumptions would weaken the argument.

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

(A) CORRECT. If higher-quality aerobic exercise machines are available elsewhere to most members, then one would expect to see a lower proportion of Apex members using aerobic equipment (and a correspondingly higher proportion using some other type of equipment, including weight-training equipment). If anything, then, this statement actually strengthens John's argument.

(B) John has made his observations early in the morning, when it is much less likely that many exercisers will have eaten a meal three to four hours beforehand (since most of them would have been sleeping). As a result, very few members of the club will be able to derive a benefit from weight training at that hour. If members are generally aware of these facts, then it is likely that the lack of members using the weight-training equipment stems from the time of day at which John made his observations, rather than from the overall demographics of the club's members. This choice has weakened John's assumption that the members he has observed are representative of all of the members and all activities at various other times of day.

(C) If this statement is true, then members of the club may be in a position to spread the word about Blown's products to potential customers, even if they are not interested in using the products themselves. In this case, Blown's advertising strategy might be effective, weakening John's conclusion.

(D) If this statement is true, then, while walking past the entrance to the health club, the customers of the store will be exposed to Blown's advertisements, thus enabling the company to promote its products to a group that is interested in building muscle mass.

(E) John assumes that Blown's advertisements will promote Blown's best-known products. If Blown is producing a new line of products aimed at aerobic exercisers, and the advertisements focus on those products, then the placement of the ads might be effective, weakening John's conclusion.

4.2895 In a certain UNIVERSITY COURSE, some of the students took their own handwritten notes on the lectures, while others studied from a printed set of notes written by the course instructor; no student used both kinds of notes. The students who took their own notes performed substantially better on the course exams than did those who used the notes written by the instructor. Clearly, the students' own notes must have been more complete or easier to understand than the instructor's, or else the students who took their own notes were simply those who were more motivated to do well in the course.

Which of the following statements, if true, most weakens the argument in the passage above?

- ☐ In other classes at the same university, students who both wrote their own notes and used the pre-printed instructor notes were among the highest-performing students on class exams.
- ☐ The exams were not written by the course instructor.
- ☐ Studies have shown that the physical act of note-taking aids in the recall of what is noted, even for those who never review the notes.
- ☐ The instructor's notes were written in language that was so florid and wordy as to make the points difficult for students to comprehend.
- ☐ Students in the course were not allowed to refer to any notes, whether their own or the instructor's, while taking the course exams.

(1) *Identify the Question Type*

The words "most weakens" and "if true" in the question stem indicate that this is a Weaken question.

(2) *Deconstruct the Argument*

Students either took their own notes or studied from pre-printed notes provided by the course instructor. The students who took their own notes performed substantially better on the tests, raising the question of why taking their own notes seemed to help them so much. The argument concludes that (at least) one of two things must be true: either the students' notes must have been superior, in some way, to the instructor's, or else the note-taking students were the ones who were more motivated in the first place.

(3) State the Goal

The argument proceeds from an empirical observation (that the students who took their own notes did a better job on the tests) to two possible explanations for that observation -- effectively ruling out all other explanations.

Any *other* reasonable explanation for the observed results, therefore, will weaken the argument.

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

(A) This statement does not apply to the particular course in question, both because it discusses different classes and because it allows a condition that was not present in the argument (namely, that students might use both their own notes and the instructor notes). This answer neither strengthens nor weakens the argument's conclusion; it does not impact the conclusion at all.

(B) If the exams were not written by the instructor, then perhaps the instructor's own notes were not as useful for study - if so, then this strengthens the conclusion. Alternatively, we can think of this choice as irrelevant: whether taking their own notes from the *instructor's lecture* or studying from the *instructor's notes*, the students were still getting their study information from the instructor, so both groups were at an equal disadvantage when taking an exam that was written by someone other than the instructor.

(C) CORRECT. If writing notes has been shown to be helpful in recall (remembering the information), then it is possible that students who had taken their own notes performed better simply *because* they had physically written their own notes, while students using the pre-printed notes had not done so. This rationale provides an alternate explanation to explain the observed results, somewhat weakening the author's conclusion that either the student notes were superior or the note-taking students were more motivated.

(D) If this statement is true, then it supports the first explanation provided in the passage, by substantiating the hypothesis that the students' own notes were easier to understand. This would strengthen the conclusion.

(E) Both groups of students are subject to the *same* rules: they can't use any notes during the test. This cannot help to explain the *difference* in the two groups' performances on the tests.

