Roles of Engagement: Role-playing in the Teaching and Learning
of Argument Writing among 9th Grade

Tim Pappageorge
University of Illinois at Chicago

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2013

Chicago, Illinois

Defense Committee:

Cynthia Shanahan, Chair and Advisor
Kim Lawless, Educational Psychology
David Schaafsma, English
Tim Shanahan, Curriculum and Instruction
Peter Smagorinsky, University of Georgia
Roles of Engagement

This thesis is dedicated to Samantha, Christopher and Zechariah Pappageorge for their love and support through this process.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the unwavering support and guidance of Cynthia Shanahan, my advisor through this process. In addition, I thank the committee--Kimberly Lawless, Tim Shanahan, David Schaafsma, and Peter Smagorinsky--for their dedication toward giving me quality and constructive feedback. I would like to thank Ryan McCarty and Stephen Kushner for their assistance with data analysis and Richard Jones for providing a reading of this text for bias.
Roles of Engagement

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Research Questions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Definition of Terms</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Research Questions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Chapter Preview</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Social View of Genre</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Engagement</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Research on Written Composition as Focus of Instruction</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Role-Playing as Collaborative Reasoning</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Constructive Controversy</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Limitations on the Above</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. METHOD</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Research Question</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Participants and Setting</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Instructional Focus</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Materials</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Research Procedures</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Data Collection</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
G. Data Analysis................................................................. 48
   a. Analysis of Student Writing ................................. 48
   b. Analysis of Small Group Interactions ................. 51
      i. Questioning .................................................. 52
      ii. Reasoning .................................................... 53
H. Analysis of Personal Interviews................................. 54

IV. RESULTS

A. Research Questions...................................................... 56
B. What gains were made from pre to post test?.................... 56
C. Research Question #2
   a. Student-generated questions in small group discussions .... 59
   b. Student-generated reasoning in small groups ............... 63
   c. Interviews .......................................................... 68
   d. Survey Results ..................................................... 69

V. DISCUSSION.................................................................... 73

A. RPC as Pre-Writing
   a. Research Question #1
      i. Effects Discussed
   b. Research Question #2 ............................................. 78
      i. Effects on Interpretive Reading ................................ 79
      ii. Effects on Critical Reading .................................. 83
      iii. Inclusivity ..................................................... 84
Roles of Engagement

iv. Engagement

VI. REFERENCES

VII. APPENDICES

a. Appendix A: Four Readings and Activities
b. Appendix B: Pre- and Post Assessment
c. Appendix C: Norming Rules for Constructive Controversy
d. Appendix D: Instructional Materials for Both Conditions
e. Appendix E: Instructional Materials for Both Conditions
f. Appendix F: Instructional Materials for Both Conditions
g. Appendix G: Prior Knowledge and Attitude Assessment
h. Appendix H: Interview Questions
i. Appendix I: Coding Idea Units in Data Analysis

VI. VITA
## Roles of Engagement

### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. LEXILE LEVELS IN PREVIOUS STUDIES</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. LEXILE LEVELS IN THIS STUDY</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 TYPES OF QUESTIONS GENERATED IN STUDENT SMALL GROUPS</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 TYPES OF REASONING GENERATED IN STUDENT SMALL GROUPS</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 STUDENT INTERVIEWS, REFLECTIONS ON ENGAGEMENT</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roles of Engagement

LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS, STUDENTS WHO VALUE CLASSMATES</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS ON RESPECT AND INTERACTION</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUMMARY

Pre-writing treatments were examined in assisting a sample of 80 students drawn from an Integrated Freshman Literacy program at the 9th-grade level. Students were tasked with the opportunity to respond through argument to various prompts featuring epidemiological scenarios, informative texts, and literary texts in preparing argument writing. Should there be a quarantine with the outbreak of H1N1? The students would decide. Did Ernest Hemingway portray a diseased child with empathy and insight? The students would decide that as well. In defining these tasks, two treatments were formulated and examined: a Standard group in which the students explored improving their writing through highly functional small groups tasked with formulating response efficiently; and a Role-Playing Controversy condition that guided students to do the same activities as the Standard group but to add an additional 15-minute discussion in which students responded in role to the inherent controversies in the text. A quasi-experimental, mixed-methods approach was used to investigate the degree to which role-playing exercises conferred an advantage on the subsequent argument writings of 9th graders; qualitative analyses of the student interactions in role playing and control groups was also conducted in order to describe the pre-writing process existing in both conditions. Results: both the control and role-playing conditions had a significant, positive effect on student argument writing. The role-playing condition groups revealed more interactions, questions, and reasoning comments—all signs of healthy small groups.

Keywords: argument, writing, pre-writing, adolescent, role-playing
Roles of Engagement

**Introduction**

Writing argument is an important skill for adolescent students to acquire. Whether students are preparing for college, the world of work, or participation in a democratic society, being able to form arguments and to understand arguments is often their ticket of entry to participation in a meaningful life (Newell et al., 2011). This is no less true for students of poverty who often lack exposure to discourses of power (Gee, 2000).

Yet the teaching of argument in the classroom has been impoverished by both standardized tests and by formalistic approaches to writing (Hillocks, 2002). In practice, few students write extended essays frequently, especially if the requirements of the writing task call for writing longer than three pages (Applebee & Langer, 2011) of written work. Indeed, engaging students in sustained argumentation remains an area of growth.

Further, the most common form of student writing in the field consists of short, fill-in-the-blank type writing. In a study of 138 cases with 8,542 separate assignments conducted in the National Study of Writing Instruction (NSWI), 81% of assignments involved worksheet-type writing, such as copying information from a teacher’s presentation or fill-in-the-blank type writings (Applebee & Langer, 2011). Clearly, despite decades of research and agreement that writing is a process, the 30 years of progress measured by the NSWI reveal that we are still experiencing a crisis that needs our attention: the writing of extended explanations and arguments is lacking in the field. Thus the current study will explore methods for engaging 9th-grade students in sustained argumentation, both orally in role-playing scenarios and on written tasks.

Recently, the Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association have issued a call for renewed attention to writing argument in the publication of the Common
Roles of Engagement

Core State Standards. Their writing standards begin with an articulated goal oriented towards the writing of argument:

W.9-10.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

(http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards/writing-6-12/grade-9-10/).

However, this standard and the others in the CCSS do not sufficiently guide the classroom practitioner toward creating a context for extended argument writing. For example, across the state of Illinois—a state cited for its fidelity to the five-paragraph essay (Hillocks, 2002)—teachers often use techniques such as prescriptive graphic organizers (Pappageorge, 2005) to reinforce formalistic approaches to writing.

Thus, classroom methods come to assist students in organizing their ideas but can fall short of the goal of extending argumentation (Hillocks, 2011). However, if the goal is to have students not merely “fill in the boxes” but to extend their argumentative writing and thinking, then a socially purposeful approach will need to be adopted, as the present study will explore.

Classroom strategies that guide students to argue with one another are rare, and role-playing activities that guide students to extend their reasoning are rarer still (Hillocks, 2002). More commonly, a building-blocks approach is taken, one in which formalist components of argumentation--claims, grounds (evidence) and warrants (explanations), and rebuttals (counter-arguments) as in the work of Toulmin (1984)--receive reinforcement. And although Toulmin intended his framework to be flexible and nuanced, it is common practice to view improving student writing as something that entails focusing these elements as an end point: on making sure that the various elements are present. Such an approach remains convenient due to the
Roles of Engagement

exigencies of the classroom and curricular goals, but it often guides student elaboration and reasoning to proceed in a somewhat facile and contrived way.

In the classroom, it can seem that taking Toulmin’s complex argumentative schema down into helpful parts or chunks can seem useful (Graff, 2011). However, if the goal is to guide students to elaborate on their thoughts and to expand on their uses of evidence, then the prescriptive nature of such an approach may not yield the results desired by the standards.

By training students in the process of how to examine evidence and how to formulate warrants, educators can help students to develop reasoning strategies that go beyond the simple format of writing in order to concentrate more on function, as in instruction emphasizing rhetorical strategies (Yeh, 1998). By learning to think in terms of well-reasoned and grounded warrants, for example, students can identify fallacies or develop their own arguments in new situations. Researchers who ground their work in this conception have examined issues of transfer, goal formulation, reader schema, scaffolding, and technology (Newell et. al., 2011) all of which demand the response of a classroom teacher who attempts to attend to them.

One response, a schema-based approach, emphasizes format. In a schema-based approach, instruction is meant to familiarize students with abstract criteria and strategies of argument that can be applied to a variety of contexts. As the instruction is explicit and clear, schema-based approaches are thought to enable argumentation among non-mainstream students (Reznitskaya et al., 2007). Such an approach is beneficial to students because the instruction is clear and comprehensible, but it can also have the unfortunate consequence of being too formulaic and rigid for high school writers who need to craft more expansive arguments.

Another approach to this question is grounded in social conceptions of genre and argumentation (Bazerman, 1994; Booth, 1963), and centers on the context and relationships in which the writing operates (e.g., Nystrand, 1986). Such research has tended to examine
Roles of Engagement

qualitatively the milieu in which students formulate their arguments by examining genre, discourse, teacher-student roles, dialogic contexts online, and visual rhetoric (Newell et al., 2011). Teachers who are grounded in this social perspective on argumentation give students meaningful roles or purposes from which to base their arguments, providing them a substantial exigency with which to think through what is needed to make the argument stronger and to create communities of practice (e.g., Flower, 2003; Wenger, 1998). For example, when students interact in powerful roles on a problematized scenario, they quickly ascertain the rhetorical and argumentative moves that they need to make in order to be successful in exploring the topic.

Rehearsing these arguments in oral discourse gives students the chance to master the types of academic work—selecting evidence, explaining that evidence, and judiciously connecting evidence to their claims—that will make their arguments more convincing (Newell et al., 2011). Such an approach could give students the chance to enact the social and cognitive moves that good arguments require, and the practice of these moves in an engaging situations should support their natural use in novel contexts.

The present study defines a control treatment focusing on a formalistic approach utilizing schema-based tools such as graphic organizers, model essays, scales/rubrics, and practice prompts; the experimental treatment was conducted using the same approach but added additional classroom episodes in which students engaged in role-playing argumentation. The data in the study were examined to determine the incremental value of the role-playing treatment on student reasoning as evidenced in small group discussion transcripts and in written warrants and rebuttals.

Newell et al., suggest that integrating cognitive and social perspectives on argument instruction yields not only rich insight but also a powerful research agenda that would examine how students’ thinking and writing is developed over time. To these researchers, studying the
Roles of Engagement

social aspects of reasoning is a promising line of research. In their recent comprehensive review of argumentative writing, they suggest that collaborative reasoning can be implemented with heuristics (Reznitskaya, 2007; Yeh, 1998) and social context implementations (e.g. Dong, 2008).

Yet the corpus of research in this area is thin--even thinner at the secondary level, since most collaborative reasoning treatments have been conducted on grade school learners at the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom level. Among the nine or so recommendations for further research for which Newell et al. (2011) argue, at least three have relevance to the present study [emphasis added]:

1.) Further research could examine the influence of writing in contexts with potential actual uptake versus no actual uptake on differences in students’ motivation and writing quality.

2.) There is also a need to develop more fine-tuned means of assessing the quality of argumentative reading and writing, particularly in terms of assessing the use of social practices identified in this review. Although assessment criteria and rubrics have been developed for analysis of the use of claims, supporting reasons, warrants, and counterarguments, less attention has been devoted to analysis of practices related to development of ethos, gaining audience identification, double-voicing different discourses and stances, uses of visual rhetoric, and so forth (Prior et al., 2007).

3.) Further research also needs to build on the collaborative reasoning research (e.g. Reznitskaya et al., 2009) to examine how students’ dialogic oral adoption of alternative perspectives and discourses in online, computer-based interactions transfers to students’
Roles of Engagement

argumentative writing. For researchers analyzing the use of online argumentative discussions, one challenge has to do with analysis or evaluation of what is a highly interactive process. (297-298)

The present study will examine the third set of issues through an experimental design. The first two areas will be explored through a range of data sources in order to describe the communities of practice involved.

Collaborative reasoning is grounded in a Bakhtinian view that language is essentially dialogic, that there is a strong role of the other. In Newell’s call for further research above, the first goal relates to the sense of audience that a student carries with him or her while writing. In effect, teachers will often ask students to adopt an imagined audience, but this can be hard to do. For the speaker/writer, whether or not one is understood only becomes clear when there is a response (Bakhtin, 1981).

Situated responses operate within and seek to reify genres of expression. Viewing genre as a socially constructed milieu rather than as a formalistic pattern can be helpful in understanding how to help students master the various genres they are asked to adopt. Academic, argumentative writing certainly stands as one such genre. If the teacher views, for example, a legal patent not as a format but as a set of agreements and assumptions between patent writers, the courts, and the legal persons responsible for carrying them out, then he or she comes to a more generative and social view of patents (Bazerman, 1994).

The same social view can be applied to Toulmin’s model of argumentation (Toulmin, 1984). Following this social view of genre in the classroom, instruction in the genre of argument would necessarily entail instruction in the roles and responsibilities of writer, speaker, audience and other key players such as expert witnesses. In this way, reasoning in roles can be grounded in the notion that genre is social.
Roles of Engagement

Further, researchers who study collaborative reasoning among elementary students have explored the distribution of participation, the divergence of questions, the quality of student arguments, and the acquisition of rhetorical moves useful in facilitating argument construction (Reznitskaya et al., 2009). By focusing on controversial moral dilemmas, collaborative reasoning approaches have been shown to draw out student interest and to help develop student writing. Controversy played a central role in the present study, as the experimental treatment guided students to argue in roles, and they experienced opportunities to rephrase ideas from varying perspectives, thus giving a line of inquiry into the first two research priorities drawn from Newell et al. (2011). The present study quantified the elaboration that students created on pre- and post-assessment writings to gauge the effects of arguing in-role on their extended argumentation in writing.

At the secondary level, the social sphere of the classroom develops students’ argumentative writing ability. According to Hillocks, the author of the first major meta-analysis (Hillocks, 1986) for the quality of instruction in writing, to write argument students need to be engaged in the act of speaking argument (Hillocks, 2011).

Underpinning the focus on social reasoning is the notion that thought is dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981) and that cognitive dissonances, if carried out in a spirit of collaboration, can powerfully develop student reasoning (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Students will be instructed to challenge each other’s views in a manner that is respectful of both the participants using ground rules developed beforehand. Such an approach seems to garner high gains in cognitive reasoning, according to one meta-analysis (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). In this study, I examined evidence in students’ written arguments of cognitive dissonance.
Given this context, the current study explored approaches to argumentative writing instruction, featuring a traditional/formalistic approach and a collaborative-reasoning approach, framing the following research question:

To what extent did an instructional treatment featuring role-playing controversy (RPC) confer any advantage on the subsequent argument writings of ninth-grade students?

The present study sought to examine student writings pre- and post- intervention to measure the degree to which students elaborated on their reasoning. Specifically, the present study aimed to measure the level of elaboration in student writing on the warrants and the rebuttals (Toulmin, 1984) that students wrote. The relationship between participation in extended argumentation in role and extended argumentation reasoning in writing was the point of focus in attempts to quantify student gains in writing skill. Thus a secondary research question is:

In what ways did role-playing shape the experience of the participants as they wrote arguments?

To examine this second question, transcripts of student interaction were examined as were student interviews. Transcripts were coded for intellectual depth of inquiry by examining the questions that students asked and the levels of reasoning that they used. In addition, student interviews were examined for the relative presence of motivational constructs such as choice, competence, and challenge (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). As theory points to the notion that the expectation reciprocity (Nystrand, 1986) is central to authentic communication, student responses to motivational constructs gave insight on the degree to which students found a socially-focused approach using role-playing to be engaging and challenging for their learning. Thus the transcripts and the interviews created a picture of the relative strength of shared meaning making within the small groups that become operational in the study.
Roles of Engagement

Definition of Terms

Collaborative Reasoning – An instructional treatment featuring increased student-to-student communication, including questioning and reasoning.

Common Core State Standards – Literacy and mathematics standards adopted in recent years by a majority of U.S. states. Language Arts standards include reading, writing, listening & speaking.

Constructive Controversy—A method of cooperative learning in which students are guided to disagree respectfully and under certain established norms.

Double Voicing—A term used to describe the ways in which a student can simultaneously respond to a given text from his or her own perspective and also from the perspective of a character or role her or he has adopted.

Engagement—Focused and sustained effort on academic tasks with a high degree of commitment to learning.

Formalism—The study of text without taking into consideration contextual factors. Absolute formalism rejects the importance of authorship or societal influence. However, for the purposes of this study, a “formalistic approach” will denote approaches to teaching argumentative writing which value the format of the writing instead of context.

Heuristics—Problem-solving strategies. In argument writing, students can use heuristics to develop a line of reasoning on a given topic.

Lexile—A measure of readability popular among grade school and middle school educators. High school educators have begun measuring both text readability and student comfort levels in order to judge suitability of text choices for student use. The online textbook Expert 21, which is used by students in this study, contains a Lexile feature.
Roles of Engagement

Models—Final drafts of written arguments. Students can examine models in order to derive both the desirable qualities of their own essays and begin to consider a plan of attack.

Role-Playing—A classroom treatment in which students are assigned a random position in the story from which to argue the outcome of a moral dilemma. In response to a work of fiction, students take on the roles of characters in the story. In response to non-fiction, students take on a variety of roles, including expert witnesses, community officials who must make key decisions based on the information in the informational text, or people affected by the decisions in question. It is important that teachers design roles that oppose one another intellectually and that help to heighten the moral dilemma in question. As a result, role-playing aims to make the text problematic for the students as they experience it first-hand.

Scales—Rubrics used by students to gain a clearer understanding of the demands of an argument writing assignment.
Chapter 2

Research Question

This study used a quasi-experimental design to determine the extent to which an instructional treatment featuring role-playing controversy (RPC) conferred any advantage on the argument writing of ninth-grade students. The study also provided a qualitative analysis of the interactions and practices established in the experimental classrooms to describe the ways in which role-playing shaped the experience of the participants as they wrote arguments.

Chapter Preview

As the first chapter sought to clearly define a rationale for researching the teaching and learning of argument in a set of 9th-grade classrooms, this chapter will define several key parameters regarding the present research study on student argument writing. From theory and research literature, this chapter will explore foundational issues for the present study on argument: what it is, how its use is acquired, and how disengaged secondary students can be affected by the instructional focus. Specifically, this chapter will:

- Define a social view of genre against a formalist view of genre, drawing on theories of rhetoric and communities of practice;
- Cite theory and research on consensus models of argument instruction and contrast those models with controversy-oriented models, including research on role-playing;
- Cite research and theory on student engagement to give context to the above;
- Cite research on written composition and focus of instruction to give context to the above.

Social View of Genre

The characteristics of strong argumentative writing enjoy a broad consensus on standardized tests and in much research literature. The influence of Toulmin (e.g. Toulmin,
Roles of Engagement

1984) in the field’s understanding of the forms, forums and functions of argument has been widely documented (Newell, Beach et al., 2011). Reznitskaya’s research on argument, which includes such terms as position, reasons, supporting facts, objections, responses to the objections (Reznitskaya et al., 2007) has also been cited as influential in the field of teaching argument to students, ages 7-14 (Andrews, 2009; Newell et al., 2011).

Toulmin’s components are often cited: claims, grounds, warrants, backing and rebuttals (Toulmin, 1984). Reznitskaya et al. defined empirical terms for the same argument criteria: position, reasons, supporting facts, objections, and responses to objections (e.g., Reznitskaya et al., 2001). However, there is a pressing need to build on these definitions and to make them more applicable to high school. Most studies have examined argument at the later elementary grades rather than at the high school level (e.g., Reznitskaya et al., 2007), and far fewer studies have explore extended reasoning in middle school or older students (e.g. Yeh, 1998).

