Everybody Knows Everybody?: Investigating Rural Secondary Students' Language Choices in Response to Audience Across Argument Writing Experiences

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EVERYBODY KNOWS EVERYBODY?
INVESTIGATING RURAL SECONDARY STUDENTS' LANGUAGE CHOICES
IN RESPONSE TO AUDIENCE ACROSS ARGUMENT WRITING EXPERIENCES

Dissertation by

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Abstract

Everybody Knows Everybody?

Investigating Rural Secondary Students' Language Choices

in Response to Audience Across Argument Writing Experiences

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The influence of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) has increased attention on the argument writing genre in K-12 writing and literacies. Approaches to argument have been informed by cognitive and structural approaches, with some attention to social dimensions (Newell, Beach, Smith, & VanDerHeide, 2011). Less attention has been given to language and the manner in which purpose and audience inform language choice, especially at the secondary level (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010). Further, audience and language use are affected by context, culture, and community. To date, rural contexts have often been overlooked in education research, and particularly in writing and literacies (e.g., Azano, 2015). Drawing on appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005) to inform the interpersonal dynamics present in student-audience relationships that inform language use, the current study explored five experiences of an argument writing project developed as a collaborative initiative by three secondary English / Language Arts (ELA) teachers participating in a rural education network in the Pacific Northwest region of the US. The study explored the relationship between writers' audience and students'

language choices in their argument writing, as well as teachers' instruction and support of language. Data collection sources included students' argument writing samples, teacher interviews, student interviews, and instructional artifacts. Findings indicate that multiple factors inform students' audience awareness and language choices, including the relationship between students' rural identities and audience, and teachers' instruction and support of audience and language. In student writing, audience awareness led to more intentional selection of reasons and evidence to support a claim, as well as effective use of technical and evaluative language. Having an explicit, authentic audience broadly resulted in more effective language use, but students experienced difficulty negotiating between local audience and global perspectives. Findings suggest that incorporating explicit, authentic audiences and providing instructional support in audience and language will lead to more effective argument writing. Implications for practice, policy, and research are discussed, emphasizing interpretation in rural contexts.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Context matters." Azano (2015) states this truism in her article calling for increased attention to rural contexts in literacy research. Acknowledging that certain (often urban and suburban) contexts receive greater attention in literacy research than others, she identifies that "rural [contexts] are too often missing from the conversation" (p. 267). Azano depicts this absence as an issue of social justice, illustrating how disregarding factors of place, culture, and context serves to marginalize rural communities, schools, teachers, and students. Within literacy research, itself, though, there are also perspectives and approaches that receive less attention, often as a result of standards and testing and the related curricular and instructional materials that follow to support these emphases. In secondary writing in the United States (US), the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) have increased attention on genre, particularly informational and argument genres. Extant research indicates that focus in the argument genre has largely been on cognitive and structural approaches to argument, though with recent turns to incorporate social dimensions drawing from sociocultural theory and perspectives on writing and literacies (Newell, Beach, Smith, & VanDerHeide, 2011). However, less attention is given to the crucial factor of language and the manner in which purpose and audience inform language choice, reinforcing previous oversight of this area (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010). Fang and Schleppegrell, therefore, call for increased attention to language in literacy research and practice at the secondary level. While increased attention to language can benefit students in areas of metacognition and comprehension (Fang & Schleppegrell), understanding how language functions also

allows students to understand how register and other language variables indicate power or solidarity in written text and interpersonal interactions. These "vertical and horizontal dimensions of interpersonal relations," experienced between dialogic participants in writing, are indicated by specific language choices (Martin & White, 2005, p. 29). Becoming attentive to language and register in writing allows students to become aware of power dynamics and nuanced meaning in written communication – "who can express feelings and who can't, what kind of feelings are expressed, how strongly they are expressed, and how directly they are sourced" and how writing tasks, purpose, audience, and language contribute to this understanding (Martin & White, p. 30). But these relationships, experienced both through interpersonal interactions and dialogic writing, are influenced by context, culture, and community. Thus, attending to the situated nature of writing – here, in rural contexts – is essential.

This study responds to these identified areas of under-investigated research requiring deeper inquiry and exploration – secondary students' language choices in writing in response to audience and literacy practices, specifically writing in the argument genre, situated in rural contexts. While these two areas are not considered equally (nor in isolation) in this study, the idea of student writing being situated within particular rural contexts is central to the framing and sense-making. This construction of the study positions context, culture, and community – here, in rural places – as central factors in the investigation of students' writing and language use. By attending to both a conceptualization of writing that emphasizes language and the nuances of rural communities, it is posited that students come to understand the effect and power of language in context as they explore how to make sense of their rural surroundings and

their existence within it, particularly when in relationship with ideas and individuals in their rural spaces. As Azano (2015) states, invoking the sentiments of Paulo Freire (2010), "what is critical is that rural students learn how to read the word and the world – that emancipatory literacies for rural youths would give them greater agency and help them make choices about their aspirations" (p. 269). Students' agency and intentionality with their language use can, indeed, be a critical from of the emancipatory literacies of which Azano speaks.

Rationale and Significance

Specifically, this study investigates rural secondary students' language choices in response to audience across argument writing project experiences. The CCSS call for an increased emphasis on argument writing to prepare students for college and career readiness. Argument writing, a shift from the strategic, selective, and often emotion-driven approach of persuasive writing, aims to convince a reader of a particular position through reasoning that is relevant and fact-based given the argument purpose at hand. As described by Hillocks (2011), argument writing has a particular structure and "is mainly about logical appeals and involves claims, evidence, warrants, backing, and rebuttals" (p. xvii). The new attention to argument by the CCSS has led to mixed opinion. Although some educators fear that these standards stifle innovative practice, others view the CCSS as educational common ground, presenting an opportunity for teachers to collaborate to develop student-centered activities incorporating creativity, critical thinking, and community-connected literacies (Grindon, 2014). Further, this attention to argument has resulted in the development of new resources for secondary practitioners in the US offering instructional strategies, potential topics, and prompts to guide effective and

engaging argument writing (e.g., Hillocks, 2011; Smagorinsky, Johannessen, Kahn, & McCann, 2010; Smagorinsky, Johannessen, Kahn, & McCann, 2011). The strategies found in these resources are often rooted in sociopolitical beliefs founded on the imperative that students should be able to craft and interpret arguments to participate in civic and democratic life. Further, they often draw from Toulmin's conception of argument (1958), involving the structure and content described by Hillocks (2011) and others (Smagorinsky et al., 2011) (including a claim, various pieces of evidence, a warrant to explain the evidence, and rebuttals), with which most secondary English Language Arts teachers across the US are familiar and incorporate into their instruction (Newell, Bloome, & Hirvela, 2015). Practitioner resources also highlight the multiple communicative skills developed during the process of argumentation, which the CCSS links to college and career readiness. Though these texts have extended the often decontextualized Toulmin structure to provide creative strategies for argument writing instruction to engage students in this new era of Common Core (such as a "Whodunit" mystery activity in Hillocks, 2011), these materials give insufficient attention to the importance of students' language choice as informed by an argument's purpose and audience (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010). This reality reflects the stated and enacted emphasis of the CCSS and indicates the need for greater attention to the linguistic elements of argument to assist teachers as they work to meet the CCSS and guide students in their development of argument writing. Language is an essential component of writing because, as Fang and Schleppegrell (2010) state, "students simultaneously learn through language and about language, better comprehending the text . . . at the same time, they gain a better understanding of how language is used to present content, infuse

perspectives, and organize specialized texts" (p. 596). To deeply understand the purpose and function of the argument writing genre, students, as well as their teachers' instruction, require an increased focus on language choice and its impact on the writing task.

But the lack of attention to language in argument writing is not merely a result of the CCSS and practitioner resources created to inform teachers' instructional practice. Research in argument writing has also had an unbalanced attention to structural elements of argument, often in relation to Toulmin's conceptualization (Newell et al., 2011). These types of studies have often been informed by a cognitive approach to writing and argument, often research through quantitative means (e.g., De La Paz & Felton, 2010). While structure is one element of argument, and these quantitative studies yielded findings about instructional strategies and student writing products under particular conditions, this research effectively portrays the phenomenon of argumentative writing as linear and decontextualized, rarely engaging argument as an authentic task relevant to students or their communities. Newell et al. (2011) identified that another strain of argument research, grounded in social theoretical framings, had emerged (e.g., Gee, 2004). The work of Smagorinsky et al. (2010; 2011) and Hillocks (2011) drew from this interactional theoretical space of the cognitive and social. What was still missing, though, was a thoughtful, context-based understanding of language in writing (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2010), and argumentative writing, in particular.

Argument writing resource texts often include descriptive cases of strategies in action. For example, Hillocks (2011) describes argument writing strategies utilized in an urban secondary classroom in which "diverse" students are situated in a "high-poverty"

and "inner-city" setting (p. xvi). In this setting, he suggests that these strategies are applicable to all students, including those who are English language learners (ELLs), identified as having special needs, or are from "at-risk" backgrounds (p. xvi). While the cultural and linguistic nuances of urban school and community settings are worthy of such attention, practitioner resources predominantly speak to urban and suburban contexts in the US; rural contexts, teachers, and students are often overlooked (Azano, 2015; Biddle & Azano, 2016; Kannapel & DeYoung, 1999; Tieken, 2014). Framing issues of the urban and suburban as equivalent to those in rural contexts can result in inadequate and misinformed findings and recommendations for instructional purposes, devaluing the learning assets present in rural communities (Azano, 2015; Schafft & Jackson, 2010). Beyond context-based instruction, I do not argue that education research or policy should remove attention from urban schools, communities, and contexts. However, there is a demonstrated need to study rural schools and communities as many US students are learning in these contexts. Just over 40% of all K-12 schools in the US are located in rural communities (see the end of this chapter for definitions and classifications of rural; here, the US Department of Education definition is used). Just under 33% of all US students attend rural schools (Battelle for Kids, 2016). And although learning and cultural assets are present in these rural contexts, there are also material challenges present that require specific and specialized attention (Brown & Schafft, 2011). For example, 85% of the persistently poor counties in the US are classified as rural counties. A county is designated as persistently poor when 20% of the population has lived below the poverty line for the last 30 years or more (Battelle for Kids, 2016; Cohen, 2014). Many of these persistently poor counties have greater than 20% of the

population living below the poverty line for over 30 years. Other realistic challenges include economic development, absenteeism, and high school and college completion (Battelle for Kids, 2016). Though some researchers have identified these issues to be shared with urban areas, as well as "a declining number and quality of services, an aging population, a desire on the part of teenagers to get out and not come back, and school problems," these issues are manifested differently depending on the particular context (Wood, 2008, p. 4). These differences are informed by both overlapping and distinct factors, including issues of race, culture, socioeconomic status, language, population size, relative isolation, and access to institutions and resources. Additionally, rural schools and communities have been described as suffering from a "brain drain," in which high-achieving students are often encouraged by family, school, and community members to pursue a life outside of their rural community in order to "succeed" (Carr & Kefalas, 2009, p. 19). If students are unable to conceive of success in their own community nor feel a sense of community attachment, it likely either drives them away from their community or can lead to depression and despondency, leading to more challenges in these rural contexts.

Though these findings characterizing rural contexts help to illuminate both the demographic realities and credible challenges, it is all too common for those conducting or interpreting research in rural contexts to present findings with implications for research and practice that are overly-generalized, instead of attending to the unique cultural, linguistic, geographic, and demographic differences across rural localities, including their strengths and challenges (Biddle & Azano, 2016; Howley & Howley, 2010). Recently, there has been a turn in education research in rural contexts towards a greater awareness

of these contextual factors (Brooke, 2003; Tieken, 2014; White & Corbett, 2014). Albeit a relatively small number of studies, this turn indicates the importance of a rich discussion of rural place and space in education research, which can then be utilized to mindfully inform research and practice more broadly. For example, Brown and Schafft (2011) affirm that "social categories are not homogeneous" (p. 8), especially in rural contexts, and research in rural contexts benefits from a "multidimensional approach to defining rural places" (p. 5). Following this recommendation, this study aims to follow this turn to move from potentially "slippery and "reductive" (Tieken, 2014, p. 5) conceptualizations of "rural" to acknowledge the complex and diverse nature of rural places (Azano, 2015; Brown & Schafft, 2011). By examining argument writing with an emphasis on language, the study demonstrates the importance of language in context, conceptualized both within the argument writing project and the broader rural context.

Purpose of Study

This study explores five experiences of an argument writing project developed as a collaborative initiative by three secondary English / Language Arts (ELA) teachers participating in a rural education network in the rural Pacific Northwest region of the US. The teachers chose the project because of the CCSS emphasis on argument writing, as well as their desire to create an argument writing experience that involved an authentic topic and audience relevant to students' rural school and community contexts. The projects occurred in two iterations over the course of two years; two teachers participated both years, while one only participated in the first year. Across the projects, this exploratory study investigates how students' awareness of and response to audience informs language choice in argument writing in English classrooms in rural secondary

schools. The study will: 1) explore the relationship between a writer's audience and language choice (both the student's use and teacher's instruction and support of language), highlighting language as an essential component of argument that reflects how a writer meets the purpose of a writing task given the audience, and 2) examine this phenomenon of argument writing in rural schools, inquiring into the unique opportunities and challenges for audience interaction in rural settings. Exploring these areas will provide new insights into if and how students are aware of and make sense of language in response to audiences in rural contexts and how teachers can support students as they come to know how they, their language, and their writing situate them in relationship to others within their unique rural places.

To understand how this study came to be, an introduction to the rural network through which the ELA teachers collaborated to create the argument writing project is necessary. In response to the inadequate attention given to rural contexts, US state education agencies (SEAs) in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington partnered with the Northwest Comprehensive Center (NWCC) at Education Northwest to form the Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) network (Hargreaves, Parsley, & Cox, 2015). The aim of the network is to develop state and local capacity to enhance rural education, specifically by focusing on increasing professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) and student engagement (broadly conceived across domains, as described in Lawson & Lawson, 2013). As the network was beginning to develop, the NWCC reached out to two faculty members at Boston College with extensive knowledge of networks, professional capital, and educator collaboration, in an effort to utilize research to inform the architecture, design, and enactment of the network.

The network convenes educators from isolated, rural schools to share resources, collaborate on self-directed projects to improve curriculum and instruction, and to thoughtfully consider unique contextual opportunities and challenges when striving to increase student engagement and enhance learning. The network brings members together twice a year for in-person meetings and established a common virtual platform by which members could collaborate between sessions. In the network, members are organized into job-alike groups, in which teachers connect with educators of similar content areas and grade levels to work towards network goals. Job-alike groups operate like professional learning communities (PLCs), but were named "job-alike" to emphasize that the common bond across these group members was that the educators in the groups finally had the opportunity to connect and collaborate with others in a similar job. That job may be serving as the one teacher in the secondary English department, the lone first grade teacher, or the teacher of a multi-grade elementary classroom. Again, because of their schools' size and isolation, it was often the case that participating NW RISE teachers were the only ones with their particular "job" in the building. Job-alike groups provide the structure and opportunity for teachers to develop self-directed projects to increase student engagement, often while considering if and how their efforts connected to the CCSS. This study examines five experiences of a collaborative argument writing project created and conducted by members of the ELA job-alike group over a two-year period.

Research Questions

The following interrelated questions and sub-questions are posed and explored in this study:

1) How do students' language choices in argumentative writing reflect their awareness of audience in rural, secondary school contexts?

2) What happens to students' awareness of and response to audience, as well as their consideration of language choices, in argument writing when teachers collaborate to improve writing instruction?

    a. How do teachers implement a collaboratively designed argument writing project? What does instruction for audience and language look like?

    b. How do students respond to a collaboratively designed argument writing project? What is their experience of argument writing instruction, particularly for audience and language?

3) How do multiple rural contexts inform or influence audience awareness and interaction in secondary argument writing?

    a. How do multiple rural contexts influence the teachers' argument writing instruction, particularly for audience and language?

    b. How do multiple rural contexts affect the students' experience of argument writing instruction, particularly for audience and language?

Overview of Study

To conduct this exploratory study, I utilized qualitative research methods to explore my research questions. In chapter two, I begin by presenting my conceptual framework, theoretical orientation, and literature review to illustrate the perspectives and approaches from which I operated and to situate my work amongst the extant literature. The conceptual framework illustrates how I envision the embedded nature of the relationship among key constructs of my study, from rural literacies and contexts to the

consideration of language within the argument writing projects. These areas form the core from which the argument writing projects are considered, while also illustrating how student and teacher experiences of the project interrelate. My theoretical orientation introduces the role of appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005) and sociocultural theory (e.g., Gee, 2004; Prior, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986) as it informs all dimensions of the study, from the framing of the research questions and conceptual framework to the methodology and selection, analysis, and sense-making of data sources. Last, my literature review highlights key research in rural literacies, audience, and language, illustrating the gaps which my study addresses and indicating how this work builds upon extant literature. This review further illustrates the rationale for my framing of the study and the significance of its contributions.

Chapter three outlines the qualitative methodology for this study, including a description of the unit of analysis (the argument project experiences), the data sources, and the framework for data analysis. It begins by illustrating how my research questions connect to and necessitate each data source and how each data source will help to answer each question. I also describe my sampling technique and provide a descriptive overview of the study's participants. Tables are used to indicate how and when data sources were collected across experiences and participants. Additionally, this chapter explicates how my conceptual framework and theoretical orientation informed the selection of data sources and the coding and interpretive schemes utilized in the analysis. Finally, this chapter presents my reflection on positionality given my role as facilitator with the ELA job-alike group and my relationships with the teachers-participants in this study.

Chapter four begins by identifying the four categories that capture how my data were analyzed into themes. These categories highlight the embedded nature of the students' interactions with their audience and language choices within their particular argument writing project experiences, and the broader writing and rural contexts. Chapter four then presents the key findings and themes from the two contextual categories. Chapter five presents the key findings and themes from the experiences of the argument writing projects, as well as the particular language choices made by students in response to their audience. These two chapters offer findings and themes grounded in an analysis of intentionally varied data as necessitated by the research questions, consisting of student writing, key interview quotes from both the teachers and students, and significant instructional artifacts related to the project to demonstrate patterns across data sources. I then demonstrate how I moved from these patterns in the data sources to key themes, as informed by my theoretical orientation.

Drawing from the findings and themes in chapters four and five, chapter six begins by identifying the salient factors present in the argumentative writing projects related to the research questions. I then discuss three main arguments made from the findings that address the impact of rurality, identity, and audience on student writing; the attention to audience and language in teachers' instruction; and the impact of audience on student language choices. Limitations are discussed to appropriately interpret the findings and implications. The chapter concludes by discussing how the contributions of this study inform implications for policy and practice; theory, methods, and research; and areas for future research. The dissertation ends by situating the study's contributions within the initial problems addressed – namely, the narrow framings of rurality and language in

writing and rurality in education research – illustrating the significance of the study and the new points emphasized to now be in dialogue with the fields of literacy and rurality in education research.

Defining Key Terms in Relation to the Study

Rural

While most terms will be defined and positioned in greater detail in the literature review (e.g., *argument*, *language*), two terms require special attention at the onset, particularly in relation to their use throughout this study.

Communities and schools have been classified as *rural* following different criteria (Cox, in review) including population, proximity, and broader contextual factors. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the US Census Bureau classify communities by "their proximity to larger urban centers, rather than population size" (Cox, in review). Communities are organized into four major categories – city, suburb, town, and rural – and towns and rural areas are then further classified as fringe, distance, or remote (US Department of Education, 2013). These formal classifications, defined by proximity, can paint rural contexts of like size and proximity as uniform, promoting inappropriate stereotyping and generalizing, potentially operating as "slippery and "reductive" (Tieken, 2014, p. 5), instead of acknowledging the complex and diverse nature of rural places (Azano, 2015). Rural education researchers have acknowledged this limitation, extending the definition of *rural* by incorporating contextual, cultural, and place-based factors (Howley & Howley, 2010). This approach problematizes phrases like "*culturally diverse* [has] become code for *urban*," also emphasizing the need to view rurality as non-monolithic (Azano, p. 267). For example, Brown & Schafft (2011) utilize

a "multidimensional approach to defining rural places" (p. 5) that considers geography, place-based approaches, population and settlement, the economy, accessible institutions, and "sociocultural domains" in an effort to add complexity to overly-simplistic notions of rurality (pp. 5-7). These broader conceptualizations of rurality also offer a descriptive set of assets by which different rural schools and communities can be characterized. Descriptive factors can include family involvement, active church and community participation, school-community-business partnerships, and opportunities to connect the community to the school curriculum (Cox, in review; Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009). This portrayal is not intended to diminish or overlook the challenges present in rural communities, including those resulting from poverty and geographic isolation (e.g., Irvin, Byun, Meece, Farmer, & Hutchins, 2012), but avoids a generalized deficit view to promote a diversified description of rural contexts.

In this study, both conceptions of *rural* will be utilized – the first aligned with the definition from the US Department of Education based on relative proximity and isolation, the other discussing the rural context as diverse and complex, with multiple cultural and place-based factors that inform the portraiture of place. While I argue that the latter conceptualization is essential in rural research, the former is still necessary to position this study among other studies using US Department of Education classifications and to hopefully illustrate the problematic nature of using a simplified categorization.

In this study, the three rural schools in which the argument project occurred are categorized as remote (more than 25 miles from an urbanized area by the US Department of Education). Two of the schools are located in the same state in the Pacific Northwest, while one school is located in a neighboring state. All three schools were significant

distances away from each other. Though the schools are commonly remote, they have differences in racial/ethnic composition, socioeconomic status, geographic characteristics, and school-community factors, including school funding, community relations, and economic drivers. The development of deep descriptions of school contexts, including their unique descriptive factors, is provided in greater detail in the findings and discussion chapters.

Writing

In recent years, *writing* and *texts* have become increasingly conceptualized to depict the multimodal, digital, and other dimensions of language, communication, and composition (e.g., Kress, 2003; Leu et al., 2013; Vasudevan et al., 2010), and rightly so. However, this study conceptualizes writing in the more traditional sense of print-based language either produced on paper or screen. This conceptualization is necessary first to match the intentions of the ELA teachers as they created their project. Second, this conceptualization is aligned with elements of the CCSS emphasizing students' familiarity and proficiency with argument writing, and in particular through print-based writing. While the CCSS guidelines are not necessarily limited to print-based writing, the project under investigation in this study aimed to address standards attentive to print-based writing.

Chapter 2

The Guiding Nature of My Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Before presenting the findings of the literature review for the topics and areas of research central to this study, I first offer my theoretical and conceptual frameworks to indicate the perspectives and lenses which I adopt in this dissertation. I do so because the theoretical and conceptual frameworks then guide which bodies of extant literature are reviewed. Further, these frameworks guide my methodology, selection of data sources, analytic plan, and sense-making.