5.2894A recent study of people who had successfully lost weight and implemented regular **EXERCISE** routines in their twenties found that, by the age of forty, most had gained back the weight, stopped exercising regularly, or both. Surprisingly, among the study's subjects who had hired personal trainers to help them lose weight and exercise in their twenties, an even higher percentage had regained the weight or stopped exercising than among subjects who had not hired such trainers. The researchers concluded not only that remaining on an effective weight management and EXERCISE PROGRAM is difficult, but also that personal trainers are largely ineffective in helping people to remain on an effective weight management and EXERCISE PROGRAM.

Which of the following, if true, most weakens the argument in the passage above?

- Subjects in the study who had hired personal trainers had, on average, more free time to exercise than did those who had not hired such trainers.
- Some people hire personal trainers for sport-specific training or to rehabilitate injuries, rather than to lose weight or implement a regular exercise program.
- The average person's metabolism SLOWS significantly between the ages of thirty and forty, making it more difficult for people aged forty or older to avoid weight gain.
- Many of the personal trainers hired by the people in the study were also dietitians who helped their clients design meal plans.
- Most people who hire personal trainers do so, at least in part, because they lack sufficient motivation to remain on a diet or exercise regimen by themselves.

1) Identify the Question Type

The words "weaken" and "if true" in the question stem indicate that this is a Weaken question.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

The study found that most subjects no longer maintained the weight-reduction and exercise programs they had followed in their twenties. The argument, however, is not primarily concerned with this *generally* low maintenance rate; it is most concerned with the fact that, surprisingly, the rate was even *lower* among subjects who had hired personal trainers. Using that discrepancy, the researchers conclude two things: that it is difficult to maintain a weight management and exercise program and that personal trainers are largely ineffective in helping their clients to do so

(3) State the Goal

For weaken questions, we're looking for an answer that makes the conclusion at least a little less likely to be true or valid. It is a fact that subjects who had hired personal trainers had a lower long-term success rate than did those who had not. To weaken the argument, there must be some other reason (besides the general ineffectiveness of trainers) for why the rate was lower among people who had hired trainers.

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

(A) If anything, having more time to exercise should contribute to a *higher* rate of success in maintaining an exercise program. (Conversely, individuals with less free time should have more difficulty maintaining such a program.) If this statement is true, then the conclusion of the argument becomes *more*, not less, likely.

(B) The argument considers only those individuals who hired personal trainers for purposes of weight loss or general exercise; the hiring of trainers for other reasons is irrelevant to the discussion.

(C) If this is true, then it supports the first half of the author's conclusion: it is difficult to remain on a weight loss and exercise regimen over time.

(D) If the trainers helped their clients design meal plans in addition to exercise routines, then the result of the study becomes even *more* surprising – if anything, strengthening the argument, rather than weakening it.

(E) CORRECT. If this statement is true, then there is selection bias among people who choose to hire trainers in the first place: namely, individuals who hire trainers are precisely those who are, all other things equal, less likely to remain on diet or training programs. If that is the case, then this group would naturally be expected to have a lower rate of success in maintaining weight loss or regular exercise – so such a lower rate does not necessarily signal any ineffectiveness on the part of the trainers.

6.2893 Adoption agency representative: It is true that eight of our last ten babies have been placed with parents who were personally acquainted with at least one of our staff members

before initiating the adoption process. However, there is no truth to the accusation against us of favoritism; our decisions have been guided solely by the best interests of the children. INDEED , all ten babies' new parents far surpassed the adoption criteria set both by the law and by our own policy.

Which of the following is an assumption on which the representative's argument depends?

- ☐ The agency's prior placements of babies with parents who were previously acquainted with its staff have not, in general, been more successful than those with parents unacquainted with the staff.
- ☐ Of those prospective parents who substantially surpassed the criteria for adoption, most were personally acquainted with agency staff before beginning the application process.
- ☐ For a time period equal in duration to that during which the data were collected, the average number of babies placed by the agency is close to ten.
- ☐ Most prospective parents who APPLY to adopt babies do not meet the agency's criteria for adoption.
- ☐ The agency will only place babies with parents who not only meet the legal and institutional criteria for adoption, but who in fact surpass those criteria.

(1) Identify the Question Type

The word "assumption" in the question stem indicates that this is a Find the Assumption question.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

According to the argument, the adoption agency has awarded the majority of its recent placements to parents who were personally acquainted with agency staff. The argument denies that this discrepancy is a sign of favoritism toward certain applicants, on the grounds that all ten placements were made with parents who surpassed the agency's (and the law's) criteria for adoption.

