



## **Riding the concrete wave: Urban skateboarders' argumentation**

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However, all opinions are strictly our own.

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### **Talk overview**

- Review past work on young people's argumentation and the analytic insights gleaned from that work
- Discuss relationships between argumentation, identity work, and learning
- Discuss ideas about future work

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## Definition of Argumentation

- Argumentation is a claim-making practice involving interaction between people. People make claims in a variety of ways (e.g., verbally, textually) for a variety of purposes (e.g., persuasion, consensus-building).

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## Argumentation in science & everyday life

- Argumentation in the science curriculum (e.g., Bell, 2004; Driver, Leach, Millar, & Scott, 1996; Kelly and Bazerman, 2003; Kuhn, 1992, 1993; Newton, Driver, & Osborne, 1999; Osborne, Erduran, & Simon, 2004; Sandoval, 2003)
- Core epistemic practice in science (Bell, 2004; Duschl and Grandy, 2004; Kelly and Bazerman, 2003; Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik, 1984)
- Young people use argumentation to:
  - explore and hone their **language capabilities** (Goodwin and Goodwin, 1987)
  - practice **theory building** (Ochs, Taylor, Rudolph, and Smith, 1992)
  - **signify status** within **and allegiance** to their peer groups (Corsaro, 2003)
  - **construct identities, create friendships, and create, maintain, and modify the social workings** of their groups (Corsaro and Maynard, 1996)

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## Argumentation at the skateboard park

### Initial Questions:

1. **Why** are arguments created, **where, how, by whom,** and **what work do they do** for those creating and engaging with them?
2. Is argumentation **influenced by contexts** in which it is taking place and if so, how?

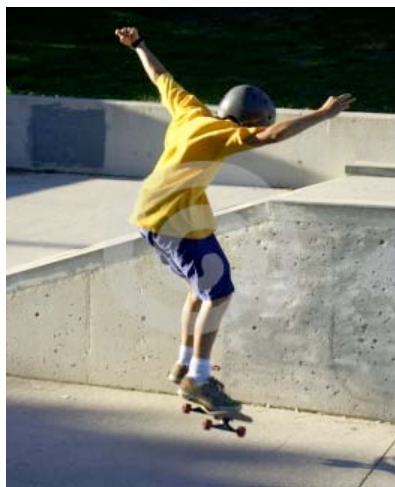
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Data collected from observations  
and recorded in field notes



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## Urban skateboard park



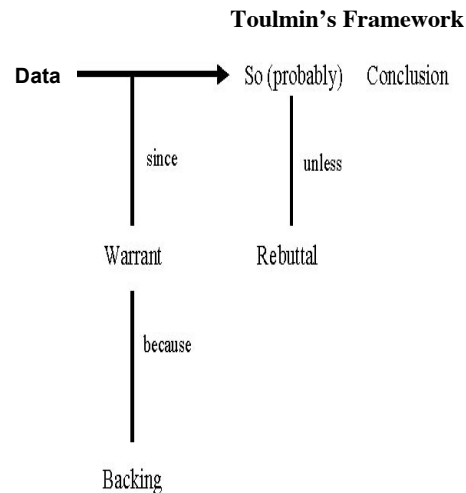
- Pacific Northwest, USA
- **concrete**, square space – flat, landing areas in 4 corners & ramps, dips, and walls in center
- 15 **teen boys** on average
- little **verbal communication**
- Two boys begin playing a **game of SKAT**

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## Argumentation analysis tools