Conceptual Framework

There are several interweaving components of this study. While the particular unit of analysis is each argument writing project experience, there are actors and factors, perspectives and contexts, which either situate or exist within the central unit. To begin, I illustrate how I see these elements related to one another (Figure 2.1). Understanding these multiple parts and the relationships among them serves to guide the direction of my inquiry. The elements of my study are related, embedded within one another and situated within a specific contextual space. Language choices are considered within student writing, and specifically in experiences of an argument writing project. These argument writing projects exist, at more of a conceptual level, within the area of rural literacies, or the range of literate practices occurring in diverse rural spaces. Both students and teachers are involved in this study – students to explore their language use in response to audience, and teachers to explore how their instruction and support around language and audience affected student writing. Audience runs across and within the levels, illustrating

that attention to audience informs all elements of the framework and is connected to multiple actors – students, teachers, and community members situated in rural contexts.
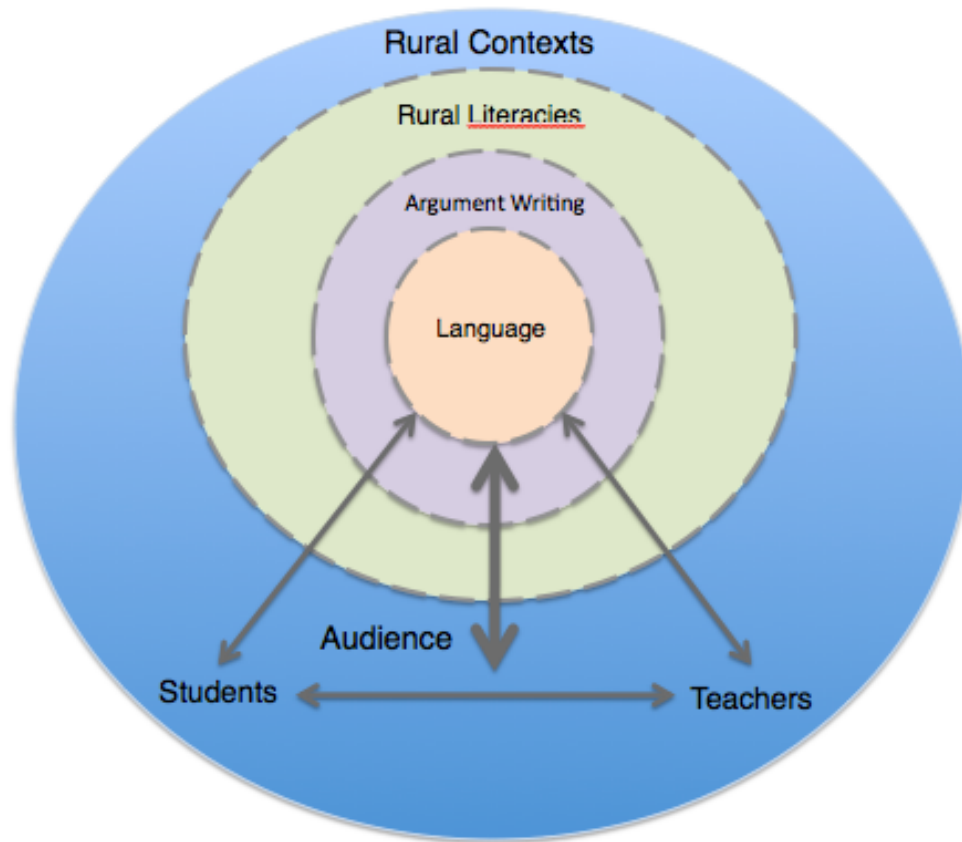
Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework

Theoretical Orientations

Because my study rests at the intersection of rurality and literacy, considered critically and complexly given the nature of my research questions, I utilize two theoretical orientations to guide this inquiry. I envision one, appraisal theory, to be situated and embedded within the other, sociocultural theory (see Figure 2.2). This positioning illustrates that appraisal theory, a theory of language that informs my consideration of language, argument writing, and audience, is predicated upon and necessarily founded on assumptions of the importance of acknowledging the social

construction of knowledge, learning, and meaning, situated within particular and dynamic social contexts. Further, the theoretical orientations affect my lens towards all elements of this study, including the methodology, analysis, and interpretation. While no theoretical orientation(s) can account for all of the complexity of a given phenomenon under study, this situated theoretical approach highlights key assumptions guiding my exploratory work and interpretive lens.
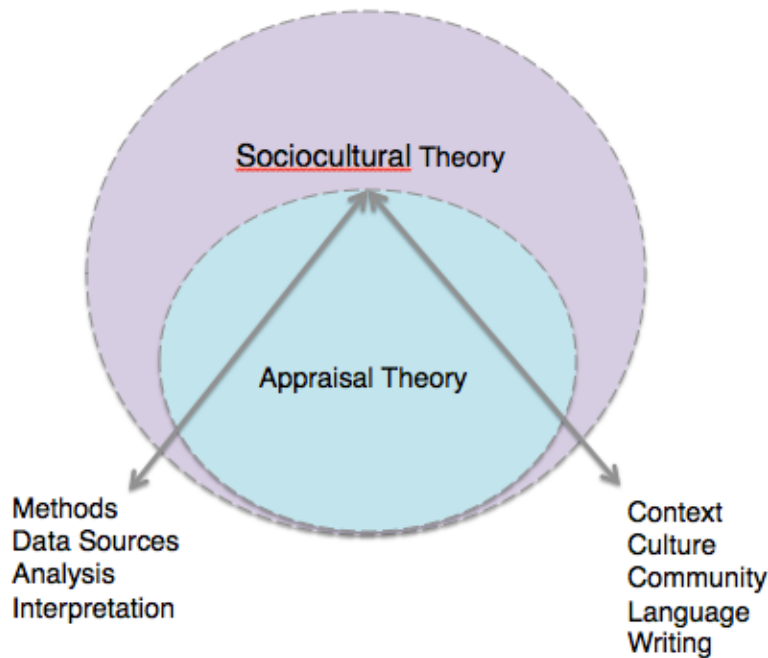
Figure 2.2. Theoretical Orientations

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory, though it has been interpreted and operationalized in diverse ways in education and literacy, has a particular relevance for writing instruction, especially writing that involves attention to language, audience, and context. Sociocultural theory is founded on assumptions of the social construction of knowledge, dialogic interactions, and situated contextual factors, seen as essential in the meaning-making process through writing (Ferretti & Lewis, 2013; Gee, 2004; Prior, 2006;

Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). This knowledge construction occurs in social and cultural contexts in which individuals are situated. This situated learning context contributes to an individual's identity, as well as to the language utilized in writing, which informs learning and social interaction (Gee, 2004). Further, one's identity, including the prior knowledge, previous experiences, and personal values of an individual, reciprocally contributes to the situated learning context. Thus, learners bring these knowledge bases, experiences, and values to the particular learning experience, where they interact with the knowledge, experiences, and values of others to make new meaning. Sociocultural theory recognizes, however, that contexts for learning are not uniform, change often, and include the home, community, and school, as well as individuals within these contexts or situated places of interaction and learning, which inform learning, language, and writing. Sociocultural theory has similar views of language, encapsulated well by Vygotsky (1986) when he states, "word meanings are dynamic rather than static formations" (p. 217). Word meanings can change dependent on the given contextual, cultural, and community norms, practices, values, and ways of interpreting meaning. Additionally, the dialogic nature of language, as viewed by sociocultural theory, and the meaning-making that occurs is influenced by interactions that occur through both textual and interpersonal exchanges between speakers or the reader and writer (Bakhtin, 1981). Essentially, adopting this theoretical orientation means that I am using a lens founded on the principles that context, culture, community, identity, and language matter when studying language and literacy, and that the contexts, interpersonal/dialogic interactions, and individual/communal identities in learning are dynamic phenomena that change and

inform how meaning is made, communicated, and interpreted across language users, either through oral or written language.

Appraisal Theory

In this study, language, founded on sociocultural theoretical assumptions, is considered from the theoretical perspective of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1994/2004), a "multi-perspective model" that stresses language as "a resource for mapping ideational, interpersonal, and textual meaning onto one another in virtually every act of communication" (Martin & White, 2005, p. 7). These three perspectives of SFL, or meta-functions, are described in more detail by Eggins (2005) who describes ideational meaning as "'real world' meaning," or that which language represents; interpersonal meaning as the "strand of meaning throughout the text which expresses the writer's role relationship with the reader and the writer's attitude towards the subject matter"; and textual meaning as "the way a text is organized as a piece of writing or speech," often in terms of its mode or form and the organizational or structural norms that follow (p. 11). These multiple perspectives influence how a writer views language and meaning, particularly as it relates to a given purpose and audience. According to Martin and White (2005), argument writing in English is influenced by appraisal theory and a language of evaluation.

SFL and register theory also serve as a foundation for appraisal theory's understanding of interpersonal meaning. Eggins explains register theory as "describ[ing] the impact of dimensions of the immediate context of situation of a language event on the way language used. SFL identifies three key dimensions of the situations as having significant and predictable impacts on language use" (p. 9). Eggins explains "context of

situation" using Malinowski's (1946) conception by emphasizing that "language only becomes intelligible when it is placed within its context of situation" (p. 88). Context of situation is determined by the three register variables of field, tenor, and mode. Field is described as "what the language is being used to talk about," tenor as "the role relationships between the interactants," and mode as "the role language is playing in the interaction" (Eggins, 2005, p. 90). These register variables all inform appraisal theory, but tenor receives special emphasis as it centers the relationships between writer and audience. Analysis of tenor can be aided by a further delineation, first described by Poynton (1985) and extended by Eggins (2005): "tenor can be broken down into three different continua: power, contact, and affective involvement" (Eggins, 2005, pp. 99-100). In this conceptualization, power "positions situations in terms of whether the roles [played] are those . . . of equal or unequal power," contact "positions situations in terms of whether the roles [played] are those that bring [interactants] into frequent or infrequent contact," and affective involvement positions situations "according to whether the roles [played] are those in which the affective involvement [between interactants] . . . is high or low" (p. 100). Placing power, contact, and affective involvement on a continuum illustrates that these interpersonal factors are dynamic and will likely vary dependent on the relationship or interactions between writer and audience, as well as the broader context (e.g., a small rural setting), the context of situation, and unique factors of identity, culture, and values that will also inform the relationship. These three continua, then, dependent on the roles, interactions, and relationships between a writer and audience, inform how language is used.

Appraisal theory is rooted in SFL, but distinguishes itself by placing greater focus on interpersonal meaning and comprehensive feelings in context, including affect, judgment, and appreciation, in the creation and interpretation of an argument text. While the act of "appraising" is often associated with real estate, involving an evaluation and judgment of the worth of a house or of other material objects related to a particular property or estate, appraisal also accurately depicts the metacognitive processes in which writers participate. In appraisal theory, it is not the house or material object being judged and evaluated, but rather the relationship between reader and writer and the meaning being communicated between them via language. Three main sub-systems are utilized to "appraise, grade, and give value to social experiences" (Miller, Mitchell, & Pessoa, 2014, p. 108). As Miller et al. (2014) describe,

> Appraisal consists of three main subsystems reflecting the choices an author can make in terms of how they appraise, grade, and give value to social experiences. The Attitude subsystem concerns appraisals of people and things, and emotional/affectual responses toward participants and processes. The Graduation subsystem adjusts the force or focus of these evaluations. Finally, the Engagement subsystem positions the author's voice in relation to others' voices. (p. 108)

In practical use, attitude reflects how writers use positive or negative language to convey their emotions, thus affecting the appraisal or judgment. For example, choosing to call an event "exhilarating" conveys a distinct positive emotion, as opposed to merely describing the event in more neutral terms. Graduation is often related to attitude, but involves the careful use of modals (e.g., "may," "can," "must"), intensification, and grading to clarify a position. Returning to the above

example, an event described as "exhilarating" carries meaning that is of a higher degree than a more neutral term and captures a particular positive affective sentiment instead of simply calling an event "enjoyable." Finally, engagement is related to how a writer relates to particular authoritorial stances and sources. Returning to the example, a writer can either create agreement with or distance from a source stating that an event was "exhilarating" by using language that endorses or positively attributes, as opposed to referring to it merely as another position (Khote, 2014; Martin & White, 2005). Attending to audience is necessary when considering these resources, particularly in the genre of argument, because, as stated in Khote (2014, referring to the work of Martin & White, 2005), "the author's control over interpersonal meanings and audience relationships are key in order to establish a coherent stance which he/she is required to defend through the use of evidence, negotiation and logic" (p. 92).

Language choice in individual clauses and sentences remains essential, but the overarching appraisal occurs at the whole-text level (similar to SFL), including considerations of purpose, audience, genre, and point of view. Related to attitude, graduation, and engagement (connecting to and building from SFL), appraisal also stresses the importance of tenor as a register variable, indicating that the factors of power and solidarity, "the vertical and horizontal dimensions of interpersonal relations," influence relationships between dialogic participants and their respective language choices (Martin & White, 2005, p. 29). In practice, these tenor principles influence "who can express feelings and who can't, what kind of feelings are expressed, how strongly they are expressed, and how directly they are

sourced" (p. 30). Appraisal theory has direct implications when considering the dialogic interactions between writer and audience and the language choices (of appraisal and evaluation) that a writer must use to effectively communicate meaning and stance.

Appraisal theory suggests that a writer's language choice reflects a perceived relationship and the corresponding factors of power, authority, and status to reflect upon when making argumentative claims. These factors, as evident, are related to the continua that inform tenor (Eggins, 2005). For example, writers may use specific linguistic constructions, such as modals, to indicate their own confidence in a given claim or position relative to the intended audience (e.g., She *is* going to the store; She *may be* going to the store; *I think* that she is going to the store). These factors of tenor are interpreted by the writer and the magnitude of effect on language choice is often related to who or what the audience is (Droga & Humphrey, 2003). Students writing to younger students or peers may be tempted to write with more definitive modals, assuming a role of relative authority on a given subject matter. Students writing to figures of external authority, such as a district superintendent or a government representative, may be tempted to write with more hesitant, uncertain language, utilizing softer modals and lowering the intensity to respect the audience's authoritative status (Martin & White, 2005). However, these characterizations are not to be generalized. Appraisal theory suggests that tenor and language choice can be mediated by invitations to contribute and offers of power to enter into partnership. For example, if a writer's audience is viewed as seeking a writer's valued opinion or position, the writer may make language choices that reflect that offer of power in the writing task, even if not commonly perceived in regular

interactions. Further, appraisal theory recognizes that unique cultural and contextual factors may change the assumed relationship between writer and audience. For example, students being in closer contact or having a form of affective involvement with their audience (to use the continua dimensions) will influence perceived power and inform language choice. Therefore, the relationship between writer and audience, the ability of the teacher to support students' consideration of audience and language, and the specific context, all guide students' language choices.

When students become aware of how appraisal and evaluation can guide language, they are able to make a more concerted effort to use language to communicate meaning effectively given their intended audience. In argumentative writing, this becomes evident in the structure of the argument (including the reasons and evidence selected), the tenor of the language, and the specific language choices utilized to construct an argument that achieves its purpose and engages dialogically with the intended audience. As indicated by appraisal theory, the intended audience and corresponding power and relational dynamics greatly influence language choice in writing. Therefore, in school contexts, when students develop a deeper awareness of audience and the language of appraisal and evaluation, they are better able to make linguistic decisions that communicate their intended meaning and enter into purposeful dialogue around a writing task. Though the elements of language and audience in argument writing addressed in appraisal theory are related to potential ways to approach instruction and writing in school-based contexts, the technical linguistics-based language of appraisal theory is rarely, if ever, present in schools. This reality, in and of itself, is not the primary issue; however, the meaning behind the theory and the implications for

school-based writing instruction and activities can be valuable guideposts as students learn about and write arguments.

In this study, appraisal and evaluative language are informed by students' awareness of and dialogic interactions with their particular audience in their respective rural contexts, recognizing, though, that the audiences, as well as the related relationships, interactions, awareness, and responses, vary across experiences. Nevertheless, appraisal theory provides a useful lens to consider student language choices, the relationship between writer and audience, and teachers' support of the writing task, all situated in a particular rural context. This theoretical framework, then, informs the framing of the research questions, the extant literature to be reviewed to inform and position this study, as well as the methodology and analysis.

Review of the Literature

Guided by my research questions, conceptual framework, and theoretical orientation, I chose to review the literature in three key areas: *rural literacies*, *audience*, and *language*. These areas embody other areas of my conceptual framework, including *argument writing* and *rurality*, but I chose to explore these later constructs within the main three to focus the review around my particular framing. However, a brief description of the general trends in argument research is provided before discussing the literature related to audience and language, particularly because it helps to illustrate the gaps in the extant literature and puts forth a call to which this current study responds. Though I start with rural literacies, searches for audience (here, related to writing audiences) yielded the greatest number of results and, thus, receive greater attention in this review. Examining the research on rural literacies provides an overview of the main

literacy discourses being explored in rural contexts, since context, and specifically rural contexts, is central to my study. Last, my search of studies on language focused on those utilizing an SFL or appraisal theoretical framework and, for some, argument writing. Because no study using SFL or appraisal exists in explicitly rural contexts, I examined the literature across contexts. Finally, it is important to note that no previous study explores my particular research questions or my combination of research topics: students' language choices in response to audience (through the lens of appraisal theory and SFL) in argument writing lessons in rural secondary classrooms. This finding indicates a gap in the literature and presents an opportunity for this study to make a valuable contribution. As depicted below, there are other gaps or areas of future research needed to which this study can also contribute.

Rural Literacies

The topic of this study primarily exists within the space of *rural literacies*, emphasizing the situated nature of writing and literacies within diverse rural contexts and to recognizing that this area deserves its own body of research (Azano, 2015). While this inquiry is worthwhile and necessary, it involves two complex terms, which themselves need to be queried and problematized. Eppley and Corbett (2012) make this very point calling for a new space of research that pushes considerations of literacies within unique rural places and highlights critical inquiry within these places, including issues of culture, class, language, and gender. They note that while scholarship within rural literacies is beginning to explore these areas, much work is still to be done. Responding to their call, my study aims to explore particular issues related to place, culture, and language within unique rural settings.

Broadening and narrowing rural literacies.

While rural literacies is not a large body of research, it is a broad and diverse field. Therefore, I begin by providing an overview of the general field of rural literacies, before narrowing to highlight studies that are particularly relevant to my study. This broad scan yielded one literature review on rural literacies (Bailey, 2014), which was focused on particular student sub-groups within rural pre-K settings stating, "The study focuses solely on preschool programs' impact on rural children's outcomes across multiple domains, with an emphasis on cognition and learning for African American children prior to entering primary school settings" (p. 389). Given my attention to a broader group of students in secondary ELA classrooms, this review did not directly inform my work. No other literature review on rural literacies exists, though Azano (2015) and Eppley and Corbett (2012) suggest the need to examine how the terms rural and literacies are being operationalized and combined, both conceptually and in empirical research.

This broad scan of rural literacies found that most studies were descriptive or qualitative in nature examining whole-school or classroom-specific literacy pedagogies, school-university partnerships to support literacy, and after-school literacy initiatives. Many studies were situated in international contexts, including Australia, Jamaica, Kenya, and New Zealand. For example, Clary, Feez, Garvey, and Partridge (2015) describe the efforts of a school-university partnership to support a whole-school literacy approach in response to lower academic achievement in rural schools in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. While this study describes efforts taken to support students' literacy development, it recognizes the importance of a university partnership, to which

many rural schools, particularly in remote areas, may not have access. This fact does not preclude its importance, as it illustrates a type and kind of research in rural literacies, but it does introduce the need for particular supports to be available in rural spaces to access the potential benefits examined and advocated for in the study.

The scope of rural literacies also encompassed research beyond K-12 contexts, including early childhood settings such as Head Start (Bojczyk, Rogers-Haverback, Pae, Davis, & Mason, 2015) and higher education (e.g., Prins & Kassab, 2015). While again worthwhile to note inquiry at these levels, particularly asking questions of equity and college-preparedness, they do not closely align with my study and, therefore, are not explored in-depth. Last, several studies, both situated in international and US contexts, examined writing or literacy strategies for students with special needs or learning disabilities within a larger tradition of special education research (e.g., Gabriel & Davis, 2015). This trend illustrates a move to study all students within rural settings, especially when special education resources may be sparse. Again, though helpful to note in this scan, this area of research does not directly inform my particular study as few students were described as having special needs or learning disabilities by the teachers participating in the argument writing project experiences.

Several studies did focus their inquiry on rural literacies in rural secondary ELA classrooms. Across all studies reviewed in this section, I found important patterns across research on rural literacies. Several studies articulated the importance of community-based audiences or community engagement as a means to increase student motivation, engagement, and writing and literacies development. Further, these activities often involved technology or multimodal writing activities. Additionally, research explored the

experience of many rural stakeholders including students, teachers, parents and guardians, pre-service teachers, and university and community partners. The findings also introduced potential obstacles to supporting students' literacy development in rural contexts, including access to resources (including technology and Internet) and partnerships and competing narratives of support of literacy practices from the home.

Some research was conducted by teacher-researchers (Slocum, 2014), illustrating the importance of "knowledge-*of*-practice" (Cochran-Smith& Lytle, 1999), described as occurring when practitioners "[work] together to investigate their own assumptions, their own teaching and curriculum development, and the policies and practices of their own schools and communities" (p. 279). These teacher-researcher studies often took on a critical perspective to consider issues of rural place and marginalization. For example, Slocum (2014) described how she "participated in and observed [her] students, colleagues, and community members' complex negotiations of the marginalising and resisting cultural discourses" both within the traditional classroom space, as well as the informal school spaces (e.g., hallways, lunch room) and in their rural community (p. 191). Though not specifically related to language and audience, Slocum found that, through writing, students "recognised their ability to see their own communities from their insider position with a perspective that nonresidents and people who participate in problematic discourses of the region did not share" (p. 204). This ability to see from multiple perspectives has important implications for how students consider themselves within their rural schools and communities, as well as how others, within and outside of rural spaces, perceive and relate to rural students. Though not explicit, this point informs

how students view audience, both informal and formal, through writing and other forms of communication.

Partnerships between rural secondary high school teachers and local universities also proved to yield positive outcomes, and notably for all participants involved (Elwood, Murphy, & Cárdenas, 2006; Hurst, 2007). Elwood et al. (2006) invited rural secondary students in Texas to their university to be trained as peer tutors. Peer tutors were trained to use digital cameras, electronic newsletters, and movie-making software as a means to support new literacies and reflect on their responses to audience through these different modes, predominantly through multimodal or technological means. Using pre- and post-surveys, the researchers found that students had learned how to address diverse audience needs through collaborative efforts to utilize technology and multimodal literacies. In turn, Hurst (2007) explored an interactive writing project between rural secondary students and pre-service teachers, focusing on narrative and letter writing. This study found that these purposeful writing interactions increased motivation for the secondary students, while also leading to an increased understanding of social knowledge construction and the importance of dialogic interactions among writers for the pre-service teachers.

Further, technology was found to be a key facilitator of collaboration and learning in rural literacies, proving beneficial both for teachers and students (Elwood et al., 2006; Hunt-Barron, Tracy, Howell, & Kaminski, 2015). As described above, Elwood et al. explored peer tutoring training with technology in partnership with a university. In contrast, Hunt-Barron et al. explored how online and digital tools, such as blogs, affected in-person professional development opportunities for rural teachers in California.

Teachers expressed positive responses of their experiences using the online and digital platforms and found that it enhanced the overall professional development experience. Though these studies are few in number, it is important to recognize that technology is used as a means to enhance development in literacies for both students and teachers situated in rural contexts.

Community-based writing activities, central to the argument project with community-based audiences in my study, were found to increase students' attention to the benefits of engaging in real-world writing, though many obstacles exist in enacting these writing opportunities (Brashears, 2008; Peterson, 2011). While these findings provide insight into the experiences of community-based writing, the studies were based in elementary school contexts. No study examined community-based writing at the secondary level. Brashears (2008) interviewed 30 parents and guardians whose children attended one rural elementary school. She found that parents and guardians lacked an understanding of the different purposes of writing and had difficulty explaining the importance of writing for real-world purposes. Though her study highlights the potential challenges of finding home-based supports for real-world writing, she uses these findings to advocate for authentic, community-based audiences so that students, parents, and community members in rural areas understand the importance of real-world writing and see school-based writing as important preparation for these future writing activities. Bursuck, Robbins, and Lazaroff (2010) conducted a series of focus groups with students, parents, and educators at a rural high school in the southeastern United States and administered an email survey to the corresponding high school principals. They did so to investigate if poverty, lack of resources, and an inability to recruit, retain, and support

teachers in rural schools was perceived as obstacles to "implement the scientifically-based practices being recommended [in education research] to improve student performance in reading" (p. 27). They found that students perceived themselves to be struggling in reading and that parents and educators were well aware of the many obstacles in place that prevented increased reading achievement. Interestingly, they cite that "one of the most interesting findings is that the problems of rural high schools aren't all that different from their urban and suburban counterparts" (p. 29), suggesting that urban and rural schools suffer from the same challenges. While this finding offers a valuable insight into the way in which different school members perceive rural challenges, and indeed other research recognizes that there are similar challenges across urban and rural contexts (e.g., Wood, 2008), to equate the two either oversimplifies or simply fails to recognize the many, varied, and complex factors that distinguish rural and urban contexts. The study, though, does echo previously reviewed research by saying that increased professional development and intentional teacher collaboration, including through the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs), can lead to teachers' increased use of "scientifically-based [reading] practices" (Bursuck et al., 2010, p. 27) to counter the host of factors claimed to be linked to students' poor literacy achievement.

But it would be irresponsible and inaccurate to view parents and home-based supports as mere obstacles in rural contexts. Becnel and Moeller (2015) examined rural teen reading patterns and preferences through focus groups (here, at the secondary level). While not explicitly linked to writing, this study found that although students did not often acquire books or other texts from libraries, they were more likely to read texts shared by family and friends. Further, students expressed that they enjoyed talking about

texts with teachers, family, and friends and found the conversations and texts to be a means by which to explore their rural and developing identities. This study illustrates the potential importance of familial and communal relationships as a means to engage with and experience positive literacy experiences, here in the form of reading.

Teachers often see the value in engaging with the home and community in rural settings. Peterson (2011) interviewed 50 fourth thru eighth grade teachers, sampling teachers from rural schools across all of Canada's provinces. Her study investigates how to support rural students' literacy development, largely as defined by standardized test scores, and stresses that additional research needs to be conducted in rural contexts to identify beneficial writing practices to support rural literacies. Within her own study, she found that 30% of responding teachers engaged the local, rural community through writing opportunities like writing contests and an Author's Night to share published work. While these events were found to engage students, there were challenges present including curricular demands, logistical coordination, and other resource-related issues. She found that some teachers use technology to support these activities, but additional research is needed in this area, as well.