(3) State the Goal

On Find the Assumption questions, we're looking for something that the author must believe to be true in order to draw the given conclusion. The argument concludes that the agency did not engage in favoritism because all of the chosen parents surpassed the adoption criteria. However, the argument is also assuming that, among *all* well-qualified applicants, there was no favoritism toward individuals who were personally acquainted with the agency staff.

For example, suppose there were 100 fully qualified families and only 8 of them were personally acquainted with the staff; those 8 happened to be chosen, while only 2 of 92 qualified applicants who were not acquainted with staff were chosen. If that were true, it would undermine the author's claim that the agency did not show any favoritism. The author must be assuming that this is NOT the case.

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

(A) The argument is concerned only with whether a bias toward personally acquainted applicants is present or absent; it is not concerned with whether such a bias may, in fact, lead to placements that are more successful in the long term.

(B) CORRECT. For the argument to establish lack of bias toward certain applicants, the proportion of "previously acquainted" people among those applicants chosen for placement must reflect the corresponding proportion among *all* applicants. In other words, if eight out of the ten parents *actually chosen* were personally acquainted with the staff, then a similar majority of *all* applicants should have been similarly acquainted with the staff. Alternatively, use the negation test. If this statement is false, then the majority of qualified applicants were in fact *unacquainted* with

agency staff – a situation in which the placement of eight of ten babies with personally acquainted applicants is a clear signal of bias. Since the negation of this statement defeats the argument, the original statement must be assumed.

(C) The argument is concerned only with determining whether a bias is demonstrated by the agency's ten most recent placements; it does not involve the idea of whether those placements were made at a typical rate.

(D) Applicants who do not meet the criteria are irrelevant; the argument is concerned with determining whether a bias exists among *fully qualified* applicants. Therefore, the relative proportion of unqualified candidates among all applicants does not affect the argument.

(E) Although all ten of the agency's most recent placements may indeed have been placed with parents who "far surpassed" the criteria, there is nothing in the argument to suggest that *all* successful applicants must substantially surpass those criteria (as opposed to simply meeting or fulfilling them).

7.2889 Xycorp plans to develop an innovative new video game involving extremely realistic three-dimensional simulations of hand-to-hand combat. The cost of developing and refining the relevant technology, however, is prohibitive for Xycorp, so the company must look to outside sources for funding. The military will only fund the development of technologies that pertain directly to military training or operations, so it is clear that Xycorp will have to look for funding from non-military sources.

Which of the following is assumed in drawing the conclusion above?

- ☐ The market for video games such as Xycorp's proposed product will not expand markedly in the near future.
- ☐ Xycorp's development project will be so costly that only large organizations, such as the military, will be able to provide sufficient funding for it.
- ☐ In originally conceiving the idea for the new video game, the developers at Xycorp were not inspired by actual, historical military operations.
- ☐ The military will not use the new gaming technology to train recruits in hand-to-hand combat.
- ☐ The military does not stay abreast of non-military technological developments such as video games.

(1) *Identify the Question Type*

The word "assumed" in the question stem indicates that this is a Find the Assumption question.

(2) *Deconstruct the Argument*

According to the argument, Xycorp must find outside funding in order to cover the development costs of its proposed new game. The argument indicates that the military will only fund projects that pertain directly to training or operations. The argument then concludes that the military will not fund Xycorp's project.

(3) *State the Goal*

The argument jumps from the idea that the military will only fund directly related projects to the notion that it will *not* fund Xycorp's game development. This conclusion can only be reached if the narrator assumes that the military considers Xycorp's project irrelevant to its training and/or operations.

(4) *Work from Wrong to Right*

(A) The conclusion centers on what sources Xycorp might use to fund the development of the game. While we might reason that a large potential market might help Xycorp to obtain funding, that does not tell us anything about whether the military will or will not fund Xycorp's project.

(B) The argument does state that Xycorp is unable to afford the cost of developing the game by itself, but there is no indication that the project is of so large a scope that only giant organizations could fund it. The military in particular is ruled out as a potential source of funding, but the military is simply presented as one source to be considered; the argument does not narrow the possibilities to organizations of that scale.

(C) Whether the game is based on historical events is irrelevant to the conclusion. The conclusion's reasoning is that the military will only fund games that are relevant to *current* training or operations.

(D) CORRECT. The conclusion is based on the assumption that Xycorp's game is irrelevant to military training and/or operations. Therefore, the author must be assuming that the military will not be using this game or the technology used to make it. Alternatively, use the negation test. The negation of this statement is that the military *will* use the technology in training recruits. If that is the case, then the military may actually be interested in funding the development of that technology, since it is relevant to training.