The problem is that classroom approaches too often focus instruction solely on defining the components of argument using the formalist traits of an argument scheme rather than offering students the chance to think through arguments or enact authentic argument writing in situated contexts (Hillocks, 2002). When viewed as an end-point, Toulmin’s framework can become in practice a set of formalistic traits for writing, rather than a way of guiding students to think through how their ideas create a field of influence. This trait approach to instruction is a problem because such a view of writing argument creates the exigency for a transmission model of instruction in which students are taught the elements of writing and then asked to use them in a formalistic—even formulaic way. The result can disengage many learners, particularly those who come from non-traditional learning backgrounds, examples of which have been described qualitatively (e.g. Au, 2002).
Roles of Engagement

Further, often in the field of argument teaching and writing, and indeed in the classroom itself, a formalistic approach to writing is evidenced (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Hillocks, 2002)—an approach that focuses on defining the traits of strong writing. This focus tends to emphasize the format of the writing, not its function or purpose. In these instances, educators fall into Booth’s first error, one of a three that he laid out while defining the constraints of the New Rhetoric: “#1: Pedant’s Stance [i.e. formalism]…consists of ignoring or underplaying the personal relationship of speaker and audience and depending entirely on statements about a subject. The writer who assumes that it is enough entirely to write an exposition of what he happens to know on the subject will produce the kind of essay that soils our scholarly journals” (Booth, 1963). Booth is suggesting that the writer has a duty to consider the audience, the effect, and the purpose of the communicative act (e.g., Flower, 2003; Jamaludin, 2009). Failure to do so creates writing and speech that lack power or effect.

However, utilizing the social sphere adds much value to the ways in which educators conceptualize argument instruction. A socially defined argument genre views writing as a function of the relationships involved in its production and use. As early as the 1960’s, Wayne Booth (1963) offered a view of writing/rhetoric that defined the social as a central concern: “The New Rhetoric Defined: at work in any communicative effort: the available arguments about the subject itself, the interests and peculiarities of the audience, and the voice, the implied character, of the speaker” (Booth, 1963). If his view is true, then the regular classroom exploration and instruction of argument writing should take into consideration a variety of constraints, not least of which is the audience and its particularities.

According to Nystrand, the connection between the writer and audience creates a social contract, a “reciprocity principle.” For example, the act of mailing a letter is not a simple act or individual action. Instead, there is a set of assumptions by the letter writer that surrounds the act,
Roles of Engagement

from the use of public mailboxes to the behavior of his or her audience who will receive the letter. Furthermore, in any collaborative activity, the participants orient their actions on certain standards that are taken for granted as rules of conduct by the group to which they belong (Nystrand, 1986). The problem for the teaching and learning of argumentative writing is that too often classroom approaches devalue this necessary reciprocity by focusing on the traits of effective one-way communication.

Nystrand continues to say that reciprocity is important because the expectation of reciprocity in discourse shapes not only the meaning of what the speaker or writer has to say or what he or she wants to accomplish (i.e. purpose) but also the expectations that are shared by all who are involved (i.e. producer-receiver contract) (Nystrand, 1986). In the classroom, the purpose that a student has for writing, as well as the connection he or she perceives with the audience, can help to create an engaging context for learning, as will be explored later.

Bazerman also defines writing by its social function (Bazerman, 1994). Genre, he postulates, is the sum of its social dynamics. Even the most prescriptive and technical of speech and writing acts—the most seemingly formulaic—have at their base social purposes and constraints. Format is defined by social relationships and mutually constrained expectations. For example, the act of requesting, negotiating, writing, and legalizing a patent is a process marked by a socially defined genre. At each turn, he explains how the form of the writing is a function of its purpose within the social sphere in which it is used:

Through an understanding of the genres available to us at any time we can understand the roles and relationships open to us. An understanding of generic decorum will let us know whether it is ours to ask or answer, to argue or clarify, to declare or request. We can find system in speech acts without reducing them to a system and without excluding evolution, novelty, and the multiplicity of human life (p. 82).
Roles of Engagement

The perspectives of Booth, Nystrand and Bazerman are amplified by the work of theorists operating within communities of practice (e.g., Wenger, 1998). Flower (2003), for example, theorizes that engaging in communities of practice with shared expectations and reciprocity can open the door for what she calls, “talking across differences,” which is not merely the exchange of ideas but something more central to the creation of community and understanding: “the attempt to talk across differences must not merely acknowledge this history but must deal directly with the relationships of power and distrust it has left behind…” (40).

Flower proceeds to say that talking across difference is a necessary focus in making meaning, since talking across difference in a rhetorical forum is not just an event but also a cultural and social activity shaped by the forces of history, ideology, cognition, and material reality that are in play (Flower, 2003). Thus she values the context for the writer or speaker as well as the community in which the message is received and responded to. An example of this interaction exists in one student’s response to the city’s curfew policy: “As the cops approach Denis and Shawn, they say, ‘What’re ya doin in dis alleyway at dis time of night. Don’t ya know there’s a curfew?’ [Thinking: I know these two teens are neighborhood drug dealers cuz they’re dressed like most drug dealers I see all the time”] (52). Here, in framing a response to the community issue of curfews, this student writer reveals unspoken rivals in the italicized writing. This writing represents the assumptions that he perceives the police are making. By doing so, this writer exposes his views on a number of topics simultaneously: the issue of curfew, his views on the motives of police officers, his appraisal of the police officers’ assumptions, and also the endemic stereotypes of both the street teens and the police officers. Later, in a dramatic performance of this scene, the student writer opted to have the unspoken italicized information boom as monologue on the PA system from a pre-recorded tape, while he and his classmates would continue to perform the drama in character. The audience, then, regardless of their
Roles of Engagement

personal orientations, would encounter the issue of curfew with the layers of difference and multiplicity that this scene and other similar scenes provide.

The inherent dynamic of Flower’s work (2003) focuses on controversy and difference. Such an orientation, when offered in a tone and approach of mutual respect, has been documented to show greater gains on cognitive measures than concurrence-seeking approaches (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). This dynamic of respectful difference forms the cornerstone of many social practices in which the exchange of ideas is grounded in the expectation of reciprocity mentioned above (Nystrand, 1986).

In contrast, some cognitive-based models have been shown to be successful without focusing explicit instruction on the social import of argumentation. In some empirical studies, these cognitive-based approaches have been successful with urban populations of students by approaching argument schemas and problem solving methods in an explicit manner and working through implementation of learning tools in a respectful environment (Graham, 2005). By maintaining clear expectations and a supportive environment for implementation, the specific implementations of schema-based approaches (e.g. Reznitskaya & Anderson, 2002) as well as strategy-based approaches (e.g. Graham & Harris, 2005) fall into this category. In particular, Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD) has been shown to be effective for low-income students in urban, elementary schools (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005), and in a meta-analysis, the impact of SRSD was substantial, with an average effect size of 1.15 (SD = 1.44; n = 110) at posttest and 1.32 (SD = .93; n = 24) at maintenance (Graham, 2006; Graham & Perrin, 2007).

In both of these approaches, learning involves generating and modifying of schemas and transferring those schemas to novel tasks. Specifically, a student might learn to support argument writing by learning the schema of a house: the roof is his or her position, while the walls and foundation are composed of reasons and supporting facts.
Roles of Engagement

Although effective in many contexts, the question of whether or not explicit instruction should include schemas or social structures, or some combination of both approaches, is far from settled. Schema and strategy treatments often represent practical, supportive treatments of learning, grounded in cognitive theories (e.g. Anderson & Pearson, 1984) as well as social learning theories (e.g. Vygotsky, 1981). However, two issues arise when considering their use with older students. First, in a recent controlled experiment, neither the SRSD nor the socially-infused approach of Collaborative Reasoning was proven to be statistically better (Coker & Erwin, 2011). Additionally, Argument Schema Theory (AST) proved to have mixed results against Collaborative Reasoning, indicating no differences in some measures, but better results for CR in essay writing and better results for AST in schema articulation (Reznitskaya et al., 2007). As a result of these two recent experimental studies, the preference for a schema-based approach (SRSD, AST, etc.) has not been clearly established, leaving open a research agenda calling for its further investigation (Newell et al., 2011).

Second, while schema-based approaches leverage the social affordances available in the classroom in order to help students to appropriate the schema in question, neither approach guides students to disagree about substantial issues. The presence of the social in these approaches functions to facilitate schema implementation. In contrast, the use of alternative treatments such as role-playing scenarios or collaborative reasoning can be used to heighten conflict and energize the exchange of ideas (Hillocks, 2011), thus leaving the question of social controversy as a key research question to be explored (Newell et al., 2011). Such a dynamic, if carried on respectfully, has been demonstrated to have greater cognitive gains (Johnson & Johnson, 2009) than approaches that solely focus on concurrence. The use of role-playing, as will be noted below, may intensify the affordances of constructive controversy that have been documented to create gains.
However, when it comes to the question of raising the level of elaboration on student argument writing, the question remains as to whether a schema-based model, one that is essentially concurrence-seeking, will help students from low income backgrounds to a greater degree than guiding them to argue the issues first. A socially-defined view of argument suggests that students who gain practice in orally defending their ideas and in sifting through alternative points of view will be able to incorporate some of the same thinking on their written work (Coker & Erwin, 2011). With older students, students who are exploring elaboration of warrants and rebuttals in their argument writing, the process of appropriating these thinking skills and then showing evidence of their mastery on writing tasks is still in need of much research (Newell et al., 2011).

It follows then, that diverse classrooms in which much “difference” already exists—differences in race, ethnicity, gender, social class, immigration status, citizenship status, family structure, and social networks—are particularly in need of taking Flower’s ideas into account. Where there is much difference to begin with, a greater need for bridges of understanding exists in order for Nystrand’s reciprocity to be established or for Bazerman’s view of genre to be enacted by the group. In contrast to a decontextualized, formalistic approach to teaching argument, these theorists suggest a dialogue-based approach that would set the stage for a contextualized, situated effort to learn argument, as is the case in role-playing scenarios and various situation gaming approaches to argument (Hillocks, 2011).

The present study draws on these theories to define argument in terms of its social function. Such a definition explores the connection between writer and audience. And such a definition is not often evidenced in schools. The present study examined the idea of offering students the chance to explore the tools of argument--position, reasons, supporting facts, objections, responses to the objections; or as Stephen Toulmin (1984) theorized, claims,
Roles of Engagement

evidence, rebuttals, grounds, warrants. In exploring these tools in socially viable roles, the present study gauged the control that students had in elaborating on their ideas and reasoning. In turn, this study explored the extent to which arguing in roles enabled students to authentically transform (Bruner, 1960) the tools of argument for students’ own purposes.

It is an important distinction, the theoretical position taken by the instructor as he or she defines genre. From this distinction, a formalistic approach emphasizing the traits of an argument or social approach emphasizing the context and dynamics of the argument is likely to follow.

Engagement

If reciprocity and “talking across difference” describe genre within communities of practice, then it is logical to next consider the effect of these traits upon classroom learning. Thus the focus of this section will be to cite theory and research regarding the linguistic and social reasons that create disengaged students in a “typical” classroom and how dialogic instruction in argumentative speaking and writing can engage those students.

Theory and research suggest that a social approach is likely to recruit “disengaged students.” Students who come from non-mainstream backgrounds (Au, 2002) often become alienated by the methods of traditional teaching and learning, the transmission model, in particular (Au, 2002). But when students are involved in authentic classroom discussions, their native, culturally valid communication strengths can often come to bear, creating greater levels of participation and personal investment. And when a discussion-based approach is coupled with high academic expectations, higher literacy achievement has been widely documented on a range of measures, including writing abstraction and elaboration (Applebee et al., 2003) as well as literacy achievement based on a range of assessments (Langer, 2001). A classroom featuring
Roles of Engagement

dialogue (Nystrand, 1997) is likely to foster students who “beat the odds,” and thus achieve to levels not predicted by SES or other factors (Langer, 2001).

Other researchers argue that schema-based approaches leverage the social capital of the classroom to improve student learning. By setting up a positive and supportive environment, students are able to gain the competence and mastery of the argument skills that have been defined for them as important. In these instances, the social dynamic focuses exclusively on the process of assembling the argument and adhering to the formalist construct or schema that has been laid out (e.g. Reznitskaya et al., 2007). What these approaches do not do is offer students the chance to leverage the social dimension of the class to explore the topic of the argument. Students do not disagree about substantial arguments. They do not sharpen the distinctions between one set of evidence and another (evidence), the implications of using that evidence (warrants), or even the necessity of anticipating an alternative point of view (rebuttal). Thus, social approach emphasizes the context of argumentative reasoning as well the status of controversy in the content of the argument.

However, it may be the case that the schema-based approaches are motivating and engaging for students. Csikszentmihalyi argued that for students to become engrossed in their work and to achieve a state of high motivation, their task should neither be too difficult nor too simplistic. In the former case, students can experience frustration, and in the latter case, they can become easily bored (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). When it comes to the academic success of at-risk 9th-grade students, the more concrete and comprehensible tasks represented by the schema-based approaches may be more in their productive zones of mastery.

Thus, research in this area is left to explore the open question as to whether the social function of arguing controversial issues—and arguing in role, specifically, will be explored below—creates the added value of increased engagement for students who are constructing
Roles of Engagement

reasoned arguments using schema-based approaches such as graphic organizers, formulas for pre-writing, acronyms, etc.

As there are many ways of operationalizing the idea of engagement, the present study explored the issue of sustained argumentation and reasoning. Thus, the commitment of students to their choices, the level of control that they perceive with regard to their work, their identification of worthwhile skill development (competence), and the value that they place on their peer interactions (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002) served as proxies for engagement.

Feedback, in its own right, creates a field of engagement as it often reflects competence and social interaction to the participant. Adolescent engagement in academic classes has been documented to be much lower than in settings such as sports or art. Csikszentmihalyi (1990), for example, suggests that most students require the kind of immediate feedback that sports like rock climbing can provide, but that the typical experience of academics does not provide this kind of feedback and appropriate level of challenge. However, Csikszentmihalyi suggests that by creating engaging, personal interactions in class, teachers in academic subjects can overcome these barriers. Such a framework corroborates the idea that teachers who use socially defined genres focusing on reciprocity and talking across difference create communities of practice that provide such a feedback loop.

The research of Smith and Wilhelm (2002; 2006) provides evidence. They describe the conditions under which adolescent boys, often some of the most disengaged profiles and proclivities, can become engaged in the academic tasks that they face. Based on the work of Deci (e.g. Deci, 1991; Deci, 1995), Dweck (e.g. Dweck 1989), and Csikszentmihalyi (1990), they indicated that choice, competence, challenge, and social relationships are central to the motivation of adolescents. By selecting 50 boys for a fine-grained analysis from a cross-section of three states and a range of schools and ability levels, they created a range of snapshots of what
Roles of Engagement

engaged learning looks like for boys along these four vectors. They collected interviews, artifacts, surveys, and literacy logs which were kept for 4-6 weeks. They had the students react to and rank scenarios of literacy learning, having them rank what they read in terms of their own preferences. Later, turning towards features of text that the informants enjoyed, learning logs and recorded think-aloud protocols uncovered what these boys were thinking, feeling, and doing as they read two action-oriented stories, and two highly reflective stories.

The results of this study indicated that the motivational constructs of choice, competence, and challenge were foundational to the boys’ appraisals of their work. Further, across all three dimensions, the boys in the study emphasized the social. They demanded a kind of authentic social contract with the teacher based on reciprocity—a social contract on which they find largely teachers reneged (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).

Students who were more often engaged in dialogue improved in their ability to explain their ideas in writing, both in terms of abstraction/reasoning and in terms of elaboration/support. In addition, they document the dearth of authentic conversation in lower-tracked classrooms, identifying an average of only 3.7 minutes per hour of open discussion in lower-tracked classes in contrast to the 14.5 minutes per hour evidenced on average in high track classes (Applebee et al., 2003). Clearly, there is a need to expand the time available for classroom interaction among lower tracked students, particularly if such interaction will lead to gains on their writing elaboration.

The question remains as to whether the benefits “open discussion” (as defined by the above study as a classroom episode of 30 seconds or longer during which students can legitimately disagree) will extend to longer episodes of discussion and role-playing for 9th-grade students. Will there be an extended benefit? Will there instead be evidence of diminishing returns? Applebee et al., theorize that “spontaneous scaffolding” results from open discussion, in
Roles of Engagement

which “support for developing ideas that are generated during open discussions is a powerful tool for learning” (p. 722). In turn, the present study gathered data on student interactions over 20-30 minutes, during which controversial subjects were explored in role. This study addressed whether or not students would be able to leverage the spontaneous scaffolding from these longer interactions to create argument writings that are more elaborated and complex.

Clearly, the students in Smith and Wilhelm’s study (2002) valued the reciprocity that exists when teachers pay attention to them as learners, and that may happen in a more viable and authentic way in either a schema-based approach or in a socially-based, controversy-oriented approach. The potential for choice, competence, control and positive social relations would seem to exist, at least potentially, in either orientation.

And yet difference and dialogism continue to resurface as central issues in the communication act. From a theoretical perspective, the work of Bakhtin suggests that dialogue is engaging by its very nature. Art requires dialogic space (Bakhtin, 1981), and everyday conversation is filled with interpretations of other people’s words with phrases like “people say” and “everyone says” (Bakhtin, 1981). Thus, everyday speech is the act of dialogic interpretation and meaning making. The context of the dialogue—the social sphere—creates a rich field in which the genre operates: “The context embracing another’s word is responsible for its dialogizing background, whose influence can be very great” (Bakhtin, 1981).

Informed by an emphasis on these social exchanges, arguing in roles emphasizes differences of opinion in the classroom, particularly in response to questions evoked by substantial moral dilemmas. In this framework, individual students are able to appropriate genre skills by first understanding them in a social context. Through informal discourses that are natural and strong for them, students can appropriate the types of argumentative skills and moves--position, reasons, supporting facts, objections, responses to the objections--that will help
Roles of Engagement

them master the social fields in which argument operates. Such structures can eventually
become incorporated in their own writing (Reznitskaya, Anderson, & Kuo, 2007). It is the
emphasis on context as noted above in Bakhtin that creates a field of argumentation learning for
the students. The emphasis placed on abstract processes as in schema-based approaches is
replaced by an effort to recruit the natural fields of dialogic communication that exist within the
classroom.

When it comes to teaching argumentative writing, teachers select how they will frame the
discussion and the progression of skills and materials. In every discussion, teachers select how
to frame the dynamics: stance; interruptive authority; turn taking control; and topics (Chin et al.,
2001). When students are able to go with the “flow” of discussion and enter their ideas without
pausing as often for editing or even praise from the teacher, then the level of engagement goes up
(Chin et al., 2001; Coker & Erwin, 2011; Dong et al., 2008; Reznitskaya, 2007). The question
quickly arises, then, if these engaging discussions influence individual writing processes.

Role-Playing as Collaborative Reasoning

The use of role-playing to explore perspectives on meaning is at least as old as Plato.
Modern educational research has explored using roles in education to explore a broad range of
applications including some of the following: ethical dilemmas, for example in the training of
medical professionals (Mitchell, 1998); racialized assumptions of college freshmen (Lawson et
al., 2010); scientific inquiry (Howes, E.V. & Cruz, B.C., 2009); and school policy (Doerr-
Stevens, C., Beach, R., & Boeser, E., 2011).

A definition of role-playing has been offered by Taylor and Walford (1972) to follow the
following contours:
Roles of Engagement

1.) Players take on roles which are representative of the real world, and then make decisions in response to their assessment of the setting in which they find themselves;

2.) They experience simulated consequences which relate to their decisions and their general performance;

3.) They `monitor’ the results of their actions, and are brought to reflect upon the relationship between their own decisions and the resultant consequences.

Operating under such a definition, students can discover and explore divergent viewpoints and can examine subjects from multiple perspectives (Mitchell, 1998). This is a key criterion for argument instruction, as the identification of rebuttals and responding to them with counter-arguments is a feature of Toulmin’s model (Toulmin, 1984). In turn, the classroom can become transformed into an authentic forum to explore ideas and issues, students can learn by participating in transforming the formal classroom into a place to experiment with ideas (Mitchell, 1998). As in the case of Troyka (1974) cited in Hillocks’s meta-analysis (Hillocks, 1986), the effects of role playing can be pronounced when enacted as “situation gaming” in which students are asked to provide facts, reasons, descriptions, comparisons and contrasts. In her study of 25 experimental classes of freshman remedial college writers, the experimental effect was 1.69 SD, over half an SD greater than the next highest effect size reviewed in Hillocks’ meta-analysis (Hillocks, 1986).

The question of transfer, however, is central. Since supporters of schema-based approaches suggest that formal, overt, explicit instruction in argument techniques will create greater gains in student writing, it remains to be seen if student participation in role-playing discussion will reliably confer advantages to their written argumentation. Such a transfer would rely on whether or not students had internalized the social structures present in the group role-
Roles of Engagement

based task. Role-playing clearly enacts the socially defined nature of argument by setting the stage for reciprocity, talking across difference, and maintaining high engagement through socially defined roles and tasks that have epistemological corollaries beyond the classroom itself. Students in a role-playing treatment could be guided to take on roles informally, to speak from their perspectives and later, to write from those perspectives.