Finally, it appears that comparative work examining literacies between and across urban and rural contexts may be a new direction for this line of research. Goodman and Cocca (2014) do a comparative study of the use of multimodal literacies to promote a "liberatory critical literacy" (p. 211) in an urban and rural context. They pursue this work to advocate for the creation of "public spaces of action in school and community settings, spaces that open new possibilities for more just and equitable opportunities and outcomes for our most marginalized children" (p. 211). This study responds to the call that findings

from studies centered in urban contexts should not be uniformly mirrored or generalized to rural contexts (Schafft & Jackson, 2010). Instead of applying findings from an urban context to the rural, Goodman and Cocca explore how liberatory critical literacies might exist and be experienced in both contexts. The study looked at two out-of-school summer programs, one (Educational Video Center) serving secondary students in an urban context and another (Appalachian Media Institute) serving students in a rural context. Both contexts were described as high-poverty with relatively (and comparable) low rates of high school and college completion. The programs brought in 6-12 secondary students each "to learn the video production process in addition to how media affect public opinion and civic engagement" (p. 215). Goodman and Cocca found that these out-of-school programs were an effective means to have students engage in "liberatory critical literacy" in both contexts as "these young people create[d] a fifteen-minute video documentary about three issues of most importance to their community, culminating in a public screening of these three videos" (p. 216). The key was to have students connect to their own communities – urban or rural – and to explore new means of literacy production in a critical manner. This point about student agency in rural literacies has been linked to student motivation. Hurt (2015) describes the importance of student choice when creating "Passion Projects," which involved reading, researching, writing, and presenting on a topic of each student's choice. Hurt found that the 45 juniors in dual-enrollment ELA classes in rural Virginia who participated in the projects experienced increased motivation due to their ability to choose the topic and effectively use technology in the different stages of reading, writing, and presenting across their projects.

Perhaps in answer to calls for an increase in rural schooling and rural literacies research in education, it is noteworthy that the majority of these studies were published in the last five years. Thus, while there is still much research to be conducted, the environment seems to be ripe for inquiry into rural literacies, as well as comparative studies across rural and urban literacies that include a focused examination of place and context. As stated, though, patterns were also found that indicate potential challenges for consideration and implementation across rural contexts. For example, several studies described collaborations with a college or university. Unfortunately, many rural schools are in remote areas where the nearest university can be a distance away. Further, studies described summer and out-of-school initiatives to support rural literacies. While an important contribution, especially when recognizing the holistic effort required by the school and community to support students' literacy development, more research is required for school-based writing and literacy in rural contexts. Finally, many studies described the importance of technology use, professional development, or teacher collaboration. While these elements can be transformative in many contexts, including rural, it is necessary to again consider that they may be more difficult to access and utilize in remote, rural communities. These realities are not intended to de-emphasize the importance of the research or the legitimacy of their findings. Rather, they point to realistic challenges presented in many rural communities which must be considered when thinking about broader implementation in rural schools.

Argument Writing Genre

Before discussing the literature on audience and language, I first address the particular writing genre in which audience and language are examined in the current

study, the genre of argument. As described by Eggins (2005), a genre is "the staged, structured way in which people go about achieving goals using language" (p. 10). Further, Schleppegrell (2001) defines genre as "purposeful, stated uses of language that are accomplished in particular cultural contexts" (p. 432). These definitions align with my conceptual and theoretical frameworks, in which genre is characterized by language in context, informing the writer's consideration of the register variables of field, tenor, and mode (Rose, 2015). But the ways in which the goals of the argument writing genre have been expressed vary based on theoretical perspective. For example, a structural or cognitive approach, often associated with Toulmin (1958), emphasizes the importance of a claim or thesis, supporting evidence, and a warrant used to connect the evidence to the claim. As Newell et al. (2011) describe, this approach alone omits "the argumentative social practices [involved] in specific literacy events" (p. 275). But even adding the social dimension lacks the attention to a particular writing purpose and audience, with language existing in context and language choices being made after appraising and evaluating the interpersonal perspectives present between writer and audience, as described by Martin and White (2005). Conventional discussions of argument in the US, as guided by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), also lack this nuanced attention to audience and language in argument writing.

The reason for this lack of attention is clear after examining the CCSS standards that relate to argument writing, audience, and language (Table 2.1). The primary argument writing standards center around structure, and those standards that do address language within argument predominantly do not attend to purpose or audience. The standards that do address audience and language in greater detail are described in general,

and not in relation to particular genres. But as Martin and White (2005) explain,

argument has unique factors, particularly related to interpersonal meaning and tenor, that

require more than a general statement about audience or language. Reviewing the CCSS,

though, provides context for better understanding the instructional demands that the

teachers were expected to meet.

CCSS Standard	Text of Standards	Genre & Focus
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1	Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.	Argument genre indicated; Structural focus
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.a	Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.	Argument genre indicated; Structural focus
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.b	Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.	Argument genre indicated; Structural and language focus, with attention to audience
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.c	Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.	Argument genre indicated; Language focus, without sufficient attention to purpose or audience
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.d	Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.	Argument genre indicated; Language focus, without sufficient attention to purpose or audience
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.e	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.	Argument genre indicated; Structural focus
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)	No genre indicated; Language focus with attention to purpose and audience

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.3	Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.	No genre indicated; Language focus, without sufficient attention to genre, purpose, or audience
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.3.a	Vary syntax for effect, consulting references (e.g., Tufte's *Artful Sentences*) for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.	No genre indicated; Language focus, without sufficient attention to genre, purpose, or audience
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.6	Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.	No genre indicated; Language focus, without sufficient attention to genre, purpose, or audience

Table 2.1. Common Core State Standards for Argument, Audience, and Language

The overall emphasis on structural elements of argument supports the predominant approach to argument over time, most commonly characterized by the structural language of Toulmin (1958), as described by Newell et al. (2011) in their review of the literature on reading and writing argument. Though this research provides some insight into students' argument writing development, Newell et al. state that

> one limitation of research on argumentative writing conducted within the cognitive [related to a predominantly structural approach] perspective is that students in these studies often wrote for unknown or anonymous audiences so that they had no understanding of their audiences' actual beliefs, attitudes, or experiences to gain the audiences' identification. (p. 289).

This finding from their literature review indicates the importance and potential learning benefits for students to have access to an identified audience, at minimum, and an authentic audience at best. Newell et al. (2011) balance this finding with the

recommendation to include social perspectives on writing that highlight the importance of social and contextual factors in students' decision-making related to audience. However, few studies explicitly discuss language factors, particularly as framed by SFL or appraisal theory, at the secondary level or in rural settings. Some studies, though, addressed issues of language at the elementary or middle levels in other schooling contexts. For example, Martínes, Orellano, Pacheco, and Carbone (2008) worked with bilingual sixth grade students in an urban context, examining their voice and language use in argument writing. However, audience was still classroom-based as students acted as different audiences for other students and then provided peer feedback. Nevertheless, this approach had students imagine a defined audience to help guide their writing and begin to consider the different interpersonal factors that would inform their language choices.

Though Martínes et al. (2008) is an important example of studying audience and language, there is still a gap in extant research examining authentic writing purposes in argument writing, and especially at the secondary level. Newell et al. (2011) recognize this gap stating:

> What is also needed are studies that occur within the complexities of school and nonschool social contexts involving uses of actual, authentic purposes and audiences shaping students' uses of argument, including the vagaries of teachers' and students' interpretations of discussion, reading, writing, and reasoning. (p. 297)

Though Newell et al. do not discuss language in this recommendation, they illustrate the importance of attending to audience, and particularly authentic purposes and audiences, in argument writing research and practice.

The major contribution of the Newell et al. (2011) literature review, after reviewing the extant literature on argument reading and writing, is their argument for an integrated cognitive and social approach to argument writing instruction and practice. Though they do not incorporate SFL or appraisal theory into their recommendations, they cite Halliday (1994/2004) and SFL as a means to guide their conceptual framing of the relationship between cognitive and social approaches to argument writing. In referencing the three meta-functions of SFL, ideational, interpersonal, and textual, they say, "Our review makes clear that although the cognitive and the social perspectives tend to favor one function over the others, effective argument in most social and cultural contexts and academic domains requires expertise in all three" (p. 298). Unfortunately, they do not apply an SFL or appraisal framework further to consider how language and audience would fit into their model. This study then, recognizing the gaps in the literature, the structural emphases and lack of emphasis on audience and language in the CCSS in relation to argument, and the need to better address language and audience, seeks to make a substantive contribution in this area.

Audience

As the research on rural literacies indicates, community interaction or engagement in the form of a student writer's audience can be a component of a broader literacy strategy. Audience is also a central element of my conceptual framework, serving as a key factor that can inform and influence students' language choices in argument writing.

Therefore, the next section of this review examines research literature on audience in secondary writing.

Audience does not have a singular meaning and, similar to the argument genre, has cognitive and sociocultural theoretical underpinnings (Magnifico, 2010). As Oliver (1995) states, "even its [audience's] definition is problematic. Do we mean imagined audience? Real audience? Implied audience? Absence of audience?" (p. 427). Audiences can be fictionalized (Ong, 1975), abstract, or authentic (Magnifico, 2010). Given that research on audience in writing requires further study and theorizing, this lack of specificity and distinguished conceptualizing is understandable. However, this reality necessitates defining terms when discussing audience to help clarify the conceptual space in a particular study. In this section of my literature review and in alignment with my conceptual framework, *audience* refers to the intended reader of a given written text who enters into a dialogic and interactional relationship with the meaning of the text and the writer of the text (though this relationship varies in form and degree). Texts can have unintended audiences, as well, but this review places it focus on intended audience. The audience in a school or classroom setting can take the form of multiple individuals, including the writer, the teacher, peer students, younger or older students, other school members, family and community members, or individuals connected by digital media or the Internet. Further, my conceptualization of audience is grounded in sociocultural framings, as illustrated in my theoretical orientation, emphasizing the importance of contextual and cultural factors when considering the writer's audience (Magnifico, 2010).

Similar to earlier searches, no studies specifically matching my research questions on audience in rural secondary classrooms utilizing an appraisal theory or SFL

framework were found. Since there were so few studies situated in rural contexts, I chose

to expand my criteria to gain a broader sense of audience conceptualization. I did not find

previous literature reviews specifically on the topic of audience, but found several

relevant empirical studies. All of the articles were empirical studies in the US, but

situated in various geographic and cultural contexts, including urban, suburban, and rural

locations. Upon initial examination and with my conceptualization of audience in mind, I

arranged the articles into two distinct categories. Eleven articles were found in

practitioner-oriented journals such as the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* aimed

at in-service literacy teachers which, while grounded in theory and research, has an

explicit audience of teachers. Sixteen articles were found in researcher-oriented journals,

characterized by explicit details for theoretical frameworks, methodology, and data

collection and analysis, such as the *Journal of Literacy Research*. Both researcher- and

practitioner-oriented articles were empirical studies and from peer reviewed journals,

thus meeting my selection criteria. To be clear, *researcher-* and *practitioner-oriented* in

this review refer explicitly to the type of journal and empirical literature reviewed. They

do not refer to the kinds or types of audience under investigation within a study, nor do

they refer to the kinds or types of study under investigation within the current study. The

two categories, though, were found to be a useful means to categorize the literature in this

section to check for alignment across researcher- and practitioner-oriented studies.

Within each of the two main categories – researcher-oriented and practitioner-oriented

studies – there are three sub-categories. The three sub-categories are genre and

instruction, digital media, and science (Figures 2.3 and 2.4). The categories represent the

primary writing feature, mode, or content area in which audience is discussed. It is

noteworthy that both researcher-oriented and practitioner-oriented studies have identical sub-categories and similar ratios of study numbers in each category. While this does not indicate that sub-fields are identical, it does indicate that there are common features, modes, or contexts of audience discussed across discourses of research and practice.
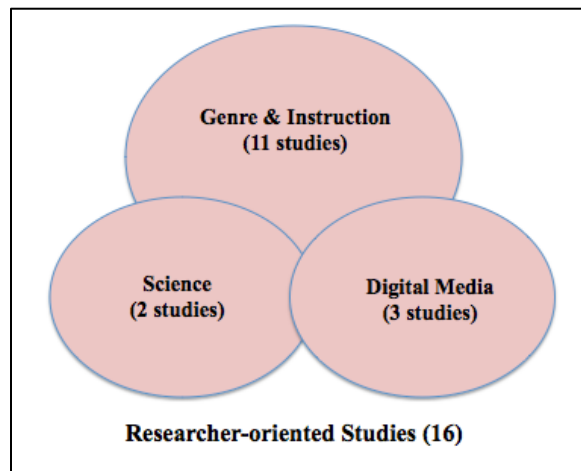
Figure 2.3. Organizational Categories from Researcher-oriented Empirical Studies
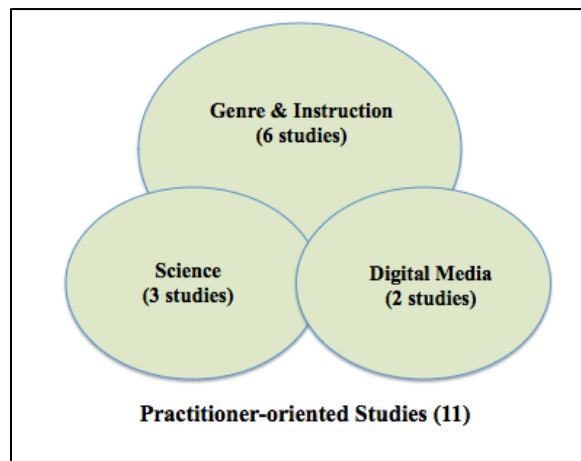
Figure 2.4. Organizational Categories from Practitioner-oriented Empirical Studies

Researcher-oriented studies.

Genre and instruction.

The largest number of researcher-oriented studies focused on audience through inquiries into genre and instruction. These studies examined a writing task, often through

a particular genre (such as argumentative, descriptive, or narrative writing), a disciplinary writing task, or a standardized testing prompt. Several studies (Aubury, 1995; Langer, 1984; Paxton, 2002; Vetter, 2011) were structured around their discipline area and examined instructional practices to support students' writing through audience awareness. Aubury (1995) investigated eight students' process of clarifying purpose in their writing via feedback from multiple audiences. Four audience groupings – the teacher, a small group of peer students, one student, and the student writers themselves via videotape – were used. Findings indicated that student writers relied on all audience groups to gain clarity in their writing purpose and language. Langer's (1984) study of 97 students writing informational essays in 10th grade American history classes examined audience from a different perspective, inquiring if students viewed their teacher as "part of instructional dialogue" or as the "examiner" (p. 40). Those students who viewed the teacher as a part of instructional dialogue scored higher in writing quality while those who viewed the teacher as an examiner or evaluator did not demonstrate improvement in writing. Further, Langer used a correlational analysis to find a strong and consistent relationship between topic specific background knowledge and writing quality. These findings indicate the dual importance of teachers supporting students' topic knowledge, while also engaging in constructive dialogue with students as they progress through the writing process.

Paxton (2002) utilized a mixed methods approach to analyze student writing and students' think-aloud processes during a unit on Julius Caesar in 10th and 11th grade history classes. In a revision activity, Paxton presented the students with an opportunity to reflect on their role of being a reading audience for their peer students. Paxton referred

to this in-person interaction between writer and audience as "visible audience," and found that this experience resulted in students' increased awareness of audience and increased response to peer feedback to make appropriate language choices. Vetter's (2011) single case study of an 11th grade English classroom utilized interview and observation data, field notes, and student writing samples to investigate the development of students' identities as writers, particular in relationship to audience. Vetter argued that this process requires time, describing students' process of writing occasional papers (Ops) with multiple opportunities for revision as opposed to hastily developed summative writing pieces. Vetter described how this process better connected with students' real writing needs in the future, such as in college or the workforce, and linked this practical need to her expectations to align writing activities with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Though Vetter's audiences were limited to teacher and peer students, student writers developed audience awareness and came to a deeper understanding of their own writing identity through the revision process. For example, Vetter highlights one student's experience sharing that "Damen [a student] clearly positioned himself as writer of a real audience by expressing language powerfully in order to engage his classmates in dialogue about a difficult issue. As a result, students respectfully listened and responded to his essay" (p. 193). Vetter stressed the importance of dialogue between writer and audience to realize the full benefits of this process.

Instead of investigating audience and writing in a particular discipline, Beck and Jeffery (2009) examined interdisciplinary writing in history and literature classrooms. Determining that analytic exposition was a challenging cognitive task, researchers found that when students had access to scaffolded instruction, creative writing opportunities,

and diverse audiences through texts like newspapers and blogs, students produced texts with greater clarity that were of increased interest to their own writing audience. Beck and Jeffery (2009) utilized SFL to identify structural, language, and register features that were informed by audience and the social context.

Early quantitative studies (Chesky & Hiebert, 1987; Crowhurt & Piche, 1979; Kroll, 1985) emphasized different elements of writing in relation to audience. For example, in their study of 10th grade classrooms in a middle class suburb of Minneapolis, Crowhurt and Piche (1979) determined that compositions written for the teacher were more complex (with longer and more varied clauses, and greater syntactic complexity) than compositions written for peer students. Increased complexity was most statistically significant in argument writing, though significant results were also found for descriptive and narrative writing. These findings are to be interpreted with caution, however, because of the narrow definition of text complexity utilized by Crowhurt and Piche, which only accounted for clause length and syntax. Complexity could have been more holistically assessed by including analysis of text clarity and intended purpose. Similarly, Kroll (1985) investigated audience-adapted writing skills in students from 5th grade through the first year of undergraduate study. Students across these grade levels rewrote a complex story for 3rd graders. Similar to Crowhurt and Piche (1979), writing samples were analyzed for linguistic complexity. Findings illustrated that all students were able to simplify their language for the 3rd grade audience. However, younger students in elementary and middle school simplified words (vocabulary) to make their stories developmentally appropriate while high school and undergraduate students simplified complex meanings. Although this indicated that high school and undergraduate students

focused more on meaning in relation to audience, Kroll concluded that the influence of audience on language choice and meaning required further study.

Chesky and Hiebert (1987) examined the factors of students' prior knowledge and multiple audiences on a variety of writing outcomes, including essay length, cohesion, and error analysis (measures of writing performance similar to the above quantitative studies). In their ANOVA analysis of 40 11th grade students, they found that students' prior knowledge was a statistically significant factor of students' writing, while writing to both teacher and peer student audiences were non-significant factors. Students who wrote to peer students wrote just as well as those who wrote to teachers. Chesky and Hiebert (1987) suggested that teacher and peer audiences were still important factors to consider in writing, but may be more complex than a simple statistical variable. Their findings on prior knowledge suggest that effects from audience interact with other factors, such as prior knowledge, to influence student writing.

To add further complexity to the findings on teacher and peer student audiences, Monahan (1984) conducted a qualitative study of eight 12th graders through an analysis of students' argumentative essays and related interviews to find that basic writers made more revisions for their teachers, but competent writers made more revisions for their peer students. In this study, "basic" and "competent" classifications were given based on standardized testing results. Monahan found that all students demonstrated an awareness of their audience, but competent writers returned to audience-driven revisions more often and made revisions of higher quality: "The process Anne [a competent student] used to produce her composition for the peer audience was noticeably different from the process she used to produce her composition for a teacher audience. She revised more often and

at a generally higher level (clause and sentence level vs. surface and word level) as she wrote for the peer audience" (p. 293). Findings suggest that competent students view writing to their teacher as perfunctory while writing to peer students encouraged deeper reflections of language use. Monahan (1984) also recommended that students be given ample time to reflect on their audience when considering revisions and that multiple audiences be used to enhance student feedback, when possible.

Indicating the need for alignment between audience instruction and assessment, Olinghouse et al. (2012) found that 51.8% of 222 student writing prompts from large-scale writing assessments did not specify their audience; therefore, audience specification was not included in the students' writing. The research calls for attention to audience intimacy, related to Langer's (1984) finding on dialogue, as well as elements of engagement in appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005), though intimacy here is simplified to audience specification. Olinghouse et al. stress that greater attention to audience will result in more deliberate language choices, drawing from SFL theory and the particular features related to register and tenor (Halliday, 1994/2004). They also suggest that large-scale writing assessments should amend their prompts to encourage students to be aware of and address a particular audience when writing. While audience awareness is necessary and, according to the findings, absent in many students' writing, Langer's (1984) view of audience in dialogue advanced the discussion of audience to consider how dialogue can influence students' writing. Oliver (1995) conducted a similar study of middle school through beginning undergraduate students' large-scale writing assessments. Quantitative analyses indicated that writing prompts that specified the topic knowledge required and the audience to be addressed resulted in higher scores. Thus,

when students were given the opportunity to reflect on topic knowledge and specified audience, they wrote clearer and more linguistically complex essays. The most valuable contribution from Oliver's study, however, extends the work of Olinghouse et al. (2012) to state how an SFL approach can enhance student writing:

> Teachers should encourage students to observe the ways in which their writing changes according to audience specification. Attention to difference in language register, syntax, and vocabulary all figure in the response to changing rhetorical demands. Conversation about audience helps students to watch for and create more realistic writing situations. Junior and senior high school students should be accomplished in revising essays to accommodate audience (p. 443).

Thus, Oliver's findings suggest that when given the opportunity to consider audience, students often make linguistic and writing decisions that correspond with their awareness of the audience and the specific writing topic.

While these studies demonstrate potential writing gains through instructional practices and genre instruction, they also present challenges, particularly in classes with large number of students. For example, teachers may view the process of a class of 25 students going through four iterations of audience readings and feedback, including the use of a video camera for self-reflection, to be quite difficult. Further, the varied findings on the effects of teacher and peer student audience make it difficult to reach decisive and consistent conclusions about the benefits of these two specific audience groups. Last, the studies often do not provide sufficient details about their sociocultural context. While contextual overviews are provided, there is little to no discussion about how audience

interaction or awareness is unique to the circumstances of the specific classroom, school, or community. There is little to no discussion of authority, power, or culture in these audience interactions. While this omission may result from audience being primarily conceptualized as teacher and peer student, it undermines the diverse and complex realities in which students are situated as developing writers.

Science.

Of the content areas other than ELA, research examining argument and audience in the science classroom was most prominent in the literature. Chen, Hand, and McDowell (2013) and Gunel, Hand, and McDermott (2009) both investigated how high school students write to learn science content by writing and interacting with elementary students. Using quasi-experimental designs, Chen et al. (2013) found that 11th grade students learned more advanced concepts of force and motion by interacting with 4th grade students, while also acquiring the skill of translating science into everyday language for their audience's comprehension. Gunel et al. (2009) investigated 9th and 10th grade students writing to four different audiences – teachers, peer students, younger students, and parents. Quantitative analyses found that writing to peers and younger student audiences resulted in statistically significant higher quality writing than teacher and parent audiences. Student writers demonstrated increased understanding of science concepts, as well as clarity of explanation, in their writing. Key to both studies was the opportunity for interaction, dialogue, and feedback from audiences during revision.

The two studies draw from sociocognitive and SFL theories in their discussion of students' awareness of audience and linguistic response. In particular, Chen et al. (2013) examined particular linguistic features, including clauses, as they analyzed students'

writing on science content. However, this dual theoretical focus did not give substantial attention to questions of context or culture when examining audience in science classrooms. While interesting that the authors utilized an SFL perspective, there was insufficient attention to the dialogic nature between writer and audience to influence language choice. Though they highlighted the importance of dialogic interactions through audience feedback, the studies omitted key elements of the sociocultural perspective that might add greater nuance to the potential benefits from these writing activities. Again, the findings should be interpreted with their challenges and limitations in mind. Allocating time for multiple audiences to provide feedback during revision can be difficult. Further, forming partnerships with younger classrooms and parents to participate as audiences can be a complicated process, especially if parents or community members are not able to participate due to work, family, health, or other commitments. The studies do demonstrate that having an authentic (or visible) audience to engage in dialogue with during revision is beneficial, but this finding should be qualified by the challenging reality of finding multiple and authentic audiences for students.

Digital media.

Increasingly, audience is being conceptualized and studied through the interactions via digital media. Two studies (Curwood & Cowell, 2011; Curwood, Magnifico, & Lammers, 2013) illustrate the benefits of using digital media that allow students to view diverse writing as readers (audience) and to publish their writing in a way that promotes acknowledgment of a broad virtual audience. Karchmer (2011) discussed the need for teachers to undergo training in digital media to engage in broader and deeper considerations of textual production and audience. All three studies utilized

qualitative methods to explore digital media and audience, though Curwood and Cowell (2011) utilized practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) to explore these phenomena from a teacher-researcher perspective. While these studies were rooted in a sociocultural perspective, they also considered the new literacies and digital literacies to frame their studies.

Curwood and Cowell's (2011) three-year practitioner inquiry study of a 10th grade English class and poetry project illustrated the need for the teacher's support to realize the benefits of digital audience awareness. Year one findings indicated a technical success as students wrote their poems online, but the effort was viewed as a critical failure because "students forgot the importance of audience in the construction of meaning" (p. 113). The teacher responded in the second and third years of the project with greater scaffolding and intentional connection to digital media and audience, as well as deeper student reflection on the role of audience. At the conclusion of the study, student writers identified the significance of audience awareness and better understood critical engagement with audience by sharing their poetry online. Curwood et al. (2013) similarly explored the benefits of digital audiences, but through three ethnographic studies of youths' online interactions outside of school. They found that "youths thrive when given the chance to draw on multiple genres and diverse modes in their writing" (p. 683) and recommended that youth writers share their writing with authentic audiences, particularly through digital platforms. Curwood et al. acknowledged, however, that this writing occurred outside of school and that efforts should be made to incorporate these digital literacy and audience interactions in traditional school contexts.