(E) The issue in the argument is not whether the military is *aware* of technological developments, but, rather, whether it considers those developments relevant to its own concerns.

8.2888

Footwear designer John de los Santos last year released several limited editions of his best-known model of sneaker in exotic **COLORS** and prints. Although the new releases were priced substantially higher than their counterparts in more traditional colors, they sold out within a week of their release, and have since been selling on the resale market for up to four times the original price. The cost of producing the sneakers in exotic prints is no greater than that of producing them in more traditional colors, so de los Santos could earn a higher profit per unit by producing a greater percentage of his sneakers in such prints.

Which of the following is an assumption made in drawing the conclusion above?

- ☐ The designers who compete most directly with de los Santos will not produce similar lines of limited-edition sneakers in the near future.
- ☐ Consumers' willingness to pay higher prices for the exotic sneakers was not influenced by the relative scarcity of those sneakers.
- ☐ De los Santos's customer base is not shifting in the direction of younger consumers who prefer bolder styles.
- ☐ De los Santos's sneakers are not priced substantially higher than those of the designers who compete most directly with him.
- ☐ The workmanship of de los Santos's sneakers is of such high quality that it is impossible for lower-budget shoemakers to produce counterfeit versions of them.

(1) *Identify the Question Type*

The word "assumption" in the question stem indicates that this is a Find the Assumption question.

(2) *Deconstruct the Argument*

The designer normally sells "traditional color" shoes but recently sold some "exotic" ones for a much higher price. Not only did the exotic shoes sell out quickly, but people are now re-selling the shoes at an even higher price, which seems to indicate a strong demand for the exotic shoes. It doesn't cost any more to make the exotic version than the regular version, so the argument concludes that de los Santos could make more money per pair of shoes if he produces more of the exotic versions rather than the traditional versions.

(3) State the Goal

On Find the Assumption questions, the correct answer will be something that the author must assume to be true in order to draw his or her conclusion. In this case, the argument generalizes from the results of a single, small-scale production to a much broader conclusion. Specifically, the argument requires the assumption that the exotic-print sneakers will continue to sell well at higher prices even if they are produced in greater numbers. The argument assumes, therefore, that the customer willingness to pay the high prices won't change even if a greater number of exotic shoes are available.

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

(A) The argument assumes nothing about the competition between de los Santos's sneakers and similar products from competing designers, nor about whether de los Santos's customers would consider purchasing other designers' products. It's perfectly possible that, even if competing designers do produce similar lines of shoes, the conclusion could still be valid.

(B) CORRECT. To draw its conclusion about profits, the argument must assume that the exotic-print sneakers will continue to sell at higher prices if their production is expanded. If the original high pricing and demand were based on the scarcity of the exotic sneakers, then expanding production would defeat that effect, leading to a negative influence on pricing and sales. Therefore, the argument must assume that the limited availability of the special-edition sneakers is not a significant factor in their selling price.

(C) The argument assumes nothing about the demographics of de los Santos's customers; it uses only previous sales figures as evidence. Moreover, if the negation of this statement were actually true -- that is, if de los Santos's customer base were shifting in the indicated direction -- than that fact would contribute to, rather than undermine, the argument.

(D) The argument assumes nothing about a possible relationship between the prices of de los Santos's sneakers and those of his competitors' sneakers. In fact, even if de los Santos' shoes were priced substantially higher, the first run of the exotic shoes sold out quickly, so apparently people are willing to pay whatever the price already is.

(E) The argument does not link the price of de los Santos's sneakers to the presence or absence of convincing fakes. It's perfectly possible that, even if convincing fakes are produced, de los Santos will still achieve higher per-pair profits by following this plan.

9.2887

Each bank in the town of La Rinconada has only a single set of locking doors at its entrance. In the town of Inverness, on the other hand, the entrances to nearly all banks are equipped with two consecutive sets of locking doors, operated by a mechanism that allows only one set of doors to be open at a time. It is clear, then, that banks in Inverness experience more robbery attempts than do those in La Rinconada, and have thus adopted the extra doors as a security measure.

Which of the following, if true, most weakens the argument above?

- ☐ Last year the number of bank robberies in La Rinconada was almost one-half greater than

the corresponding figure for the previous year.