In the world beyond the walls of the classroom, engaged argumentation has led to activism among adolescent students (Crisco, 2009). This study theorizes a call to engagement to students that moves them to action: “A key difference is that community literacy advocate consensus—or deliberative models of democracy, whereas activist literacy is a practice that aligns with Chantai Mouffe's "agonistic model of democracy" (Crisco, 2009). In her approach, both community literacy and activist literacy find value in building coalitions and collaborating with other individuals or groups for the purpose of social justice and change, yet community literacy brings everyone together to make the best change for all, whereas activist literacy challenges dominant attitudes, positions, policies, and laws.

Research on Written Composition and Focus of Instruction

The research on student composition has a rich body of research with at least two major meta-analyses (Hillocks, 1985; Graham & Perrin, 2007). Hillocks’ meta-analysis (1986) contrasted an inquiry-based approach—one in which students were given data sets or diagrams to analyze critically before they wrote—with several other foci of instruction, such as scales, free writing, and models. The use of scales amounts to the teaching of students the grading scale or rubric in question as a major focus of instruction. The effect size for this type of instruction is .36, less than the .56 realized by the inquiry focus (n=6 studies). However, the use of models alone—this focus of instruction features a teacher-presented student model essay for emulation—found an even lower effect size of .22.
Roles of Engagement

Older students in grades 7-12 are expected by state standards to elaborate on their use of evidence, explain it, and to offer plausible and multiple perspectives. Such complex elaboration requires a greater level of mastery of argument in context, as the writer must anticipate counter arguments, qualifiers and rebuttals—all of which come from an anticipation of and sensitivity to his or her audience. Here the notions of reciprocity and difference move from theoretical grounding to the tasks that the groups in the present study must do. Even more basic moves such as elaboration on evidence and expanding warrants are likely to be affected by the design of the present study, with the given foci of the control and experimental groups.

In addition, an inquiry focus has precedent in further empirical research. Yeh (1998) found the same results as in the meta-analysis in his experimental treatment of argumentative writing with disadvantaged middle school children. Two teachers in two separate schools and cities each taught an experimental and a control group. He found that an inquiry-type approach to teaching argumentative writing yielded gains in areas significant to quality writing: .64 gain on the issue of writing ($SD = 63; p = .02$) development, gauged by the number and depth of supports in a given essay, and a .48 gain on the quality of student “voice,” judged by language use, in writing ($SD = .63$). Furthermore, Yeh found that the students’ knowledge of rhetorical strategies seemed to increase when 36 of them were interviewed, as 78% of the control-group students focused on superficial aspects of writing, such as grammatical correctness, when they were asked to analyze the quality of a good argument, leaving only 22% to comment on the quality and proof in evidence of the claim. In contrast, 61% of the experimental group focused on rhetorical issues such as proof of the claim when they were asked to analyze an argument (Yeh, 1998). All of this occurred through Yeh’s instruction focusing on thinking patterns in context; he contrasts this approach with the common notion that skills need to be taught in isolation. Although Yeh (1998) did not focus his research question along
Roles of Engagement

the lines of social dynamics, he did guide his students toward independent analysis and use of argument through rehearsals and practice.

Further empirical evidence supports the notion that students benefit from learning to practice their thinking prior to writing. Graham and Perrin’s meta-analysis makes a strong argument for teaching students to use thinking strategies when they write (Graham & Perrin, 2007). Although, they separate Hillocks’s inquiry from strategy instruction on the basis that Hillocks’s treatment centers on pre-writing data sets while strategies can commonly be implemented by students at several points along the continuum, their reported effect sizes support the kind of strategic approach to writing instruction that contrasts sharply with the “drill and kill” of grammar instruction (-.32 effect) or the simplistic use of models or rubrics, as noted above. Specifically, the most successful treatments they noted were: strategy instruction, with a .82 effect size; summarization, with a .82 effect size (n = 4 studies); scaffolding and peer assistance, with an effect size of .75 (n= 7 studies), and setting product goals, with an effect size of .70 (n = 5 studies). I will concentrate of the last two effects in following sections, but the first two seem to support the kind of strategic writing instruction that has been discussed in this section.

It must be acknowledged that students are able to set goals in their writing through either a formalistic or a role-playing/inquiry approach. That is, students can set the goal to implement the various components of argument successfully in either instructional focus. Peer or teacher feedback can powerfully motivate students to identify evidence that is not carefully selected or explained. The appeal of formalism lies in the experience of many educators that it is an effective way for students to improve their use of language to create clear and cogent expressions (Graff, 2011). In fact, without goal setting and a clear focus on improving, the dialogue-based model could lack the kind of direction that students need in order to understand their improvement from a metacognitive point of view. The difference will be in the nature of the goals.
Guiding students to set authentic goals is an integral part of strong writing instruction. Both a formalist and a role-playing approach—or some combination of the two—would seem to set students to task with authentic goals in mind. Under a formalist approach, students could be taught a schema or acronym of some kind in order to help them to frame and support an argument. Such explicit goal setting may be highly effective for students to help them focus their efforts to improve their argument writing. However, if the goal is to go beyond framing an argument to sustaining one—that is, extending reasoned interpretations of textual evidence through warrants, paraphrasing, elaborations, hypothetical “what if” inferences, and qualifications—then such schemas may not offer students viable and authentic ways to think about the reasoning that they have to do in order to be successful. Perhaps, when it comes to sustaining argumentation, students who practice sustaining their arguments have a clearer sense of the authentic purpose for doing so. Further, if creating an argument position and supporting it is the goal, and if reciprocity is a reasonable expectation for a writer to have (Nystrand, 1986), then students who practice oral argument with an audience in mind—that is, in role—may gain a more authentic understanding of the purpose for elaborating on their reasoning.

If students gain a stronger metacognitive sense of control over their writing process, then they are more likely to understand what counts for good writing and to be able to show the kinds of gains in development and voice described by Yeh above, even though Anagnostopoulos (2003) and Hillocks (2002) found that classroom teachers were often pressured by the forces of large assessments into abdicating authentic goal setting in the classroom.

Graham and Perrin (2007) noted that goal setting yielded one of the greatest effect sizes on students’ writing quality, at .70 (n = 5 studies), so one might think that any kind of goal setting in the classroom is beneficial. However, as Langer noted in schools that do not beat the odds, instruction remains ineffective because it focuses on the basic level of the test’s requirements, while beating the odds requires schools and teachers who go beyond these requirements to approach a generative
Roles of Engagement

approach to instruction (Langer, 2001); Anagnostopoulos noted the prevalence of the former approach in classrooms in Chicago Public Schools (Anagnostopoulos, 2003). Langer’s use of the word “generative” centers on applying knowledge and skills to novel settings and instances, reinforcing the transfer of the skills and challenging students with more cognitively complex learning opportunities.

The process of guiding students to set authentic goals needs to go beyond simply introducing them to a testing rubric, as is commonly done (Hillocks, 2002). Andreade (2003) guided students to master a state rubric and then to use that rubric to self-assess. The process was student-directed and was designed to be authentic practice, but the effect was not seen in the students’ writing results. Perhaps merely acquainting students with the rubric in question, regardless of how student-centered the classroom dynamic might be, does not ensure authentic goal setting on the part of the students. Moreover, Hillocks (1986) found that instructing by introducing students to writing scales alone did not yield an effect size as strong as other approaches, particularly those that are inquiry-based; the effect size for scales was .36 (n = 6 studies).

What is at stake is the ability of students, particularly urban youth, to sustain their thinking in writing. To explore this topic with 38 middle school students, one study (Coker & Erwin, 2011) implemented both a schema-based approach (Graham et al., 2006) and a social reasoning approach (Chinn et al., 2001). In preparation for the study, the researchers were persuaded to use the particular schema-based approach of SRSD as a treatment because of the confirmed effect sizes noted as 1.15 after the intervention and later 1.32 at the maintenance point (Graham, 2006). They planned for a supportive environment in which to guide students to master the argument scheme of SRSD. In contrast, their social reasoning group was grounded in the position that social process is the best way to learn the structure of an argument. By participating in oral arguments, students would gain mastery of the subtle moves needed (Coker & Erwin, 2011). They grounded their rationale for the
Roles of Engagement

SRSD treatment on the notion that transfer from oral practice of argument to written practice can be a challenge due to such issues as handwriting, spelling, compositional fluency, self-regulation, and planning and revising.

They defined the parameters within which the two conditions would be used. SRSD would offer explicit instruction in the following:

1. Discourse (arguments, reasons, evidence, counterarguments, and conditions).

2. Instructions for argument through a mnemonic, DARE (Develop your topic sentence, Add supporting details, Reject possible Arguments, End with a conclusion.

3. Planning, by using the STOP mnemonic (Suspend judgment, Take a side, Organize ideas, Plan as you write).

The teachers also instructed students in the use of specific self-statements related to planning. Their approach to the more socially defined collaborative reasoning (CR) approach was defined as the following:

1. Introduce students to the elements of discourse.

2. Instructors pose the central question that addressed a dilemma in the story, asking students to make a preliminary explanation of their positions in a whole-class discussion.

   Instructor’s role to facilitate the discussion without directing it.

3. At the end of each session, instructors take the time to have the class vote on the topic.

Similar mnemonic tools will be used and will operate in much the same way. The key difference is that the latter approach puts student ideas and responses at the forefront. Their positions on the topic in question are of central concern. In contrast, the SRSD group valued the precise and efficient use of strategies to argue well, regardless of the position taken.

The results of the above study revealed that both groups had improved in using argumentative elements, although no significant difference between the two was evidenced. In terms of number of
Roles of Engagement

words written, the 6th grade groups showed identical gains, while the 7th grade groups showed greater gains for CR (Coker & Erwin, 2011). Thus the question remained open as to whether an abstracted reasoning framework such as SRSD or whether a contextualized, socially significant framework such as CR would have a greater effect on the elaboration in arguments that students write. However the study provided a precedent in using such a framework among low-income students and at the middle school level. Further, students in the study evidenced writing strategies that emphasized pre-writing: “I took time and thought about what I would say and wrote it down” (p.131). However, the question of using CR as a means to extend during-writing, procedural knowledge is also still in need of research. If the goal is to have students write more elaborated arguments, as Coker and Erwin (2011) suggest, then it makes sense to give students the practice in sustaining their arguments.

One major difference between the above study (Coker & Erwin, 2011) and the present study lies in the use of small groups. In the present study, students were given norming tools that were meant to help them establish self-sustaining controversy-oriented discussions in roles. It is worth noting that the shift in patterns of discourse to a role-playing frame can offer a challenge in classroom discipline to students and teachers, and that teachers can be concerned about the loss of control. Such a shift did take place in Coker & Erwin’s study, and it took time and modeling by the instructor before some experimental groups settled into productive and focused patterns of behavior (Coker & Erwin, 2011). However, students were not given specified roles for double voicing, a technique that can often situate students in socially meaningful positions (Newell et al., 2011).

When considering how Coker & Erwin’s study may reflect on the current study, it is important to note that most of the strategies involved “brainstorming for relevant ideas” (pg. 131). Over half of the students (69%) who planned their work indicated that their planning consisted of thinking about the question before beginning to write. In addition, only 38% of students said that they considered counter positions before writing. Perhaps such a lack of consideration of the complexity of the social
Roles of Engagement

dimension of their ideas came from a lack of authentic audience in the dialogue sessions, as one student commented, she “didn’t think anybody would argue back” (pg. 132).

As a result, reasoning with peers in this study (in Coker & Erwin, 2011) seemed to emphasize *initiating* argument. However, the present study explored students’ ability, in 9th grade, to not only initiate but to *sustain* the reasoning and explanation of key evidence—through extending reasoned interpretations of textual evidence, crafting warranted explanations, paraphrasing key data points, elaborating upon these data by offering comparing or contrasting data from lived experience, generating hypothetical “what if” inferences that seek to extend evidence into the world outside of the text, and offering qualifications which seek to limit or further define the significance of the evidence in question—within the context of their collaborative reasoning small groups and again in their writing. Conversely, the present study theorized that a treatment using role-playing would give students authentic practice in extending their reasoning of evidence. It was hypothesized that writing and thinking would become more engaged and elaborated in a dialogic field of interaction, as has been mentioned above, both from a theoretical perspective (Bakhtin, 1981) and from an empirical perspective (Nystrand, 1997; Applebee et al., 2003). The expectation of reciprocity would become a focus throughout the oral argumentation, as would the expectation of creating an authentic community that talked across difference.

**Constructive Controversy**

The status of controversy and how it is handled is central to the education of at-risk students. Often, classroom settings avoid raising controversial issues because personal squabbles or other disciplinary issues can result, and teachers avoid opening the floor to student control (e.g. Coker & Erwin, 2011).

This issue of controversial discussions has been explored empirically, however, and strong cognitive gains have been experienced over a range of studies for students who engaged in
Roles of Engagement

“constructive controversy” (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). In this approach, students are guided to explore ideas by being trained beforehand in the norms of proper engagement, as follows

1. Be critical of ideas, not people. I challenge and refute the ideas of the other participants while confirming their competence and value as individuals. I do not indicate that I personally reject them.
2. Separate my personal worth from criticism of my ideas.
3. Remember that we are all in this together, sink or swim. I focus on coming to the best decision possible, not on winning.
4. Encourage everyone to participate and to master all the relevant information.
5. Listen to everyone’s ideas, even if I do not agree.
6. Restate what someone has said if it is not clear.
7. Differentiate before I try to integrate. First, I bring out all ideas and facts supporting both sides and clarify how the positions differ. Then, I try to identify points of agreement and put them together in a way that makes sense.
8. Try to understand both sides of the issue. I try to see the issue from the opposing perspective to understand the opposing position.
9. Change my mind when the evidence clearly indicates that I should do so.
10. Emphasize rationality in seeking the best possible answer, given the available data.
11. Follow the golden rule of conflict: I act toward opponents as I would have them act toward me. I want the opposing pair to listen to me, so I listen to them. I want the opposing pair to include my ideas in their thinking, so I include their ideas in my thinking. I want the opposing pair to see the issue from my perspective, so I take their perspective (Johnson & Johnson, 2009, pp. 42-43).
Roles of Engagement

The results of seven studies contained in the meta-analysis (Johnson & Johnson, 2009) showed that constructive controversy interactions create much stronger effect sizes when measured against other common forms of engagement: debates, concurrence seeking, or individualistic approaches. Constructive controversy generated positive effects sizes ranging from .32 to 2.18 across eight criteria, including key classroom indicators: achievement, cognitive reasoning, perspective taking, motivation, attitudes toward risk, interpersonal attraction, social support, and self esteem.

The specific results of the Johnsons’ meta-analysis call attention to the notion that constructive forms of controversy can more effectively create an environment for learning when compared with concurrence-seeking approaches, with an effect size of .70 (n=12 studies) for achievement .84 (n=2 studies) for cognitive reasoning .97 (n=8 studies) for perspective-taking, and .68 (n=8 studies) for motivation. All point to the desirability of constructive controversy (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

Disagreement can motivate participation for a range of students (Chinn, 2001). Often, however, in practice students can turn an exchange of ideas into a winner-take-all melee; thus the need for the ground rules established above. The ability to understand counter-arguments, both in range and in depth, allows a skilled argument writer to make an elaborate and effective case. Finally, the idea of teachers instilling norms (Applebee et al., 2003; Durst, 1999) prior to engaging incendiary topics is effective for guiding positive student participation (Chinn et al., 2001; Jadallah et al., 2011),

Limitations on the Above

In some ways, the declarative knowledge offered by the schema-based approaches may serve students well into their futures as they listen to presidential debates, commentaries within the scientific community, etc. Being knowledgeable about the schema of argument may allow
Roles of Engagement

students, in time, to become better critical thinkers, which may be an entirely different expertise than being able to produce argumentative writing, the focus of the present study.

Another limitation of using oral argument structures to improve written argument, is that “transfer” to written argument is not certain: “the empirical evidence is still limited, especially with respect to whether argumentative knowledge acquired during discussions transfers to contextually and structurally different situations requiring the use of argumentation” (Reznitskaya, Anderson, & Kuo, 2007). Some research suggests that there is “no model” for written discourse that can be drawn from oral argumentation. Conversational argumentation may depend on the non-verbal and subtle verbal feedback that speaker and audience give to one another in conversational partners (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1982). However, positive transfer from oral to written argument has been supported empirically in experimental studies (Kuhn et al., 1997; Reznitskaya et al., 2001).

A further limitation exists in the nexus between student engagement in elaboration in oral arguments and in elaboration on written arguments. This study hypothesizes that role-playing discussions will foster the kinds of engaging literacy experiences that Nystrand et al. (1997) described. By moving from “test” questions toward authentic questions, students become engaged in issues that seem to matter. In a study of 84 students in the 4th grade, Chinn et al. (2001) found that there was more student uptake when students were offered the chance to build on authentic questions that were not posed to assess their understanding of the text. In this study, “test” questions decreased from 53% to 9% of total questioning, suggesting that it is at least possible for teachers to make this shift. More student-to-student response was also documented through greater uptake of ideas, as consecutive student turns increased from 6% to 45% (Chin et al., 2001). However, the type of engagement that has been studied in oral discourse may relate to a range of factors that are not present or accessible to the student when he or she begins to
Roles of Engagement

write. That said, the present study examined transcripts of student interaction and triangulated those with student surveys and interviews in order to ascertain whether a bridge existed between engagement in oral and written arguments.

Final limitations exist in the age of students as well as the facets of writing under consideration. Many studies in collaborative argument production center on the 4th and 5th grades (e.g. Reznitskaya, Anderson, & Kuo, 2007) and test student gains in argumentative writing by the number of propositions that the students make or the extent to which students can recall or cite alternative viewpoints in short paragraphs of student writing. This present study, centered on 9th graders, gauged students’ ability to sustain argumentation. Thus, the present study examined the students’ number of warrants and rebuttals in their writing, in addition to their use of claims and evidence. However, while some researchers comment that the number of argumentative propositions creates the quality of the argument (Reznitskaya et al., 2009), others counter that the quality of the evidence, warrants, and rebuttals should be taken into account (e.g. McCann, 1989). Thus a limitation exists on the present study as it will focus on the relative number and length of warrants and rebuttals in the students’ argument writing, holding with the assumption that the flow reasoning present in these elements evidences more elaborate thinking and argumentation.
Chapter 3: Method

Research Question

This study was guided by two research questions: To what extent did an instructional treatment featuring role-playing controversy (RPC) confer any advantage on the subsequent argument writings of ninth-grade students? In what ways did role-playing shape the experience of the participants as they wrote arguments? A quasi-experimental, mixed-methods design was used to answer the first question, and descriptive data sources were used to answer the second.

Participants and Setting

The argument writings and discussions analyzed in this study were drawn from data collected in five classrooms of ninth grade students, involving three teachers. These students had been selected for and were participating in an extended English/Reading 70-minute class for the entire year because they scored at the 40th percentile or lower on a reading achievement MAP test score in eighth grade.

Roughly 25% of the students were considered at-risk of not graduating from high school, as determined by failing quarter grades, disciplinary referrals, and past performance in middle school. A portion of the students (48%) was eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. The classes were diverse racially and ethnically, with 25% of the students being African American, 40% Latino/a, 20% Asian/South Asian background, and 15% from European backgrounds. Class sizes ranged from 15-22 students.

The three teachers involved were experienced veterans, with 15-25 years of service, and all three were recognized as teacher leaders in staff development, having led or attended workshops in technology instruction, cooperative learning, or differentiated instruction. One of the teachers, the author of this paper, served as a participant researcher in two of the class sections. By including a participant researcher, this study will require several steps in data
Roles of Engagement

analysis to safeguard reliability, each of which will be addressed in greater depth (e.g. coding student work for anonymity, using two coders for the data in order to establish inter-rater reliability).

**Instructional Focus**

Small-group and whole-class treatments were used. Three classrooms were designated as treatment classrooms and two were standard classrooms. In both the treatment and control classrooms, students were randomly assigned to small groups of four students each. The groups remained stable and followed RPC or Standard procedures for the duration of the study. The RPC and Standard conditions are described below.