Across the researcher-oriented studies in the genre and instruction, science, and digital literacies categories, key themes were present: 1) audience has a strong relationship to topic and prior knowledge; 2) when students are prompted to be aware of audience, they respond accordingly with appropriate language choices; 3) teacher and peer student audiences can be particularly beneficial during revision as they provide students with insights into how their writing may be interpreted and help them to reflect upon what language needs greater clarity to achieve their purpose; 4) dialogic interactions between student writer and audience yield the greatest benefits, particularly in linguistic choice and clarity; 5) student writers can also experience the beneficial interactions with audience via digital media and online publication; and 6) teachers need to provide modeling and scaffolded instruction on audience and support audience awareness throughout the writing process, especially when involving digital media. As indicated, there are challenges when incorporating audience into student writing experiences, but findings illustrate the numerous linguistic benefits for high school students when audience is considered, particularly through deeper reflection and understanding of writing clarity and purpose.

Practitioner-oriented studies.

Genre and instruction.

In practitioner-oriented studies, audience was frequently examined through specific genres or writing instruction (Beckelhimer, 2011; Brockman, 1999; Gebhard, 1983; Lapp & Fisher, 2012; Rodesiler, 2010; Teitelbaum, 2006). All six of these studies are descriptive, single case studies. One study (Rodesiler, 2010) described student writers as readers of cultural media, asking questions about intended audience and writing

purpose to encourage students to ask similar questions of their own writing. Another (Brockman, 1999) described a student considering the audience of college admissions boards as he wrote his admissions essay. Brockman described the challenge of writing to a distant, unknown audience, but illustrated how other adult readers serving as his audience to provide feedback during revision allowed for greater reflection on writing purpose and clarity.

The three remaining studies discussed the potential benefits of authentic and visible audience interaction, including through family and community literacies (Beckelhimer, 2011), connecting with local agencies to share informational writing (Gebhard, 1983), and interactions with peers to simulate interpretations of power (Lapp & Fisher, 2012). These three studies offer a more critical look at audience, considering how audience interpretations, culture and context, and dialogic interactions for authentic tasks create a more authentic and engaging writing task. By connecting to home, community, or culture, students become aware of their local "funds of knowledge" (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994) which they can interact with dialogically to inform their language choices as they seek to achieve a meaningful writing purpose. Gebhard (1983), in particular, described an exemplary project in which students in a biology class in a rural school provided written reports on a local stream's ecology to the county's environmental management council. The Gebhard study indicates that while rural contexts may be perceived as or often are isolated or under-resourced, there can be meaningful community-based opportunities for audience interaction.

Though the single case studies highlight a particular practice, these practitioner-oriented studies rarely offer a thorough description of challenges or limitations. However,

similar to the researcher-oriented studies, challenges are certainly known to exist. Time, access, and the ability to partner all present obstacles to creating meaningful, authentic audiences for writing tasks. At the same time, these studies found significant improvements in writing, as well as affective engagement for students. Thus, authentic writing tasks do resonate with students as individuals, while also preparing them for writing in college and career settings, as advocated for by the CCSS.

Science.

Practitioner-oriented studies explored audience in science classrooms, as well. Similar to the genre and instruction category, these studies were descriptive, single case studies. Mayhew and Hall (2012) examined how high school students interacted with scientists in a "café"-style program. In this program, students served as the audience for interactive science presentations in which they dialogued with scientists and asked clarifying questions about the science topic. This activity was intended to build students' knowledge of scientific concepts and to gain an understanding of how science can be translated and entered into dialogue with the public.

DeFauw and Saad (2014) and Kohnen (2013) examined two authentic audience activities involving scientific concepts. Similar to the researcher-oriented studies of audience and science, DeFauw and Saud examined a 9th grade science class' experience of presenting information on cells from their biology unit to 4th grade students. The high school students created picture books with text to make the concepts developmentally appropriate for their 4th grade audience. While learning about audience, DeFauw and Saad observed secondary students' deeper understanding of the scientific concepts by creating a text for a younger audience and engaging in dialogic interactions with them

involving questioning and explanation. DeFauw and Saad indicated that these outcomes

align with the CCSS, preparing students for college and career readiness through the

opportunity to explain their scientific knowledge through dialogue with others. In the

Kohnen study, predominantly African-American students in an urban, low-income school

participated in a science journalism activity in a chemistry class. Kohnen explored how

authentic publication opportunities through science journalism affected students' writing

tasks and learning. Through interviews, field notes, and analyses of student writing,

findings indicated that students came to understand science journalism as a genre with

unique structural and textual features. Further, the teacher's ability to model, scaffold,

and support this style of scientific writing allowed the students to understand its

importance, particularly as it engaged a broader audience on issues of science.

These practitioner-oriented studies of audience and science yielded findings

similar to the researcher-oriented studies, particularly emphasizing the importance of

writing to learn activities that aim to create deeper understanding of science content. The

practitioner-oriented studies, however, provide deeper exploration into the relationships

between writer and audience, as well as the unique contextual factors present. Though

challenges of access and sustainability still remain, this body of research indicates that

when students interact with an audience, they often develop a better understanding of

scientific content and how those concepts may be disseminated and discussed.

Digital media.

Practitioner-oriented studies (Chandler-Olcott, 2013; Elwood, Murphy, &

Cardenas, 2006) recognized the need for deeper audience consideration. These two

studies presented descriptive, single case studies of high school students participating in

digital and multi-media projects to gain an understanding of audience. Chandler-Olcott (2013) explored how 9th grade culturally and linguistically diverse students in an urban high school examined audience in response to the Boston marathon bombings by searching digital news, pictures, and reporting. Through their personal reflections contemplating how others experienced reading the online texts, students examined how audiences interpreted and responded to language and text through digital media. Similar to DeFauw and Saad (2014), this study demonstrated its alignment to the CCSS by creating an activity in which readers were critically engaged in the online sphere, informing their own conceptions of audience.

Elwood et al. (2006) used a public service announcement (PSA) project to explore how high school students in rural Texas responded to previous PSAs about safety on prom night (particularly around drinking), engaged in peer discourse to discuss their response as an audience, and then created their own PSAs for their particular school context. Findings indicated that students "learned how to negotiate dissensus to address the needs of the audience" in their PSAs (p. 87) and came to consider audience in a deeper sense knowing that their PSA would be an applied writing project and shared publicly within their school. Of note, Elwood et al. was the only empirical study that overlapped across the rural literacies and audience categories, again illustrating that exploration of audience needs greater attention within rural contexts. These studies indicate how high school students can be both critical readers and writers, considering the role of audience and its effects on meaning-making and interpretation in writing.

As demonstrated in this review, audiences were conceptualized in multiple forms for multiple purposes. The empirical literature on audience discusses broad research

questions using a myriad of research methodologies. Audiences were portrayed as teachers, peer students, younger students, parents and family members, broader community members, and the online community. Students were audiences for other writers, often to reflect on the role of audience from their own experience. Writers wrote to audiences to receive feedback during revision and wrote to younger audiences to learn new content in specific disciplinary or content areas. Further, writers engaged in writing tasks with authentic or visible audiences in the community or published their works using digital media. Finally, writers wrote to gain clarity in their writing purpose and the meaning communicated through their linguistic choices.

Discussion of audience literature.

From these multiform interpretations of audience, five main points emerge: 1) audience is an integral component of writing, but must be considered in relation to topic knowledge, prior knowledge, genre knowledge, and writing purpose; 2) audience in various forms (teacher, peer student, younger student, parent or family) can provide valuable feedback on writing clarity in response to a specific purpose during revision; 3) authentic, visible audiences can enter into dialogic interactions to inform a student writer's language choices throughout the iterative and recursive nature of the writing process; 4) issues of culture, community, and context must be considered when examining the relationship between the writer and the audience; and 5) teachers should model, scaffold, and support lessons of audience, language, and writing so that students can gain an understanding of how audience can influence and inform structural and language features in a text.

While there was an overlap of categories and themes between researcher-oriented and practitioner-oriented studies, the practitioner-oriented studies placed greater attention on issues of culture, community, and context to consider how audience was conceptualized and experienced in a given situation and writing task. Further, the substantial number of practitioner-oriented studies indicates that audience and writing is a topic of interest to practitioners and researchers alike and deserves increased inquiry in future research. Last, recent studies of audience have increased focus on sociocultural perspectives and digital media, particularly through qualitative research methods. This pattern suggests that there is a necessitated increase in attention to issues of social interaction, context, and culture, particularly in increasingly diverse US school settings. SFL theory, already utilized in some studies reviewed, can add nuance to the type of structural and language features associated with audience, moving beyond clause length and syntactic complexity to consider whether writing achieves its intended purpose at the level of the text and if language choices are aligned with purpose and audience. Connections between audience and language, utilizing an SFL or appraisal theoretical perspective, will be further reviewed in the subsequent section.

As discussed, writing tasks that involve audience are not without their challenges. Many teachers do not find that they have the time, resources, partnership connections, or access to multiple audiences to pursue a home- or community-based audience project. Further, while some studies on audience point to an alignment with the CCSS, it can be argued that the CCSS may decrease opportunities for creativity and audience exploration if the process of meeting the standards to prepare for standardized testing results in curriculum oversimplification or a lack of creative instruction to engage students. Finally,

some teachers feel overwhelmed by the amount of work already required from curricular and instructional demands, including the ever-changing requirements resulting from educational policy. Therefore, researchers and practitioners must offer practical examples of how audience can be taught and incorporated into instruction in traditional, everyday classroom experiences, as well as when there are opportunities for authentic audience interactions. Though relatively few in number, research suggests that this attention to audience deserves to be considered when planning writing activities for students.

Language

Aligned with my theoretical framework, *language* in this study is considered from the perspective of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1994/2004) and appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005). As indicated, some studies of audience define effective or high quality language use by clause length or syntactic complexity (e.g., Crowhurt & Piche, 1979; Kroll, 1985). An SFL approach adds nuance to the consideration of structural and language features associated with audience, moving beyond clause length and syntactic complexity to question the function of language in specific social contexts and whether language choices are aligned with the purpose and audience of the writing task. Brisk, Hodgson-Drysdale, and O'Connor (2011) describe an SFL perspective of the relationship between language and audience saying,

> To produce effective texts, awareness of audience and self as reflected in
> the writing, ability to develop the topic, and ability to construct a coherent
> text are demanding and necessary. An essential ingredient of expressing
> the intended meaning in such texts is language knowledge, which is
> required in order to make appropriate choices. (p. 9)

While the SFL perspective is helpful when framing language for the purposes of this study, few empirical studies exist (and even fewer in secondary classrooms) that utilize an SFL approach to discuss language and audience in writing. This section of the literature review includes two sub-sections: A review of studies utilizing an SFL-informed view of language and a direct connection audience (i.e., a closer examination of language in studies already reviewed in the above *Audience* section) and a second section looking at a broader set of studies utilizing SFL and appraisal theories, including those set in higher education classrooms.

SFL, appraisal, and audience.

While the Brisk et al. (2011) study was situated in an elementary classroom, Enright (2010) used a similar framing for high school students in which SFL guided a teacher's language and genre instruction with attention to audience. Additional studies in secondary settings utilized an SFL approach to discuss audience and language. Three studies (Beck & Jeffery, 2009; Chen, Hand, & McDowell, 2013; Olinghouse, Zheng, & Morlock, 2012) referenced SFL and the work of Halliday, predominantly to introduce their position on genre and language. One study (Olinghouse et al., 2012) referred to SFL in greater detail, discussing register and tenor as integral to developing audience intimacy and students' more deliberate language choices. Further, Oliver (1995) used an SFL framing to discuss the linguistic benefits of giving "attention to difference in language register, syntax, and vocabulary [which] all figure in the response to changing rhetorical demands" (p. 443). These findings suggest that an SFL perspective provides a useful framing to examine the relationship between audience and language, highlighting the

function and meaning of language when attempting to respond to the purpose and audience of a writing task.

Broadening and narrowing language from an SFL/appraisal perspective.

When examining language, I did not limit by rural contexts due to the paucity of research on rural literacies with a particular attention to language (and with none focused on SFL or appraisal). Only one of the four empirical studies (Maxwell-Reid, 2015) and the doctoral dissertation (Khote, 2014) were situated in secondary classrooms. The other three studies (Lancaster, 2014; Miller et al., 2014; Wu, 2006) were situated in higher education settings. Though the latter three are not at the secondary level, they provide important insights into how SFL and appraisal theory have been researched in relation to writing, especially given some of the developmental overlap between students in secondary and higher education.

Maxwell-Reid (2015) utilized an SFL perspective when examining secondary student writing in Spain in an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. He found that students needed support with clausal embedding in nominal groups (or noun phrases) to better communicate their intended meaning. In relation to my study, though, the most important finding is about variation in student writing. Maxwell-Reid found great variety in student writing both in terms of clausal embedding and other relevant language variables. This study illustrated the diversity of language use across students in classroom settings, indicating that further research and a deeper consideration of how language is taught in instructional settings are required.

Khote's (2014) dissertation, while not situated in a rural context, highlighted how appraisal theory and SFL can be used to consider language in response to audience in

secondary argument writing. His study's focus, though, involved a teacher-as-researcher approach to study his own 10th grade emergent bilingual students as they negotiated language use in their argument writing. His larger point was to make connections between students' home and community funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994) and their writing to advocate for a re-conceptualized SFL perspective called culturally-sustaining SFL praxis. The way in which he conducted the study and articulated language demonstrates connections to audience, even if not emphasized as strongly as other points. He wrote:

> This dissertation is grounded in the belief that culturally responsive and systematic writing instruction creates bridges between home and school […] The SFL informed pedagogy and the permeable curriculum supported students, both academically and culturally to understand and negotiate among multiple social worlds […] In turn, the students' writing showed their transition from social and informal formulaic writing to an understanding of how linguistic resources and semantic meanings are interconnected to make meanings. Their texts revealed a noticeable shift to use of language and grammar for abstraction to express disciplinary meaning in academic ways. (pp. 317-318)

While necessary to consider individual contexts and students when interpreting his work, his dissertation provides a helpful framework to closely examine how analyzing secondary student argument writing with an SFL and appraisal perspective can make important links to the importance of context, audience, and meaning.

As stated, Lancaster (2014), Miller et al. (2014), and Wu (2006) all investigated writing through an SFL perspective in higher education settings. Miller et al. conducted a four-year longitudinal study at an undisclosed English-speaking university in the Middle East. They investigated students' argument and analytical writing in a world history course. Analyzing student writing, they found that students had difficulty maintaining a consistent argument position throughout their writing. By attempting to entertain or shift values to show openness, student writing lacked a coherence in voice and tenor that affected the quality of the argument. Miller et al.'s findings have important implications for considering language and writing audience stating, "we found that the inconsistent positioning of author and reader does the same [weakens the argument]. It is not enough for students to merely demonstrate awareness of alternative voices; when this is done without consistency, it undermines the force of their overarching claim" (p. 115). Therefore, attention to language, especially consistency and coherence throughout a piece, is essential when considering the strength of an argument when interpreted by a given audience.

Lancaster (2014) utilized an SFL and appraisal theoretical perspective to examine the language of faculty feedback in response to students' writing in a university-based economics course. Ninety-two graded argument writing papers were analyzed for feedback. Findings indicated that faculty, too, need to have an increased awareness of how language affects argument writing and how they can tailor their feedback to specifically address issues of appraisal, such as judgment, to assist students' argument writing development. Although this study's primary focus was on higher education faculty, it offers insight into the ways in which a teacher's feedback and instructional

support can influence students' language development in argument writing. Wu (2006), shifting the focus from faculty back to undergraduate students, explored students' ability to utilize a consistent and appropriate stance for an academic audience (e.g., the professor or other academic). The study found that students who had a better (although often unconscious) use of appraisal features, including engagement and judgment, received more highly-rated scores on their writing. Though Wu's focus is on students, the findings echo Lancaster and suggest that pedagogical instruction of appraisal language features is an important component of constructing a consistent and coherent argument that is responsive to a particular audience.

Discussion of language literature.

A review of studies utilizing SFL and appraisal theory to inform the study of language illustrated that more research is necessary in this area, particularly in secondary writing instruction. However, the studies that do exist stress important realities and implications that must be considered when researching this intersection of research areas. First, students' language use, as informed by SFL and appraisal theory, is often quite varied and may be inconsistent throughout a piece of argument writing. However, the research presented two salient recommendations to make students' writing more effective: that writing activities build from students' home and community resources to allow them to gain a deeper understanding of language and meaning in response to audience; and that teacher's instruction, support, and feedback serve as crucial components of students' understanding and use of language. As stated, there are limitations and further calls for research in this area that present salient questions. First, how many secondary teachers are explicitly using SFL or appraisal frameworks in their

instruction of language and writing? If current practices overlap or are informed by SFL or appraisal, how can teachers become more intentional in their instruction, support, and feedback to support students' language development? While a paucity of research exists in this area, it is noteworthy that it is receiving increased attention, as evident by most of the publication dates in this section, as well as the thorough dissertation by Khote (2014) in a secondary US context.

Informing Methodology, Data Collection, Analysis, and Interpretation

This review of literature first and foremost indicates that more research needs to be conducted in the area(s) of my study. Rural literacies, audience, and language (from an SFL and appraisal perspective) are all relatively young fields with a stated need for further research in diverse contexts to gain deeper understanding of implications for theory and practice. In response, this study investigates students' language choices in response to audience in argument writing lessons in rural secondary classrooms. In response to the literature, particular attention will be given to variability in students' writing, the importance of teachers' instruction and support, and connections to rural contexts and communities. These areas connect to my conceptual framework and have guided the forms and types of data to be collected to respond to my research questions. The next chapter, describing my methodology, goes into greater detail of the methodological choices made and how they connect back to the research questions, conceptual framework, and theoretical orientation. My methodology, though, also connects to the majority of the methods utilized by studies in the literature review, utilizing analysis of student writing, interviews, and other qualitative sources to gain a better understanding of the experience of the argument writing project, students'

awareness of and response to their audience, and the language choices made, all situated

within unique rural contexts.

Chapter 3

Study Design

In this study, I utilized qualitative research methods as a means to explore my research questions. This methodological selection was particularly appropriate for and responsive to rural research, in which contextual and place-based factors are central, following the recommendation of Bartholomaeus, Halsey, and Corbett (2014) who state:

> Research showing the how and why of rural educational outcomes is needed if we
>
> are to convey a rich and nuanced understanding of rural schools and their students
>
> that shows the quality of what is happening in these settings and the challenges
>
> faced in an era of increasing forces of standardization of education. (p. 69)

Qualitative methods requires discussion of theoretical orientations, perspectives, and contexts (Creswell, 2013) which moves away from a reductionist or generalized view of rurality to position the research questions in a richly-detailed and complexly-viewed series of contexts.

Using multiple data sources, including teacher and student interviews, student writing analysis samples, and instructional artifacts, I examined five experiences of an argument writing project occurring over two consecutive school years. *Experiences* (e.g., Matsumara & Wang, 2014) are similar to cases in case study research (Yin, 2014), but are more appropriate when more variability is present, resulting in inconsistent bounding. Experiences are more appropriate for this study because, as described below, different students participated in each project experience, two different argument writing topics were used across the two years, and a different number of teachers participated in each year. In the first year of the project, three secondary teachers participated. In the second

year, two returning teachers participated in a second iteration of the project, while the third retired after year one and did not participate in year two.

Unit of Analysis

As stated, this study explored five experiences of an argument writing project across two years in secondary English classrooms in rural schools in the Pacific Northwest. The unit of analysis was the argument writing project, individually experienced as opposed to explored as a unified body over time. This unit – *the individual project experience* – encapsulates the totality of student writing related to each argument project iteration, the teachers' instructional strategies, curricular materials, and project artifacts, and the teacher and student perceptions of and responses to each project iteration. The argument writing project experience was chosen as the unit of analysis because it best represents holistic activity, as my research questions require exploration of student writing for language use, teacher and student perceptions of and responses to elements of the project, and teacher and student conceptualization of their rural context.

Previous studies (e.g., Matsumara & Wang, 2014) utilized a similar research design, designating *experiences* as the means to explore multiple iterations of a project in which only some members participated across years and other variability exists. I chose to explore the argument writing projects as experiences instead of case studies (Yin, 2014) because of the variability present across key elements of the five experiences. In particular, one teacher from the first year (when three project experiences occurred) retired before the second year began (and when the following two project experiences occurred). Further, no students under study participated across the two years. Conceptualizing each project as an experience allows for comparison across experiences

(following Matsumara & Wang, 2014), though analysis is more flexible because of differing bounds. Because of this design choice, I provide rich descriptions of the different project iterations when presenting the data and findings to be clear about context, teacher prior knowledge and experience, and instructional variation across project experiences. Further, I consider if and how participating in a second iteration affected teachers' and students' perceptions of and experiences of projects in the second year.

Sampling and Participants

The projects were planned and implemented by three teachers who collaborated through their participation in a rural network (see Introduction). Purposive sampling was used to identify the three teachers because of my (the researcher's) role in supporting the network and, in particular, working with the ELA job-alike group. Purposive sampling was then used by the teachers to identify the 36 student participants across the five project experiences. I had the teachers choose the student participants because of their strong relationships with the students and their knowledge of students' writing abilities. This knowledge allowed teachers to more effectively select a range of students to approximate the writing experiences and abilities in their classrooms (average, above average, below average). While these categories are imperfect, they were helpful to approximate the range of student writing to gain a sense of each project experience. Although this approach can result in a lack of consistency, the teachers collaborated to examine CCSS writing rubrics, as well as their own writing rubrics, to determine common expectations for student writing. Therefore, although the classroom ranges, themselves, may have been different, the teachers' interpretation of student writing

experiences and abilities were comparable. In the first year, the three teachers each chose

six students to participate. In the second year, the two teachers each chose nine students

to participate, the nine being different from the previous year's students (see project

experience designations in Table 3.1). The number of student participants per teacher

increased from six to nine in year two to ensure that a sufficient number of students were

included to allow for rich description, analysis, and interpretation to uncover both

patterns and complexities. Therefore, 18 students were involved each year, totaling 36

student participants (see Table 3.1 for an overview description of participants across

years and experiences).

Year 1			Year 2		
Project Experience Number	*Teacher*	*Students*	*Project Experience Number*	*Teacher*	*Students*
1	Betsy[1]	6 students (5 female; 1 male)	4	Betsy	9 students (6 female; 3 male)
2	Erin	6 students (2 female; 4 male)	5	Erin	9 students (4 female; 5 male)
3	Kate	6 students 4 female; 2 male	N/A	N/A	N/A

Table 3.1. Project Experience & Participant Overview

Argument Writing Project Description Overviews

The three English classrooms were composed of 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students,

though the majority were 10th and 11th grade students. For the three projects in the first

year, the argument topic asked students to adopt a stance toward 1:1 technology

implementation in their schools and write an argument with reasons and evidence to

convince a designated audience of their position. Different community-based audiences

were identified for each classroom as determined by the individual teacher, but audiences

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[1] All teacher, student, and school names are pseudonyms.

included school, district, or community members with whom the students interacted and directed their writing. Some interactions were direct, while others were indirect; additional details on the argument writing projects, including specific audience interactions, are provided in chapter four. The argument topic for the two projects in the second year had students adopt a stance on the use of drones, which could include private, public, or government use depending on the particular project and audience. The projects in the second year were implemented by two teachers, both of whom participated in the projects from the first year. While no formal professional development on argument writing, audience, or language occurred between project experiences, teachers reflected on their instruction and support of the first-year project, and examined and discussed their students' writing, paying particular attention to audience and language choice, to inform their project instruction in the year two experiences. As the ELA job-alike facilitator, I participated in some of these reflective discussions and provided the teachers with resources (related to both research and practice) as they reflected on the first iteration of the project and planned for the second year. Though I drew on language from appraisal theory and SFL in these discussions, I did not include the technical theoretical language when speaking with the teachers. The teachers did, however, develop a conceptual understanding of audience, including how students' may need to shift tone or voice, often described as a desire to be more formal. While the two teachers certainly may have grown across the two iterations (which will be addressed), no explicit intervention was utilized for look for specific growth or change within one teacher's project implementation.

Contexts

The three rural schools in which the argument projects occurred are categorized as remote (more than 25 miles from an urbanized area) by the US Department of Education. Two of the schools are located in one state in the Pacific Northwest; the third school is located in another state in the Pacific Northwest. Though the schools are all remote, they differ in their racial/ethnic composition, cultural practices, socioeconomic status, geographic characteristics, and school-community factors, including school funding, community relations, and economic drivers. Since elements of the rural contexts were central to the findings, chapter four discusses these factors, as well as students' demographic information, in greater detail. This information is supplemented by teacher and student reflections on their identity and residency in a rural context. Including teacher and student interview data in the construction of conceptualization of rural and description of the rural contexts counters a reductionist and generalized view of rural (Bartholomaeus et al., 2014) to provide detailed accounts of each rural context to situate each project experience, while also affirming the very real complexity and variation across contexts, regardless of their typology, which should be attended to in educational research.

