

Argumentation

An Introduction To
Argument

Forms of Influence

- Influence is the ability to cause or to enhance others' thinking or action.
- Influence comes in several forms:

argument

persuasion

coercion

making threats

propaganda

bribes

social pressure

“Argument” Defined

- “An argument is a set of statements in which a claim is made, support is offered for it, and there is an attempt to influence someone in a context of disagreement” (Warnick and Inch, 1994, p. 6, § 2).

Definitions

- **Argumentation** is a process of making arguments intended to justify attitudes, beliefs, values, [and behavior change proposals] (p. 10).
- **Presumption** is the idea that the status quo is acceptable until an argument for the contrary is forwarded.

Definitions

- Propositions are appeals for change.
- Propositions are overarching or main claims which serve as the principal claim of an extended argument (p. 52).

Proposition Characteristics

- Propositions and claims need to have the following six characteristics (p. 57):

- | | |
|--------------------|---------|
| ■ controversiality | clarity |
| ■ challenge | balance |
| ■ relevance | honesty |

Characteristics

- If a claim is controversial, it states a position that is not currently accepted or adhered to by the audience (p. 58).
- Challenge means that an arguer's claim confronts recipients' existing [attitudes], values, beliefs, or behaviors" (p. 62).

Characteristics

- Relevance refers to focus; a relevant statement is one that is a “fitting response” to previous statements and anticipated future statements (Bitzer, 1968).
- Clarity refers to how well claims focus arguments on a particular set of issues (Warnick and Inch, p. 58).

Characteristics

- Issues are the points of potential disagreement related to propositions (p. 52).
- Balance is the requirement that the issues for and against a proposition be included equally in the propositional field (p. 61).

Characteristics

- This is one major way that argument and persuasion differ. Persuasion typically is one-sided.
- Argument honesty includes truthfulness, completeness, source disclosure, and a lack of exaggeration and sensationalism.

Claim Types

- There are three major claim types:
- **Factual claims** include inferences about past, present, and future relationships, conditions, or events (p. 64). Factual claims are sometimes referred to as conjectural claims.

Claim Types

- **Value claims** assess the worth or merit of an idea, object, or practice according to standards or criteria applied by the arguer (p. 66).
- **Values** are fundamental positive or negative attitudes toward certain end states of existence or broad modes of conduct (Bem, 1970, p. 16).

Claim Types

- **Policy claims** call for a specific course of action and focus on whether or not a change in policy or behavior should take place.
- Policy deliberations must ethically take costs into consideration.

Evidence

- Evidence is what is offered as support for claims or propositions. Evidence comes in the following forms:
- Reports and descriptions are non-numerical or narrative accounts of some object or occurrence (Warnick and Inch, p. 77).

Evidence

- Statistics are facts and figures that have been systematically collected & ordered so as to convey information (p. 77).
- Artifacts are physical evidence that helps to prove an argument (p. 78).
- Testimony is first hand; experience-, observation-, or occurrence-based data.

Evidence Evaluation

- The criteria commonly employed to evaluate evidence include: reliability, expertise, objectivity, consistency, recency, and access.
- A **reliable source** is one that has proven to be correct many times in the past (p. 79).

Evidence Evaluation

- **Expertise** is the possession of a background of knowledge and information relevant to the subject matter under discussion (p. 79).
- **Objectivity** refers to a source's tendency to hold a fair and undistorted view on a question or an issue (p. 80).

Evidence Evaluation

- **External consistency** is an agreement of evidence with sources of information other than the source(s) being used (p. 80).
- **Internal consistency** is the absence of self-contradiction within information provided by a source (p. 81).

Evidence Evaluation

- **Recency** refers to employing up-to-date evidence rather than using outdated information.
- **Accessibility** depends on whether or not someone offering an opinion is or has been in a position to observe firsthand the matter being disputed (p. 83).

Sources of Evidence

- Established sources of evidence in our culture include: books, newspapers, scholarly journals, magazines, general reference works, indexes, government documents, archives, internet, media broadcasts, interviews, symposia, experiments, and testimonials (Newman and Newman, 1969).

Toulmin's Argument Model

Explanation of the six
Toulmin Argument Model
components.

Toulmin's Argument Model

- Stephen Toulmin offers us a diagrammatic model of argument allowing us superior argument analysis and evaluation.
- The model, in its simplest form, looks like this:

Toulmin's Argument Model



Toulmin Model

- The claim is the assertion in dispute made by the arguer.
- The data is the evidence offered in direct support of the claim.
- The warrant expresses the reasoning used to link data and claim.
- The qualifier indicates the rational strength the arguer attributes to it.

Toulmin Model

- The reservation states the circumstances or conditions which undermine the argument.
- The backing consists of further facts or reasoning used to support or legitimate the principle contained in the warrant.

Argument

- Auditors are not obliged to acquiesce to another's arguments.
- “Anyone who opposes a prima facie case has the burden of rejoinder, the requirement that those who oppose as proposal respond reasonably to the issues presented by the original advocate” (Warnick and Inch, p. 205).

Argument

- **Refutation** is the process of discrediting someone's argument by revealing weaknesses in it or by presenting a [viable] counter argument (p. 205).
- Some arguments and evidence are field dependent; that is, the data employed is limited by, skewed by, or specifically attuned to a particular field of inquiry.

Field Dependent Terms

- The term “insane” is an example of a field dependent term. Physicians, lawyers, and lay people use and understand the term differently and, therefore, in arguments about insanity or when using the term as evidence in arguments, arguers need to be cognizant of others’ fields of reference.

Conclusion

- Arguments are useful in stating, clarifying, testing, and evaluating disagreements. Care must be taken to:
 - a. maintain a tone of civility.
 - b. change one's position when the evidence suggests that action.
 - c. argue fairly (see <http://www.umpi.maine.edu/~petress/fairargu.htm>).

Conclusion

- Arguing is a useful technique to settle disputes; however, we must remember that in order for disagreements to be settled well, we must disagree without being disagreeable.

Sources Cited

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