Table 3.1

Instructional Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre- and During-Writing Focus</th>
<th>Standard Treatment</th>
<th>Role-Playing Controversy (RPC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students read a text excerpt aloud in their argument groups, read an argument writing prompt related to the reading, and began outlining a potential response.</td>
<td>Students read a text excerpt aloud in their argument groups, read an argument writing prompt related to the reading, and began outlining a potential response.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students were assigned roles from which to comment on the discussion prompt. This role-playing discussion lasted roughly 15 minutes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Roles of Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Role and Focus on Composition (when stepping in and out of groups)</th>
<th>Teachers stepped in to clarify the scales of excellence (scales), guide students to evaluate models of finished essays, and guide students to read and comment on various features of argument excerpts (Hillocks, 1986).</th>
<th>Teacher stepped in to clarify the scales of excellence (scales), guide students to evaluate models of finished essays, and guide students to read and comment on various features of argument excerpts (Hillocks, 1986).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal-Setting Focus</strong></td>
<td>The teacher guided students to include the various elements of a strong argument, paying particular attention to the use of evidence, warrants, and rebuttals. Students were able to choose</td>
<td>The teacher guided students to include the various elements of a strong argument, paying particular attention to the use of evidence, warrants, and rebuttals. Students were able to choose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roles of Engagement

between writing an analytical essay and writing a letter to a character or person mention in the text.

In addition, the teacher reminded students to incorporate the insights from the role-playing exercise in their writing, paying particular attention to the social significance of the evidence, warrants, and rebuttals within the context of the role-playing episode.

Above, the independent variable was presence of role-playing controversy as a pre-writing strategy, versus the control. The dependent variable was the quality of student argument writing as evidenced in the students’ expression of warrants and rebuttals.

The purpose for using the role-playing discussions as pre-writing a strategy is grounded in the notion that difference (Flower, 2003) and cognitive dissonance (Johnson & Johnson, 2009) can increase students’ ability to write argument for a real or imagined audience. Further, the instructional focus centering on ideas rather than solely on the format has been demonstrated to have positive effects on student writing (Hillocks, 1986), and an investigation of realistic topics in a spirit of inquiry has also been demonstrated to have a positive effect on student writing (Hillocks, 1986).

Thus, the RPC group used all the same goal-setting exercises, sample essay analyses, and rubric discussions that the Standard group used, but the RPC group engaged in a additional pre-
writing activity to that of the standard group—they argued in role. The RPC activity took roughly 15 minutes.

**Materials**

In their argument groups, students read a series of textbook excerpts before writing their individual arguments. The texts included fiction and non-fiction examples and came from the class textbook, *Expert 21*. The texts were different from those used in previous studies of student argument collaboration (e.g. collaborative reasoning) in that they were determined by Lexile level and by an analysis of conceptual load to be more complex. The Lexile levels of texts in previous studies are in Table 3.2, and the Lexile levels for the present study are in Table 3.3.

Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Title</th>
<th>Author and date</th>
<th>Study Used*</th>
<th>Lexile level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ronald Morgan Goes to Bat</em></td>
<td>Patricia Reilly Giff, 1990</td>
<td>(Dong et al., 2008)</td>
<td>Lexile of 200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Many collaborative reasoning studies have used the same several texts, and these are typical of that group.

Table 3.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text title</th>
<th>Author, if given</th>
<th>Lexile level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“We Are All the Same”</td>
<td>Nkosi Johnson</td>
<td>900 Lexile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Typhoid Mary”</td>
<td>Victor M. Parachin from <em>American History</em> magazine</td>
<td>1080 Lexile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Hunting Down a Killer”</td>
<td>Jacqueline Adams</td>
<td>1010 Lexile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“A Day’s Wait”</td>
<td>Ernest Hemingway</td>
<td>910 Lexile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“SARS case information”</td>
<td>Wikipedia.org</td>
<td>1240 Lexile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“H1N1 case information”</td>
<td>Wikipedia.org</td>
<td>1160 Lexile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roles of Engagement

The conceptual load of the texts cited in collaborative reasoning research in Table 3.1 rests on the complex moral dilemmas that each presents. The stories are drawn from life experiences that have a personal appeal to students and are relevant to student life. In contrast, the texts in the present study were selected to have an increased conceptual load. These texts presented scientific or medical information while still incorporating a moral dilemma. In addition, the one fiction excerpt was drawn from the writing of Ernest Hemingway, whose style is known for deceptively simple language but complex thematic content. In all, these readings (Appendix A) reflect a body of work that 9th graders might typically be expected to read, as CCSS guidelines encourage Lexile levels to move to a range of 1,000 to 1,200 for 9th graders from a previous range of 855-1165 for 9th graders, established by the 25% and 75% of student scores on Lexile assessments nationwide. In addition, the last two prompts (Appendix B) figure 3.3, “SARS case” and “H1N1 case,” both served as pre- and post-assessments, and they included directions for response.

Students in the experimental group were given a norming description sheet that was used for discussion purposes to guide their engagement (Appendix C). The list is comprised of a set of expectations and traits of constructive controversy (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

Both treatment groups had access to a range of instructional materials that are typically used in conjunction with the writing process: model essays and sample introductory paragraphs (Appendix D); a graphic organizer (Appendix E); and rubric (Appendix F). In addition, both groups were given a survey that combined items of prior knowledge, attitude and engagement (Appendix G), a lengthy discussion of which will follow below.

Research Procedures

This study occurred in three stages: planning, implementation, and post-treatment analysis. In the planning phase teachers read and discussed treatment materials and how they
Roles of Engagement

were to be used. They came to a shared understanding of the standard and RPC classrooms as described in the above table. Thus, the teachers participating in the study worked through materials together in a series of three in-service preparation sessions on facilitating role-playing controversy as a pre-writing method. This training also included a review of standard procedures for the writing process.

The tone and tenor of the role-playing controversy segments was critical to this method, and so the teachers discussed the following hypothetical interactions in addition to examining the reading and writing prompts for both conditions. Teacher talk in the control (C) groups focused on three goals: student mastery of the components of argument, concurrence seeking among students, and efficiency. Prompts for the Standard group included the following types of questions or comments:

- *Were you able to fill in the evidence from the text?*
- *How do you know it is good evidence?*
- *Did you explain the evidence?*
- *All of you, work together to make sure that your group members have explained the evidence enough.*
- *Try to think of other points of view, and see if you can agree on how to react to them in your writings.*

In addition, the control teachers were asked to guide the small groups to critique the use of evidence, elaboration/warrants, and rebuttals in several sample essays (see Appendix D). The teachers in the Standard setting guided students to understand and identify the terms and standards of excellence presented in a sample rubric (see Appendix F).

Teacher talk in the RPC groups focused on the same goals but added three additional ones: teaching students to double-voice by arguing in role and then reflecting, encouraging students to
Roles of Engagement

constructively disagree about evidence and how it can be explained, and prompting students to use insights from these constructive controversies in their writing. Prompts for the RPC group included the following types of questions and comments:

- Do you agree with him/her? What would your character or perspective think about this?
- Do you agree with what she said about the vaccine? What does your character think?
  (Later: what do you think?)
- Explain to him/her your point of view. Why do you disagree?
- I think you might be missing the point [teacher in role of a character] about this...
- Do you interpret the evidence differently?
- Why? Explain your response to the others? Hash it out.
- It’s important that you disagree about ideas, not the people that you are arguing with.
- Once you have thought this through, write your response both supporting your argument and also respectfully disagreeing with your classmates’ opinions.
- You may choose to write to your classmates in your response.

During the in-service, teachers’ understanding of the two treatments was assessed by having them respond to hypothetical situations that depicted RPC or Standard implementations, and they were asked to explain how each example fit either one or the other frame. Again, the focus of this training, among three veteran teachers, was to develop a consensus and to ensure treatment fidelity; this was particularly important since one of the teachers was operating as a participant researcher.

Also during the in-service, the teachers established (1) methods for audio-taping each group in as non-intrusive a way as possible and (2) common classroom norms. Finally, the teachers read the materials for the pre- and post-unit assessments as well as the materials that they were to use in the four experimental lessons.
Roles of Engagement

**Data Collection**

Students completed a pre- and post-assessment writing prompt based on readings relevant to the topic of study: diseases (Appendix B). To do this, the students had access to online computers, and wrote and posted their work for the teacher and researcher to review. This type of electronic writing and publishing was typical of the classrooms being studied. In order to complete the task, students were given the relevant prompt (Appendix B), asked to read the article and then complete the writing indicated. The directions were simple and to the point, and the students got to work with little clarification needed, as the written directions were intended to support the students’ self-sufficient completion of the task.

In addition, in order to curtail an order effect error in the data, half of the students in each category were randomly selected to use the H1N1 prompt during pre-assessment, and half were selected to use the SARS prompt. All students then use the other prompt for the post-assessment. That is, if a student took the SARS prompt at the pre-assessment he or she took the H1N1 prompt at post-assessment, and vice versa.

As the study was concerned with the presence of reasoning and elaboration about evidence in student writing, student essays were written in similar conditions, pre- and post-treatment. Students were given 40 minutes to read a prompt (Appendix B) and to conduct an argument stating their positions. The prompts themselves involved a brief reading on the topic of either H1N1 or SARS, disease epidemics in which the students were fictionally placed in the role of being a decision maker: to quarantine affected students, to have no quarantine, or to somehow qualify the use of a quarantine.

All students took the pre- and post-assessment of background knowledge and affect (Appendix G). This was done as an online survey, which is typical of the classrooms from which the students come.
Roles of Engagement

At the close of the study, ten students (five each drawn from each treatment/control) were interviewed individually, using semi-structured interviews (see Appendix H). The purpose of the interviews was to gauge the students’ opinions on the small group work.

In addition, recordings were taken of student interaction within the argument groups. Throughout the implementation phase, students took part in small group discussions. The readings were drawn from the classroom text and came from a text set based on disease and epidemiology. Microphones were set up in each group and tested in advance. This study did not use videotaping in order to capture student discussions. The reason for this lies in the use of multiple small groups: with at least four and possibly six groups functioning each class session, video footage would have required the use of multiple video recording devices and would have created an atypical and potentially disruptive condition. Conversely, removing students from the classroom to have them undergo a staged, videotaped discussion in a separate room would also have been disruptive.

Twice a week for three weeks, the discussions were as a part of the students’ normal classroom experiences, at the same time and place that their English/Reading class typically met. Student discussions were recorded with a digital audio recording device. In all, 80 small-group discussions were recorded, averaging 10-15 minutes in length for the RPC groups and 5-7 minutes in the Standard groups. Students in both conditions were asked to audiotape their conversations by passing a digital microphone from student to student or by talking into the mic that was situated in the center of their argument group seating area. All four students in each group were encouraged to add their thoughts; students were not given a time limit on speaking and were encouraged to discuss the prompt until they were finished and ready to write.

The central issue, for example, in the first reading, “We Are All the Same,” by Nkosi Johnson, focused on whether or not a student with HIV/AIDS should be allowed to play
Roles of Engagement

basketball (Appendix A). Both RPC and Standard groups were guided to respond to a fictional prompt about Franklin Brown, the character in the story who wished to play basketball for the school team, even though he is infected with HIV/AIDS. The Standard group was asked to adopt a pro or con position in response to the text. Together, they were expected to find appropriate evidence from the story to support their position and to figure out ways to explain (warrant) the evidence, linking those explanations to their position. It was expected that students would come to consensus on their pro or con position through these interactions. After the discussion, each student wrote a response. In the RPC groups, students argued the case in role (Appendix A), imagining that the forum for their discussion was a school board meeting. Both the Standard and RPC groups responded in a genre of writing that they chose, either an analytical paragraph or a letter to an imagined audience. Excerpts of these interactions are included in the next chapter.

Data Analysis

Analysis of student writing. The following research question generated the analysis of student pre- and post-assessment writing samples: To what extent did an instructional treatment featuring role-playing controversy confer any advantage on the subsequent argument writings of ninth-grade students?

All student pre- and post-assessment essays were analyzed. Student writing was collected electronically and given a code number in order to hide the identities of the students. Student arguments were analyzed by two analysts. I was joined by an independent analyst who is not familiar with the students or classroom conditions of the study. The goal of using two analysts was to establish inter-rater reliability as the analysis of student argument was completed. The following steps were taken:

1.) The number of words for each essay was calculated by using the computer’s word count function. This number was recorded for later statistical analysis.
2.) Ten percent of the essays were parsed into idea units (Appendix I contains an exemplar of this method).

3.) Each idea unit was coded as relevant or irrelevant, and the relevant idea units were coded as: claims, grounds, warrants, or rebuttals. Numbers of each code were tallied, with the numbers of warrants to serve as proxy for elaboration.

4.) A second rater completed the same procedure. An inter-rater reliability of 90% or better was established; then the first rater evaluated the rest of the sample. If 90% agreement was not reached, then the category definitions were rewritten and another inter-rater reliability was established.

I parsed both the pre- and post-test essays into idea units, as mentioned in the method section above. As set out in the methods section above, I coded compound sentences into two idea units or more. For complex sentences, I established the following rules and verified them by using the other analyst: 1.) IF/THEN statements were broken into two idea units even if the student neglected to use the word “THEN.” In such cases, we added the word “THEN” in brackets; 2.) In case of “Because” statements, some were not broken into two idea units when the student failed to create a complex sentence. For example, when a student wrote, “We should quarantine because of the disease,” I coded the statement as a single idea unit. This was done consistently throughout both the pre- and post-samples.

Student idea units were then coded as either relevant or irrelevant, and finally, relevant idea units were coded into one of four codes: claims, evidence, warrants, or rebuttals. For the purposes of the study, an inclusive working definition of warrants was established to describe instances in student writing when students attempted to (1) extend evidence from the text, (2) explain why different aspects of it were important, or (3) apply original reasoning (e.g. explaining what might happen in the case of implementing a quarantine--or failing to implement
Roles of Engagement

said quarantine. Speculation without evidence was coded as a claim, and students were only
given the code of warrant if evidence was cited prior to the warrant. Thus, the comment, “SARS
is spread easily from person to person,” as cited from the source article would be coded as
evidence. A following comment like, “Thus, we need to quarantine in order to keep the students
at the school safe,” was coded as a warrant. However, same comment absent the evidence was
coded as a claim.

Rebuttals and counter-arguments were very few across the board for both the pre- and
post-assessments, but they were coded based on the student introducing a contrasting view of
evidence offered. Like the warrants, a counter-argument or rebuttal was only given that code if
offered after a piece of evidence. Students who used rebuttals offered obvious starter stems such
as, “Some might argue…” or “Not everyone would agree with me, but…” As a result, a sample
of a rebuttal reads as follows: “Not everyone would think that having a quarantine in the school
would be a good idea, but I think that a quarantine would contain the virus from spreading by
limiting exposure.” This sentence would be broken into two idea units, with the first part of the
sentence getting the code of a rebuttal and the second part getting the code of a warrant.

Inter-rater reliability on the coding system came to 96.4%, as the four codes were easily
identified after some practice. Occasionally, the original articles on SARS and H1N1 were
consulted to ascertain if the student writers were citing quoted information (evidence) or were
expanding upon this information (warrant). In these cases of initial discrepancy, 3.6% incidence,
the two raters examined the source information and resolved conflicting views on the coding.
The purpose for this analysis was that explaining evidence and extending reasoning on that
evidence from various points of view is a notoriously difficult task for high school students
(Hillocks, 2011). The presence of warrants served as a proxy for increased argumentation
overall. The mean number of idea units (e.g. Mayer, 1985) for warrants/elaborations was
Roles of Engagement

compared pre- and post-assessment using ANOVA. Before running this analysis, GPA and Prior Knowledge were both examined across both groups and time to see if significant variances existed; the purpose of this analysis was to identify possible confounding variables that might affect student appropriation of the argumentation skills in question. In addition, an analysis of GPA*Pre-test was conducted to determine if differences existing among the five class sections involved had a significant effect on student writing as a pre-existing condition.

**Analysis of Small Group Interactions**

The six small-group audio segments were transcribed by one analyst and checked by another. In cases where discrepancies existed, the first analyst reviewed the changes and either accepted them or asked for further review with the second analyst. This approach served as a representative sample of the overall small group interactions (e.g. Chinn et al., 2001).

There was a high degree of initial agreement on the transcription. An inter-rater reliability of 91% was established by the following means: every word, either omitted or incorrectly transcribed by the first analyst was considered to be an error. If there were more than 10% of errors on a given line of transcript, the line was considered to be a problematic line. Since no more than 9% of all lines were considered to be problematic, the inter-rater reliability of the transcription was deemed acceptable for the level of analysis and scrutiny brought to bear on the transcripts. Each transcript was also parsed into student turns so that analysts could assign questioning codes to each (see below). Turns were operationally defined as a student utterance of a question, and no examples existed of a question being interrupted, so ambiguities around the issue of turns as the term pertains to student questions were not relevant to the analysis of student questions.

In contrast, I wanted a finer grain of analysis for coding student reasoning. As a result, I parsed the corpus into idea units with an additional pass through and then applied reasoning
Roles of Engagement
codes to the transcripts, excluding the idea units which had previously been coded as questions. A separate reasoning code was applied to each idea unit. The reason for the finer grain of analysis in student reasoning is that there were more reasoning codes that existed and that evidence of student reasoning was more nuanced and often challenging to identify into discrete codes. Having shorter units to code, while not necessary for the codes used for student questioning, aided in making the coding of reasoning more precise and discrete.

The types of questions and reasoning that the students used in their small group interactions were coded to get a sense of how students built an argument or interpretation. If open discussions can create “spontaneous scaffolding” (Applebee et al., 2003), then way students build on each other’s ideas would be revealed by both range and depth of the questions that they asked each other and the depth of the reasoning that they used.

**Questioning.** At the first pass through the transcripts, both raters established which of the student turns came in the form of questions. An inclusive definition of “questions” was adopted for the purposes of analysis, and rhetorical questions, executive type questions, as well as questions for meaning were all given the generic code of “question.” Later, student questions were assigned one of the following codes: assessment, genuine information, open ended, or executive. These first three codes are drawn from the literature on teacher and classroom questioning (e.g., Bean, 1985; Dillon, 1990; Wong, 1991), and the last code was added during coding as a result.

*Assessment questions* helped students monitor the quality or feasibility of the work that they were doing. Student responses would times focus solely on genre: Does this count for evidence? They also focused on the issues raised in the text: Are you sure that the school board really has an option here? Why? What does the principal say?
Roles of Engagement

The purpose of genuine information questions was to elicit student insight drawn from a literal or inferred comprehension of the text. Does it say that he is still bleeding? Do the parents seem to care? How does the coach feel about the issue? Tell me, why do you think that way?

The purpose of open-ended questions was to extend the text into lived experience. What do you think you would do in this situation? How would you react?

Finally, the executive questions were used when students were trying to discern their next steps or progress as a group. Are we done? Who should go next?

I applied the codes independently as did an independent analyst, and we achieved an inter-rater reliability of 93%. That is, 93% of student turns indicated as questions were co-identified.

Reasoning. Reasoning codes were assigned to students’ oral responses to the text. They were drawn from discussions of cognitive processes (Chinn et al., 2000). Reasoning can be depicted as commenting about evidence from a text, making connections across the text, elaborating on the text, predicting what might come next, explaining the text, selecting evidence to back up a position, co-constructing a position or argument, and articulating alternative perspectives. (e.g. Chan et al., 1997).

Of these general processes, I piloted five codes on a sample of student transcript data with a co-analyst. We found that these five codes both coded the breadth and range of the transcripts and yielded little to no potential coding errors due to overlap. As a result, these five codes applied to the transcript data: commenting about evidence (R1), interpretive work (R5), selecting evidence (R6), co-constructing an argument (R7), and positing a perspective (R8). Three codes that were initially considered were discarded during coding because examples were not found—making connections across texts (R2), and predicting (R4)—or because it had significant overlap—elaborating on the text (R3). As it was, the two raters reached an inter-rater
Roles of Engagement

reliability (90%) when they applied codes to the six transcriptions, each idea unit receiving one reasoning code.

Analysis of Personal Interviews

The two analysts also coded the interview data of ten (10) of the students. Each interview lasted approximately 5-10 minutes and followed a semi-scripted set of questions (Appendix H). Student comments were examined for the presence of engagement constructs such as choice, challenge, competence and social relationships (Wilhelm & Smith, 2002). The purpose of these analyses was to determine whether the four constructs or whether some other factors of engagement or motivation were at play within the RPC treatment and Control groups. Of central concern was the degree students felt a sense of connection with each other, engaged in reciprocity, reached concurrence, or valued individual achievement, grades, or other solitary motivations.