"Thinking with Theory"

The process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation in this study was informed by, but did not replicate, the methodological approach of "thinking with theory" by Jackson and Mazzei (2012). Specifically, I used my sociocultural and appraisal theoretical orientations throughout my data collection, analysis and interpretation "to think *with* [my] data (or use data to think *with* theory) in order to accomplish a reading of

data that was both *within and against interpretivism*" (p. vii). Jackson and Mazzei

rightfully critique "mechanistic coding" (p. vii), arguing that following a coding-theme

approach to analysis of often-prescribed data sources (e.g., interviews) that does not

constantly consider the lenses and influences of omnipresent assumptions, biases, and

(both explicit and implicit) theoretical orientations does "little to critique the complexities

of social life; such simplistic approaches preclude dense and multi-layered treatment of

data" (p. vii). My aim in this study was to make a conscious and ongoing effort to be

aware of my theoretical orientations, to be transparent in my use of theory to make

methodological decisions for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and to

acknowledge the complexities of social phenomena, language, literacies, and human

identity and interaction.

In this study, this approach to thinking with theory was blended with a carefully

enacted plan for coding, memoing, and sense-making that provided me with multiple

opportunities to experience, review, and interpret the data to best respond to my research

questions and add my own understandings to the theoretical orientations that guided my

study. Therefore, I also drew from Charmaz's (2014) work on constructivist grounded

theory, which "highlights the flexibility of the [grounded theory] method and resists

mechanical applications of it" and "shred[s] notions of a neutral observer and value-free

expert" (p. 13). In doing so, Charmaz posits that "diverse researchers can use basic

grounded theory strategies such as coding [and] memo-writing" (p. 12), even without

utilizing the full methodological approach of grounded or constructivist grounded theory.

Building from Charmaz, I also referred to Saldaña (2016) to construct a systematic and

intentional coding strategy (described in greater detail below). However, an important

note regarding my use of both Charmaz and Saldaña is that I consciously avoided

mechanistic uses that could have prevented theory-informed introspections into deep and

complex data. Therefore, I enacted iterative and recursive coding, analysis, and

interpretation processes, as informed by my theoretical orientations and Jackson and

Mazzei (2012), to ensure that I was encountering and highlighting the complex nature of

the participants' experiences, their situated contexts, my research questions, and the data.

Research Question	Primary Corresponding Data Sources
How do students' language choices in argumentative writing reflect their awareness of audience in rural, secondary school contexts?	Student Writing Samples – 36 total (18 – Year 1; 3 Experiences) (18 – Year 2; 2 Experiences)

What happens to students' awareness of and response to audience, as well as their consideration of language choices, in argument writing when teachers collaborate to improve writing instruction?
  a. How do teachers implement a collaboratively designed argument writing project? What does instruction for audience and language look like?
  b. How do students respond to a collaboratively designed argument writing project? What is their experience of argument writing instruction, particularly for audience and language?
	a. Teacher Interviews – 5 total (3 – Year 1; 3 Experiences) (2 – Year 2; 2 Experiences) Project Artifacts
	
	b. Student Interviews – 18 total (18 – Year 2, 2 Experiences) Student Written Reflections

How do multiple rural contexts inform or influence audience awareness and interaction in secondary argument writing?
  a. How do multiple rural contexts influence the teachers' argument writing instruction, particularly for audience and language?
  b. How do multiple rural contexts affect the students' experience of argument writing instruction, particularly for audience and language?
	a. Teacher Interviews – 5 total (3 – Year 1; 3 Experiences) (2 – Year 2; 2 Experiences)
	
	b. Student Interviews – 18 total (18 – Year 2, 2 Experiences)

Table 3.2. Research Questions and Data Sources

Data Collection

Qualitative methods and my theoretical orientations were used to guide data

collection from five sources: student writing samples, student written reflections of the

project, semi-structured teacher interviews, semi-structured student interviews, and

artifact examination. Additionally, each research question was analyzed to determine

which available data sources would best assist in the answering of each question (see

Table 3.2). Writing samples from thirty-six students were collected across the argument

writing experiences, one from each student participant. Samples were composed digitally

using a word processor program (e.g., Microsoft Word). In year one of the collaborative

project, writing samples from six students were collected from each of the three argument

project experiences. In year two, writing samples from nine students were collected from

each of the two argument project experiences. While the intent of the methodology was

not to explicitly compare between years one and two, I chose to maintain equal number

of writing samples across years to ensure that a sufficient number of writing samples

would be analyzed to notice both patterns and unique features in the student writing. The

samples were taken from students' submitted final drafts of their argument writing. Final

drafts were submitted after an extensive process of drafting and revising, receiving

feedback from their respective teacher, and engaging in peer feedback activities with

students both from their own class, as well as students from the partnering classrooms

(delivered digitally). All writing drafts were posted and shared digitally using a learning

management system (LMS). In year one, students posted their writing and shared digital

peer feedback using the EdModo LMS. In year two, students shared using the Schoology

LMS. The teachers chose to switch from EdModo to Schoology because they were

utilizing Schoology as a digital platform to collaborate for other purposes through the

NW RISE network. Teachers created a private group within the LMS so that students

could participate in a safe and controlled environment as they drafted their writing and

gave feedback to one another. Additionally, the private nature of this group allowed the teachers to monitor interactions, postings, and feedback and provide support as necessary.

Students' written reflections of the projects were collected for one first-year experience and all second-year experiences to further explore students' perspectives of the process and experience of the argument project, including the elements of argument, audience, language, and teacher instruction. It should be noted, though, that written reflections across years and project experiences were quite brief. In the year one experience, reflections did not provide sufficient information to gain a deep understanding of students' perceptions of the argument writing project or audience. In the three year two experiences, though the reflections were still brief, they did not offer substantial new information beyond the student interviews. As described below, student interviews, which were added for year two data collection, provided the most insight into students' perceptions, helping to triangulate findings and themes.

Semi-structured teacher interviews (see Appendix B) were used to examine context (with a particular emphasis on rurality) and key elements of the argument project experience, including teacher instruction, considerations of and interactions with audience, and teacher perceptions of students' language choices. Five teacher interviews were conducted across the five project experiences – one interview per teacher after the completion of each project experience. Three interviews were conducted after the three project experiences in year one, while two interviews were conducted after the two project experiences in year two. Semi-structured student interviews (see Appendix C) were similarly used to examine context and the argument writing instruction, but also inquired into students' awareness of and response to audience, particularly as it informed

their language choices. Student interviews also inquired into student perceptions of their teachers' instruction and the argument writing project, itself. Student interviews were added for the last two project experiences after determining with the teachers that it would be beneficial to hear from the students directly to gain their understanding of their language choices in response to audience, their experience of the writing project, and their conceptualization and perception of their rural contexts. Further, from the perspective of research, student interviews provided important triangulation of findings and themes, instead of having to imagine, guess, or approximately interpret students' experiences, motivations, and thoughts when participating in the argument writing projects and making language choices in response to audience. Student argument writing drafts were referenced to guide questions in the student interviews, including asking students to consider if and how they had an awareness of their audience and how they made language choices in response to their particular audience. In total, eighteen student interviews were conducted after the last two project experiences in year two. This data source addition illustrates the iterative and discursive nature of qualitative research and substantiates the need for the projects to be explored as experiences instead of case studies. The development of interview protocols was guided by the research questions and the theoretical framework (see Table 3.3). For example, teacher interviews were necessary to conduct to explore their perceptions of their rural context, the argument writing project experiences, their instruction corresponding with the project, and their students' language choices with an awareness of and response to audience. Student interviews were necessary for similar reasons: to explore student perceptions of their

rural context, the argument writing project experience, and their language and writing choices with an awareness of and response to audience.

Last, project artifacts, including argument writing project instructions, prompts, and graphic organizers were collected, which provided additional insight into how the project was supported by the teachers and how students were encouraged to consider audience in their writing. Project artifacts were collected during and after the argument writing project via the learning management system (LMS), where teachers shared resources on a separate private page, accessible only to them, to be used during the project. Artifacts included writing prompts and directions, graphic organizers used during instruction, sample research and informational texts used as evidence, and rubrics. A summary of data collected, connected to year, project experience number, teacher, and student group is included below (see Table 3.4).

Research Question (RQs 2-3)	Sample Corresponding Teacher Interview Protocol Items	Sample Corresponding Student Interview Protocol Items

What happens to students' awareness of and response to audience, as well as their consideration of language choices, in argument writing when teachers collaborate to improve writing instruction?
    a.   How do teachers implement a collaboratively designed argument writing project? What does instruction for audience and language look like?
    b.   How do students respond to a collaboratively designed argument writing project? What is their experience of
	a. Can you describe how the argument writing project was created and carried out?
	Probe: What did you do as the teacher to introduce the project and support your students throughout the writing process?
	Probe: Was there a focus on the writer's audience in your instruction? Why or why not?
	Probe: Was there a focus on students' language choices in your instruction? Why or why not?
	
	Did students have an awareness of their writing audience during this project?
		b. Can you describe how you, as a student, participated in the argument writing project?
		Probe: Was there a focus on audience in the assignment? What was your audience? How did you interact with your audience?
		Probe: What helped to support you during the project? What challenges did you face?
		Probe: What did you learn about argument writing through this project? What else did you learn?
		
		Probe: Do you think it was important to think of your audience when writing this essay?

argument writing instruction, particularly for audience and language?		Probe: Why or why not? Probe: How did it affect your writing? Can you show me an example?

How do multiple rural contexts inform or influence audience awareness and interaction in secondary argument writing?
  a. How do multiple rural contexts influence the teachers' argument writing instruction, particularly for audience and language?
  b. How do multiple rural contexts affect the students' experience of argument writing instruction, particularly for audience and language?
	a. In general, when you hear of a "rural school," what kind of picture do you form in your head?
	Probe: What does the school look like? What do the students look like? How do they act? What do the teachers, administrators, and staff look like? How do they act?
	
	Would you describe your school as a rural school? Why or why not?
	Probe: What are benefits of teaching in a rural school? What are some of the challenges?
		b. In general, when you hear of a "rural school," what kind of picture do you form in your head?
		Probe: Does your school match the image you described earlier of a rural school, in general?
		Probe: What are benefits of being a student in a rural school? What are some of the challenges?

Table 3.3. Research Questions and Interview Protocols

Year 1			Year 2		
Project Experience Number	*Teacher*	*Students*	*Project Experience Number*	*Teacher*	*Students*
1	Betsy **1 Interview** **Instructional Artifacts**	6 students (5 female; 1 male) **6 Writing Samples**	4	Betsy **1 Interview** **Instructional Artifacts**	9 students (6 female; 3 male) **9 Writing Samples** **9 Interviews** **9 Written Reflections**
2	Erin **1 Interview** **Instructional Artifacts**	6 students (2 female; 4 male) **6 Writing Samples**	5	Erin **1 Interview** **Instructional Artifacts**	9 students (4 female; 5 male) **9 Writing Samples** **9 Interviews** **9 Written Reflections**
3	Kate	6 students	N/A	N/A	N/A

		4 female; 2 male			
	1 Interview	**6 Writing Samples**			
	Instructional Artifacts	**6 Written Reflections**			

Table 3.4. Participants and Data Collection

Data Analysis and Coding

Data analysis was conducted under two guiding processes. Student writing

samples were collected and analyzed from each argument project experience using

Brisk's (2015) modified argument analysis (see Appendices D & E). Student writing was

analyzed for structural and language features, adapting Brisk's argument guides for

secondary argument writing. These analysis guides highlight argument language,

purpose, and stages, as informed by appraisal theory, particularly examining the register

variables of field, tenor, and mode in light of the student-audience relationship (Martin &

White, 2005). There is also an emphasis on language use that affects how students

convey attitude, judgment, and engagement, in alignment with appraisal. Student writing,

in particular, was used to explore Research Question 1: *How do students' language

choices in argumentative writing reflect their awareness of audience in rural, secondary

school contexts?*, but also was used to examine how students' argument writing and, in

particular students' language choices in response to audience, related to student and

teacher interview responses and the teachers' instructional materials. Writing analysis

was done manually in electronic form. Student writing was transferred to Microsoft Word

documents and analyzed using Brisk's (2015) modified analysis forms, which also were

in electronic form. The Brisk analysis guides were amended to place developmentally-

appropriate attention on language features more characteristic of secondary argument

writing, including more careful selection and description of reasons and evidence in response, technical vocabulary related to the particular content, and appropriate use of language (and specifically register) variables to convey tenor and voice. The analysis guides indicate whether or not a student appropriately meets a genre or language standard, if revision is required, or if additional instruction and teacher support are necessary. Writing and analysis forms were reviewed in an iterative process and then were reviewed holistically to explore patterns, variations, and unique features. A shared analysis (Dodson, Piatelli, & Schmalzbauer, 2007) was utilized after initial analysis of student work to include teachers' perspectives on audience, language choice, and effective argument writing. Including teachers in the process of analyzing student argument writing illuminated teachers' understanding of appraisal and evaluation language (though they did not necessarily use the technical language of Martin & White, 2005), as well as their perceptions of how language choices were made in response to audience. Teachers' perceptions of their instructional support provided a deeper understanding of the role of the teacher in assisting students as they negotiated the relationship between audience and writing in the construction of arguments. Finally, teachers' perceptions of their rural settings provided a nuanced understanding of context and the opportunities and challenges to involve authentic audiences in their specific settings.

Teacher and student interviews, project artifacts, and student reflection data were analyzed through multiple rounds of coding using constant comparative analysis and analytic memo-writing (Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014; Saldaña, 2016). As described, this process of analysis was informed, in part, by Mazzei &

Jackson (2012), acknowledging that it was necessary to be attentive to my theoretical

orientations throughout the coding process. Although this approach did not involve

establishing specific codes before coding began, it did require intentional awareness that

the framing of the research questions and theoretical orientations utilized would likely

lead me toward specific codes; specifically, codes related to audience, language (as

framed by SFL and appraisal theory), and descriptions of students' rural contexts.

Merging this perspective with Saldaña (2016), I adopted the following perspective on

coding: "Coding requires that you wear your researcher's analytic lens. But how you

perceive and interpret what is happening in the data depends on what type of filter covers

that lens and from which angle you view the phenomenon" (Saldaña, 2016, pp. 7-8).

Guided by my theoretical orientation and research questions, I engaged in purposeful

rounds of coding in which I viewed the data through multiple perspectives, including

macro- and micro- lenses, participant voices, and relevant descriptors. For these data

sources, I used computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to assist

with my data organization and analysis. I transcribed the teacher and student interviews

in a Microsoft Word document using data-assist software to slow the audio to ensure

accurate transcription. I also reviewed the written transcription against the audio for

accuracy. I did rounds of coding in the written transcriptions and also imported the

transcripts in the CAQDAS program, Dedoose, to continue the coding iterations. Written

student reflections and artifacts were transferred into Microsoft Word documents, similar

to the student writing drafts, and then imported into Dedoose for coding. Following

Saldaña (2016), I utilized three elemental methods of coding across my coding iterations:

descriptive, In Vivo, and concept. Descriptive codes were primarily noun-based to

provide an "inventory of topics" when doing close, micro-readings of the data (p. 97). In Vivo codes were used to center participant voices and use their language as I noticed patterns. Finally, I used concept codes, primarily in initial and final iterations, to identify the "big picture," or macro-view of data selections (p. 97). I engaged in a "cyclical" act of coding, recognizing that it is appropriate, organic, and productive to analyze, interpret, and make sense of the data throughout collection and analysis because "coding *is* analysis" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 9). Throughout this process, I crafted analytic memos (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2016) to document my coding, analysis, interpretation, and sense-making. The memos were originally crafted in Microsoft Word, but were gathered in Dedoose, as well, all of which were dated and linked to the particular analytic or coding selection. The analytic memos were an essential element of considering how findings and themes related back to my research questions, informed final conclusions, and guided implications for practice, policy, research, and theory. Further, writing memos helped to recognize limitations of the study and areas for future research.

This iterative and recursive coding process allowed me to explore how the data related to the discussion of language and audience through appraisal theory. Further, it allowed for space to identify new elements within the data, particularly through participants' perspectives, which had the potential to inform the study's implications, namely when considering rural contexts. Codes were used to develop patterns, though again with the awareness that new codes or patterns had the potential to develop through multiple rounds of coding. Pattern and axial coding (Saldaña, 2016) were utilized to move from individual or cluster codes to themes. However, in keeping with Mazzei and Jackson (2012), I also maintained an intentional examination of unique or isolated

occurrences, which could highlight important omissions or re-framings of the theoretical lens that guided my analysis and sense-making. Themes and salient points were compared across teacher and student interviews, student written reflections, and student artifacts to identify broader patterns, particularly related to the exploration of Research Questions 2 and 3 (*What happens to students' awareness of and response to audience, as well as their consideration of language choices, in argument writing when teachers collaborate to improve writing instruction?; How do multiple rural contexts inform or influence audience awareness and interaction in secondary argument writing?*).

Together, these two forms of analysis served to provide a rich description of each of the five argument writing project experiences. Across analyses, sociocultural theory emphasized the importance of considering the individual and collective rural contexts, another lens I intentionally utilized throughout this process. Attention to context highlighted unique rural contextual factors, as well as teacher-level factors. For example, considering each teacher's unique rural context, the length of their participation in the NW RISE network, and their experience with the argument project were all factors related to a given teacher-participant's context to inform analysis.

Positionality

My role as both ELA job-alike co-facilitator and researcher was to provide support to the ELA secondary teachers, predominantly by providing resources (e.g., relevant research and instructional materials), coordinating virtual communication and digital sharing, and encouraging the teachers as they undertook their self-directed argument writing project. Although there was no formal professional development on language, audience, or writing administered before or during this project, the teachers and

I explored instructional practices for argument writing, as well as those for interacting with audience. As facilitator, I supported the teachers and the project by providing summaries of research on argument writing, audience, and language; providing argument writing mentor texts to be used during class instruction; and posting on digital platforms with recommendations for connecting students' language use to their respective audiences. These supports were largely introductory and practice-oriented, as opposed to focusing in-depth on linguistic factors (e.g., explaining different uses of modals through an SFL or appraisal lens). The teachers largely collaborated asynchronously online to participate in and enact the argument writing project for their students. However, virtual meetings were also held to allow for real-time conversation to concretely plan and schedule collaborative dimensions of the project, including digital peer feedback activities and to reflectively check in about instructional practices and student writing progress.

Though I served as facilitator, the collaborative argument writing project was initially conceived by the three teachers before I joined the ELA job-alike group. I moved forward with the study when the group learned of my research interests in writing, language, and audience and then encouragement me to collect data and study the nature and results of the project with them. The three teachers were never under an obligation to participate in research as a result of their participation in the ELA job-alike group. However, it is necessary to recognize and account for the potential that the teachers may have felt unintended pressures to participate given the network's collaboration with Boston College. For this reason, I took multiple and explicit efforts to inform the teachers of the research design (both in oral and written form), acquired the schools' and teachers'

informed consent (Appendix A), and made a deliberate effort to involve the teachers through member checks and collaborative discussions to ensure accuracy of data analysis and interpretation. Further, other secondary ELA teachers have since joined the ELA group and have pursued projects beyond argument writing; those who joined after these experiences were not invited to participate in this research, indicating that participation in research is not compulsory for those participating in the job-alike group.

The ELA job-alike group has, indeed, been a collaborative space built on trust. The participating teachers in the group have done their best to build relationships both personally and professionally. I have been included in this relationship-building process. While this process creates trust, which has been deemed central to the group's ability to carry out collaborative projects across state-lines and their isolated, rural contexts, these relationships can affect the research process. For example, relationships between the teachers and me may cause the teachers to feel compelled to participate. These relationships can also affect me as the researcher, creating bias or an unintended favorable lens of the projects or the participants due to positive relationships with the teachers. Therefore, I was intentional in involving the teachers in the research process through member checks and collaborative discussions to ensure transparency and accuracy of data analysis and interpretation, utilizing multiple interpretations of data instead of simply my own. To be proactive in engaging the teachers throughout this process, changes in the study design (e.g., adding student interviews) were discussed with the teacher participants and resulted from discussions about the need for greater student inclusion and voice. Teachers also had the opportunity between project iterations to discontinue their participation or to choose another project, as opposed to it being a pre-

determined component of the research design. After year one, though, the teachers expressed interest in continuing a second iteration of the argument writing projects and the study continued into a second year. While relationship-building may be related to potential bias, it has resulted in my having an interesting and valuable insider/outsider perspective which, when paired with an approach that includes participant voices during interpretation, yields thick description and careful analysis, interpretation, and sense-making.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge my background and experience. I am a former ELA middle school teacher and K-12 instructional coach, predominantly in urban schools serving students who were racially, culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse. Further, I have spent time as a doctoral student and researcher studying and exploring the SFL and appraisal theoretical perspectives and their influence on language and writing, particularly in school settings. These experiences provide me with certain outlooks on schooling, writing, and language that likely differ from other teachers, and particularly those participating in my study. I have been intentional in discussing my background and experience with the teacher participants. Further, I am aware that the teachers may not be conscious of a particular theoretical lens espoused via their instructional decisions. Therefore, I have made a conscious effort to use accessible language around this topic to reflect a reciprocal relationship of teaching and learning with the teachers and to maintain a collaborative role in this job-alike group. Though my background and experience may still influence my lenses, language, and work with the group, my hope is that my awareness will allow those interpreting and learning from this study to wisely consider their own backgrounds, experiences, potential biases, and issues

of context, culture, and community when interpreting this work or considering

implications for their own site of practice.

Overview of Presentation of Findings and Themes

The next two chapters systematically present the core findings and themes from

my study which emerged from the data collection and analysis process detailed in this

methodology chapter. I organized the findings and themes into four categories, each

category presenting numerous examples from the data to support the findings and themes

within. These findings and themes are then considered using my theoretical orientations

and the respective rural contexts of the experiences to present conclusive points from the

study that respond to and expand the research questions.

Chapter 4

Broader Experience Contexts, Rural Contexts, and Contexts of Situation

After completing data analysis, guided by my theoretical orientation and methodology plan as described in chapter three, I grouped the key findings and themes within and across project experiences, participants, and data sources into four categories. These categories are broader experience of contexts in rural schools, communities, and classrooms; context of situation; argument writing projects across experiences; and audience, language, and writing. The categories are hierarchically nested, illustrating that the themes under audience, language, and writing are situated within the argument writing projects. The argument writing projects, then, are situated within particular contexts of situation. Finally, the particular contexts of situation guiding the project experiences are situated within broader rural contexts (Figure 4.1). This structure follows a central tenet of SFL and appraisal theory that language exists in context. This figure of the categories incorporates elements of my conceptual framework presented in chapter two, but is now explicit framed using my theoretical framework and as supported by my data.
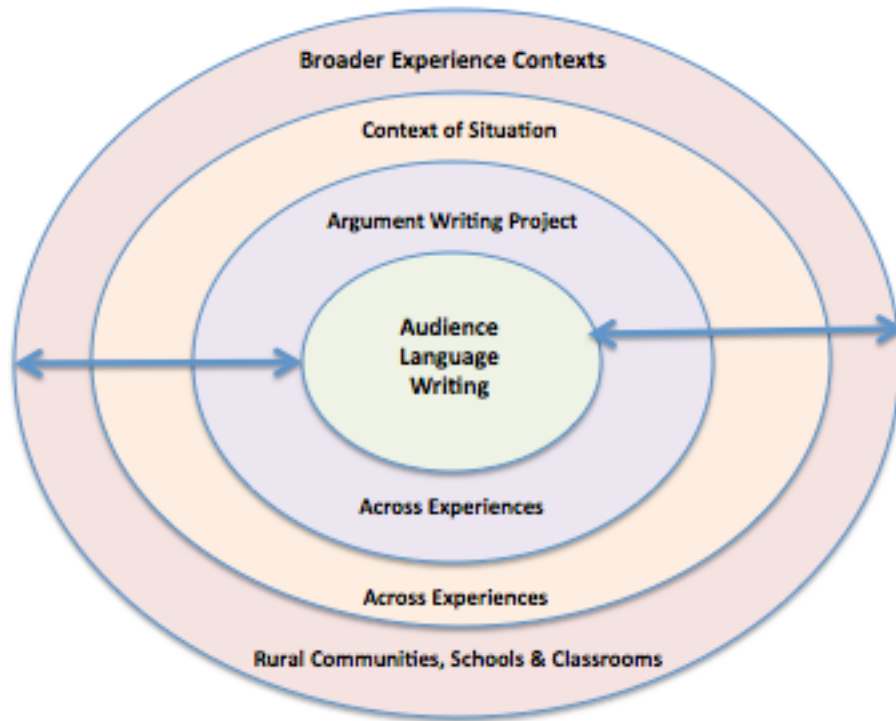
Figure 4.1. Categories of Findings and Themes

Within each category, findings are highlighted to illustrate the primary themes, as well as the notable exceptions that add nuance. While the four categories are offered to organize the themes, they should not be viewed as discrete. For example, themes on student writing are present across categories and attending to issues of context are addressed across categories. The first two categories, discussed in chapter four, are divided into two sections. First, the broader rural contexts and the contexts of situation are described briefly, organized by year and experience, to have a descriptive grounding to help situate and interpret the subsequent findings. Second, I present the themes from these categories to explore the issues of rurality and contexts of situation related to the project experiences. These themes are presented across years and project experiences to highlight the predominant patterns and the triangulation that occurred across data sources and project experiences, as well as the exceptions that add nuance. The themes are then

used to ground the further discussion of findings on the argument writing projects,

themselves, as well as the findings related to audience, writing, and language, found in

chapter five. The findings and themes are then used to answer the research questions in

chapter six through the lens of appraisal theory.