- ☐ Inverness is known for its harsh winters, while the climate of La Rinconada is quite mild year-round.
- ☐ The mechanism of the double doors used by banks in Inverness allows bank security personnel to lock the doors remotely.
- ☐ Bank robbery attempts are typically unsuccessful, and, even when the robbers do manage to escape with stolen money, the sum is usually quite small.
- ☐ Inverness has almost twice as many police officers per capita as does La Rinconada.

(1) Identify the Question Type

The question asks us to weaken the argument presented, so this is a Weaken the Conclusion question.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

The argument attempts to explain why almost all banks in Inverness have separately locking double doors, in contrast to the total lack of such doors in the town of La Rinconada. The argument concludes that the double doors must be an extra security measure against crime, and that, by extension, the rate of the relevant crime (here, bank robbery) must be higher in Inverness than in La Rinconada.

(3) State the Goal

For Weaken questions, we have to find an answer that makes the conclusion at least a little less likely to be true or valid.

The explanation presented in the argument does seem reasonable - certainly, one reason for using double doors could be security concerns. The argument can be attacked, though, on the grounds that it claims this *must* be the reason. If there are other possible reasons for using the double doors, then the claim that the doors are used due to security concerns and a higher robbery rate becomes less likely to be true.

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

(A) The year-over-year growth rate of bank robberies in La Rinconada *alone* is not helpful in making a comparison between La Rinconada and another town.

(B) CORRECT. The door mechanism in Inverness creates an effective barrier against harsh winter winds and cold air: At no point will both sets of doors be open at the same time, so the introduction of cold air into the bank will be minimized relative to a typical single door opening. This choice thus provides an alternative rationale for the presence of the double doors, weakening the force of the original conclusion.

(C) This choice actually *strengthens* the argument: If the double doors are equipped with such a feature, it becomes more reasonable to speculate that they were installed as a safeguard against crime. Also, this choice can be eliminated immediately on the grounds that it doesn't distinguish at all between the two towns, and thus provides no reason for the door system to be present in Inverness but not also in La Rinconada.

(D) This choice does not address the argument's conclusion: the reason for the presence of double doors in Inverness banks and the lack of double doors in La Rinconada banks.

(E) The proportion of citizens who are police officers does not provide meaningful information about bank-robbery rates in the two towns, or about the reason for the presence of double doors in Inverness banks and the lack of double doors in La Rinconada banks.

10.2886

Many banks have a drive-through automated teller machine, built into the wall flanking the DRIVER'S side of a narrow aisle. Even though blind people obviously do not drive, these machines nonetheless invariably feature Braille – the system of raised dots used by the blind for reading and writing – in addition to the standard letters and numerals on their control panels.

Which of the following, if true, does the most to explain the situation described?

- ☐ In most automobiles, the rear windows on the DRIVER'S side only roll down about halfway.
- ☐ Moderately visually impaired people who are still allowed to drive typically do not use Braille to read or write.
- ☐ Blind people can often read Braille just as quickly and accurately as sighted people can read regular writing.
- ☐ The embossing technique used to form the raised dots does not typically add much to the overall cost of the automated teller machine.
- ☐ In order to maximize profits per unit, manufacturers produce only a single model of automated teller machine.

(1) *Identify the Question Type*

We are asked to "explain the situation described," so this is an Explain the Discrepancy question.

(2) *Deconstruct the Argument*

According to the passage, many banks are equipped with drive-through automated teller machines. Surprisingly, these machines usually feature Braille – a writing system for blind people – on their control panels, although blind people clearly cannot drive through these lanes.

(3) *State the Goal*

We need to find a valid reason why the banks INSTALL machines equipped with Braille in the drive-through lanes. The correct answer, when added to the original argument, will eliminate the "that's surprising!" aspect of the argument; instead, with the information in the correct answer, the full argument will actually make sense. Perhaps blind people still use these machines somehow, even though they're not driving the vehicles?

One of the biggest traps on Discrepancy questions is choosing an answer that highlights or exacerbates the discrepancy. We're not trying to show that the discrepancy exists; rather, we're trying to show that there is not a discrepancy at all (once we have the new information contained in the correct answer).

(4) *Work from Wrong to Right*

(A) If this statement is true, then blind people will have serious difficulty using the drive-through teller machines even if they are passengers in the rear seat (on the driver's side) of an automobile. This actually makes the discrepancy *more* difficult to explain, since it removes one possible explanation (namely, the idea that blind people might use the machines as passengers in autos driven by sighted people).

(B) Be careful: this answer would be the right answer if it didn't contain the word "not." It's a trap. This statement is the opposite of what we want; it makes the discrepancy *more* difficult to explain, since it removes one possible explanation (namely, that visually impaired people might be capable of driving but still need Braille for reading).