The interviews were transcribed in the same manner as the small group interactions, and were parsed into student turns. These turns were the subjected to two passes of coding. First, they were coded as positive, negative, or neutral affect; then they were coded for the elements of engagement: choice, competence, challenge, and relationships/social.

By analyzing the interview data, this study sought to triangulate the analyses of the small group interaction transcript coding for questions and reasoning by asking students to what degree they found the experience valuable and to what extent the engagement constructs were visible in their comments on their groups’ work.

Students who value the presence of their peers and genuinely enjoy their company have shown greater gains on some cognitive tasks (Johnson & Johnson, 2009), and logically have come closer to establishing a community of practice in which the contributions of each student hold value. In sum, these qualitative measures were to describe the process that existed within
Roles of Engagement

the two treatment groups and were intended to shed some light upon the results that were observable on the pre- and post-assessment measures.
Chapter 4: Results

Research Questions

As stated, this research was conducted to answer two questions:

- To what extent did an instructional treatment featuring role-playing controversy (RPC) confer any advantage on the subsequent argument writings of ninth-grade students?
- In what ways did role-playing shape the experience of the participants as they wrote arguments?

I addressed the first question by examining experimental data drawn from student pre- and post-tests composed of a writing task. Measures of improvement were as follows: number of warrants in the essay and the overall length of the essay. I addressed the second question through analysis of multiple sources in order to accurately describe the differences in the two conditions. The goal of addressing this second question will be to describe the ways in which role-playing shaped the experience of the participants as they discussed argument prompts and wrote arguments.

What gains were made from pre to post test?

Students in the Standard condition increased the number of warrants per essay from the 5.38 at pre-test to 7.14 on the post-test, with an average gain of 1.76, (M = 7.14, SD = 4.56); the RPC treatment group, on the other hand, gained in average number of warrants from 5.6 during the pre-test to 8.02 during the post-test, with a gain of 2.42 (M = 8.02, SD = 4.71). Thus, on average, there were greater gains in the number of warrants for the RPC group. Similarly, students increased the length of their essays to a greater degree, on average, in the RPC treatment. The students in the Standard group added roughly 59 additional words per essay, from 101 on the pre-test to 160 on the post-test (M = 160.01, SD = 69.37), and the RPC group
Roles of Engagement

increased an average of 67 words, from 104 on the pre-test to 171 on the post-test (M = 171; SD = 55.23).

I originally planned to conduct an ANCOVA to discern the significance of these gains with GPA (Grade Point Average) and prior knowledge being the covariates. GPA was calculated as the semester grade point average for each student during the semester that the study took place. Prior knowledge was calculated as the average score on the 10-question survey. Most of the prior knowledge items focused on vocabulary terms such as the term, “epidemic.” Other questions focused on communicability, such as how the AIDS virus can be contracted. Both types of questions were meant to gauge the student’s advantage in writing about a quarantine situation, as called for by the pre- and post- tests. An ANCOVA was conducted on the potential covariates to see if there was a significant difference between the Standard and RPC groups. For GPA, (M = 2.77; SD = .780) the results of the ANCOVA were non-significant: \( F[1, 80] = .907, p = .344 \) with respect to total number of words per essay and total number of warrants per essay. For the prior-knowledge proxy, the results were non-significant as well: (M = 1.55, SD = .557) as well: \( F[1, 75] = 1.615, p = .208 \).

I ran an additional test to see if there was a significant variance across the five class sections that existed in the study with respect to GPA and pre-test results. Across the five sections, average GPA can be described as follows: class 1, M = 2.956, SD = .185; Class 2, M = 2.620, SD = .202; Class 3, M = 2.905, SD = .175; Class 4, M = 2.689, SD = .209; Class 5, M = 2.546, SD = .217. I ran an ANCOVA for the pre-test results among the five classes for number of words in the essay total (M = 150, SD = 79.9) and found that there was no significant interaction effect between the results of the pre-test, the class section, and the student’s GPA across the five sections: \( F[1, 14] = 1013, p = .456 \). I ran the same test to determine if there was a significant interaction when considering the number of warrants (M = 4.73, SD = 5.01) on the
Roles of Engagement

pre-test as a function of GPA and class section, and again, the results proved non-significant: F[1, 14] = 1.122, p = 386. At this point, I chose to investigate the effects of the treatments across sections rather than within sections; thus, the effect of the RPC would be calculated across 2.5 sections of the course, while the effect of the Standard treatment would be calculated across the other 2.5 sections of the course. GPA would still be examined as a covariate, but not within sections.

Additionally, all ANOVA analyses assumed homogeneity of variance, which was tested and verified by use of Levene’s test, and the results indicated that equal variance across both groups could be assumed at the 95% confidence level.

**Number of warrants per essay.** I used a 2 X 2 ANOVA to determine if there was a significant difference in the number of warrants per essay (M = 6.86, SD = 4.67 for Standard; M = 7.89, SD = 4.79 for RPC). In this analysis, there was no main effect for condition: F[1, 135] = .491, p = .485. There was a main effect for time: F[1, 135] = 6.360, p = .013. There was no interaction effect: F[1, 135] = .141, p = .708. Thus, both groups improved in the number of warrants they used over time. There was no significant effect for GPA (M = 2.77, SD = .780) as a covariate: F[1, 20] = 1.269, p = .214.

**Total words per essay.** I also conducted an ANOVA for the number of words written in the essays overall. The results mirrored those for number of warrants. The mean number of words increased for both groups, with the control group posting M = 101, SD=69 at pre-test and M = 160, SD = 76 at post-test; the experimental group posted M = 104, SD = 58 at the pre-test and M = 171, SD =55 at the post-test. There was no main effect for condition: F[1, 134] = .345, p = .558. There was a main effect for time: F[1, 134] = 30.614, p = .000. The interaction effect was not significant: F[1, 134] = .093, p = .760. In addition, there was an effect for GPA (M = 2.77, SD = .780 for GPA): F[1, 20] = 1.985, p = .018.
Roles of Engagement

Hence, both groups wrote significantly more words in the post-test than they did the pre-test, and GPA was a significant impact across both groups as well.

**Research Question #2**

What were the interactions and practices established in the experimental classrooms, and in what ways did role-playing shape the pre-writing experience?

**Student-generated questions in small group discussions.** A representative sample of three small group discussions was selected from both the Standard and RPC conditions. Analysis of the small group audio revealed that the RPC treatment groups’ discussions were typically much longer than the Standard groups’ discussions were, and a higher number of questions was present in the RPC group across the four categories examined (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Types of Questions Generated in Student Small Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Q2</th>
<th>Q3</th>
<th>Q4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Questions</td>
<td>Genuine Information Questions</td>
<td>Open-Ended Questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPC</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three of these question types are discussed below. I did not run statistical tests on these frequency distributions because the low number of discussions analyzed, the expansion of which presents a limitation for this study and an opportunity for further research, both of which are discussed in chapter 5.

*Assessment questions (Q1).* Students in the RPC groups often questioned each other’s evidence by using assessment questions (Q1), debating the fit of the evidence with respect to the question being discussed. Such questions often resembled the following stems: “How do you
Roles of Engagement

know?” or “Are you sure?” For example, one student, while reading “A Day’s Wait” questioned whether or not the character’s actions were reasonable: “Who believes rumors like that?” By asking this question, the student was asking the group, albeit with a rhetorical question, to consider that the character in the story lacked semblance to life. Since the small group was debating the relative merits of the Hemingway story in question, this comment focused on the element of characterization in that inquiry.

**Genuine information (Q2).** Students in the RPC group asked literal or inferential questions about the text itself, such as the following: “What does it mean here?” or “Why do you think the character did or said…” Some specific examples from classroom transcripts read as follows: “If you go hunting for food, how are you going to get money?” and “Have you considered if both players have open wounds and they bump into each other?” The first question was asking for the student role player to enter the world of the story and to think inferentially about what the character would do or think. Similarly, in the second example, the student role players considered what might happen in a basketball game if a player with AIDS should be allowed to play. In asking this question, the students were responding to a non-fiction text, but they were applying cause and effect inferences based on the stated information in the text. As such, the code of genuine information (Q2) was applied in both cases, as the primary focus was not on assessing evidence value or fit (Q1) but on extending the meaning into the world of the text through inference or simple observation.

**Open-ended (Q3).** These questions came from situations in which student applied the story to life experiences, as follows: How would you feel in this situation? What would you do? Such questions were often a function of the roles that the students were playing, such as “As the mayor of New York, what do you think should be done with Mary Mallon?”
Roles of Engagement

**Executive functioning (Q4).** These questions focused on the group’s attempt to self-direct: “Now will each of you give your argument?” or simply, “Are we done?”

The following longer transcript example characterizes the differences between the two conditions and offers some examples of the above question types in context. In the following excerpt drawn from a Standard group, students respond to a given problematic short story, Ernest Hemingway’s “A Day’s Wait.” The story has a minimalistic quality that can become a challenge for many high school students to understand and interpret, and thus the students in the study were asked to generate an argument as to whether the story is a strong one or not, whether it deserves five stars or one, or somewhere in between.

Student 1: I think the story is good because it shows the setting, but it doesn’t show a lot of emotion, which is kind of the bad part of it.

Student 2: I agree on everything you said, but I just don’t like the story that much. It just has like no emotion, no feelings, just like crying, and that’s it.

Student 2: ok because it doesn’t tell the characters’ moods. And like where it changes the settings. It was like a kid crying, and then the dad went hunting, which was kind of weird.

Student 3: I feel like the story isn’t that good, I dunno…

In this discussion, the students generated criteria for their review. They argued about whether or not the story maintained a strong emotional quality. Student 2 commented on the changes in the character’s moods and also the inclusion of a scene in the plot. Patterns of interaction here reveal polite, turn-taking, but little “uptake,” which is a discourse pattern of back-and-forth as students responded to one another.

In contrast, the RPC group revealed a higher incidence of turn-taking and uptake, as students more frequently chimed in or disagreed with one another’s arguments. For example,
Roles of Engagement

one student was assigned a positive-reviewing book critic (#53), another student a negative-reviewing book critic (#22), and still a third to be Hemingway (#11) himself. The fourth student (#1) played the role of a talk-show host, and the students were to carry on as though they were participants in a talk-show discussion of the book’s quality.

The following excerpt reveals student-generated questions. Generally, the questions seem to ask others to expand on their ideas. They questioned each other several times throughout the discussion, and this short excerpt is representative of their longer discussion.

1: About anything, about what they just said…So…what makes this book 5 stars? What makes you like it so much?

53: Because it gives us a mood, and he explains things really well, for a job like hunting, how he walks his dog, and then how he fell twice. Then he drops the gun, and then how he missed 5 times but still killed them [pheasants]…

1: How would you feel if you were that boy? Like in the story. You thought you were dead or going to die?

53: I would feel ...I would panic, and that’s it…

1: Alright, and now we’ll have a few words from [Hemingway]… How do you feel about the book? What makes it great?

11: Well, I wrote it, so I think it’s good…

1: What made you have the creative mind to think of a story like that?

11: Cuz I think we should all care about the boy, and yah, that’s it.

1: Alright, are we done?

The questioning here appears to lead to the use of specific evidence which yields a contrast to the excerpt from the Standard group. In effect, the RPC group’s excerpt features some of the same criteria for arguing about the quality of the short story: the story brings out emotion, strong
Roles of Engagement
coloration, and empathy. However, student #53 incorporates more specific evidence in his comments, “Then he drops the gun, and then how he missed 5 times…” In making the point, the student cites a particular and often-overlooked detail of the story in order to suggest that the character’s nerves were frazzled due to his son’s illness. In general, this type of reading and interpretation occurred much more commonly in the experimental group, as will be explored below, in the section on student-generated reasoning. However, what is important to note here is that this detailed reading of the story is preceded by a question. Further, the discussion draws out empathy, “I would feel…I would panic…” This insightful comment is also preceded by a question. In sum, student-generated questions occurred at a much greater level in the experimental group, which is an expected function of the condition itself, and the differences were accompanied by longer discussions, more frequent interchanges, and often more detailed readings of the story.

**Student-generated reasoning in small groups** In order to analyze reasoning evidenced in the small group transcripts, first the transcripts themselves were parsed into idea units in the manner described in chapter 3. We took this approach because the reasoning codes used below were narrower in scope than were the questioning codes, and we found the compound and complex sentences tended to have more than one reasoning code that seemed applicable. As a result, we coded the transcripts into idea units using the same process, outlined above, that was used on the pre- and post- essays.

Once the idea units were established, we applied reasoning codes. Originally, we began the study with eight codes established from prior research literature, as noted in the method section, but in applying the codes to the student discussions, both analysts worked through a sample transcript collaboratively, coming to consensus that five of the codes were applicable to
Roles of Engagement

the student discussions, with no overlap, as described in the methods section above. Then, one analyst applied the five reasoning codes to the transcripts, and I verified his work.

Across three discussion transcripts for each of the conditions, the analysis of idea units for reasoning also yielded a greater level of interaction across the RPC groups analyzed. A cursory glance at the reasoning code distributions reveals that the RPC condition evidenced more examples of reasoning overall as well as more examples of reasoning within each of the five codes (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2
Types of Reasoning Generated in Student Small Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R1 Commenting on evidence</th>
<th>R5 Interpretive Work</th>
<th>R6 Selecting Evidence</th>
<th>R7 Co-construction Argument</th>
<th>R8 Positing a Perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPC</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasoning codes in detail.** In instances of the first code, *commenting on evidence* (R1), the students said such comments as “That doesn’t make any sense,” and “Basically, there is not much of a choice here.” The R5 code, *interpretive work*, labeled the reasoning comments of students who were making comments about a character’s motives, inferring a character’s feelings, or commenting about cause and effect in a non-fiction piece. For example, one student commented on a character’s perspective in the Hemingway short story by saying, “But maybe he was thinking he was going to die.” In a history-focused piece on Mary Mallon, “Typhoid Mary,” one student critically evaluates the evidence brought against Mallon, indicating that she has been spreading Typhoid around New York: “In her urine and her stool, and it can’t be wrong, it’s [scientific] tests!”
Roles of Engagement

The last three reasoning codes perhaps require the least explanation. The code of R6, *selecting evidence*, was used when students introduced direct or indirect quotations. The code of R7, *co-constructing evidence*, was used when students supported each other’s claims, not with evidence but with comments or claims that were not directly in evidence in the text. The code of R8, *positing a perspective*, was used when new claims or contradictory claims were introduced.

*Reasoning code results.* The differences between the conditions in the presence of reasoning codes were present across this range of codes, in sample analyzed, especially *interpretive work* (R5). This code varied in prevalence from 120 idea units in the RPC condition to 24 idea units in the Stanard condition. Similarly large differences occur across codes *commenting on evidence* (R1) and *positing a perspective* (R8). With respect to the former, 16 idea units existed across three discussions in which students commented about evidence (e.g. “It was weird when he [Hemingway] changed settings”). In positing this comment, the student was offering an opinion about a narrative choice that the author had made to abruptly switch the narrative to a hunting scene. With respect to *positing a perspective* (R8), 91 idea units in the RPC groups were coded, compared with 18 idea units within the Standard groups. Conversely, the numbers for *co-constructing an argument* (R7) are similarly small across groups, with the RPC condition exhibiting 19 idea units of co-constructing arguments, and the Standard condition exhibiting 18 idea units, across three discussions per condition.

In the classroom, transcript data and field notes reveal that both groups interacted differently. The Standard groups examined the data, quickly agreeing and formulating a reasonable argument. The RPC groups showed differences of opinion, often disagreeing and marshalling evidence to establish the viability of their perspectives.

In the following transcript excerpt drawn from a Standard group’s discussion of Mary Mallon, students had read a historical text exposing the story of Typhoid Mary, who was held
Roles of Engagement

responsible for an outbreak of typhoid in New York over 100 years ago. The students were given the question as to whether or not Mary Mallon (“Typhoid Mary”) should be quarantined on North Brother Island for the remainder of her life. In the student interactions the Standard groups spoke quickly and directly, while the experimental groups raised the question of Mary Mallon’s status as an immigrant who might have been unfairly blamed by influential characters in the story. Here is an excerpt from the control condition:

Student 1: I think that she should be locked up because she decided to change her name so she can start cooking again because before when she was cooking, she was spreading Typhoid because she never washed her hands. And it spread more Typhoid to many different people.

Student 2: The reason I think she should be locked up is because maybe she did not think at first that she is spreading Typhoid, but when they wanted to bring her in to do further testing, she refused and sent away, changed her name. Also, she remained a cook, and the fact that she was being hard-headed in not realizing that she killed two people and still didn’t want to go back in, I think she should be locked up for the rest of her life.

Student 3: I think she should be locked up because, like they said, she didn’t realize that she was harming others, but after doing something she never washed her hands, so she should be locked up.

Student 4: She should be locked up because she killed people.

This is the total excerpt of this small group’s discussion, which is short and perhaps to the point. Again, I saw the students generating criteria for their decision. All students thought that Mary Mallon should be “locked up,” but they did express different reasons. Student 1 assigns blame to her for not washing and for acting suspiciously. Student 2 talks about how Mary Mallon refused to live under the law. Students 3 and 4 seem to concur, not adding much more to the discussion.
Roles of Engagement

However, in terms of their reasoning, the group seems to function more or less as a whole, and they support the interpretation of Mary Mallon offered in the original text reading, that she probably knew what she was doing, was guilty, and was even evading justice by facing Doctor Soper, the local official sent to investigate her health issue, with a carving knife.

The RPC group, however, offered varied points of analysis with some qualifiers on the standard interpretation of Mary Mallon. Specifically, one of the students was assigned to represent Mary Mallon (MM) herself, and another was assigned an immigrant’s perspective (Ira Loff, IL); two other students were given the mainstream perspectives of the doctor (Doctor Soper, DS) or the mayor of New York (MNY).

MNY, DS: WE have proof!

DS: In her urine and her stool, and it can’t be wrong, it’s tests!

DS: [same time as DS] Can’t be wrong.

MM: I think you’re discriminating.

DS: Two people died.

IL: Just because you have proof, it doesn’t mean that Mary should be in a quarantined for the rest of her life. It’s bogus! What if you were, like?

DS: She killed two people!

MM: So?

DS: She might kill more.

IL: It’s not her fault.

DS: She could stop working. She could just live at home.

IL: What do you expect? We’re immigrants. Yah, and she needs her job.

MM: I had to get something.

IL: She has no education to do something else.
Roles of Engagement

DS: We will try to find a solution to her disease.

IL: You will not do that. All you want to do is quarantine. And in another 20 years, you’ll find her dead on the street. I guess this is over, clean that stuff up. You can’t do that. I know that you have evidence, but you just can’t do that to her for the rest of her life because it’s not her fault.

DS: Man, who cares, she’s IRISH!

IL: But she knows—

--UNCONTROLLED LAUGHTER AT THIS POINT--

MM: Discrimination.

IL: You [are] a racist! Too racist to be president because that’s just like –

DS: The mayor’s right here. She’s on my side!

IL: You’re not worried about the people. You’re only worried about your image. And your election! Oh, wait, wait, I need to quarantine Mary because she’s killing people.

That’s all you care about, your election.

Here, the students offer a variety of reasoning types in order to examine the credibility of evidence and its applicability to the question at hand. It is also noteworthy that this group’s discussion was much longer, and this excerpt represents only about a third of the total; on the other hand, the control group transcript above is the total of their interaction.

In sum, the status of reasoning was evidenced very differently in the two conditions studied. Both groups cited evidence and analyzed it, but the RPC groups spoke longer, examined evidence from a wider range of perspectives, and included other important touches such as a higher degree of laughter and non-verbal interaction. In the area of reasoning, the differences between the two groups were pronounced.

Interviews. The results of the interviews revealed less dramatic contrasts than did the analysis of the small group interaction above (Table 4.3, below). Among the ten interviews
Roles of Engagement

consducted, five were comprised of students from the RPC group, and five were comprised of students from the Standard group. Field notes from these discussions reveal that both groups of students were interested in talking about their work, as evidenced by positive body language and eye contact. Both groups expressed positive comments about their groups and the processes involved.

Table 4.3

Student Interviews, Reflections on Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interview Positive Comments</th>
<th>Interview Negative Comments</th>
<th>Interview Neutral Comments</th>
<th>Reference to choice</th>
<th>Reference to challenge</th>
<th>Reference to competence</th>
<th>Reference to the social</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPC</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)*</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>8 (11%)</td>
<td>10 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1(2%)</td>
<td>2 (4%)</td>
<td>4 (8%)</td>
<td>8 (16%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages of total comments made in the interview.