As themes are discussed within and across experiences in each category,

individual teacher and students will be referred to (see Table 4.1). For the purpose of

clarity and to avoid repetitive information in these sections, teachers and students are

followed with a number in parentheses [e.g., Devin (2)] to indicate the project

experience. Doing so also illustrates triangulation, as data sources from multiple

participants and experiences are often used to support a given theme. As noted, all

teacher, school, and student names are pseudonyms.

Year 1				Year 2			
Project Experience Number	*Teacher*	*School*	*Students*	*Project Experience Number*	*Teacher*	*School*	*Students*
1	Betsy	Mountain High	6 students (5 female; 1 male)	4	Betsy	Mountain High	9 students (6 female; 3 male)
2	Erin	Farmland	6 students (2 female; 4 male)	5	Erin	Farmland	9 students (4 female; 5 male)
3	Kate	Hillside	6 students 4 female; 2 male	N/A	N/A		N/A

Table 4.1. Project and Participant Overview

Broader Experience Contexts: Rural Communities, Schools, and Classrooms

Project Experience 1 – Mountain High

Betsy, one of the three teachers participating in the NW RISE rural collaborative

network in year one, was no stranger to rural schools or the Mountain High community.

She was born and raised in a rural community in which its members primarily made a

living in mining and timber. Betsy moved to Mountain High with her family because of the familiar rural context, but also because of the sense of community. Mountain High school was characterized by high teacher retention. As Betsy described, "the average person who had worked here had worked there for like 20 years." This sense of stability and commitment was important to Betsy when determining that Mountain High would be a good fit for her and her family. At the time of the year one project experience at Mountain High, Betsy was an experienced teacher at the school and the primary English teacher in the high school, wearing multiple hats and teaching multiple subject areas within the broader English / language arts department, including literature, speech and debate, and Advanced Placement (AP) classes.

Though isolated and small, Betsy viewed the Mountain High community as closely-related, with multi-generational families having made their living in mining and logging. Over the time she had spent at Mountain High, however, the community had become more transient due to decreasing employment opportunities and increased rates of poverty. Even with these changes, she described her school as "the hub of the community," with the school's sports teams and other activities bringing together students, families, and other community members.

The 11th grade students who Betsy chose to participate in the argument writing project were in a general English class, with many students in the class struggling with writing according to Betsy. The students were primarily White, except for two Japanese exchange students and one Mexican-American student. Most students, according to Betsy, came from low-income households; many lived with someone other than a parent. As described in chapter three, the subset of students who participated in this study was

chosen by Betsy. An overview of participating students' backgrounds and identities is found in Table 4.2. Note that the descriptors used in the table are those that were given either by the students or their teachers. Language background indicates the language or languages which the student spoke regularly or had spoken regularly while growing up, including at home, at school, or in their community.

Number	Name / Pseudonym	Sex	Grade Level	Race / Ethnic Background	Language Background
1	Caitlin	Female	11	White	English
2	Jennifer	Female	11	White	English
3	Jordan	Male	11	White	English
4	Kim	Female	11	Asian	Japanese / English
5	Sophia	Female	11	White	English
6	Victoria	Female	11	White	English

Table 4.2. Year 1 Mountain High Students

Project Experience 2 – Farmland

Similar to Betsy, Erin was no stranger to rural communities, had found a close community in Farmland, and had been teaching there for many years. She described the Farmland school, itself, as small with only 200-300 students from pre-K to grade 12. Farming was the major economic driver in the area and Erin explained that students' families typically either owned the farms or worked on the farms. Many students were from low-income backgrounds. Forty percent of the students at Farmland were Latino (predominantly Mexican-American), and many of those students spoke Spanish at home and acquired English as a second language as young children.

Erin portrayed the Farmland faculty as collegial and community-driven. She explained how this culture allowed for all teachers to have deeper knowledge of the

students saying, "we can work more closely as a staff because we know each other really well . . . so we can share knowledge about students because we're going to have the same students pass through our class year to year." She also described how she and other teachers at Farmland hold "multiple jobs" and wear "multiple hats," a necessity due to the nature of the small school and teaching staff.

Erin's 11th grade students participated in the argument writing project in year one. The participating students, chosen by Erin to be representative of the broader class, were in the one English class offered at that grade. Many of the students in this class came from low-income families, similar to the overall Farmland student population. A majority of students were White, but there were a number of Latino students, as well, again matching the Farmland student population. These Mexican-American students were bilingual, and though many of them acquired English as young children, some still encountered difficulties with the English language, particularly in school-based contexts. An overview of participating students' backgrounds and identities is found in Table 4.3.

Number	Name / Pseudonym	Sex	Grade Level	Race / Ethnic Background	Language Background
1	Carlos	Male	11	Mexican-American	Spanish / English
2	Devin	Male	11	White	English
3	Gabriel	Male	11	Mexican-American	Spanish / English
4	Grace	Female	11	Native American / White	English
5	Robert	Male	11	White	English
6	Susanna	Female	11	Mexican-American	Spanish / English

Table 4.3. Year 1 Farmland Students

Project Experience 3 – Hillside

Kate's journey to a rural school was less linear than Erin or Betsy. She had lived in highly-populated urban and suburban communities with her family. Eventually, though, her family chose to move to the Hillside community, where she and her husband found job opportunities. Once moved to Hillside, Kate became a long-standing and committed member of the Hillside community. She indicated, though, that Hillside was different from many rural communities and schools, including those in the NW RISE network. She called it "unique," citing the larger number of middle class families, larger number of parents with a tertiary degree, and lower number of families living in poverty. Many of her students' parents worked in a small city approximately 20 miles away and some worked at one of three universities within 50 miles. But as Kate described, some jobs, particularly in the farming industry, were starting to leave the Hillside community: "many of the children's families used to be farmers, but over the 20-some years I've taught there, there are fewer and fewer farming children." Though some families suffered from unemployment and some students did live in poverty, the Hillside community as a whole was more resourced than the typical rural communities in the NW RISE network. Hillside's demographics and community resources resulted in more opportunities to support the school. Kate said that Hillside was "so lucky to pass bond [similar to a levee for school funding] this year, every year," explaining that the Hillside community actively voted to add funding to support the school.

The 11th grade students that Kate chose to participate in the project, similar to the other students in year one project experiences, had long-established relationships with one another and were in the one English class offered at that grade level. Kate described

that these relationships meant that students "were familiar with each other's quirks, as well as their strengths." Some of her students in this class came from low-income families, but most came from middle class backgrounds. Many parents traveled to work in the nearby small city or to the universities within driving distance. All participating students' were White and spoke English. An overview of participating students' backgrounds and identities is found in Table 4.4.

Number	Name / Pseudonym	Sex	Grade Level	Race / Ethnic Background	Language Background
1	Alex	Male	11	White	English
2	Jacob	Male	11	White	English
3	Caity	Female	11	White	English
4	Leah	Female	11	White	English
5	Marie	Female	11	White	English
6	Shannon	Female	11	White	English

Table 4.4. Year 1 Hillside Students

Project Experience 4 – Mountain High

The rural context at Mountain High was largely unchanged between years one and two, as demonstrated by Betsy's responses in her second interview. However, this interview did provide more details about the causes behind some of the economic hardships, and related issues of transiency, in the community. She described how efforts to save the spotted owl effectively ended job opportunities in timber and the US Forest Service, which increased unemployment:

They found this owl called the spotted owl in the forest and ecologists, scientists, did studies and found that the clear-cutting that was done was destroying the habitat of the spotted owl, so a lot of that was forced to be scaled back. So the

forest service office closed, the mills were closing. It was just lately, too, that it

wasn't that that was causing the spotted owl to decrease, it was a predator, another

bird, a falcon or hawk.

These economic events are important contextual details to better understand the changing

economy in Mountain High and the resulting effects on students, families, and the school.

Betsy shared that it was for reasons like unemployment caused by the response to spotted

owl that increased unemployment, increased transiency, and increased the number of

students moving around and staying with various family members.

Students, themselves, did not share much about the local economy, nor about their

familial situations. Several students did express that they had recently moved to the area,

though reasons for moving were generally omitted. Similar to year one participants from

Mountain High, all participating students in year two were White and many came from

low-income backgrounds. A major difference, though, present in this project experience

is that Betsy worked with her ninth and tenth grade English class in year two. After the

first year, Betsy determined that the argument writing project would better serve the

needs of and better match the writing curriculum and standards for her ninth and tenth

grade students. Because two project experiences were included in year two, instead of

three in year one, nine students participated from each school. An overview of

participating students' backgrounds and identities is found in Table 4.5.

Number	Name / Pseudonym	Sex	Grade Level	Race / Ethnic Background	Language Background
1	Aubrey	Female	9	White	English
2	Cassie	Female	9	White	English
3	Hannah	Female	9	White	English

4	Lizzy	Female	9	White	English
5	Lucas	Male	10	White	English
6	Maggie	Female	9	White	English
7	Mason	Male	9	White	English
8	Noah	Male	9	Black / White	English
9	Zoey	Female	10	White	English

Table 4.5. Year 2 Mountain High Students

Project Experience 5 – Farmland

The rural context of Farmland was largely unchanged between years one and two, as demonstrated by Erin's responses in her interview. Erin's second interview, however, did provide more details about Farmland's larger number of Latino, Mexican-American students compared to other rural schools and communities in NW RISE. She explained saying, "I think we're pretty typical [as a rural school], but we do have a fairly high Hispanic population, which I think sets us apart." Though the Mexican-American community was more transient in the past when many parents worked as migrant farmworkers and moved their families, Erin described how the Mexican-American community had become "less of a migrant population, so now many of our families are pretty much staying here, rather than moving" and had become a permanent and important entity within the greater Farmland community. Erin described how she and others at Farmland worked to ensure that Latino students and families felt welcome by keeping in contact with families, supporting the Future Hispanic Leaders of America student group, and working with parents to support students as they applied to college.

Erin chose her 11th grade students again to participate in the argument writing project for the year two experience. Similar to the students from Mountain High,

Farmland students did not share much information about their backgrounds during their interviews. According to Erin, and similar to year one students from Farmland, many of the students in this class came from low-income families. A majority of students were White, but there were a number of Latino students, as well. Again, these Mexican-American students were bilingual, and though many of them acquired English as young children, some still encountered difficulties with the English language, particularly in school-based contexts. An overview of participating students' backgrounds and identities is found in Table 4.6.

Number	Name / Pseudonym	Sex	Grade Level	Race / Ethnic Background	Language Background
1	Alicia	Female	11	Mexican-American	Spanish / English
2	Amanda	Female	11	White	English
3	Chloe	Female	11	White	English
4	Derek	Male	11	White	English
5	Elliott	Male	11	White	English
6	Emilia	Female	11	Mexican-American	Spanish / English
7	Liam	Male	11	Mexican-American / White	English
8	Juan	Male	11	Mexican-American	Spanish / English
9	Sammy	Female	11	Mexican-American	Spanish / English

Table 4.6. Year 2 Farmland Students

Themes Across Rural and Experience Contexts

Across the five project experiences, five distinct themes emerged in the broader experience contexts category, focusing on the rural nature of the communities, schools, and classrooms. First, many participants described their rural school and community as a place where "you know everybody and everybody knows you." This recurring quote (an

In Vivo code), which developed into a central theme, illustrates the nature of relationships in rural community and schools, which as the participants explained, had both beneficial and challenging aspects. The second theme, related to the first, is that some students in these rural schools and communities perceived or experienced issues of mixed belongingness, in part due to the changing nature of their communities. The third theme demonstrates how, regardless of their sense of belongingness, all students expressed the recognition of and gratitude for their teachers' intentional relationships with students, which were described by many students to have an impact that improved their learning. The fourth theme identifies how teachers, though they are committed to their students, are often pulled in multiple directions and forced to wear multiple hats to keep the school functioning. Last, the fifth theme acknowledges the challenges of attending a small, isolated school as both students and teachers expressed the limitations in opportunities present in their schools. Though the students and teachers described these challenges candidly, many concluded with an attitude of resilience and resourcefulness, identifying how most in these rural schools and communities were doing the best with the resources and opportunities available to them.

"You know everybody and everybody knows you."

In our first interview after participating in the first argument writing project, Betsy (1) stated that "you know everybody and everybody knows you" in her rural school and community of Mountain High. She laughed as she made the comment, indicating the multiple layers of meaning within the quote, which became an important theme. Betsy (4) expanded on how this idea of knowing everyone was born from her own experience:

I grew up rural . . . everybody knows your name. I remember growing up in my

small community, people knew who I was and I had no idea who they were. But

it's true – everybody knows everybody. And everybody knows everybody's

business, which is where things can go awry.

Erin's (5) description of her experience teaching at and living in Farmland centered

around images of the family and the familiar. When visualizing Farmland as a rural

school, she said, "I see kind of a close-knit school, more informal, kind of, laid-back

atmosphere, where everyone knows everyone and it's very family, has a family feel. So I

always call my students my kids." This idea of "everyone knows everyone" emerged, in

part, from Erin's close relationships with individual students, as well as their families,

including siblings that she may encounter in the future. Though she predominantly taught

eleventh and twelfth grade students, she knew almost every student in the school and said

that "by the time they come to me as juniors and seniors, I definitely know who they are,

I probably taught their siblings."

"Everybody knows everybody," was common in interviews with students, as well.

Cassie, Hannah, Mason, Noah, and Zoey (4) all expressed this sentiment, acknowledging

both the positive and negative elements of familiarity in their community of Mountain

High. Students at Farmland also shared that "everyone knows everyone." Alicia,

Amanda, Chloe, Elliott, Liam, and Sammy (5) all articulated this statement directly, often

invoking images of family, similar to their teacher, Erin. Liam (5) highlighted the

supportive nature of the community, ranging from supporting school sports to teachers

taking extra measures to support students: "All of the teachers know each other,

everybody knows each other, if you need help out of school, your teachers are there for you." Sammy (5) added language describing Farmland as a family:

> We're like a family here. Our class advisor, our homeroom, says she feels like our mom because she says we act like brothers and sisters around here. We argue, we love each other. I think that's really nice about here, because it's all one big family. Even if they're not your own teachers, you know them. You know them outside of school and in school.

This theme of the familiar and familial relationships across rural contexts and project experience contexts provides a key foundation for understanding interpersonal relationships in student writing, understanding of audience, and language use discussed later in the findings.

Belongingness and changing rural communities.

Though everyone may have known everyone, the actual nature of relationships in rural schools and communities were revealed to be more complex and nuanced. The nature of these relationships, in turn, affected the perceived and experienced belongingness, a phenomenon described by both teachers and students. Additionally, the nature of rural communities and schools being small and isolated also affected students' perceptions and experiences of belongingness.

Students, particularly those who were not lifelong residents of Mountain High, said that attending a small, isolated, rural school limited the opportunity to meet students with diverse interests. For example, Zoey (4) shared that, "there's less kids, so you have less people who are interested in that kind of thing [speech and debate], so you have less

opportunity be involved in stuff like that." Lizzy (4) framed this challenge as an issue with socialization and belongingness:

> There are also not enough people to, let's say there's someone who ends up being mean to you and you don't really want to hang out with them anymore, you don't really have much of an option because everyone is kind of together and so if one person doesn't like you, you're kind of pushed out.

Cassie (4) echoed this point saying, "if you don't get along with the people here, you don't get to meet new groups, because everybody here is pretty much the same general group of people." While some of these sentiments may be characteristic of adolescent socialization and relationships, it is important to note that these students identified these issues as specific to their rural school experience, illustrating that contextual elements may be at play or at least were articulated as such by the students.

Similar to students at Mountain High, and acknowledging the many positive relationships present in Farmland, students at Farmland described the rural school and community context as complex and sometimes problematic. For example, Alicia (5) described that it could be "hard [for some students] to fit in" and Chloe (5) described that "there [was] a lot of drama present," in part because of the small nature of the school and community and "everyone knowing everyone." Though not explicitly discussed by students, Erin (2, 5) described the dynamic of some students' parents owning the farms in Farmland, while other students' parents worked on the farm. Additionally, Erin's discussion of efforts to welcome and support students from the Mexican-American community, even though this community had become less transient and more stable, suggested that there may still have been tensions amongst member groups in the

Farmland community. Though there are insufficient data to support this claim, it is a factor that was alluded to and deserves further examination, potentially adding another layer of complexity when considering how the project experiences were situated within the Farmland context.

In her interview, Betsy (4) added layers of complexity to her conceptualization of relationships in a rural place based on her own experiences:

> I think that small communities can be more accepting in some ways, and in some ways not. Because they're so small and everybody knows everybody and a lot of people are related to each other, when you have different kinds of people socially, they're still accepted by the community because they're somebody's uncle or aunt.

Betsy (4) illustrated that members of rural communities had to negotiate cordial relationships with others by mere necessity of regular interaction. Interviews with Betsy's students supported this point, but also added questions of relational depth and superficiality. For example, Maggie (4) shared that

> you could be close to someone, but not know what's going on with them. I think it reflects both the school and the community. You could say that you're really close to someone . . . but still not know their living situations or how their parents are or even who their parents are.

Again, the issue of lifelong residency in Mountain High is applicable. For example, Cassie and Lizzy (4) both expressed that lifetime residents of Mountain High might be less attuned to the perceived superficial nature of relationships. Lizzy (4) shared that "I

think that some people may not realize because they haven't experienced anything else, so they think they're friends here," while Cassie (4) added:

> I feel like it's easier for us to notice [the superficial relationships] since we've had a different experience. But I feel like a lot of people just think that it's normal and it's normal interactions because they haven't had the other experiences.

This idea of "normal" is important to unpack, as conceptualizations appear to differ across community members. While students like Cassie and Lizzy (4) see some relationships in Mountain High as superficial, and thus problematic, Betsy and others who have lived there for an extended period of time or their entire lives see the relationships as negotiated and necessary to forming an inclusive community rooted in familial support. For instance, Maggie (4) described Mountain High as "really small and [where] everybody's really close. There's not an entire world between a person. I know you, I know your family. You know everyone without having to talk to them." Here, the themes of everyone knowing everyone and belongingness merge. Even without verbal interaction or pleasantries, a sense of community is developed and maintained in these small and isolated rural spaces.

As described earlier, some of the rural communities, particularly in Mountain High, were experiencing changes in population caused by job loss and, related, students moving among family members. The changes experienced when moving to a rural community also affect students' perceptions and experience of belongingness. For example, Noah (4) described moving from an urban center to Mountain High saying, "When I first moved up here, it was weird. I was used to living in the city and stuff and then I moved up here and it's pretty much living out in the woods." While not explicitly

describing the reason for the move, he and other students confirmed Betsy's point that students have become more mobile and transient, as opposed to having a more stable student population of lifelong residents.

Though not expressed by many students, Maggie (4) highlighted an important point about the potential role of belongingness and student familiarity on learning in the classroom. She explained that, "being able to be comfortable with people, there's the people who don't understand that you're learning and not there to just have fun all the time." Though not all students were lifelong residents of Mountain High, both Betsy (4) and the students indicated that the nature of their small rural school and community resulted in comfort and familiarity between students and others. Erin (5) echoed this point, describing how the phenomenon of "everyone knowing everyone" can result in an "informal" or "laid-back" learning atmosphere. While issues of the familial and familiar were central, it must be recognized that students likely experienced changing and complex experiences of belongingness, which also would affect their experience of learning, including in the argument writing project.

Teacher-student relationships and learning.

Just as experiences of community and belongingness were mixed, teacher and student relationships in small, rural communities resulted in both benefits and challenges. Overwhelmingly, though, teachers and students saw teacher-student relationships as positive with beneficial impacts on student learning. For example, Erin (2) saw this sense of community to be an asset in her teaching saying:

> I really get to know my students. I know about their parents, where they come
> from, their dogs, everything. And I feel like that way I can get a little bit more

direct instruction time with them in the classroom. I can call their parents and feel

comfortable about that because I know the parents, I see them at the store daily.

Betsy (4) also recognized the importance of relationships and how these

interactions occurred across school and community contexts:

You get to build closer relationships to kids because you're all part of the same

community. In a small community, you'll see them [students] not just once a day,

maybe you'll teach them a couple of times a day. You'll see them in the halls and

talk to them, and you'll see them at extracurricular activities at school, but then

you'll see them in the community because you may go to the same church that

they go to or to the same civic club that they go to, or to another community

events like the local loggers jubilee days or parades and see them there and their

families, or in the grocery store. So it's more that we're all part of the community,

instead of just I'm your teacher and I teach you these 50 minutes.

Students experienced these relationships across contexts, as well, viewing teachers as a

support that existed beyond the walls of school. As Sammy (5) explained, "most of my

teachers, they say I can text them if I have a problem, or e-mail them, or call them. It's a

very small school, so you can have these close relationships with your teachers."

Beyond relationships across school and community contexts, students explained

how attending a small, rural school meant more one-on-one time with the teacher,

allowing for more deep and focused learning to take place. Several students at Mountain

High highlighted the importance of this "one-on-one time" between them and Betsy.

Aubrey, Hannah, Lizzy, Maggie, and Zoey (4) all referenced "one-on-one time," and

described how having access to their teachers allowed them to ask questions when

necessary and to feel generally supported in their learning. Students at Farmland, like Amanda (5), also explained the benefits of "one-on-one time" saying, "well it's nice because we have a small class. So if we ever need help, there aren't very many other kids that also need help so you can get help pretty fast from [Erin] or any other teacher." Further, Liam (5) described how the nature of the relationships increased student motivation and engagement saying:

> The teachers all know us . . . they know our capabilities and what we can do so they push us hard to reach that expectation . . . When we're not performing to our best, they push us even more to get to that spot. And that's what I like about going to school here, because they know we can do better and they push us.

Here, Liam described teacher-student relationships as having a concrete impact on his engagement and learning, connecting factors of the community directly to his learning experiences. While teacher support was widely cited as a benefit of Farmland, Emilia (5) also shared that a distinguishing characteristic for her is that "students help out each other. All students want to see each other succeed." Thus, collaborative practices among both teachers and students created a positive learning environment in which both groups aimed for collective success.

"One-on-one time" was often described in contrast to what students perceived or previously experienced to be the nature of learning environments at larger, urban schools. For example, Zoey (4) shared that "there's less kids [at Mountain High], so it's easier for teachers to focus on students and to be able to help them specifically instead of having a lot of kids that they would have to deal with." Lizzy (4) described the positive effect in personal terms: "Having smaller classes means more one-on-one time with the teachers

so I can understand things better, so I learn more." Lizzy offered this comment in relation

to her previous experience in a large, urban school. She moved to Mountain High in

middle school and previously lived in the southern region of the US. Lizzy emphasized

that the closer relationships at Mountain High influenced the curriculum, instruction, and

general attitude toward learning saying,

> I definitely feel like the teachers try to focus on your education more than at my
>
> old school. In [southern state], all it was was trying to get you to learn how to do a
>
> test throughout the entire year and then after you took it you could just relax in
>
> class and not have to do anything. Whereas here, it's more like you have to learn
>
> this and it can help you in the future. They do focus on the test, but they also
>
> focus on more of the life part of it.

Lizzy perceived the difference in educational approaches as an issue of context and found

that her new rural school in Mountain High was much more focused on her learning and

overall growth.

Importantly, teacher-student relationships were not viewed entirely as beneficial.

While Betsy (1) discussed the close relationships with teachers and students, she also

shared that teachers and students can be detrimentally labeled, affecting the nature of

these relationships and making them more difficult to navigate. Kate (3) used similar

language, describing how small, rural schools can sometimes "pigeon-hole" students or

teachers into being labeled a particular way. Because "everyone knows everyone," it

often became difficult to change perceptions, an issue facing both teachers and students

and potentially inhibiting relationships that could affect student learning.

Further, Erin (5) identified that the familial and familiar nature of relationships at times resulted in an "informal" or "laid-back" learning atmosphere. While these characterizations are not necessarily negative and often reflect positive relationships, the unique nature of familiarity in rural schools may have resulted in students feeling overly-comfortable and less willing to engage in the particular type of work occurring in school settings. While insufficient data exist to substantiate this point, this issue of familiarity in relationships and the learning environment presents implications to consider when examining the argument writing project.

The challenge of teachers' multiple hats.

Erin (2) explained that the work of being in a small, rural school necessarily involved "multiple jobs" and wearing "multiple hats." Betsy (4) also expressed these challenges, describing how she served in multiple teaching capacities, a reality that allowed her to build relationships with many students, but also prevented her from specialization: "you kind of have to become a jack-of-all-trades teacher. You can't just have a focus and specialize. I have to teach speech and debate, American lit, 9-10 English, maybe even junior high. And every year that can change." In many ways, it was participation in a collaborative project like the argument writing project through the NW RISE network that allowed Betsy to feel that she was able to reflect on and improve particular elements of her practice, instead of potentially succumbing to a form of paralysis from being overwhelmed with her multiple roles and responsibilities.

Students recognized the challenges that teachers faced and expressed appreciation for their efforts. For example, Juan (5) described how teachers at Farmland like Erin often exerted extra effort to improve their teaching and their students' learning. He said,

"the teachers work harder in rural schools [like Farmland] because they have to write grants on their own time. We have so many teachers that write grants . . . because they want more stuff in their class." Because of a limited amount of opportunities and resources, teachers must become innovative and resourceful. In many ways, participating in the NW RISE network is an extension of this attitude, as well. Though pursuing grants or participating in a network added to the number of hats that these teachers were wearing, these efforts were noticed by students as intentional initiatives to improve their learning, demonstrating care and ingenuity.