(C) The speed with which blind people can read, whether in absolute terms or relative to sighted people's READING SPEED, is irrelevant to the issue in the passage.

(D) Although the wording of this answer choice might seem promising because it seeks to address an implied reason for not including Braille on the drive-through ATMs (it doesn't actually cost that much more), the fact remains that a feature that "does not add *much* to the cost" does cost *some* amount more than not having that feature. Why would the banks pay for machines with an extra feature that costs more when customers aren't expected to use that feature?

(E) CORRECT.

11.2884

In a certain country, INSURANCE COMPANIES pay only a fixed percentage – set by law and uniform across all INSURANCE COMPANIES – of the fees actually billed by healthcare providers. Patients without INSURANCE coverage, however, are legally responsible for the full amount of those fees. If the fixed percentage set for INSURANCE COMPANIES is changed, healthcare providers will adjust their fees so that the INSURANCE COMPANIES pay the same dollar amount that they would have paid before the change.

The information given most strongly supports which of the following general claims about the country described?

- ☐ If the percentage prescribed by law for INSURANCE companies is decreased, private patients without insurance coverage will pay more for healthcare services.
- ☐ The dollar amount paid by insurance companies to healthcare providers will not change unless the legally specified percentage is changed.
- ☐ If the number of patients without insurance coverage grows beyond the number of patients covered by insurance, healthcare providers will adjust their billing practices according to the needs of those patients.
- ☐ If an economic recession causes the healthcare industry to suffer, the legally prescribed percentage paid by insurance companies will be increased.
- ☐ Acquiring insurance coverage, if possible, would be a sound economic decision for any patient.

(1) Identify the Question Type

At first this may seem to be a Strengthen question, because of the phrase "most strongly supports." However, we are asked which *answer choice* is supported by the information in the passage, so this is an Inference question.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

Under the law, insurance companies only have to pay a fixed percentage of healthcare bills, but private patients must pay the full amount. In addition, if the percentage is changed, healthcare providers will adjust the amount of the bill, so that the *dollar amount* does not change. If the legal percentage is decreased, healthcare providers must increase the billing level in order to offset the change. Alternatively, if the legal percentage is increased, healthcare providers would have to decrease the billing level in order to offset the change.

(3) State the Goal

On inference questions, we're looking for the answer that *must* be true according to the information given in the passage. The most tempting wrong answers are often items that might be true but don't have to be true.

(4) Work from Wrong to Right

(A) CORRECT. The passage states that, if the percentage is changed, healthcare providers will adjust the amount of the bill so that the *dollar amount* does not change. In particular, if the legal percentage is decreased, healthcare providers must bill increased amounts to accomplish this objective. Since private patients are responsible for the full amount billed, they will be responsible for the new, higher amount.

(B) There is nothing in the passage to suggest that the amount paid by insurance companies could not change for reasons unrelated to the law. For example, nothing in the passage prevents the healthcare providers from changing their prices, and a change in prices without a change in the percentage paid would result in a change in the dollar amount paid by the insurance companies.

(C) This statement might be true, but there is nothing in the passage to indicate that it must be true. The passage describes what healthcare providers will do only in the event of a change in the law; it does not describe what they will do in other situations, such as the one described in this answer choice.

(D) The passage provides no information about what determines the legally set percentage.

(E) This statement may be true for some patients but does not have to be true for all, e.g., for those who use healthcare services very infrequently. For such patients – even if they pay greater bills when they *do* use healthcare services – the difference may not make up for the cost of insurance premiums, especially if those premiums are high.

12.2876

In a recent psychological survey, participants aged 40 to 60 were asked to name the song that had made the greatest emotional impact on their lives. Remarkably, in 86 percent of cases, the participant named a song that was popular when he or she was between thirteen and seventeen years old. Clearly, music has an inherently greater emotional effect on teenagers than on people of other ages.

Each of the following, if true, weakens the argument presented above EXCEPT

- ☐ All of the other questions asked during the survey centered around the participants' teenage years.
- ☐ People are more likely to have deeper emotional responses to life events, and to associate contemporaneous songs with those events, during the teenage years than at other times of life.
- ☐ People tend to retain and recall emotionally infused memories with greater depth, detail, and accuracy than other memories.
- ☐ People tend to listen to a much greater number of songs during the teenage years than at other times of life.
- ☐ Most of the songs cited by the survey respondents retained their popularity for twenty or more years.