After the interviews were transcribed and checked, two analysts assigned positive, negative, or neutral codes to the students’ comments, with the unit of analysis being the student’s full turn. There was no conflict in these codes with this broad unit of analysis because there were no examples of a student beginning with a negative comment and then ending positively or vice versa.

From the figure above, the experimental group had more to say, with more student turns in general, with 71 turns taken, versus 48 turns taken by the control group interviewees. This occurred primarily because the interviewees had more follow-up comments instead of one-word responses.

**Survey results.** Much like the results of the interviews, the survey items of engagement revealed a generally positive experience in both groups with no significant differences between the two conditions. In addition to the WAS-survey items, five questions original questions, neither normed nor validated over consecutive studies, were also used to examine engagement among the students within the two condition groups.
Roles of Engagement

The questions were created to examine the value of choice/control, competence, challenge, and the social within the students’ views of the group and the work that each group completed together. The questions were as follows: 1.) In class, I feel I am respected when others disagree with me; 2.) In class, I enjoy hearing other students' points of view; 3.) I value my classmates as a part of my learning process; 4.) When I write an argument, I explain my thinking well; and 5.) I enjoy improving my argument writing.

The results of these survey items corroborate with the comments made by the ten students in their interviews: regardless of the treatment condition, they enjoyed working with one another. What is particularly striking and unexpected about this is that the overall sample group of 90 students involved in the study come from a program designed to help striving readers, a significant portion of whom may be at risk for on-time graduation, according to the predictors of attendance, discipline referrals and grades (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1
Student Survey Results, Students Who Value Classmates

When it comes to managing conflict and difference in their small groups, only slight differences existed across treatments, with a generally positive result, as below (Figure 4.2). These survey responses are not as uniformly positive as those in response to the question of “I value my classmates…”; however, they do show a baseline of high functionality among the students involved.
Fifteen students still view the presence of conflict, “When others disagree with me,” as a sign of disrespect, but the majority does feel respect, even when differing opinions are surfacing. Field notes of small group work do reveal some examples of competitiveness or even hierarchy-reinforcing language in instances of disagreement, so the students’ comments here can find some corroboration in the classroom experience.

Finally, as the last graph indicates, the students generally do enjoy hearing from each other, with six students dissenting and 81 agreeing. Clearly, both conditions were comprised of students who seem to be operating out of a seemingly high baseline of strong, positive mutual regard.
Roles of Engagement
Chapter 5: Discussion

RPC as Pre-Writing

Research question #1. To what extent did an instructional treatment featuring role-playing controversy (RPC) confer any advantage on the subsequent argument writings of ninth-grade students?

Effects Discussed. Clearly no significant effect for the role-playing treatment existed when compared with a standard treatment that is informed by writing process literature when the metric of comparison was the total number of words per essay. Put another way, role-playing did help students to increase the number of warrants in their writing and to write longer arguments, but it did so with the same effect as a standard treatment when total number of words was the metric. From these statistics, the effect of time, and perhaps the intense focus on argument writing over four weeks, helped a range of students to see gains in the number of words written per essay. It must also be noted that the students in this study were selected for inclusion in the program as a result of below-average reading scores, so the improvement in their writing across the board is significant in its own right. The same was true when comparing the variance in number of warrants written across the two groups.

Perhaps role-playing operates in the writing process simply as a way of focusing students on important matters of writing investigation. After all, both strategy instruction and setting product goals have been long established as having strong experimental effects across a number of studies (Graham & Perrin, 2007): strategy instruction, with a .82 effect size; and setting product goals, with an effect size of .70 (n = 5 studies). Perhaps, too, role-playing, as engaging as some of the qualitative data suggested it may have been, as evidenced by the greater presence of student-to-student interaction--that is uptake (Nystrand et al., 1997)--offers the same kind of benefit to student writing as other methods of peer support. Again, longstanding and well
Roles of Engagement

documented (Graham & Perrin, 2007) benefits exist for scaffolding and peer assistance, with an effect size of .75 (n= 7 studies).

The idea that role playing could simply be another way—an effective way, but one among many options—of helping students to simply to focus on their writing is corroborated with the findings of a recent study examining the effects of collaborative reasoning versus SRSD, noted above in chapter 3 (Coker & Erwin, 2011). Much like the role-playing condition in the present study, collaborative reasoning sought to offer students a chance to engage in controversies in an open format of discussion. Although not the same in every respect, the tenor and feel of the role-playing controversy groups carried a similar exploration of controversial issues. However, although the effects of collaborative reasoning have been demonstrated by a number of studies to be beneficial to improving the writing of younger students on shorter stories (Reznitskaya et al., 2009), results of Coker & Erwin’s study (2011) with 6th and 7th graders reflected a similarly ambiguous result as the present study: both conditions helped students to improve, but no statistical difference existed between the two.

In the present study, gains in the writing of 9th graders were in question, and one significant difference existed in the use of argument groups, per se. Both the Standard and RPC groups were implemented in the context of high-functioning cooperative groups, as evidenced by the survey results and the interview results. Specifically, since both conditions generated positive affect in the interview data, with 20 positive engagement comments made by the experimental group and 15 positive engagement comments made by the control group, one can conclude that both groups were high functioning. In addition, the survey results show strikingly high levels of mutual respect existing among the students, levels which are atypical of high school classrooms in general and, in my experience across four schools and 21 years of teaching, particularly atypical of remedial sections of grade-9 English students. Again, if the treatment
Roles of Engagement

...were offered as a replacement for the typical conditions which exist across the majority of classrooms in the U.S. in which student groups take 9th-grade English in schools of need, then more dramatic or statistically significant results may have materialized. As it is, only 3% of the students did not express value for their classmates on the post-survey, thus the high levels of cooperation and mutual regard were clearly established and in place before the study began.

In addition, it could be argued that the statistics in the present study have been presented with too-large a number for degrees of freedom, thus calling for a larger sample in future research. Specifically, it could be argued that each argument group in each classroom created a specific unit defined by the specific norms and interactions that existed within the group. Since each group had four students, the total number of units under study should not be 80 students but rather grouped into 20 defined units, with gains in the number of warrants or number of words examined in light of the group composition. As it stands, the present study may include a misleadingly high number of degrees of freedom and a higher level of significance in the stats indicating time and GPA.

The argument for gains under more dramatically diverging design conditions is corroborated by existing empirical research: Troyka (1974) cited in Hillocks’s meta-analysis (Hillocks, 1986), explained that the effects of role playing can be pronounced when enacted as “situation gaming” in which students are asked to provide facts, reasons, descriptions, comparisons and contrasts. In her study of 25 experimental classes of freshman remedial college writers, the experimental effect was 1.69 SD, over half an SD greater than the next highest effect size reviewed in Hillocks’ meta-analysis (Hillocks, 1986). She documented these gains among remedial college freshman writers, but the control conditions were unlikely to have been as informed by research on cooperative learning (very little had been done yet) or the writing process (still nascent at this time) or composition research on goal setting, or peer
Roles of Engagement

support (few of Graham & Perrin’s studies documented in their meta-analysis, 2007, had been written).

The question arises, then, about pre-existing treatment conditions in the present study. In small classes of 18-22 students, with three highly trained teachers, a culture of inquiry and discussion was present from the opening of school. It would be interesting to use the RPC treatment right at the beginning of the school year or in the context of a more typical classroom setting.

There is also the idea of maximizing the hybrid nature of combining the best of a schema-based approach such as SRSD (Graham, 2005) or AST (Reznitskaya, 2009) with the socially-defined approach such as RPC in the present study. It was not a possibility in either condition in the present study for teachers to pause student role-playing controversy discussions and to help students to be more meta-cognitively aware of the spontaneous scaffolding (Nystrand, 1987) that they were providing for one another. For example, after a particularly strong inferring question aimed at a piece of textual evidence, the teacher could ask the group to pause, step out of role and into their own shoes as students in order to recognize the value of the question for later writing. The same could be true of a particularly strong example of student reasoning that might become evidenced within the small group.

Thus, the following interaction could be augmented by adding some flexibility for the teacher to step out of role-playing format for a moment, as in the italicized comments.

MNY, DS: WE have proof!

DS: In her urine and her stool, and it can’t be wrong, it’s tests!

Teacher: You’ve just used evidence, Dr. Soper. Can you explain your reasoning about the evidence by using a warrant?

MM: I think you’re discriminating.
Roles of Engagement

DS: Two people died.

IL: Just because you have proof, it doesn’t mean that Mary should be in a quarantined for the rest of her life. It’s bogus! What if you were, like?

DS: She killed two people!

Of course, one limitation to this hybridized approach is that stepping out of role-playing could kill the momentum generated by the group, as well as the sense of play and artifice that the RPC scenario had sought to generate. That said, an artful and experienced teacher would likely be able to manage both modes simultaneously, guiding groups to get into the rhythm of their roles and then stopping only occasionally to label their progress. Too, the use of video-taping or small group transcripts for use the following day in class could also help the teacher to return to the role-playing moment and help the students to label their dialogic moves.

Another limitation in the present study is that transfer was measured across the unit. That is, students argued in small groups and then immediately wrote informal responses to each scenario. But when the final metric was taken, no role-playing exercises were conducted. This was done in order to reduce the number of confounding variables that may have affected student performance on the pre- and post-assessment writings, for example, timing, group scaffolding, etc. However, there may be something specific that occurs for the student when he or she argues in role in the context of a small group and then immediately writes the related essay. The only way to ascertain whether or not this is true, or to what extent it is true, would be to focus on the process pieces of writing along the way. This type of research would be a natural and suggested follow-up to the present study.

The limitation of length of the present study is a glaring limitation. Clearly, very different types of discourse were occurring within the small groups, across the experimental and control conditions. What would happen if these conditions existed from the first day of school
Roles of Engagement

through several months of instruction? It is arguable that the effect size would be more pronounced, as it was dramatically so in Troyka's research (1977) or even in the quasi-experimental research on heuristics in the writing of middle schools students that Yeh (1998) conducted.

Other limitations and qualifiers to my exploration of the first research question come from the way that I operationalized the various concepts in argument writing. I took a generalized definition of warrants as a proxy for the overall quality of an argument. The number of warrant/reasoning elements applied to evidence in a student’s writing is a reasonable and defensible proxy, but the patterns of evidence and warrants, and even rebuttals, also emerged during my coding as worthy of investigation. For example, if a student offered three strong pieces of evidence in service of a single claim and then one warrant to tie them together, then their work was not particularly recognized in the experimental design that I used. In addition, if a student artfully combined an organized and insightful set of one-two punch combinations—evidence followed by warrant, followed by evidence, followed by warrant, etc.—then this sequencing of the argument also escaped the experimental metric I designed. Thus, the use of evidence, quality of its selection, and timing of its use in conjunction with the warrants could become interesting and fruitful points of entry for future research.

Research Question #2: In what ways did role-playing shape the experience of the participants as they wrote arguments?

Even though the experimental effects of the small group treatment were not seen on the post-assessment writing of the students, it is arguable that the small-group discussions serve as a valuable end in themselves for fostering better interpretive reading, critical reading, inclusivity of marginalized students, and engagement across a range of students. And although I did not run parametric or non-parametric analyses for significance, I will suggest that the frequency results
Roles of Engagement

presented in chapter 4 are evidence for a rationale for future study of role-playing as a discussion tool.

**Effects on interpretive reading.** It was the greater presence of interpretive reasoning (R5) that evidences a real advantage for developing interpretive reading within the context of the small groups studied; these types of reasoning comments in the RPC groups outnumbered those in the Standard groups 120 to 24. And although the sampling of small group discussions was relatively small, at eight of the eighty total discussions, the results sampled seemed to reflect the trend observed in class: students in roles tended to explore the literature in greater depth and for a greater length of time.

Such student-led interpretive reasoning is sought after and important in literacy instruction because it can lead to disciplinary practice. Shanahan & Shanahan (2012) make the distinction between disciplinary literacy and content-area literacy by stating that disciplinary literacy engages in specialized language routines and discourses. These practices are typically present in the communities of practice existing within professional academic communities, but students can find them to be challenging to appropriate. The goal of the instructors at the secondary level is to assist students in gaining access to the codes and specialized practices present in a range of disciplinary settings. In contrast to this disciplinary literacy model, the content-area literacy approach favors adopting generalized reading processes across disciplinary lines, and it makes the assumption that, for example, writing a lab report and a drafting historical argument based on primary sources are similar to marshaling an argument about literature. And while it is interesting that Toulmin himself offered specialized structures for his argument system in the context of various disciplinary settings (e.g. “Arguing about the Arts,” chapter 28 in Toulmin, 1978), the practice of generic, content-area literacy skills and treatments is all too
Roles of Engagement

common in secondary school settings. As a result, graduating high school students are not always prepared to do advanced academic work in college and beyond.

The rub is that instructing students with skill gaps can create a double-edged challenge for all classroom practitioners interested in the literacy development of their students. If instruction gives intermediate, content-area moves like summarization short shrift, in favor of advanced, disciplinary approaches to reading such as critiquing a Gabriel Garcia Marquez short story featuring the literary technique of magical realism, then progress can be thin or even stymied on both levels—the intermediate and the advanced. However, when a strategy or classroom condition allows students to explore a reading in ways that are significant to the practice of the discipline and to spontaneously practice disciplinary reading, then such a strategy or approach is worth examining because it does all of the following simultaneously: 1.) Engages students in the skills and strategies that they need in order to master basic or even intermediate literacy skills; 2.) Allows students to see textual material in greater complexity, often problematized in ways that are significant to a given discipline; and 3.) Is fun.

What is encouraging about the small-group transcript data is that it features a high degree of interpretive work (R5), often revealing disciplinary thinking in its nascent form. For example, one key disciplinary habit of the historian is to question the source of a given document (Wineberg, 2001). In textual preparation of the historical excerpt about Mary Mallon in the present study, the textbook editors paint her in the light of a sort of freak of nature, a portrait that is not flattering to her as a woman at the turn of the 20th century—she was clearly hysterical as she attacked Dr. Soper with that carving knife, she should have been more rational—and as an Irish immigrant—she has that so-called Irish temper to consider. Such a treatment of her character is unbalanced at best and racist/sexist and worst. Sadly, the control groups did blame Mary Mallon for being “hard headed” and they did not question the sourcing of the historical text.
Roles of Engagement

in question. That said, the students in the RPC-experimental group, partly because an Irish immigrant was one of the stated roles in the argument scenario, questioned the motives of the mayor and the doctor who would so blithely lock Mary Mallon up in an attempt to keep typhus from spreading. When the student in the role of the examining doctor suggests that Mary could easily undergo a voluntary quarantine because she could “stop working…She could just live at home,” the student playing the Irish immigrant offered a critical reading of his perspective and of the textbook presentation of Mary Mallon as well when she says, “She’s an immigrant…and she needs her job.” I find it also quite interesting that the students playing Mary Mallon and the Irish immigrant were played in this segment by students of immigrant background themselves, so one can hear in their classroom transcript a level of empathy for and identification with her. Next, when the student playing the doctor suggested, “We will find a solution to her disease,” he is greeted by a suspicious reading of his motives, “You know damn well you won’t do it.” A bit later in the exchange the students can be heard laughing and carrying on together, clearly having enjoyed the gamesmanship present in this exchange.

There were two other disciplinary genres represented: literature and science. With respect to the former, a key disciplinary habit is to infer meaning about a character’s point of view or experiences. This is challenging because students often do not particularly understand characters whose world views or experiences are far removed from their own, as is often the case. For the students in this study, living nearly 100 years after Hemingway’s story was written, inhabiting a cultural space far removed from his, and being relatively inexperienced in reading the type of minimalistic literary style for which he is famous, one would think that “A Day’s Wait” would be a challenging read for any of today’s high school freshmen. However, the students in the RPC group offered 38 comments of literary/interpretive reasoning (R5), while the Standard group offered none. Further, their R5 comments often focused on evaluating literary
Roles of Engagement

criteria, in this case examining characterization, theme and plot. In order to explore
characterization, however, the students required empathy—evidence of a significant reader-
response (Rosenblatt, 1978)—in order to evaluate the main character fairly, a character who was
a boy who was convinced he was going to die, as in the following comment, “But maybe he was
thinking that he was going to die, so it might maybe it would be his last time…It’s even worse to
call something before you die.” At this moment, the student was arguing in favor of the
character’s feelings being valid while his fellow group member was arguing that the boy’s
character was unrealistic and underdeveloped. In all, the students’ reasoning was spontaneous,
energized and thorough, as they evaluated the story along the lines of three key artistic criteria.
The control group’s discussion was over much more quickly, with little controversy present in
their exploration of artistic criteria. Again, the students reveal nascent disciplinary thinking, and
it is important to note that this happens on top of what seems to be an accurate reading of the
story from a non-specialized point of view.

Finally, nascent disciplinary thinking was present in a science-based story about HIV as a
contagion in sports. In order to argue this case, the students had to understand how the virus is
spread, how it isn’t spread, and to think carefully about the practical application of this
information in the context of a basketball game. One key disciplinary reading trait in the
sciences hinges on inferring cause and effect, that is, examining evidence and considering how
the result might be different if different elements are introduced. For example, what would
happen to global temperatures if CO2 continues to be emitted at its current rate? Again, the
experimental groups revealed greater incidences of this kind of reading, although the differences
between the two conditions in this particular story were less pronounced than they were in the
previous two examples. Still, the students weighed the possibility of using various cautionary
measures in allowing the character in question, Franklin, to play the game: “Alright, but what if
Roles of Engagement

the person helping him set up his bandages, say someone helping him…” Again, these types of what-if questions allow the students to reason about the implications of the various pieces of evidence present in the text. That said, both the Standard and RPC groups evidenced this type of reasoning in this particular scenario, but there were greater incidences of it in the RPC-experimental group.

The limitations on this preliminary observation are many, but the chief of which is the lack of a large sample size across which to compare the effects of the two conditions on R5, interpretive work, especially as it seems to relate to the practice of embedded but understandable disciplinary literacy practice. I would like to transcribe and code the remaining small group discussions and even replicate this study in the classrooms of some of my colleagues in the Biology and History classrooms. Such an exploration would involve a more sustained inquiry into the genres involved, instead of just a taste, evidenced in one reading from each discipline and in the context of a Language Arts classroom.

Effects on critical reading. As I mentioned in the case of Mary Mallon above, there was a greater incidence of critical reading in the exchanges present in the experimental condition. The reasoning codes bear this out statistically, as well, since there was a greater difference between codes indicating diverging ideas than there was for consensus-based codes. Specifically, with respect to positive a perspective (R8), I counted 91 idea units existing within the discussions of the RPC groups, compared with 18 idea units within the Standard groups. Conversely, the numbers for co-constructing an argument (R7) are similar small across groups, with the RPC group exhibiting 19 idea units of co-constructing arguments, and the Standard group exhibiting 18 idea units, across three discussions per condition. This is perhaps a predictable result of designing roles that are problematically at odds with one another. Such a design principal was at the heart of my selection and design of roles, and as another limitation, it
Roles of Engagement

is a challenge for any teacher when writing curriculum to consider roles that are relevant, naturalistic, opposed to one another, and accessible.

However, future research could explore the longer-term effects of exploring texts in the mode of instruction focused on controversy. As mentioned in chapter 2, there is support at the meta-analytical level for controversy having a stimulating cognitive effect overall. The specific results of the Johnsons’ meta-analysis call attention to the notion that constructive forms of controversy can more effectively create an environment for learning when compared with concurrence-seeking approaches, with effects on achievement, with effect size of .70 (n=12 studies); cognitive reasoning, with an effect size of .84 (n=2 studies); perspective taking, with an effect size of .97 (n=8 studies); and motivation, with an effect size of .68 (n=8 studies). All point to the desirability of controversy (Johnson & Johnson, 2009), especially when the rules of engagement have been established around a focus on respect and mutual consideration.

**Inclusivity.** On the surface, the type of controversy present in the role-playing scenarios may seem to lend itself to splintering and fragmenting in a classroom rather than to inclusivity. However, with the research of Johnson & Johnson (2009), ground rules can help maintain respect while controversy can create the experience of authentic inquiry that fuels mutual respect, and this was certainly the case in both the RPC and Standard groups, as evidenced by the survey and interview results.