Opportunities and resources: Challenges in rural schools.

While students recognized the extra efforts exerted by teachers like Betsy, Erin, and Kate, it is important to name the challenges present in rural schools and to recognize how they may play a role in the broader context that affected the argument writing projects and student learning. Betsy (1) described the isolation of teaching in a rural school and living in a rural community like Mountain High. She framed isolation by proximity stating, "Rural is where the nearest Wal-Mart or McDonald's is over an hour away, and usually over a mountain pass to get there." Aside from experiencing relative isolation, the main challenges took the form of a lack of resources of opportunities at school.

Erin indicated that isolation and living in a community facing the challenges of poverty had material impacts on school resources:

You know, we don't have a lot of resources. So that's probably one of the

negatives of working in a small rural school is, you know, we don't have the

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money to purchase all of the technology, and the textbooks, and the books that
other larger schools have.

Liam (5), one of Erin's students, was conscious of the material deficit saying, "I mean, funds definitely [are an issue]. We're not like the richest school or anything like that." At the same time, Kate's (3) recognition of her school's "unique" predominantly middle class population and their ability to pass bonds meant fewer challenges with material resources. Other challenges related to isolation still were present, but Kate did not identify insufficient funds or resources as a pervasive issue at Hillside.

Students also recognized that having fewer students in the school resulted in fewer course or activity offerings. For example, Cassie (4) shared that "there are less classes, like less options, there's only one language here and they don't have drama and all of these extra clubs. You get the bare minimum of class opportunities." Zoey (4) echoed this point, offering a contrast to her previous school which was in a larger town that had more resources: "There's not as many opportunities as there would be in a larger school. Like, we don't have a competitive speech and debate team which was pretty cool in my old school." Similar to the students at Mountain High, Farmland students, including Chloe, Derek, Elliott, Liam, and Sammy (5), identified issues of funding and opportunity as challenges. As Derek (5) shared, "I really like art and music, and both of those programs got cut." Sammy expanded on this point saying,

You just might not have as many electives or as many opportunities. Like, I know
I have to take a lot of the agriculture, welding, or shop classes because that's what
is offered here. But I would have liked to have taken art or music.

Limitations were not merely a result of size or access to resources. Hannah (4) also indicated that relative isolation was a barrier to opportunities saying, "I think a lot of schools do have more opportunities than we do because we live so far away from things. Some schools have more money or more stuff [that] they can do." Students also identified that limited resources or opportunities extended to the rural community of Mountain High. Lucas (4) stated that, "there's not very much around here," and Mason added, "outside of school it's pretty boring because there's nothing really to do." In response to these challenges, Hannah expressed an attitude to cope with the range of limitations with no easy remedy on the horizon stating, "I think we just manage with what we have."

Summary of Rural and Experience Context Themes

In summary, teacher and student voices described a diverse and varied account of the broader rural and experience contexts. "Everyone knows everyone," but the nature of these relationships were perceived and experienced differently, from seeing them as necessary for community sustainability to superficial illusions. Feelings of belongingness were complex for students, especially those who were not lifelong residents, and influenced how students perceived relationships at school and in the community. Relationships, though, were at the heart of the schools under study and were widely cited as having a positive impact on student learning. Though the size and nature of the schools and communities may limit or negatively affect relationships, positive relationships largely undergird the work and interactions in rural schools like Farmland, Hillside, and Mountain High.

As documented, challenges were present in these rural schools, especially concerning resources and opportunities. In spite of the challenges present, though, teachers and students maintained a spirit of determination, illustrated by Erin (5) saying, "But, you know, we are able to accommodate our students as much as possible." The teachers recognized the challenges involved, but wore multiple hats, wrote grants, and participated in a collaborative network like NW RISE, all to better serve their students. Some students also expressed this attitude, affirming that the benefits of attending a small, rural school far outweighed the challenges. For example, Liam (5) explained his sentiments saying, "I feel like we have more opportunity to do more things even though we're small . . . I feel like we're just the perfect size where everybody knows each other."

The themes present in this outermost category of broader rural and experience contexts serve to situate the remaining theme categories. Within each rural and experience context is the next category, the particular context of situation. This category includes a description of the project, including the purpose, topic, audience, and form, as well as details of students' relevant background knowledge and experiences that affected their participation in the argument writing project. Then, themes are identified and explored to illustrate the similarities and differences across project experiences by using a context of situation framework.

Context of Situation

As described in the theoretical framework in chapter two, context of situation is used to frame how language is used in a particular contextual event. Therefore, before addressing the categories of the argument writing projects and the audience, writing, and language themes present within the project experiences, the context of situation across

each project experience must be identified and explored. As guided by SFL and described by Eggins (2005), "register theory describes the impact of dimensions of the immediate context of situation of language," (p. 9) register being a central element in argument writing as described in appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005). These three dimensions of register impacting the immediate context of situation are field, tenor, and mode. But these terms take on unique meaning within the particular context of the argument writing project experiences. Here, field refers to the argument writing project topic and the ideational content at hand, which although linked by a common topic was taken up differently by individual students within project experiences. Tenor refers to the interpersonal relationship between writer and audience, and importantly the prior knowledge and previous experiences of the writer, the particular role and nature of the audience, and the manner in which the students perceived their audience. Mode refers to the particular form of the argument. While all of the argument writing projects were in written form, the forms differed depending on the particular articulation of the writing purpose, topic, and audience.

Project Experience 1 – Mountain High

The field, or topic, for the Mountain High students' argument in year one was 1:1 technology, which was common across all three project experiences in year one. The prompt asked students to adopt a stance toward 1:1 technology implementation in their schools and write an argument with reasons and evidence to convince a designated audience of their position. This prompt was used across the three project experiences in year one. The tenor was influenced by the audience to which the writing was directed. For this experience, the audience was the Mountain High district's technology

committee, consisting of the district superintendent, school principal, select teachers, and the school's technology director. Students would have been familiar with these individuals, though individual perceptions and relationships were not able to be inquired into due to the lack of student interview data in year one project experiences. The potential adoption of 1:1 technology was a current and relevant topic for Betsy and her students as her district and school were actively considering 1:1 adoption. This real-life topic and purpose influenced how Betsy's students conceptualized and perceived of their audience.

Betsy also shared that argument writing, as framed by the CCSS, was new for many of her students. Before the CCSS adoption, Betsy's emphasis had been on persuasive writing, in which students explored the use of pathos, or emotion, to persuade. But with this argument project, Betsy described "a shift," moving more towards the use of logos in argument and "not using as much emotion . . . but instead bringing the facts, the experts to the table to make your point." This shift also meant that students were relative novices with argumentative writing, though they would be familiar with some of the features and strategies. The mode was an argument that was to be directed at the technology committee. Though the form was not explicitly a letter, it was to be written as a text shared with the committee in the hopes of convincing them to take a particular stance on 1:1 adoption grounded in reasons and evidence. Additionally, the mode required the use of research to find appropriate points to serve as evidence.

Project Experience 2 – Farmland

Similar to Mountain High, the field for the Farmland argument writing project was 1:1 technology. The tenor was influenced by the intended audience, which for Erin's

class was a local community member who was potentially interested in supporting the 1:1 initiative financially, particularly because their community recently failed to pass a levee (or bond) to fund a broad array of initiatives at the school, including technology. Unfortunately, information about student's prior knowledge or previous experiences with 1:1 technology, as well of their perceptions of and relationships with their audience is not available, again because of the lack of student interview data. Reflecting on her students' prior knowledge and previous experiences with argument and writing, Erin shared that her students' writing experiences were not particularly strong in the previous year. She was one of two English teachers at the school and she noted that "the kids, their writing experience the year before, they didn't get much," both in terms of learning about the argument genre, but also speaking more broadly about writing support. She expanded on her students' prior knowledge and experience, citing that students had done "a little bit of persuasive writing, I think, in the 8th grade, but that's about it. And they really hadn't done any research." Erin also noted that the timing of the project affected students' prior knowledge, saying that "this was our first major writing assignment for the class, so it really tested their knowledge and their abilities." The mode, similar to Mountain High, was not an explicit letter, but was supposed to be written as an essay, grounded in reasons and evidence, shared with the audience to convince them of their particular stance on 1:1 technology and, for this particular audience, arguing whether or not 1:1 technology deserved funding and support.

Project Experience 3 – Hillside

The broader context of situation for project experience three at Hillside, affecting field and tenor in particular, was influenced by a unique circumstance. Hillside had just

implemented 1:1 technology use at the start of the school year. Like Mountain High and Farmland, the field for the Hillside argument writing project was also 1:1 technology. However, the topic and prompt, while similar to Mountain High and Farmland, was different in that they were also able to draw on their limited firsthand experience of 1:1 technology. The tenor differed from Mountain High and Farmland because the audience did not need to be an individual or group within the Hillside school or community. Therefore, the audience for the students in Kate's class was the district leaders of another rural district, such as Erin's, who were considering 1:1 adoption. While this audience difference changed the nature of the writing purpose as the students already had 1:1 technology in their school, the topic was still new and relevant since 1:1 adoption was recent and frequently discussed. Further, writing to an audience of a partner school in the broader argument project still offered the Hillside students an opportunity to write to an authentic, but not an explicit or known, audience weighing 1:1 adoption. Additionally, Kate's students had some experience with arguments or techniques used to write an argument. She shared that "as sophomores, they [the students] wrote a controversial issue essay. And, so I did a lot of research with them that time." Through this exercise, students practiced writing a thesis and supporting the thesis with relevant details. The mode for the year one Hillside project was similar to that of Mountain High and Farmland, except that their argument would be written in essay form to someone who they did not directly know, which had the potential to affect the particular form, as well as language affecting tenor, within the text.

Project Experience 4 – Mountain High

The field, or topic, for the Mountain High students' argument in year two was drones. The prompt asked students to adopt a stance toward drone use – some for public use, some for private use, some addressing both – in their schools and to write an argument with reasons and evidence to convince a designated audience of their position. This topic was common across the two project experiences in year two. The major difference between project experiences four and five year two was a difference in mode, which also affected tenor. Betsy, while using the same prompt on drones as Erin in Farmland, had her students write their argument in the form of an opinion-editorial (or Op-Ed) text that one might find in the Opinion section of a newspaper. While an Op-Ed is, in essence, an authentic writing activity, Betsy prepared her students to write for a general public audience, as opposed to an explicit individual or group to whom the students could relate. As Betsy described, "Drones were in the news, everywhere you look, in the newspapers, and I wanted them to join the conversation and chime in with their stance on the topic which affects society." A more thorough discussion of students' background knowledge and previous experience with drones is included in chapter five.

This particular mode informed the tenor of the text. Within the mode of an Op-Ed, which carried a particular purpose, Betsy described the audience as the "general public," though conceptualizing the "public" was largely left up to individual students. Betsy said she made this decision to allow for student choice in conceptualizing public so that students could best determine how to frame their argument based on their view of the public. Unfortunately, though, this plan was found to be problematic for several students. Some students conceptualized "public" to be the general public in their rural community

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of Mountain High. Others, though, attempted to reach a much broader public. Some students address multiple "publics" in the same text. This variation in conceptualization of public led to differing student approaches to writing the argument, some of which decreased clarity and effectiveness. Betsy, herself, noted that "I don't think I did as good of a job to have them focus on writing to an audience" and that the difficulty conceptualizing audience was the "drawback of an Op-Ed piece" in a project like this. Though she made a reasonable decision based on an attempt to increase student choice in writing, the lack of a specific audience made the writing task more challenging for many.

Students' prior knowledge of and previous experience with argument writing varied at Mountain High, but the majority of students said that they had little experience with or remembered little about the key elements of writing an effective argument writing piece prior to this project. Those few students with more experience with the genre had moved recently to Mountain High (as described above) and attributed their knowledge to past schooling experiences. For example, Zoey said,

> At my old school, I was on the speech and debate team. So we actually got a 3rd place award for novice debating, which included argumentative writing obviously. And at my old school, they really liked argument writing, so we did a lot of them.

Most students, though, were unlike Zoey. Noah shared that, "This is the first one [argumentative writing project] I've ever done" and Hannah admitted that she may have learned it, but recalled little saying, "Not that I remember. I probably did, but I don't remember." Though students could identify that an argument required an opinion or stance, supported with details, there was little expressed about argument structure or

language, particularly when making decisions with an explicit awareness of the register variables of field, tenor, and mode. As Lizzy shared,

> Going in to writing this without any prior experience, I didn't really know what to do. Ms. Betsy explained it really well. All I knew was that you had to come up with an opinion about something and explain what supported it and why you thought so. And that's all that I knew.

Project Experience 5 – Farmland

In contrast to Betsy, the register variables in the Farmland year two argument writing project were more consistent with those in year one. Similar to Mountain High, the field was drones. The prompt was different in that Erin's prompt did not situate the writing in the mode of an Op-Ed. Drones had been a relevant topic for Erin and her students as the use of drones for private and public use had been discussed and debated in their local community. Because drones was a part of the community dialogue, Erin explained how she and her students chose their state representative, who lived in Farmland with them, as their audience saying,

> We were lucky enough that we had a guy who lives in town who was actually our mayor's husband and he runs the little opera theater in town, as well. So the kids knew him, you know, intimately, some of them. And he was the state representative and that's who we chose to be our audience, as if we were writing to the state representative giving our arguments for whether or not drones should be allowed in [Farmland's state] for personal use.

Since the state representative had the potential opportunity to take legislative action in response to drone use in their local rural community and broader state, writing to him

created an authentic opportunity to explore what issues would be most pertinent and convincing for someone in the role of state representative. Erin made the audience explicitly known in her prompt, which stated:

> Write an essay to [Farmland state representative] stating whether or not you believe the personal and commercial use of drones should be banned, regulated, or allowed without censure in [Farmland's state]. Be sure to provide very specific, factual, research-supported evidence to support your claim.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, most students were keenly aware of their audience, especially since he held a position of authority and also was a member of their community. This audience awareness, as indicated by student interview data, influenced the tenor of their argument writing.

Because all of Erin's students had attended school in Farmland for most if not all of their lives, their prior knowledge of and previous experience with argument writing was more congruent than the range present across some of Betsy's students. However, the overall pattern was quite similar; students remembered doing argument writing to some degree, but had difficulty identifying key elements of the genre beyond identifying a claim or stance and supporting it with details. Elliott's response illustrated this point, and also emphasized that it was through this project, in particular, that he came to better know the genre: "I mean, I've heard of it [argument writing] and I think I may have written one, but I don't think I can remember. But this is one that definitely stood out to me because I learned what it really was." Juan's response, representative of the other students in this project experience, showed how the prior knowledge from the limited previous experiences was narrowly focused on choosing details to support a claim: "I

learned that you have to have pretty detailed answers to prove what you are trying to say."

The mode of the argument was similar to the modes in the argument writing project experiences in year one. It was not written as an explicit letter, but the argument was essentially written as an essay, grounded in reasons and evidence, to convince their state representative of their particular stance on drones.

Summary of Contexts of Situation

Across project experiences, a few key themes are consistent when examining the context of situation. First, the fields are similar across project experiences and years, as would be expected based on the teachers' planned collaborative projects. However, there was variation in students' knowledge of and previous experiences with the particular field for each project experience. Second, the modes are largely the same, except for the argument writing project at Mountain High in year two in which Betsy instructed her students to craft their argument in the form of an Op-Ed. Third, the audiences across project experiences, which plays an integral role in tenor, were largely authentic and community-based. Again, the outlier was Mountain High in year two, in which the Op-Ed was written to the general public, which was conceived differently depending on the student. Finally, students were largely unfamiliar with argument writing. Though most students understood the purpose of the genre and some students had basic notions of structural elements, such as a claim, reasons, and evidence, the majority of students did not have extensive experience practicing with the genre, nor having the modeling, instruction, or support to be cognizant of particular language features. All of these themes further situate the final two categories of the findings focused on the argument writing

project experiences and the way in which audience, writing, and language were

experienced in the particular contexts of situation described above.

Chapter 5

Argument Writing Projects Across Experiences

Within the broader experience contexts and the particular contexts of situation in which the writing projects were situated, the teachers' guidance of the projects, including their instruction and support, and the students' experiences of the project adds another layer of context that ultimately affected student language use in argument writing in response to audience. Therefore, before presenting the themes on audience, writing, and language, I discuss the themes from the teachers' and students' participation in the projects, themselves. The argument writing projects across two years and five experiences were characterized by findings and themes in five categories: 1) classroom cultures and practices; 2) mentor texts, models, and instructional supports; 3) collaborative, scaffolded writing; 4) within- (in-person) and cross- (digital) school peer feedback; and 5) recognition of the need for additional instruction, scaffolds, and supports, particularly in relation to language and audience. Each of the five categories is discussed across project experience, year, and classroom to illustrate triangulation of data and to present the similarities and differences in project instruction and support across experiences that affected the final findings category of audience, writing, and language.

Classroom Cultures and Practices

Though the five project experiences had five different groups of students, the five classrooms in which the projects were situated had remarkably similar classroom cultures and practices. This reality, of course, is attributed to the three teachers – Betsy, Erin, and Kate – who came to collaborate with each other through their participation in the NW RISE network. Across their classrooms, the project experiences were centered on

students and collective inquiry. While the teachers provided mentor texts, models, graphic organizers, sample pieces of research, rubrics, and other instructional supports – all of which were identified as helpful by the students – students seemed most thankful for the relationships formed between the teachers and students, particularly as they allowed students to feel comfortable to ask questions when necessary to support their learning. Students perceived a sense of care from their teachers, some of which they attributed as a characteristic and benefit of a small, rural school, but which also served as a testament to the culture of learning fostered by Betsy, Erin, and Kate.

Though the teachers described their classroom proceedings during the project experiences, this finding on classroom cultures and practices is best supported by student interview data in year two. Chloe (5) cited the collaborative nature of her Farmland classroom by describing their "work in small groups" and the ability for students to help one another if they had questions. Aubrey (4) also experienced this beneficial collaboration as a means to brainstorm in Betsy's classroom saying, "I was usually working with my friend next to me because we'd be thinking of ideas." Students often used collective language, such as when Maggie (4) articulated the overall workings of what she viewed as a collaborative community in her Mountain High classroom saying, "so we were all involved in sharing." Though students technically wrote their arguments individually, a good amount of the brainstorming, drafting, and revising happened in dialogue with others.

Liam (5), connecting back to an earlier point about "one-on-one" attention in small, rural schools, cited the support from Erin and his fellow students as important elements of his learning: "You get to connect with the teacher a lot more, more one-on-

one. You get more attention, more of a learning experience. Everybody's [the students] helping each other because it's [the school and classroom size] so small." Aubrey (4) also mentioned the importance of Betsy's one-on-one attention saying, "If I had any questions I'd ask [Betsy] and she'd go around and help other students, too." Hannah (4) recognized the teacher support as particularly helpful in the context of the argument writing project saying,

> I asked a lot of questions because it [writing an argument] confused me at first
> because I never wrote an essay before, you know, freshman year, wasn't sure
> exactly what I was doing. So I asked [Betsy] a lot of questions and she helped a
> lot actually. She was really helpful, she knew what she was talking about
> obviously.

It should be noted that students did not praise their positive and collaborative classroom community merely for the ability to converse with their friends or to enjoy a positive relationship with their teacher. Hannah's quote, representative of others, indicated that they recognized that the classroom cultures and practices were intentionally directed towards utilizing best practices to aid them in their learning and enhance their ability to write an effective argument.

Mentor Texts, Models, and Instructional Supports

Betsy, Erin, and Kate all relied on mentor texts, models, and instructional supports as a central means to teach their students about the argument writing genre in preparation for independent writing. A representative sampling of instructional artifacts across the argument project experiences in year two can be found in Appendix F, including a guided mentor text on drones, a graphic organizer used to help organize

information to be included in the argument, and a sampling of academic language related to the genre and writing purpose, which were used to acquaint students to the writing task. The teachers shared all project experience resources with one another using the Schoology LMS platform. Teachers did not uniformly use these instructional resources, but they did review and often consider them when making or modifying their own resources. In year one, Betsy, Kate, and Erin supported their students' argument writing with instruction on elements of an argument. These elements included taking a stance and writing a thesis, choosing appropriate reasons and evidence, and conducting research or drawing from personal experience to build an argument. Similar to year two, the teachers provided models of effective claims and evidence, as indicated by Kate who reviewed texts with students and met with students to discuss their writing. Kate also emphasized structural elements of an argument, reminding students that "essays always have a thesis and then they have examples, details to prove what they're saying." Further, Erin had students discuss and correct argument drafts so that students could identify "what was wrong with it and fix it, whether it was punctuation or [if] they didn't have enough support or it really wasn't a claim statement and it was just a random piece of evidence." This corrective approach was not enacted in isolation, but came after reviewing mentors and models together as a class. The teachers also introduced academic vocabulary related to the argument writing genre, as well as the related argument topic, so that students had initial interactions with the genre and topic in a supported environment. Argument vocabulary included terms like "thesis," "stance," and "evidence," while topic vocabulary (in year one) included terms like "1:1 device" and "technology." This practice of introducing academic vocabulary was also included in the year two projects on drones.

In her year two interview, Betsy (4) described the set of strategies utilized to introduce argument writing to her students:

My introduction to it [the project] was sharing a couple of articles, two or three articles that I had found, covering different aspects about drones. Because I wanted to show them that there were different avenues that they could be pursuing. I used some of those early articles to practice summarizing. And then one was farmers, direct application in an economic market. I also showed them a video, because I wanted to show them that their sources didn't have to be written. So I showed them a news clip about drones being misused by the public. Also, I shared another video, a TED talk speech about drones. So they had a body of information that hopefully would generate questions in their minds, help them think where they could further research.

Betsy used multiple media and modes to illustrate how arguments on drones were crafted and to provide examples of the types of research available to be used as evidence. Betsy also explained how she used other activities as the project progressed to support her students' argument writing:

When it was time to write our claim, we did a day or two lesson on what is a claim, what does it look like, what are some characteristics, here are some examples of claims, what makes this one good, having them look at each others' claims… As we went through, I gave them graphic organizers so that they could get their ideas down to see if they had enough research, enough thinking and ideas to do the whole essay . . . One of the lessons had to do with writing academically

and how does that sound when I write academically, so we talked about word choice and how to use more formal words.

Betsy ensured that her students saw examples of claims and had the opportunity to discuss their key characteristics before working on them in groups or independently. Additionally, Betsy used some graphic organizers to discuss the structure and some language features of argument writing. She understood that students could not simply jump into writing in a particular academic genre without being familiar with its elements. These elements, though, often focused on the structural dimensions of the genre, as well as issues of field (content) when choosing reasons and evidence.

Betsy's students recognized the instructional strategies that Betsy used in their classroom, particularly providing mentors and models to serve as resources to draw from as students considered their own arguments. For example, Lizzy (4) shared, "One of the very first things she [Betsy] ever gave us to expand our knowledge or introduce us to drones was a written portion of an article about whether or not drones were good for farming." Cassie (4) added that reading and discussing "examples of people's argumentative writing essays" was a helpful way to be introduced to the genre. Aubrey (4) explained how being exposed to readings and resources could assist them in writing their own argument:

> When we read an article or watched a video, we would talk a lot about it and we would see if we could find evidence there. We would watch a drone video and then we would write on it. And she [Betsy] would share drone articles with us and we would do our own research on them.

Thus, students had an awareness of Betsy's intentional instructional practices, using mentors, models, and other resources to first introduce the genre, to provide examples, and to supply resources that could aid students in their own writing. Though Betsy's (4) instruction did include some attention to language, her strategies placed a greater focus on argument structure and the research necessary to include effective evidence.

Similar to Betsy, Erin (5) used readings and resources as mentors and models to introduce argument examples, as well as to outline the process of gathering research to be included as evidence. Erin described her intentions for using these mentors, models, and sample research resources saying,

I found a lot of articles [saying] what drones are used for or have been used for, here's how people are looking at them in the future. We read an article supporting drones and we read an article that showed the disadvantages of drones and the problems that they can cause and some of the legal issues. So they [Erin's students] had different perspectives and also they got the idea of what a drone actually is. And once we did that, they started mentioning former students in [a nearby town] who actually own drones...And that was a lot more concrete for them.

According to Erin, this initial introduction to the topic of drones and different stances on drones was one way that students began to see how drones could be linked to their local, rural context and could be pertinent to their audience, the state representative. For example, Erin described one instance when students began to make this connection saying,

And one of the articles we read talked a lot about how farmers will use drones to look for insect infestations and things like that. And for our community, that definitely, the kids were like, 'Ohh, that would be so cool!' You know, just fly a drone over and see where it needed water or where there might be a bug infestation. So that, building the background context, was very essential for my students.

Similar to Betsy's students, Erin's students recognized her strategies and how they were helpful as they learned more about arguments. For example, Sammy (5) described the multiple ways that she and her classmates encountered readings and resources saying,

First, she [Erin] introduced us to drones in general if people didn't know. She gave us articles or websites to learn more about drones. She gave us different arguments from different people – why they were bad, why they were good.