(1) Identify the Question Type

The language "weakens" and "if true" indicates that this is a Weaken the Conclusion question. The "EXCEPT" variation indicates that we need to find and eliminate 4 "weaken" answers. The "odd one out" answer, an answer that does not weaken, will be the correct answer.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

Given the opportunity to mention one song from any period of their lives, the survey respondents, who were between 40 and 60 years old, overwhelmingly named songs that were popular when they were aged between 13 and 17. The author claims that this data indicates that music has more emotional power over teenagers than over other age groups.

(3) State the Goal

We're asked to find something that does not weaken the argument. The four (incorrect) answers, which will weaken the argument, must each make the conclusion at least somewhat less likely to be true or valid. The correct answer will either strengthen the conclusion or be irrelevant to the conclusion.

The passage leaves no doubt that the participants disproportionately named songs that were popular when they were teenagers. So, to weaken the argument, we must introduce possible alternative explanations for this finding. In other words, we need to identify another possible reason – apart from the greater inherent emotional impact of music – why so many of the survey participants would name songs from that particular period of their lives.

(4) Work From Wrong To Right

(A) If the survey asked participants to focus on their teenage years, then the participants may have been biased. The preponderance of songs from their teenage years may simply reflect that bias, rather than signifying anything important about the music itself.

(B) The argument concluded that the music itself inherently causes an emotional impact. This statement, by contrast, indicates the opposite: an emotional event causes someone to remember a particular song. If teenagers are more likely to experience emotional events, then they're also more likely to remember a particular song associated with the event, but not because the music itself caused the emotional impact; rather, the music gains emotional power simply by association with those separate events.

(C) CORRECT. Reasonable people might disagree as to whether this choice is irrelevant or whether it strengthens the conclusion; either way, it does not weaken the conclusion. If people have better recollection of memories that are more emotionally intense, then the conclusion in the passage -- that music is remembered best when it was most emotionally potent -- is supported by this choice.

(D) If the participants listened to a greater number of songs as teenagers than at other periods in their lives, then they would reasonably be expected to remember more songs from their teenage years than from other periods, and there would be a greater probability that any song selected would be from this period. In this case, the survey result simply reflects the greater quantity of music to which the participants were exposed as teenagers, rather than any inherent quality of the music itself.

(E) If this statement is true, then most of these songs would have been popular for a substantial time before and/or after the participant's teenage years, too. In that case, even though those songs were popular when the participants were teenagers, they were also popular during other periods of the participants' lives; we don't know at what age the cited song impacted that participant specifically

13.2874

The subway system in New City has recently been running a severe budget deficit. Analysts have concluded that, to avoid a crisis, subway revenues must increase by 50% from the current level, beginning with the coming quarter. Subway riders are currently charged a flat fare per ride; the chairperson of New City's transit authority has concluded that a 50% increase in this fare, effective at the beginning of the coming quarter, will be sufficient to avert any crisis.

Each of the following, if true, calls into question the chairperson's conclusion EXCEPT

- ☐ Subway fares are paid with single-ride tokens that are purchased in advance and do not expire.
- ☐ On the most heavily traveled routes in New City's downtown, express bus fares range from 25 to 40 percent greater than current subway fares.
- ☐ Under New City's tax code, subway fare increases of more than 25 percent trigger reductions in the amount of tax money allocated to the subway system.
- ☐ New City's economy is adding many more jobs in suburban areas, which are inaccessible by subway, than in the urban areas that the subway system serves.
- ☐ Mobile phones, upon which a significant percentage of New City's workers have come to depend for essential communication while commuting, will be banned on the subway from the coming quarter onward.

(1) Identify the Question Type

The language "calls into question" and "if true" indicates that this is a Weaken the Conclusion question. The "EXCEPT" variation indicates that we need to find and eliminate 4 "weaken" answers. The "odd one out" answer, an answer that does not weaken, will be the correct answer.

(2) Deconstruct the Argument

In order to avert a budget crisis, New City's transit authority must increase subway revenues by 50 percent. The chair of the transit authority has devised a plan to increase subway fares by exactly this percentage and believes that this will avert any crisis. In other words, the chair is assuming that a 50 percent fare increase will lead directly to a 50 percent increase in actual revenues and that this increase will occur as soon as the plan is implemented.

(3) State the Goal

We're asked to find something that does not weaken the argument. The four (incorrect) answers, which *will* weaken the argument, must each make the conclusion at least somewhat less likely to be true or valid. The correct answer will either strengthen the conclusion or be irrelevant to the conclusion.