As a case in point, I think very specifically about a student, James, a student for whom critical thinking was often a challenge. James was a student who often seemed to lack social capital in the context of the class and had some learning deficits around the area of being able to appreciate humor and subtext. He seemed to find it difficult to get a clear read on his classmates’ intentions, and this compromised his status as a leader in class. What was striking to me in my field notes and upon reflection was to note that in the discussion of the Hemingway
Roles of Engagement

short story, “A Day’s Wait,” he had drawn the role of the talk show host. He relied on his out-of-school knowledge of that genre to do a beautiful job of garnering participation from all of his group members, of keeping the lively discussion going, and of directing some serious inquiry into the story. Specifically, he took 20 turns within the conversation that was transcribed, and what is more impressive is that the pattern in his interaction is well timed and shows leadership, in that he was able to confront the ideas of some of his more vocal classmates because he knew he had to draw in everyone to the conversation. This type of interaction contains some of the best features of talking across difference (Flower, 2003), as students were guided to challenge each other’s ideas respectfully and to consider, albeit indirectly, some key vectors in the formation of their ideas: history, ideology, cognition, and material reality that are in play.

**Engagement.** While students in both conditions seemed to value their classmates a great deal, there seemed to be an element of choice present in the RPC groups that seemed to be left unexplored in the Standard groups.

Even though the interview data indicated little to no advantage for the RPC groups, some data taken synchronously did indicate an advantage when viewed through the lens of student choice. Specifically, the interview results revealed the presence of pride in a job well done and mutual respect at somewhat parallel levels across both conditions. Comments relating to competence—8 (11%) in RPC-experimental and 4 (8%) in the control—were roughly parallel. Comments relating to the social were also similarly stacked, with 10 (14%) for the RPC group and 8 (16%) for the Standard group. However, the data taken synchronously reveal that the processes of the two groups were very much different with respect to executive functioning and the choices available to them. Specifically, the RPC groups asked 18 questions of an *executive* nature (Q4)—“Are we done?” or “What else should we do?”—compared with zero asked by the Standard groups. And while it is possible that the RPC groups had questioning built into the
Roles of Engagement

design of their task, there really is very little in the task that inherently demands that they negotiate the group’s progress more than the task that the Standard groups were given. For example, a talk show host does not really ask “What should we do?” because he or she is supposed to be in charge of the direction of the program.

One possible explanation for this disparity in executive type questions is that perhaps the control groups were very familiar with the task of doing a reading in their small group and then completing a bit of writing about it. In this view, they were operating by a familiar script, one that didn’t suggest any negotiation or adjustment. The converse, then, would be true for the RPC group, which was given a somewhat fuzzy, unfamiliar task that required more negotiation through the increased use of executive type questions. If that is true then, I am left not with a question of which mode of operation is superior for a small group but rather of the philosophy of adolescent education that each presents.

Clearly, adolescent learners must face a host of negotiations on any given day, from those with family, friends, teachers, bosses, and neighbors. Further, they continue to experience increasing responsibility in decision making outside of school, as new privileges such as automobile driving and working become real possibilities for them, while the economic challenges their families face are also very real concerns. Thus, school tasks should, at least some of the time, allow students the chance to negotiate for themselves the progress that they can make. Such decision making is central to meta-cognition because it helps one to develop the kind of conditional knowledge that is needed to get the reading or thinking task done appropriately, but more than that, such decision making is central to life itself as it helps students to rehearse the kinds of decision making that they will need as adults, voters, soldiers, workers, family members, etc. Such choice is healthy, and we know from research that choice is a key element in engagement (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002).
Roles of Engagement

References


Roles of Engagement

*Genre and the New Rhetoric: Critical Perspectives on Literacy and Education.*


Roles of Engagement


Roles of Engagement


Hillocks, G. (1986). Research on Written Composition. Urbana, IL, NCRE.
Roles of Engagement


Roles of Engagement


Roles of Engagement


Roles of Engagement


APPENDIX A: FOUR READINGS AND ACTIVITIES

TO BE USED IN THE RPC AND STANDARD GROUPS
Roles of Engagement

STUDENT DIRECTIONS FOR READING #1:

“We Are All the Same” by Nkosi Johnson; Lexile 900

Read the article and discuss the following situation.
A student, Franklin Brown, who has HIV/AIDS has made the school basketball team, only to have a few of his teammates express concern for their playing together. Examine the story for evidence to decide what to do. Do you think that Franklin should be able to play on the team or not?

Standard:
Directions: Agree as a group as to pro or con. A search the story for evidence, and rate each piece of evidence 1 to 5 (5 = strong). See how much evidence you can find in 10 minutes. Be ready to explain both your evidence and its rating when asked.

RPC:
Directions: Read and assign your role from the four listed below. Assign the roles in order. Read the directions for constructive controversy. Agree to disagree politely. Then, individually, find evidence to support your perspective. After that, you will have some time to argue out whether or not Franklin should be able to play varsity basketball. At the end of your session, rate the evidence (1 to 5) as to how strong it was. Give each other feedback on this. Imagine that you are at a school board meeting where this issue is being discussed. Present quotes and information from the story to prove your point.

Mrs. Smith/Parent (negative): You are concerned that other students will be infected. You argue against Franklin participating.

Coach Begley (positive): You want a winning season, and you know that Franklin is a great player. You want to do whatever it takes to bring him on board.

Nkosi Johnson (positive): You are the author of the piece that we just read. You feel a lot of empathy (caring) for people who are suffering with AIDS/HIV and want to open up this opportunity for Franklin.

Principal Skinner (neutral): You are worried about the health and safety of the students. You care about Franklin, and you care about coach Begley. You have been asked by the school board to facilitate this discussion, which means to get everyone talking. At the end of your time, they will vote on the fate of Franklin.
TEXT OF STUDENT READING #1

Excerpt from "We Are All the Same" by Nkosi Johnson

Nkosi Johnson was born with HIV. In his short life, Nkosi Johnson inspired millions of people in his fight against AIDS. He delivered this speech a year before he died.

Hi my name is Nkosi Johnson. I live in Melville, Johannesburg, South Africa. I am 11 years old and I have full-blown AIDS. I was born HIV-positive.

When I was two years old, I was living in a care center for HIV/AIDS-infected people. My mommy was obviously also infected and could not afford to keep me. She was very scared that the community she lived in would find out that we were both infected and chase us away.

I know she loved me very much, and would visit me when she could. … Then the care center had to close down because they didn't have any funds. So Gail Johnson, who was a director of the care center…said she would take me home. I have been living with her for eight years now.

™ & © 2011 Scholastic Inc. All rights reserved.
What evidence does the story provide to answer the following two questions:
1. Is Mary Mallon responsible for contaminating people with Typhoid, or could it have been someone else?
2. Should Mary Mallon be required to stay on North Brother Island for the rest of her life?

Standard:
Directions: Agree as a group as to pro or con in response to each of the two questions. Then, search the story for evidence, and rate each piece of evidence 1 to 5 (5 = strong). See how much evidence you can find in 10 minutes. Be ready to explain both your evidence and its rating when asked.

RPC:
Directions: Read and assign your role from the four listed below. Assign the roles in order. Read the directions for constructive controversy. Agree to disagree politely. Then, individually, find evidence to support your perspective. After that, you will have some time to argue the two questions above. At the end of your session, rate the evidence (1 to 5) as to how strong it was.

Give each other feedback on this.

Imagine that you are at a New York Hospital, the second time Mary Mallon is brought in. Argue the case from your perspective, and then decide what should be done.

Mary Mallon (negative): You cannot believe that you are being accused of infecting people with a disease. You are a good person who came here from Ireland and have been working hard to earn your way as a cook.

Dr. Soper (positive): You have documented proof that Mary Mallon needs to be dealt with. You will explain this proof to the group.

Immigrant (negative): You are sick and tired of being mistreated as an immigrant. You have read Dr. Soper’s story about how Mary Mallon came after him with a carving fork. You find it hard to believe. Explain that Mary Mallon is being stereotyped for just being an immigrant!

Mayor of New York (positive): You have read the documented proof and are convinced that Mary Mallon should be placed on North Brother Island; at the same time, you don’t want to make this decision too hastily because you respect the immigrants who work hard and make New York a great city.
TEXT OF STUDENT READING #2: “Typhoid Mary”

Excerpt from Typhoid Mary: The Most Dangerous Woman in America

By Victor M. Parachin from American History magazine

Did she do it on purpose? A woman infected with typhoid spreads the deadly disease wherever she goes.

In the summer of 1906, New York banker Charles Henry Warren and his family began what should have been a delightful summer vacation. They had rented a large summer home on scenic Oyster Bay, Long Island from a man named George Thompson. They hired maids and a gardener, and an Irish immigrant woman named Mary Mallon to be the family cook.

On August 27, 1906, the Warrens' vacation took an ugly turn. One of the Warren daughters became desperately ill, followed in rapid succession by Mrs. Warren, two maids, the gardener, and another Warren daughter. All suffered excruciating headache, fever, nausea, abdominal pain, diarrhea and vomiting. The diagnosis? Typhoid fever—a sometimes fatal disease caused by germs in food or water.

Fortunately no one died. Still, property owner Thompson faced a dilemma. Today, typhoid is treated with antibiotics, but that treatment was not available in 1906. Contaminated homes were sometimes burned to the ground to destroy any remnant of the disease. If Thompson could not locate and remove the source of the outbreak, he faced financial disaster.

Local health authorities suspected that the Warrens and their staff had contracted typhoid from food consumed sometime between August 27 and September 3. Initially, authorities believed contaminated clams were the culprit. But not everyone who became ill had consumed clams.

When health officials reached an impasse, Thompson hired a medical sleuth, Dr. George Soper, a highly regarded New York City area epidemiologist with a doctorate from Columbia University, to further investigate. Soper quickly concluded that everyone who fell ill with typhoid had consumed a dessert of homemade ice cream and fresh peaches. The family cook, Mary Mallon, had prepared that dessert—but she was the only individual that Soper was unable to interview.

…In March 1907, Soper located Mallon working as a cook for a New York City family. "I had my first talk with Mary in the kitchen of this house," Soper explained. "I was as diplomatic as possible, but I had to say I suspected her of making people sick."

Mary Mallon immediately became enraged. "She seized a carving fork and advanced in my direction," Soper recalled. "I passed rapidly down the long narrow hall, through the tall iron gate ... and so to the sidewalk. I felt rather lucky to escape."

Soper was frightened, but not deterred. With the aid of the New York City health commissioner, Soper returned with police and an ambulance. Mallon was taken to Willard Parker Hospital in New York, where samples were taken. Typhoid bacteria were found in her system, and her gall bladder was teeming with typhoid salmonella.
Roles of Engagement

STUDENT DIRECTIONS FOR READING #3:

“Avian Flu”

Prompt #3: Avian Flu
Reading: “Hunting Down a Killer” Lexile 1010

Prompt:
Imagine that an outbreak of Avian Flu has been determined in a village of 3000 people in rural Mexico. Roughly 100 people have come down with the disease and two have died, and there is near hysteria about it. People are worried that since it is contagious, they could be next. Many people keep chickens in their back yards, and they rely on the eggs for food. You need to decide whether or not to have the roughly 50 chickens exterminated.

Standard:
Directions: Agree as a group as to pro or con in response to each of the two questions. Then, search the story for evidence, and rate each piece of evidence 1 to 5 (5 = strong). See how much evidence you can find in 10 minutes. Be ready to explain both your evidence and its rating when asked.

RPC:
Directions: Read and assign your role from the four listed below. Assign the roles in order. Read the directions for constructive controversy. Agree to disagree politely. Then, individually, find evidence to support your perspective. After that, you will have some time to argue the two questions above. At the end of your session, rate the evidence (1 to 5) as to how strong it was.

Give each other feedback on this.

Imagine that you are in a village in rural Mexico, decide what exactly should Mayor Moran say and do about the H5N1 epidemic?

Juan Batista: You are 9 years old and love to eat eggs for breakfast. You know that the eggs are making you grow stronger through nourishment.

Dr. Gonzalez: You have been a doctor in this town for 20 years and are very concerned about the H5N1 disease. You know that the disease can be fatal, and you don’t have the resources in the village to properly treat people who get sick.

Mary Jiminez: You are an expert on diseases and viruses. The town looks to you to inform them of how diseases work and what to do. You are very concerned about the presence of the virus.

Mayor Moran: You want to make the best decision possible. You know that people will die without their chickens for food, but some are already dying with the H5N1 disease. At the end of your deliberation, you will issue a proclamation to the village.

http://www.who.int/influenza/human_animal_interface/EN_GIP_20111010CumulativeNumberH5N1cases.pdf
Can virus hunters track—and stop—the deadly bird flu virus before it spreads out of control?

In 1997, three-year-old Lam Hoi-ka was admitted to a hospital in Hong Kong. At first, the boy seemed to be suffering from a typical flu virus. His throat was sore and he had a stomachache and a fever. Then, deadly symptoms appeared. The boy began to have difficulty breathing. That caused his lungs, liver, and kidneys to fail. Within a week, he was dead.

Lam Hoi-ka's death baffled his doctors. Tissue samples from the boy's throat tested positive for flu—but not for the types of flu known to make humans sick. What kind of flu virus had taken the life of this otherwise-healthy young child? Were other people at risk of contracting it?

To get to the bottom of the mystery, doctors in Hong Kong needed help. They sent tissue samples to top labs around the world. Soon, news came from Holland. A team of Dutch scientists had made a terrifying discovery. Lam Hoi-ka had died from a lethal strain of flu previously found only in birds. Somehow, the virus had made the leap from birds to humans. The new killer, soon to be known as "bird flu," triggered fear around the world. Scientists worried that the virus could cause a pandemic.

Fortunately, the virus did not travel outside Hong Kong—at least, not in 1997. But scientists and health officials worry that it's only a matter of time before bird flu or another new flu virus spreads out of control. In a race against time, they're working on solutions to protect the world from a deadly outbreak.

…

No Ordinary Flu

Other flu viruses circulate among humans without causing much harm. Humans have been exposed to common flu viruses for years, so the body's system of defense—the immune system—has learned to resist them. Ordinary flu viruses are sometimes deadly to the elderly, the very young, or those with weakened immune systems. But most infected people—a far greater percentage than the one-third who survived the 2003 bird flu outbreak—are back on their feet after just a few days or weeks. So, what makes bird flu so lethal? H5N1 is new to humans, so it catches the immune system off guard.

"Our immune system is not used to H5N1. So there's little to no immunity in humans," explains John El-Attrache, an avian flu scientist at Texas A&M University. That's why H5N1 can infect and kill even young, healthy adults. As El-Attrache explains, "This virus has no boundaries with the type of people it infects."

"Hunting Down a Killer" by Jacqueline Adams from Expert 21 21Book, Course II, Volume 2. Copyright © 2010 by Scholastic Inc. Published by Scholastic Inc.

™ & © 2011 Scholastic Inc. All rights reserved.
Roles of Engagement

STUDENT DIRECTIONS FOR READING #4:
“A Day’s Wait” by Ernest Hemingway, Lexile 910

Pre-teaching:
Definition of minimalism, background on Hemingway and influenza will be provided through a quick teacher-led discussion. The story will be read aloud in class. Then, small-group work will ensue for 30 minutes, in which the control and experimental groups are given tasks that vary by being either consensus seeking (formalist) or oriented towards constructive controversy (CR).

Small Group Session:
Hemingway’s sentence style is very short and to the point. As a result, he is known as a modern writer with a minimalist style. Do you think that his story artistically reveals the struggle of the little boy to remain brave in the face of his imagined death?

Standard
Directions: Agree as a group as to pro or con. A search the story for evidence, and rate each piece of evidence 1 to 5 (5 = strong). See how much evidence you can find in 10 minutes. Be ready to explain both your evidence and its rating when asked.

RPC:
Directions: Read and assign your role from the four listed below. Assign the roles in order. Read the directions for constructive controversy. Agree to disagree politely. Then, individually, find evidence to support your perspective. After that, you will have some time to argue out whether or not the story presents good art or not. At the end of your session, rate the evidence (1 to 5) as to how strong it was. Give each other feedback on this.

Imagine that you are a talk show host like Tyra Banks, Oprah Winfrey, or even Dr. Phil. The author of this story, Ernest Hemingway, is being brought on the show to talk about his story, “A Day’s Wait.”

Take on the following roles:
Book Critic (negative): You think that the story does not help us to develop empathy/caring for the young boy in the story. The minimalist treatment of the story is inappropriate an example of bad art.

Book Critic (positive): You think that, yes, the story brings out the boy’s plight (situation) in a way that helps people to appreciate him. The minimalist treatment of the story is good art.

Hemingway: You wrote the story as an attempt to suggest that we all, like the boy, have hidden fears. You care about the boy that you wrote about and want us to as well.

Talk Show Host: You want to make sure that the audience has heard an in-depth discussion of the story. You realize that this is going to be hard to do, given that the story is so short. But you have your audience to consider! And your salary. Get those people talking.
“A Day's Wait,” by Ernest Hemingway

A boy is determined to face death bravely.

He came into the room to shut the windows while we were still in bed and I saw he looked ill. He was shivering, his face was white, and he walked slowly as though it ached to move.

"What's the matter, Schatz?"

"I've got a headache."

"You better go back to bed."

"No. I'm all right."

"You go to bed. I'll see you when I'm dressed."

But when I came downstairs he was dressed, sitting by the fire, looking a very sick and miserable boy of nine years. When I put my hand on his forehead I knew he had a fever.

"You go up to bed," I said, "you're sick."

"I'm all right," he said.

When the doctor came he took the boy's temperature.

"What is it?" I asked him.

…
APPENDIX B: PRE- AND POST-ASSESSMENT
READINGS WITH WRITING PROMPTS
Roles of Engagement

Pre/Post Essay Measure

Quarantine!
Project Type: Case Study
Topic: Language Arts
xSpace Title: Workshop 6: Plagued by Disease

The Events
A student in your school has come down with flu-like symptoms and has been put into isolation. Doctors think the student may have an illness called SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome).
The problem: SARS is contagious and could lead to death.
The question: Should your school be quarantined?

Your Challenge: You must decide whether to quarantine—or isolate—everyone in your school. You will write an argumentative letter to the school board, taking the role of either someone in the school or yourself. Make sure to do the following:

To make your decision, you will
- Read the attached excerpt.
- Analyze data on SARS and a 2003 outbreak in Canada.
  http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5223a4.htm
  and its effect on Chinese restaurants in New York (see text)
- Decide what information is relevant to your argument, making active reading notes on the text.
- Write an argument that answers the question above. Make sure to explain your evidence in doing so.
- Convince the school board to agree with your recommendation.

SARS CASE INFORMATION
United States

Adapted from Wikipedia.org 1240 Lexile
SARS and the fear of SARS spread worldwide. Responses to a deadly epidemic (disease spreading) can occur far beyond the region experiencing actual infections, particularly in the age of the Internet. In the United States, which suffered no SARS-related deaths, there were 8 people with laboratory-confirmed cases of SARS infection, all of whom contracted the virus abroad. However, media reports concentrated on the possibility of a domestic epidemic in the U.S. Pictures of Asians in facemasks and emails circulating rumors of domestic infections in Chinatowns became common. In people’s minds, there came to be a connection between Asian peoples and SARS infection.

The first SARS case in the US was in Bergen County, New Jersey at Holy Name Hospital in Teaneck. Dr. Thomas Birch, the head of Infectious Diseases at Holy Name, was the first doctor to treat SARS in the United States.
A national survey conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health revealed that by mid-April, 93% of Americans had heard of SARS. Further, the survey showed that fourteen percent of Americans nationally avoided Asian businesses. While the latter is not an overwhelming statistic, many Asian communities began reporting losses in business and tourism, indicating that a larger percentage of people in areas near Asian communities might have avoided Asian businesses.

New York City’s Chinatown was very much affected, as rumors of local infections spread fear. Many Asian Americans felt cut off from the general public. Even without a local outbreak, SARS caused economic damage to Chinatown’s economy. It was already struggling from the nearby terrorist attacks which had already made tourism become a lot less, as the public avoided what they thought was an infected space and people. Restaurants in particular suffered losses after one particular rumor reported that a local restaurant owner had spread SARS to his employees before dying. According to local accounts, tourism and business were still going down in the summer of 2004, one year after SARS had been contained. Even without a single infection, Chinatown was quickly identified as a site of infection and risk.
Roles of Engagement

Pre Essay Measure--Quarantine!

The Events
A student in your school has come down with flu-like symptoms and has been put into isolation. Doctors think the student may have an illness called H1N1, also known as swine flu.

The problem: H1N1 is contagious and could lead to death.
The question: Should your school be quarantined?

