

# Review of Professional Resources

Millard F. Eiland, Editor

## ARGUMENTATION AND THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS, 2e

by Richard D. Rieke and Malcolm O. Sillars  
Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1984

Any textbook which enters a second edition is a publishing and presumably an educational success, but the second edition also invites comparison with the first. This reviewer, having used both editions of Rieke and Sillars' *Argumentation and the Decision Making Process* (Wiley 1975, Scott, Foresman 1984), finds comparing the two to be a useful way of assessing the more recent version.

In their preface to the first edition, the authors described argumentation as "a unified study that examines how people give reasons for their beliefs and actions" and claimed that "our objective is to strengthen contemporary studies in argumentation and current programs in forensics." In contrast, the newer edition's preface calls argumentation the "process of *reasoning among people*" (the authors' italics) and contends that the text assists students to apply contemporary argumentation theory to practical, audience-centered contexts. There is no mention of forensics in the revised preface, the chapter on educational debate in the first edition is omitted, and debate is dealt with in one paragraph which concludes by advising the student that "if you are interested in this educational experience you should contact the Director of Forensics at your institution in order to become a part of the program" (40).

This de-emphasis on academic debate to the point of virtual exclusion probably is the biggest difference between the two editions, although one could certainly consider whether conceiving argumentation as a study of how people give reasons or one of reasoning among people constitutes a conceptual or only a semantic change. The first edition was more satisfactory as an introductory argumentation *and* debate text, whereas the newer edition continues to provide a clear and basic introduction to argumentation but requires total supplementing of debate material or the use of a distinct debate text. The second edition is better suited for an argumentation course with little or no debate.

As a fundamental argumentation text, this reviewer continues to find the book generally satisfactory. The first ten chapters, which appear in both editions in the same order and with nearly identical titles, deal with "mainstream" topics: the nature of argumentation

("theories" in the first edition); relations to decision making; analysis; the nature of arguments ("characteristics" in the first edition); evidence, values, and credibility as facets of support; case building; refutation; and language. The final chapters offer material different from that in most comparable texts, as they deal with what the authors call "specialized" types and formats for argumentation. In the first edition, these later chapters dealt with law, scholarship, and educational debate, whereas in the newer edition, the chapter on debate has been dropped and new chapters added on politics, religion, and business.

The second edition is two chapters and thirty-five pages longer than the first, and the chapters have been laid out in a clearer and more functional manner with lists of key terms, increased use of italics and heavy type to emphasize important concepts, chapter summaries, and recommended student projects; all but the last of these instructional aids represents a significant change from the earlier version.

Textually, the second edition generally is an improvement. For example, the first edition's simple formula that argumentation occurs when people make claim statements to which others grant or deny adherence has been replaced by the more precise description of argumentation as a "process of advancing, supporting, modifying, and criticizing claims so that appropriate decision makers may grant or deny adherence" (25). This expanded statement more accurately reflects the complexity of argumentation as communication or decision making, as well as implicitly recognizing such important considerations as feedback or channel modification in the process.

In both editions, the authors claim that their work is based on the best of traditional and contemporary research in relevant fields, and this claim is borne out by the citations literally to hundreds of sources; in addition, more than one-third of the citations in the second edition are to sources published after the first edition went to press. But there is also unevenness in some respects; for example, the basic argumentation model in both editions is a slightly modified version of Toulmin's from almost thirty years ago, implying that no further refinement of the model could be made in the decade between editions. Although Rieke and Sillars cannot in general be accused of being out-of-date, in some areas they seem not to have updated as much as in others. Their treatment of general argumentation is better than their handling of decision making, partly because they have not looked extensively into the large amount of research in this area that has been produced in recent years by behavioral and experimental psychologists and sociol-

ogists, although they do rely to some extent on this work in their chapter on values.

In other respects, the book is quite good; the writing is clear enough and the explanations detailed enough to make the text especially appropriate for students with no prior study or experience in the field; the examples in the second edition, many drawn from the early 1980's, are as timely and well-chosen as possible given publishing constraints. Although this writer was at first chagrined by the exclusion of educational debate from the newer edition, he continues to find the text a highly usable introduction to argumentation.

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