Implicit in the stated plan is the assumption that nothing will *offset* the fare increase or *delay* an immediate increase in revenues. The chairperson assumes that ridership levels will not drop and that there won't be any other reasons why the 50% fare increase might not result in an immediate revenue increase of 50%.

(4) Work From Wrong To Right

(A) If prepaid tokens will remain valid, current subway riders who purchase a large number of tokens at current prices will be able to avoid paying the increased fare for some time – thus delaying the projected increase in revenue. The chairperson assumes that the fare increase will produce the desired result more or less immediately, an assumption that is undermined by this choice.

(B) If this statement is true, then the proposed subway fare increase will raise subway fares to a level higher than the corresponding express bus fares. In that case, many current subway riders will have an incentive to switch from the subway to the express buses. If some do switch, revenues are likely to decrease.

(C) The proposed subway fare increase is far greater than 25 percent, so, if this statement is true, the increase will trigger a reduction in the tax revenue given to the subway system. That tax reduction will offset the revenue increase from the greater fare, thus undermining the chairperson's plan.

(D) CORRECT. The greater rate of **JOB** growth in areas outside the reach of the subway does not, by itself, contain or imply any basis for a negative effect on subway revenues. In particular, there is no reason to assume that the number of workers who ride the subway will decrease. In fact, the wording of this choice suggests that New City is actually adding jobs in areas served by the subway, albeit more slowly than in the suburbs; thus, if anything, the subway's ridership is more likely to increase (however slowly) than to decrease. The chairperson's argument requires only that the ridership not decrease, so this choice does not weaken that argument.

(E) This choice states that "a significant percentage" of New City's professionals have come to view mobile phones as essential, specifically during commute times. If phones are banned, many current subway riders will have an incentive to switch from the subway to another mode of transportation; if so, revenues are likely to decrease.

14.2836

Smith, a basketball player, successfully made 80% of the shots that he attempted this year – an exceptionally high percentage for a player in Smith's league. However, this statistic does not mean that Smith is an exceptional shooter, because the best shooters take many shots from risky locations 20 or more feet away from the basket. Instead, Smith's high shooting percentage simply shows that he takes most of his shots from locations very close to the basket.

Which of the following statements, if true, provides additional support for the argument?

- ☐ Smith's shooting percentage for shots taken from more than 20 feet away from the basket is no higher than other players' shooting percentages from that distance.
- ☐ Smith took most of his shots during games that were closely contested and in which his team could not afford the time and effort to set up easier shots.
- ☐ Very few of the baskets scored by Smith's team from locations close to the basket were shot by Smith himself.
- ☐ The position that Smith plays allows him relatively few shooting opportunities from locations close to the basket.

- Smith's shooting percentage, the highest in the league, was almost 10% higher than that of the player with the next highest percentage.

The principal issue in the argument is the interpretation of Smith's 80% shooting percentage. The argument indicates that this is an "exceptionally high percentage" but attributes that percentage to shots taken from positions closer to the basket – that is, easier shots. To strengthen this argument, additional information is required that points to the fact that Smith did, indeed, achieve his high shooting percentage as a result of taking easier shots (closer to the basket). Alternatively, information showing that Smith is no better than other players when shooting from the risky, far away locations (more than 20 feet from the basket) would serve the same purpose; if that were true, then Smith's superior overall shooting percentage would necessarily result from a higher rate of making easier shots.

(A) CORRECT. According to this choice, Smith's percentage on risky (more than 20 feet from the basket) shots is no better than that achieved by other players from the same distance. If this statement is true, then the only possible source of Smith's higher overall percentage is a superior contribution from easier shots. This choice therefore strengthens the argument.

(B) This option presents the fact that Smith's team could not afford to set up many easier shots. If this is true, then it works against the assumption that the majority of Smith's shots were easy; therefore, on balance, it weakens the argument.

(C) This choice suggests that Smith did not, in fact, preferentially shoot easy shots from close to the basket; in fact, it indicates the opposite. If Smith took very few of his team's close shots, then the claim that his shooting percentage is based largely on such shots is implausible. Therefore, this option weakens the argument.

(D) This choice suggests that Smith did not, in fact, preferentially shoot easy shots from close to the basket; in fact, it indicates the opposite. If Smith had few opportunities to take close shots, then the claim that his shooting percentage is based largely on such shots is implausible. Therefore, this option weakens the argument.

(E) The argument is not concerned with comparing Smith's performance to that of his teammates. Rather, the argument attempts to explain why Smith's performance was so high. This option is out of scope.