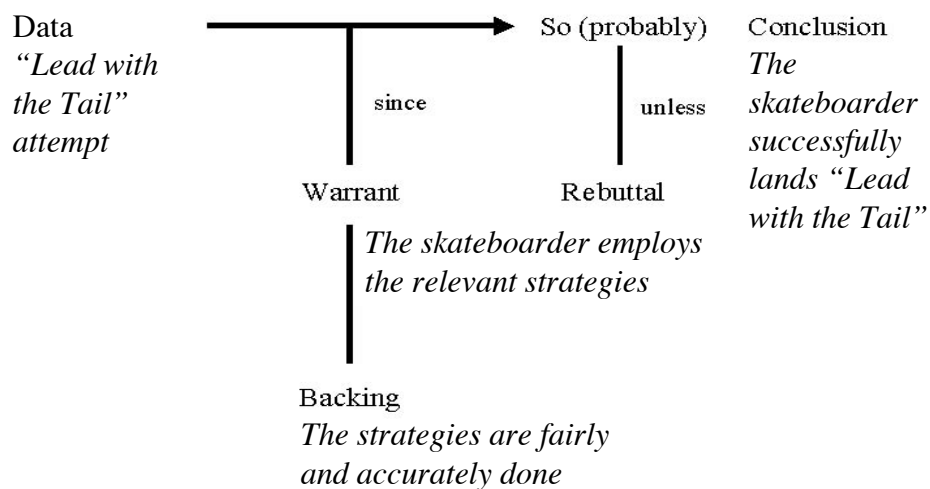
- Formal logic perspective (e.g., all P are M, and no M are S, so no S are P)
- Structural perspective (e.g., Toulmin, 1958/2003)



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## Applying Toulmin's framework to skateboarder argumentation



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## Analytic insights

Solely utilizing a formal logic perspective and/or a structural perspective to analyze everyday argumentation:

- could lead to the creation of a **deficit account** of everyday argumentation (cf., Driver, Newton, and Osborne, 2000; Simosi, 2003)
- does not address **what work arguments do** for those creating them
- does not allow for a socio-cultural-historical perspective of argumentation - **“Dehumanizes” and de-contextualizes**

## Kenneth Burke's method of dramatism

- Analyzing human motive through the use of a five part theater metaphor called ‘the pentad’ (Burke, 1969)
  - **Act** → what took place, in thought or deed
  - **Scene** → the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred
  - **Agent** → person or kind of person who performed the act
  - **Agency** → means or instruments used
  - **Purpose** → why the person performed the act, performed it in the way he/she did, etc.

## Skateboard park – embodied argumentation



**Act:** Game of SKAT – “I am the better skateboarder.”

**Scene:** Skateboard park

**Agents:** Teen boys

**Agency:** Embodied argumentation

–Skateboarder’s tricks (e.g.,  
“Lead with the Tail”)

**Purpose:** e.g., construct identities,  
signify status and allegiance

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## Dogtown and Z-Boys

### Zephyr Skate Team

- 1970s surf/skateboard team
- Dogtown (Southern Santa Monica, Venice, and Ocean Park – California, USA)
- 11 boys and 1 girl

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“Two hundred years of American technology has unwittingly created a massive cement playground of unlimited potential. But it was the minds of 11 year olds that could see that potential.”  
– Craig Stecyk, 1975



[Sony Pictures Classics]

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## Video clip – Dogtown and Z-Boys



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## Argumentation and identity work

- Argumentation to **build identity** – individual & group
  - “pushed and praised...that’s how the stuff evolved”
  - “...a daily competition between all of us to see who could pull off the hottest shit...”
  - “...you’re pushing each other – no one else is around – it’s just the original crew”
- Argumentation to **establish insider/outsider boundaries**
  - On the deck watching, getting ready to take a run, “actual player”
  - Had to have a meeting before bringing someone outside the group...otherwise, group member couldn’t skate the pool

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## Video clip – Dogtown and Z-Boys



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## Argumentation and learning

- **Utilization of prior knowledge & transfer** (e.g., Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 2000)
  - “...completely foreign mentally and physically but the, the fact that we were surfers, we knew which movements needed to be done. We just didn’t know if they were possible yet.”
- **Goal setting** (cf., Butler, 2000)
  - “...make it over the light...successfully.”
  - “Going big worked only as long as you looked good doing it.”
- **Imitation** (cf., Meltzoff & Prinz, 2002) & **Internalization** (Vygotsky, 1978)
  - “We used to call ‘em, ‘Do a Bert.”
  - “...copying that [surfing style] on the ground.”

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## Directions for future work

- Continue to build an analytic toolbox for analyzing argumentation episodes across contexts
- Continue to explore the relationships between argumentation, learning, and identity formation
- Continue to construct a coordinated account of argumentation across contexts
- Attempt to leverage young people's varied argumentation expertise when engaging them with how to argue scientifically