Your Challenge: You must decide whether to quarantine—or isolate—everyone in your school. You will write an argumentative letter to the school board, taking the role of either someone in the school or yourself. Make sure to do the following:

To make your decision, you will
Read the attached excerpts on H1N1 and on quarantine.
http://e21.grolier.com/article?id=10003401&product_id=eto&uid=10467730

Decide what information is relevant to your argument, making active reading notes on the text. Write an argument that answers the question above. Make sure to explain your evidence in doing so.

Convince the school board to agree with your recommendation.
APPENDIX C: NORMING RULES FOR CONSTRUCTIVE CONTROVERSY
TO BE USED IN RPC GROUPS
Roles of Engagement

NORMING RULES FOR ARGUMENT GROUPS

1. Be critical of ideas, not people. I challenge and refute the ideas of the other participants while confirming their competence and value as individuals. I do not indicate that I personally reject them.

2. Separate my personal worth from criticism of my ideas.

3. Remember that we are all in this together, sink or swim. I focus on coming to the best decision possible, not on winning.

4. Encourage everyone to participate and to master all the relevant information.

5. Listen to everyone’s ideas, even if I do not agree.

6. Restate what someone has said if it is not clear.

7. Differentiate before I try to integrate. First, I bring out all ideas and facts supporting both sides and clarify how the positions differ. Then, I try to identify points of agreement and put them together in a way that makes sense.

8. Try to understand both sides of the issue. I try to see the issue from the opposing perspective to understand the opposing position.

9. Change my mind when the evidence clearly indicates that I should do so.

10. Emphasize rationality in seeking the best possible answer, given the available data.

11. Follow the golden rule of conflict: I act toward opponents as I would have them act toward me. I want the opposing pair to listen to me, so I listen to them. I want the opposing pair to include my ideas in their thinking, so I include their ideas in my thinking. I want the opposing pair to see the issue from my perspective, so I take their perspective (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).
APPENDIX D

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR BOTH CONDITIONS

MODEL ESSAYS
Roles of Engagement

MODEL ESSAY #1

DIRECTIONS: Read the following essay from a project earlier this year. Identify how the writer used evidence and explained it. Suggest how the writer could incorporate different points of view, as well.

When the Blind Can See

These days, people believe that seeing is believing. We want proof, evidence, video footage, etc., to prove that we visited a famous place or even that a crime was committed. However, in the story “Hum” by Naomi Shihab Nye, we learn that judging by appearances is very limiting. It is through the blind character of Hugh Mason that we discover that understanding others comes from being “blind” to differences and also by being kind. Hugh Mason shows both of these important characteristics.

To begin, Mr. Mason is blind to differences. Early in the story, he shows that he cares about Sami and that he does not judge Sami for being Palestinian: “Mr. Mason’s voice was gentle. ‘That must be harder than usual these days’” (286). By saying this, Mr. Mason shows that he understands that Sami is going through tough times due to 9/11. Furthermore, Hugh does not judge Sami by appearances because he sees people’s personalities first. He says, “he could visualize these things with his ‘inner eyes’” (288). This is an important quality because Mr. Mason does not judge just by looking at someone but by what they going through. In both of these examples, Mr. Mason is blind to racial differences.

In addition, Mr. Mason is kind. One time, Mr. Mason visits with Sami’s family and compliments them: “‘Good evening, pleased to meet you, I am Hugh Mason, you have a very nice son’” (287). By saying this, Mr. Mason shows that he cares about Sami and his family. Him
Roles of Engagement

mom probably liked hearing the compliment, as well. Similarly, Mr. Mason shows kindness after a dinner with Sami’s family when he says, “Friends, my stomach is full, my heart is full...I’m so happy we’re neighbors!” (291). By saying this, he shows again that he values the people around them and uses his words to build others up. This is his type of kindness.

These two characteristics are not only important but they combine to create a memorable character. It is not surprising, then, that Mr. Mason brings many different types of students together in an after school club to talk about their experiences. What would the world be like if more people were both blind to differences and as kind as the character Mr. Mason? The world would be a better place, that is for sure. Petty arguments and even wars could be avoided.
Leaving Home

Leaving home is often a very difficult thing to do, affecting one’s family, friends, and sense of self. Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* depicts the consequences of leaving one’s environment through a boy named Junior, an Indian boy on the Rez (reservation) who leaves his environment for an all-white school named Reardan. Junior’s departure in this instance though, is beneficial for both himself and the Rez. Success for Junior would mean success for the Rez, Junior would give back to his old home, and a whole new generation of youngsters would aspire to be like Junior. Junior’s departure from his home, while difficult, is necessary.

Success for Junior would mean success for the Rez because the Rez would finally have something to look forward to—somebody to look up to and prove to themselves that they can achieve. One example is when Junior describes why he wants to leave for Reardan: “My sister is running away to get lost, but I am running away because I want to find something” (Alexie 46). Junior’s “something” is magic-in-a-bottle. It is success or the promise of success in the future. Once Junior finds that success, that “something,” then the Rez would seemingly benefit from that success as well. Junior’s name would be synonymous with something positive, and for the Rez that can only be a good thing. Success for Junior would mean success for the Rez.
Roles of Engagement

Junior would give back to his old home regardless of where he ends up in the future. One example is when Junior helps Penelope in the bulimic episode: “So I walk away, but something pulls me back. I don’t know what it is. If you’re romantic, you might think it was destiny” (Alexie 106). Junior is drawn to help Penelope. Something inside him compels him to give back to others and make their way of life better and perhaps a little easier. In this instance Junior may be drawn to Penelope more so because he likes her, but his heart clearly shines through. Regardless of whether Junior stays near the Rez or not, his heart will always give back.

Many youngsters will aspire to be like Junior in the future, making the Rez a far-better environment. Junior’s departure will “pave the way” for others to follow their dreams. One example is when Junior reflects on the state of the Rez after his sister Mary’s passing: “Reservations were meant to be like prisons, you know? Indians were supposed to move onto Reservations and die. We were supposed to disappear. But somehow or other, Indians have forgotten that reservations were supposed to be death camps” (Alexie 216-217). Junior realizes that Indians are resilient; he foresees a future where fear to follow one’s dreams does not exist. Junior realizes that if he can do it, if he can overcome all obstacles, then his fellow Indians may very well follow suit. Junior’s fellow Indian youth will aspire to be like Junior.

In conclusion, success for Junior would success for the Rez, Junior would give back to his old home, and youngsters will aspire to be like him each and every day after his departure. Junior’s move to Reardan, regardless of how it long it may be for, will undoubtedly benefit those that inhabit that part of the world. Junior’s departure will undoubtedly change other peoples’ perspective on being Indian, and what it means for one to be Indian. In this case, Junior must leave the Rez. Junior must leave home.
Roles of Engagement

MODEL ESSAY #3: MODELS OF INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

DIRECTIONS: Read the following excerpt from a project earlier this year. Identify how the writer sets up his or her point of view, and decide as a group which introductory paragraph is best. Suggest how the writer could incorporate different points of view as well.

SAMPLE B:

Becoming a success in life is not easy. My grandfather started a business in 1908, and my brother became an important architect in the city of Chicago. I became a high school teacher. Success partly comes from determining how one defines the topic, but perhaps a good place to start is by defining success as the quality of affecting people positively. And when it comes to having a positive impact on the world, there are three main steps that help in the process: first, we have to be well balanced in our own lives; next, we have to make the most of every opportunity; and finally, we have to treat others the way that we would want to be treated. By examining the writings of Joseph Bruchac in “Bombardment,” Martin Luther King in “Your Life’s Blueprint,” and the three doctors in “We Beat the Streets,” we can see that these three steps are important not just in literature but in life as well.

SAMPLE D:

Success partly comes from determining how one defines the topic, but perhaps a good place to start is by defining success as the quality of affecting people positively. And when it comes to having a positive impact on the world, there are three main steps that help in the process: first, we have to be well balanced in our own lives; next, we have to make the most of every opportunity; and finally, we have to treat others the way that we would want to be treated.
Roles of Engagement

SAMPLE C:
I have always liked Walter Payton. He served as a Chicago Bears runningback for years, guiding them to their famed Superbowl Shuffle victory in 1986. Becoming a success in life is not easy. My grandfather started a business in 1908, and my brother became an important architect in the city of Chicago. I became a high school teacher. Success partly comes from determining how one defines the topic, but perhaps a good place to start is by defining success as the quality of affecting people positively. By examining the writings of Joseph Bruchac in “Bombardment,” Martin Luther King in “Your Life’s Blueprint,” and the three doctors in “We Beat the STreets,” we can see that these three steps are important not just in literature but in life as well. Walter Payton is really awesome.
Roles of Engagement

APPENDIX E:
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS TO BE USED WITH BOTH CONDITIONS
Roles of Engagement

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER PRE-WRITING

DIRECTIONS: Use the following graphic organizer to plan and prepare your argument for writing. It is important that your group comes to a consensus on the best way to get this argument down on paper!

**TEL-CON Paragraphs**

**A Graphic Organizer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T = Topic Sentence (main idea)</th>
<th>L = Links (your explanation of how the example links to or supports the main idea)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E = Evidence / Examples (facts)</td>
<td>Con = Concluding Statement (recap/summary)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Transition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Con</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Roles of Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>concluding statement</th>
<th>(refocus on main idea)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX F:**

**INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS TO BE USED WITH BOTH CONDITIONS**

**DIRECTIONS:** Use this rubric to decide how well you have progressed in the writing of your argument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EXCELLENT</th>
<th>GOOD</th>
<th>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intro Paragraph</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Effective lure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Effective bridge sentences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Thesis has an effective angle or insight.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body Paragraphs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TELCON x3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strong topic sentences.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Context given for evidence; transitions used throughout.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roles of Engagement

- Thoughtful choices of text.

- Quotations explained and linked with other points of view or rebuttals responded to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Punctuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Spelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Homonyms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GRADE: ________ COMMENTS:
Roles of Engagement

APPENDIX G:

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE
Roles of Engagement

QUESTIONS OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

1.) HIV is most likely to be spread through
   a. Physical contact
   b. A strong kiss
   c. Open bleeding
   d. Swimming
   e. All of the above

2.) The word contagious is best defined as something that can
   a. be contained
   b. be eliminated
   c. be spread from person to person
   d. create anger

3.) An epidemic is best described as a disease that
   a. affects a few people
   b. affects many people
   c. can be easily contained
   d. can be eliminated

4.) Which of the following diseases has not spread widely throughout the U.S. in the past 10-15 years:
   a. Typhoid
   b. Avian Flu
   c. Swine Flu
   d. Snake Disease

5.) The disease called influenza has been known to be
Roles of Engagement

a. Fatal at times
b. Also called “the flu”
c. A health issue that concerns many experts
d. Difficult to get rid of completely
e. All of the above

6.) An influenza outbreak spread worldwide and killed millions of people in what year?
   a. 1950
   b. 1850
   c. 1918
   d. 1600

7.) Doctors sometimes inject a less powerful form of a virus into a person in order to:
   a. Build up their immunities
   b. See what will happen, if they will get sick or die
   c. Test the medicine
   d. Predict the virus’s behavior

8.) In society, an outbreak of a disease can affect which of the following?
   a. Education
   b. Health
   c. Businesses, such as restaurants
   d. All of these

9.) “Typhoid Mary” best refers to
   a. A hurricane
   b. A disease
   c. An Irish immigrant
Roles of Engagement

d. A ghost or religious person

10.) Avian Flu was spread into the U.S. primarily from what country?

   a. France
   b. England
   c. Russia
   d. Mexico

QUESTIONS OF WRITING ATTITUDE

1.) How would you feel writing a letter to the author of a book you read?

   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

2.) How would you feel if you wrote a letter about something you have heard or seen?

   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

3.) How would you feel writing a letter to a store asking about something you might buy there?

   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad
4.) How would you feel telling in writing why something happened?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

5.) How would you feel writing to someone to change their opinion?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

6.) How would you feel writing a letter stating your opinion about a topic?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

6.) How would you feel about becoming an even better writer than you already are?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

7.) How would you feel about writing a story instead of doing homework?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
Roles of Engagement

d. Fuming Mad

8.) How would you feel about writing a story instead of watching T.V.?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

9.) How would you feel writing about something you did in science?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

10.) How would you feel writing about something you did in social science (history)?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

11.) How would you feel if you could write more in school?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

12.) How would you feel writing a long story or report at school?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
Roles of Engagement

c. Standing and Thinking
d. Fuming Mad

13.) How would you feel writing answers to questions in science or social studies?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

14.) How would you feel if your teacher asked you to go back and change some of your writing?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

15.) How would you feel if your classmates talked to you about making your writing better?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

16.) How would you feel writing an advertisement for something people can buy?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad
Roles of Engagement

17.) How would you feel keeping a journal for class?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

18.) How would you feel writing about things that have happened in your life?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

19.) How would you feel writing about something from another person's point of view?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

20.) How would you feel about checking your writing to make sure the words you have written were spelled correctly?
   a. Thumbs way up
   b. Thumbs Up
   c. Standing and Thinking
   d. Fuming Mad

21.) How would you feel if your classmates read something you wrote?
   a. Thumbs way up
Roles of Engagement

b. Thumbs Up
c. Standing and Thinking
d. Fuming Mad

22.) How would you feel if you didn't write as much in school?

a. Thumbs way up
b. Thumbs Up
c. Standing and Thinking
d. Fuming Mad

OTHER QUESTIONS ON ENGAGEMENT

1.) 1. In class, I feel I am respected when others disagree with me:

a. Always
b. Usually
c. Sometimes
d. Never

2.) In class, I enjoy hearing other students’ points of view:

a. Always
b. Usually
c. Sometimes
d. Never

3.) I value my classmates as a part of my learning process:

a. Always
b. Usually
c. Sometimes
d. Never
Roles of Engagement

4.) When I write an argument, I can explain my thinking well:
   a. Always
   b. Usually
   c. Sometimes
   d. Never

5.) When I write an argument, it is important for me to talk through my ideas with a classmate or two:
   a. Always
   b. Usually
   c. Sometimes
   d. Never

6.) I enjoy improving my argument writing:
   a. Always
   b. Usually
   c. Sometimes
   Never
Roles of Engagement

APPENDIX H: Interview Questions
### Roles of Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Stem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you enjoy argument tasks—exchanging opinions with your classmates, searching for answers, weighing ideas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How did/do you improve in argument writing, that is, writing that is intended to help support a particular point of view? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you value your classmates and enjoy them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What resources or people help/helped you improve when you are working on a long piece of writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is there anything that you would change about how you work in small groups? About your writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What did you learn about selecting good evidence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What did you learn about explaining evidence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What did you learn about others’ points of view?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Roles of Engagement

APPENDIX I: CODING IDEA UNITS IN DATA ANALYSIS
Roles of Engagement

*Idea Units.* Idea units for each student essay and for small group discussion will be indicated by a slash (/) with related key verbs underlined, as in this example (drawn from Reznitskaya et al., 2009):

> Not everyone in my school *should be quarantined.* It’s not their fault that they got H1N1, and /people can *be* careful not to transmit the disease./ There were only 501 cases in our area according to the source./ Some might *say* that it’s too dangerous, /but I think freedom is more important.

Special cases and rules will be examined and explored by having raters practice on sample texts and achieve inter-rater reliability of 90% or greater.

1. **Conjunctions** creating a compound sentence will be divided into separate idea units, as in:

   Some might say that it’s too dangerous, /but I think freedom is more important.

2. **The use of IF/THEN or BECAUSE** will generate an additional idea unit if used in a complex sentence.

   If we *have* a quarantine, /then everyone *will be* safer.

   I don’t *think* this would be a good idea / because people will still *get* sick.

3. The same will be true if either is implied in the written sentence or conversation.

   These will occur frequently in run-on sentences, as in:

   I don’t *think* H5N1 is a big deal / it’s mostly contagious through birds.

   We should *have* a quarantine / we *need* to keep everyone safe.

*Warrants.* Other coding issues may arise in determining whether an explanation serves the purpose of being an example of evidence, extended reasoning (warrant) or simply additional claims. The following special cases will be used as exemplars for data analysis.
Roles of Engagement

1. In explaining evidence, a writer must refer to the claim explicitly in order for it to be coded as a warrant. For example, as in:

   Example: A hundred people are contaminated/ and that is a lot. (no warrant)

   Example: A hundred people are contaminated/ and that requires a quarantine because there is no other way to limit the spread of the disease. (warrant underlined)

2. In explaining evidence, extended reasoning, while seeming like additional claim work will be considered a warrant if it elaborates specifically on the nature or significance of the evidence.

   Example: A hundred people are contaminated/ and that requires a quarantine because whenever there is a large group of people contaminated, then a quarantine is helpful in limiting the spread of the disease. (warrant underlined)

3. In explaining evidence, predictions of hypothetical outcomes will be considered evidence if used to expand directly upon evidence from the text.

   Example: If we don’t use a quarantine, the disease will spread. (no warrant; this will be treated as evidence)

   Example: There 40% of the people contaminated, and if we don’t use a quarantine, pretty soon all of the people will have the disease. (warrant undelined).

Sample Essay Coded for Idea Units

Should a school be quarantined is an important question./ If a school was quarantined it would prevent the spread of diseases/ but we are not really sure of where the disease SARS is coming from and how it is spread./ In the SARS case information paper, it said that Asians are somewhat related to the disease./ They pull out pictures of Asians with facemasks/ and it shows
Roles of Engagement

how it is connected to SARS. So this could lead to where the origins of SARS is coming from/ but then there is another piece of information in the text. In New Jersey, the first case of SARS has been found in the U.S and has been treated. The information doesn’t tell where the victim has gotten the disease SARS before he was found with it. So this can make the lead that Asians are not spreading the disease. With these two facts, many Asian communities in the U.S have been not getting as much business as they used to. There is one more piece of information that backs up the case that Asians are the spread of the disease. In the case information, it says that there was one restaurant in Chinatown where the owner spread the disease to his employees before death of the disease. So I think that a school should be quarantined to stop the spreading of the disease SARS because the fact that the disease originated from Asians or in Asia.

Sample Essay Coded for Argument

| CLAIM | Should a school be quarantined is an important question. |
| CLAIM | If a school was quarantined it would prevent the spread of diseases |
| REBUTTAL | but we are not really sure of where the disease SARS is coming from and how it is spread |
| EVIDENCE | In the SARS case information paper, it said that Asians are somewhat related to the disease. |
| EVIDENCE | They pull out pictures of Asians with facemasks |
| EVIDENCE | and it shows how it is connected to SARS. |
| WARRANT | So this could lead to where the origins of SARS is coming from |
| EVIDENCE | but then there is another piece of information in the text. |
| EVIDENCE | In New Jersey, the first case of SARS has been found in the U.S and has been treated. |
| EVIDENCE | The information doesn’t tell where the victim has gotten the disease SARS before he was found with it. |
| WARRANT | So this can make the lead that Asians are not spreading the disease. |
| WARRANT | With these two facts, many Asian communities in the U.S have been not getting as much business as they used to. |
| EVIDENCE | There is one more piece of information that backs up the case that Asians are the spread of the disease. |
| EVIDENCE | In the case information, it says that there was one restaurant in Chinatown where the owner spread the disease to his employees before death of the disease. |
| CLAIM | So I think that a school should be quarantined to stop the spreading of the disease SARS |
| WARRANT | because the fact that the disease originated from Asians or in Asia. |
Roles of Engagement

VITA

Timothy C. Pappageorge
613 S. Lincoln Ave
Park Ridge, IL 60068
312-607-2214
tpappageorge@maine207.org

Education
University of Illinois, Chicago (2006-2014)
Ph.D. in Literacy, Language, and Culture
Dissertation topic: Constructive Controversy and Writing

University of Chicago (1992-1993)
Master of Arts in Teaching English/Education
Thesis: Student Comprehension

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (1988-1992)
Bachelor of Arts in Finance, Bachelor of Arts in Rhetoric
University James Scholar

Publications and Conference Presentations


“That is the question,” IATE Newsletter, 2006; NCTE Conference presentation, 2005.

Work in Schools
Maine East High School, Park Ridge, 2007-2014
English Teacher & Instructional Coach

Maine South High School, Park Ridge, 2002-2007
English Department Chairperson,
Roles of Engagement

Glenbrook South High School, Glenview, 2001-2002
English Teacher

Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, 1993-2001
English Teacher

Other Experience
Alliance for Lifelong Learning: Director of Night High School (2012-2014)

GED Test Committee Chairman (2007-2011)


English Teacher for the Summer Program for Gifted/Talented Students