Derek (4) and Juan (4) shared similar accounts, describing how the provided readings illustrated the different ways in which a stance on drones could be crafted and supported. Of note, these students emphasized the importance of learning about multiple perspectives on drones through these examples. While Erin used this approach to allow the students to see different perspectives that could inform their own choice of stance after conducting preliminary research, some students felt compelled to include multiple stances or perspectives in their papers, a theme that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Collaborative, Scaffolded Writing

The importance of a collaborative, scaffolded writing process, though suspected to be helpful and responsive to student needs, was not directly evident until student

interview data from the year two project experiences were examined. Through scaffolded, progressive writing drafts and peer feedback, both in-person within each class and across classes via virtual and digital means, both teachers and students found the scope of the project to be beneficial as they explored the elements of and wrote their own argument text. The teachers intentionally crafted an extensive instructional plan to support the different stages of the project, anticipating the potential needs of their students. Betsy (4) described the teachers' aims when structuring the scaffolded approach to argument writing saying,

> for the argumentative writing project, for the students I tried to break it down to very manageable, day-by-day chunks. So it went very slowly. We broke it down and we spent the full six weeks just on writing and learning the skills, you know, paraphrasing, summarizing, before we even got into the research and writing. And then I walked them through the paragraph writing.

Though the overall process was slow, taking about six weeks in all, the teachers incorporated a variety of strategies and content during that time period. As described, Betsy placed a focus on the importance of summarizing so that students could review and synthesize research into meaningful pieces of evidence to include in the argument. Her students recognized her approach, too, demonstrated by Zoey (4) when she explained, "We did a lot on summarizing and finding the main points. And a lot of us were able to use those as references when we wrote our paper."

Two other students' comments largely represented the students' sentiment towards the opportunity to take an intentional, scaffolded approach. Mason (4) shared that he found the scaffolded, progressive writing to be beneficial for his learning saying,

"It [writing progressive drafts] was helpful because if you cut it down into different chunks, breaking them down into different sections is more helpful." Maggie (4) echoed this point saying that she

> found it [writing scaffolded, progressive drafts] helpful because if I wrote a rough draft and another student in my class went over it and found spelling errors or words that didn't make sense, then I knew that I had time to change it before it was finalized and it wasn't my last chance.

Here, Maggie identified the benefits of collaboration within the project. Though the various iterations of peer feedback added time to the project, beyond the scaffolded, progressive draft writing, students appreciated and made good use of the opportunities to revise after receiving each round of feedback. Even those students who had more experience with arguments previously, such as Zoey (4), recognized the value of this instructional approach as a benefit for the entire class:

> I think that if you have limited experience writing essays, then it was very helpful because it went through the whole process and went step by step what to do for writing this essay. Personally, I've done a lot of writing like this, so it was really slow. But I think that if you haven't had a lot of experience, it was really very helpful.

Further, Liam (5) shared,

> I thought it [multiple drafts, feedback] was a lot easier than just trying to write a paper. When we took it slow like that, we made each paragraph the best that it could be and it benefitted our paper. Each paragraph was strong and it made it more clear and helped a lot.

This theme was widely triangulated across students and experiences, illustrated by Sammy's (5) response showing agreement with Liam:

> I like that we did one step at a time, one draft. You were able to build up. And if you wanted to change something, it was easier to do because you had all of these drafts. You had the chance to change it, really look at what you were writing.

Therefore, although the projects were a long process and some students, particularly those who were more familiar with argument, viewed it as partially extraneous, all students recognized the value of the intentional and structured approach, incorporating writing strategies and other lessons in to the broader argument writing project to promote deeper understanding.

Within- and Cross-School Peer Feedback

As part of the scaffolded approach, the teachers determined peer feedback would be an important component of iterative writing and revising. The three teachers coordinated an innovative cross-school digital peer feedback system, in which students used a learning management system (LMS) digital platform to post, review, and provide feedback on peer argument drafts. In the year one project experiences, the students' first interactions with one another were the instances of giving feedback. Upon reflection after the year one projects, though, the teachers recognized that it would be beneficial to have students build relationships before engaging in a feedback activity so that they would feel more comfortable sharing their work and giving feedback. Peer feedback allowed students to hear multiple perspectives on their writing, with students often giving specific feedback illustrating if and how their argument was convincing given the intended audience. While the peer feedback experience was positive for many, not all students

found it to be beneficial. Though teachers supported the practice of giving peer feedback with models, practice sessions, and feedback guidelines, the teachers and students encountered challenges that prevented its wholesale effectiveness for all students. To address these issues of consistency, teachers also incorporated opportunities for within-classroom feedback so that students could engage in in-person discussions about their work.

Betsy (4) described the teachers' intention in using Schoology as an LMS to facilitate the digital peer feedback process across schools: "We used Schoology to have students upload the different parts [of the essay]. On the first three pieces, we had students from other schools comment, give feedback, on what was posted. And we'd use Schoology to do that." Both Betsy and Erin took efforts to provide models to illustrate how to give feedback. Betsy described the preparation she undertook with her students saying,

> For each one [peer feedback for each draft iteration], I would model it in whole-group with the class. I would model okay here's somebody's claim, this is what I would maybe say about it, talk about one thing there is to improve, how to phrase it, and then we'd do one whole group to have them help me how to write a response to somebody. And we'd talk about how vague comments like, 'great job' aren't really helpful.

Appendix G provides an example of instructional artifacts that Betsy and Erin shared with their students to support their practice of giving peer feedback. Though Betsy and Erin were intentional about providing mentoring and scaffolding before the feedback rounds began, both teachers recognized the inherent challenges of digital peer feedback,

which upon reflection were determined to need additional support. For example, Betsy shared,

> I learned that I should never assume that students would understand exactly what was required of them in their online proceedings and communications. Because Schoology is somewhat familiar to them because it's kind of set up similar to Facebook. So some of my students got on and started to fool around, so we did a halt until we went over netiquette.

As Betsy described, she and Erin were responsive to the needs of their students and added support, as necessary, to try and promote a peer feedback system that was relevant to the task and helpful for the students, aiming to reduce instances of distraction or improper use. Betsy explained that she "found online chapters about netiquette and I created a quiz and students had to pass the quiz until they could go back on Schoology," in response to an issue when students were using Schoology for more informal, non-academic purposes as if they were using Facebook.

Aside from issues with proper use given the peer feedback expectations, Erin (5) acknowledged that some students struggled with giving substantive feedback, even with the initial support:

> You know, they would tell them they have a lot of spelling mistakes or you have this, but other than that, they couldn't pick out language issues or they couldn't pick out transitions and whether or not they were supporting their evidence good enough.

Additionally, students would give vague commendations, instead of giving specific examples of effective writing and areas that needed revision. Erin said a common

comment given by students was, "Oh, this looks good, you did a nice job." Similar to the

manner in which the teachers responded to the need for netiquette, Betsy and Erin both

recognized the need to respond with additional support in giving substantive feedback.

Erin posited that a more focused, directed approach with additional teacher support could

be beneficial:

> I think leading up to the project that the kids need to do more examples. And then
>
> just talk through, okay, this is how I would [give feedback on] your paper. And
>
> talk through, okay, when I read this sentence, it sounds weak. I read this, you're
>
> using 'I.' You're not using support. You know, actually talking through the
>
> process of editing with them quite a few times before they actually do it.

Erin and Betsy planned to incorporate this approach into their instructional plan for

subsequent collaborative cross-school work, including future iterations of the argument

writing project.

Erin and Betsy's students expanded on their own experience and perceptions of

the project, providing triangulation and adding nuance to the themes presented. Noah (4)

agreed that Schoology, the LMS, was similar to using social media: "It was kind of like

Facebook. You comment on people and tell them that they did a good job or give them

pointers." The majority of students enjoyed using Schoology as a means to connect with

students from other rural schools to receive feedback and improve their writing. Some

student responses addressed the substantive nature of the digital peer feedback, such as

Aubrey (4) who shared, "I liked receiving the feedback from other people who gave me

more ideas." Similarly, Hannah (4) found clarifying questions offered by her peer

reviewer to be helpful as she prepared to revise. Other students made clear, though, that

the nature of the feedback was not always substantive, which affected whether or not the feedback was actually helpful. Students were perceptive and knew when feedback would be useful or not. For instance, Cassie (4) explained that "the ones [instances of feedback] that were really helpful were the ones that were more specific. Like make it clear what the background information was about or to add more evidence like quotes." Amanda (5) agreed saying that her reviewers "told me that I should add a couple more things into my paper and that I should change something that I had in the middle, to put it in the end to make it sound more fluid in my paper." Alicia (5) said she also valued the specificity of her peer reviewer's feedback: "On Schoology, they told me that I needed to make my introduction stronger . . . [so] I added more [details]."

For many students, it seemed the teacher's preparation and support had been effective and laid the groundwork for productive feedback. Emilia (5) illustrated how this preparation led to a positive experience saying,

> One thing I really liked about it [peer feedback] is that some students were really respectful about others' opinions and the way their mistakes were made, the corrections that they had them do. For me, I know I included so much detail . . . and to see students say what to work on better was really helpful.

Beyond the preparation, some students emphasized that the mere, yet important, fact that students giving the digital peer feedback were from different schools and different rural communities was key to the effectiveness of the feedback process. For example, Liam (5) explained,

> We didn't know the people from the other schools, so we weren't afraid to give them the actual criticism . . . say one of my friends from here [Farmland] tried to

give me feedback on my paper, they didn't want to say I did something wrong or argue with me. So I thought kids from other schools would actually help you fix your mistakes instead of trying to sugar-coat it. They were a lot more blunt. They would tell you, 'Hey, this doesn't make sense.' They weren't sugar-coating it.

Maggie (4) agreed saying,

"It was nice to use that [Schoology], because if you had your peer in your class, it might just be your friend who would not want to judge your essay, so getting advice from someone who didn't have a clue about you and just reading what you wrote really helped to get a real response.

Other students, including Lucas (4), responded similarly, suggesting that their familiarity with their friends and classmates may have detracted from their peers' ability to critically evaluate their writing. By writing to new students who were unfamiliar, the task of giving feedback was elevated. This change often resulted in students becoming more critical and careful as they reviewed writing and gave feedback. As Lucas (4) described, "The people from the other school were more helpful because I feel like they saw more stuff than our regular friends did."

As indicated, though, the effectiveness of the digital peer feedback was experienced inconsistently. Some students were behind in their work and were delayed in either posting their drafts to Schoology or in responding in a timely manner with feedback. Cassie (4) had a negative experience with the digital peer feedback because her peer essentially did not participate: "I think it [peer feedback] would have been nice if I actually had gotten feedback from anyone else. My person didn't actually upload or comment." If there were issues, though, it was more common that they were connected to

a lack of detail or support. For example, Lizzy (4) shared that her peer "did give feedback, but it was very vague. I think that it [digital peer feedback] was a good idea, though. But I think that people needed to take it more seriously." Because some students received poor or no feedback, they had to rely more on their own revisions, as well as feedback from their classmates. Derek (5) explained how an extra review of his paper on his own was necessary because "the person that gave me feedback didn't really give me much, and then when I looked over my paper again there were a bunch of things that I could have fixed." When Amanda (5) realized she did not receive adequate feedback, she turned to her classmates:

> My student that I worked with didn't really give me very much feedback on my paper. He was just really short on what he said. Like he just said your paper is really good. You should probably change this – and that was it. So I asked some of my peers in my class to read mine also.

Some students recognized that in order to avoid mishaps, they needed additional support before they were ready to give substantive feedback. For example, Aubrey (4) shared that "I wasn't great at giving feedback. I couldn't think of what to say. I didn't know what to say to make their drone paper better." Seeing students admit this concern emphasized the need for additional support from teachers before the cross-school digital peer feedback began, as indicated by teachers, themselves, earlier in this section.

An important lesson, indicated throughout the student interview data, was that students valued both the cross-school digital peer feedback, as well as the within-school in-person peer feedback. While the recognized the value in both, they saw them as valuable for differing reasons. As Zoey explained, having both opportunities was helpful

because "I liked those [in-person] better, when we did the [in-person] peer reviews because then you have the person there who can explain what they're talking about and point out specific places that they're talking about." At the same time, Sammy (5) said that while the in-person feedback was helpful, "it didn't feel like editing [because] we were just reading and making comments and helping each other." This sentiment connects back to the earlier point about familiarity and willingness to give critical feedback to friends or classmates. As indicated, there is a benefit in connecting to new students, which increases the level of seriousness that was brought to the task of giving feedback. Overall, though, students recognized the unique opportunity of giving digital peer feedback to other students from other rural, isolated schools. This unique experience increased students' affective responses, as indicated by Zoey (4) who shared that "Schoology was cool . . . you could talk to people from the other [rural] schools," an experience that increased engagement and enhanced learning. Though the digital peer feedback was imperfect and seemed to be most effective in combination with within-school in-person feedback, the cross-school digital peer feedback was still a valuable component of the project.

Since students had mixed experiences with the digital peer feedback, Betsy agreed that she, as the teacher, also valued the opportunity for students to partake in both within-school, in-person feedback, as well as the cross-school digital peer feedback. Thinking about potential changes going forward, she said,

> I think that they both had value. I would do both ways again. Because one, like you said, small school, they've been going to school for forever with each other. They're comfortable, and there are social dynamics that might prevent them from

saying, 'time to go back to the drawing board.' Whereas if you don't really know

the person, you can find a nice way to say you need to put a better claim in there.

While Betsy and Erin have new plans for increasing support in this area of peer feedback,

they also found that students' peer feedback, similar to the major focus of instruction,

lacked attention to audience and language, a point that the teachers recognized and

identified for further development.

Recognition of the Need for Additional Instruction, Scaffolds, and Supports

The three teachers were keenly aware that the argument writing project

experiences needed changes to better serve their students. Aside from the additional

supports that Betsy and Erin wanted to add, as described above, they also articulated how

they needed an increased attention to audience and language. Erin explained that the

emphasis on argument structure, reasons and evidence, research, and other strategies

utilized in the argument genre like summarizing predominantly stemmed from their

attention to the CCSS, which they were tasked with implementing. She explained this

pressure saying, "And we really wanted to try and meet the Common Core because,

especially then, it was really, you know, this new thing that they're pushing and as

teachers we were a little bit nervous about that, I think." Though the CCSS was helpful in

that it provided a common set of standards by which the teachers could draw from to

collaborate, it also emphasized a particular set of standards – standards that often

minimized attention to or overlooked audience and language. Erin's year two project

prompt (Appendix H) included the relevant CCSS standards and, although some

standards on voice, tone, purpose, and audience are present, the instructional points

emphasized via CCSS-informed instructional resources and guides, as well as by those

supporting teachers in CCSS adoption, lacked substantive attention to audience and language.

Upon completion of the projects, however, both Betsy and Erin expressed the need to provide additional instruction and support in the areas of audience and language. As Erin (5) described, "I feel like that's an area, the language and the audience, that I feel like we need to beef up [when] . . . we do this project again." Betsy (4) recognized this need, as well, saying, "that was a weak point on me as the teacher. My attention was drawn more to other issues in their writing. I don't think I did as good of a job to have them focus on writing to an audience." Identifying these supports, along with identifying the need for additional instruction, scaffolds, and supports throughout the argument writing projects, from introducing the genre to giving peer feedback, illustrated that the teachers continuously critiqued their practice to ensure that their students have engaging, meaningful learning experiences in which they learn to write an effective piece of argument writing while engaging with their rural communities.

Though both Betsy and Erin expressed that they wished that they had spent more time providing instruction on and supporting audience and language, there was still, at minimum, a basic understanding and, at best, a keen understanding that informed their argument writing. Students' understanding of audience and language, though varied, provides important insight into how they made choices about their language use in response to their audience, especially considering issues of context, culture, and community in their rural settings which affect their consideration of register variables, and particularly the tenor of their argument piece, as they write.

Audience, Language, and Writing

Analysis of Student Writing

In order to fully understand how students made language choices in response to their audience, it is necessary to consider multiple factors, particularly those highlighted from teacher and student interviews in which they reflected on and responded to their writing and the argument writing project. Before considering those factors to inform the broader findings and themes, I first provide the stated field (topic) and audience of the respective argument writing experience and then present an overview of the students' writing across project experiences. Each overview is presented using two tables, highlighting key elements of the writing analysis performed using the argument analysis rubrics modified for secondary writing (Brisk, 2015). One table (Table 5.1) is dedicated to purpose and stages, considering the structure and content of argument, as determined by the writing purpose and audience. The second table (Table 5.2) is dedicated to language, including the way in which language features and vocabulary are appropriately used based on purpose and audience. Guided by appraisal theory, I paid particular attention to interpersonal and evaluative perspectives, particularly communicated through the register variables of field, tenor, and mode. Since mode was consistent across student writing in a given project experience, mode is discussed in the summary following each overview. Thus, only field and tenor are highlighted within each project experience overview table. The subsystems of appraisal – attitude, graduation, and engagement – are connected to these areas, as attitude is reflective of evaluative language, graduation is connected to modal use, and engagement is connected to both evaluative language and grammatical person. All three subsystems inform the overall cohesion of the text, as well

as the language choices made in response to audience in both choosing the reasons and evidence (field) to include in the argument and the manner in which those reasons and evidence are positioned in relation to the audience (tenor). After each project experience summary, I provide illustrative examples that capture the representative writing strengths and challenges of each project experience. The patterns found across student writing are then used to undergird the subsequent presentation and discussion of findings and themes supported by additional examples of student writing and the teacher and student interview data that follow this chapter.

Project experience 1 – Mountain High.

Field / Topic: 1:1 technology; Audience: District's technology committee

Note: In these tables, the following numbers correspond with the respective evaluation: 1 – Needs substantial support; 2 – Needs instruction; 3 – Needs revision; 4 – Meets standard

Name / Pseudonym	Teacher-assigned Argument Writing Level	Introduction	Reasons	Evidence	Cohesive Text
Caitlin	Above average	4	3	2	3
Jennifer	Average	3	3	2	2
Jordan	Below average	3	3	2	3
Kim	Below average	2	3	2	2
Sophia	Average	4	3	3	3
Victoria	Above average	3	3	4	3
Average	N/A	2.8	3	2.5	2.7

Table 5.1. Project Experience 1 Overview, Purpose and Stages

Name / Pseudonym	Teacher-assigned Argument Writing Level	Language of Reasons & Evidence in Response to Audience	Technical Vocabulary	Evaluative Vocabulary	Modality	Types of Sentences & Grammatical Person
Caitlin	Above average	3	3	4	3	2
Jennifer	Average	3	3	3	2	2
Jordan	Below average	3	3	3	3	3
Kim	Below average	2	3	3	2	2
Sophia	Average	3	4	4	3	2
Victoria	Above average	3	4	3	2	2
Average	N/A	2.8	3.3	3.3	2.5	2.2

Table 5.2. Project Experience 1 Overview, Language

The Mountain High (1) experience in year one revealed student strengths in their ability to name reasons to support their claim for or against 1:1 technology, as well as their use of technical and evaluative language to support their argument given their audience. However, students struggled with several language variables, including grammatical person, types of sentences, modality, and language use in response to audience to support their reasons and evidence. These findings may be explained, in part, by students' prior knowledge of and experience with argument, as well as Betsy's new emphasis on argument writing in her class in response to the CCSS.

These findings are represented by two examples. Sophia (1) incorporated language demonstrating her proficiency with technical and evaluative language, but her repeated use of second person ("you") and other language choices seem to be directed to a fellow student audience, instead of her district's technology committee:

```
The iPad is lightweight, and less time-consuming.
Eliminating the struggle of carrying textbooks will be
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preventing tardies because you will not need to stop
at your locker as much. Also in class when you need to
leave to get a book, or are struggling to get a book
out of your backpack and wasting class time, if you
had an iPad you will have easy access to any book you
need.
```

She used appropriate technical and evaluative language by calling the iPad "lightweight"

and "time-consuming," but switching to second person and including examples about

getting to class on time seem more appropriate for a student audience. While Sophia's

modal use in that excerpt was strong and consistent (repeated use of "will"), other

students, including Victoria (1) struggled with modality. She used modals inconsistently

and without apparent intention, as she repeated the phrase, "It seems . . ." in her essay

when presenting evidence, but then used stronger modals to conclude her essay. Mixing

modals without intention results in a lack of cohesion and consistency, weakening the

effect of the argument. While students understood how to incorporate technical and

evaluative language, their struggles with other language variables indicated the likely

need for additional instruction and support, particularly related to audience and language.

However, since no student interview data are available for this project experience, it is

difficult to understand the students' intentions in their language choices.

Project experience 2 – Farmland.

Field / Topic: 1:1 technology; Audience: Local community member considering

financial support

Name / Pseudonym	Teacher-assigned Argument Writing Level	Introduction	Reasons	Evidence	Cohesive Text
Carlos	Below average	3	3	2	2
Devin	Above average	3	3	2	3
Gabriel	Average	3	3	3	3
Grace	Above average	3	4	3	3
Robert	Below average	2	3	2	2
Susanna	Average	3	3	2	3
Average	N/A	2.8	3.2	2.3	2.7

Table 5.3. Project Experience 2 Overview, Purpose and Stages

Name / Pseudonym	Teacher-assigned Argument Writing Level	Language of Reasons & Evidence in Response to Audience	Technical Vocabulary	Evaluative Vocabulary	Modality	Types of Sentences & Grammatical Person
Carlos	Below average	2	3	2	2	2
Devin	Above average	3	4	3	2	3
Gabriel	Average	3	4	3	3	3
Grace	Above average	3	4	3	3	2
Robert	Below average	2	2	2	2	2
Susanna	Average	3	4	3	2	3
Average	N/A	2.7	3.5	2.7	2.3	2.5

Table 5.4. Project Experience 2 Overview, Language

Similar to Mountain High (1), Farmland (2) students in year one found the most

success in their ability to incorporate appropriate reasons to support their claims and to

use technical language to indicate their knowledge and familiarity with the field of the

argument. However, they, too, struggled with language variables including modality,

grammatical person, and types of sentences appropriate for the genre and audience.

Grace (2) illustrated students' ability to include relevant reasons in response to audience to support their claim in their writing:

```
The initial cost may be high, but the devices will pay
for themselves and more in the long run. 1-1 devices
can completely replace textbooks, which are very
expensive themselves, costing hundreds of dollars.
Textbooks go out of date and become worn within a few
years, and schools spend thousands of dollars
replacing them repeatedly. With devices, however,
online textbooks can be downloaded for low or even no
cost, and can be updated at any time.
```

Given the audience was a community member interested in potentially funding the 1:1 initiative, Grace appropriately focused on the costs and benefits of 1:1. Further, she used evaluative language (e.g., "completely," "expensive") to illustrate her attitude towards the reasons. Unfortunately, though, some students, such as Robert (2), struggled with language, such as grammatical person and within-paragraph cohesion, even when including reasons relevant to their audience:

```
Next is the cost. I know that my school can't afford
them and I'm sure a lot of schools can't either. They
may even put a school in debt because supplying these
devices to every student in a high school you're
looking upwards of thousands of dollars.
```

These first person constructions shift the focus to Robert's own perspective, instead of considering the audience and utilizing substantiated evidence to support his reasons.

Again, while it is not possible to know the students' intentions in their writing or how they conceptualized the way in which they responded to their audience, the student writing samples suggest that students understood how to choose relevant reasons and how to use technical language, but struggled to take up the appropriate use of other language variables based on the particular audience.

Project experience 3 – Hillside.

Field / Topic: 1:1 technology; Audience: Another district considering 1:1 adoption

Name / Pseudonym	Teacher-assigned Argument Writing Level	Introduction	Reasons	Evidence	Cohesive Text
Alex	Below average	2	3	2	2
Caity	Above average	4	4	3	3
Jacob	Below average	2	3	2	2
Leah	Average	3	3	4	3
Marie	Above average	4	3	4	3
Shannon	Average	3	3	3	3
Average	N/A	3.0	3.2	3.0	2.7

Table 5.5. Project Experience 3 Overview, Purpose and Stages

Name / Pseudonym	Teacher-assigned Argument Writing Level	Language of Reasons & Evidence in Response to Audience	Technical Vocabulary	Evaluative Vocabulary	Modality	Types of Sentences & Grammatical Person
Alex	Below average	2	3	3	2	2
Caity	Above average	3	4	4	2	3
Jacob	Below average	2	2	3	2	3
Leah	Average	3	4	3	3	3
Marie	Above average	3	4	4	3	3

Shannon	Average	3	3	3	3	2
Average	N/A	2.7	3.3	3.3	2.5	3.2

Table 5.6. Project Experience 3 Overview, Language

The students at Hillside (3) fared better than their counterparts in the year one project, with higher scores across most categories in purpose and stages, as well as language. As noted earlier in this chapter and in chapter four, this may be related to particular contextual differences, including Hillside students' different experience of rural (according to their teacher, Kate), or differing levels of prior knowledge and experience related to this writing project and topic. It is important to remember that Kate's students had just received 1:1 devices at the beginning of the school year. For these students, 1:1 technology was a topic that they had already experienced and discussed. For example, Caity (3) used strong evaluative and technical language when introducing reasons and evidence saying:

> School budgets are not exactly overflowing with extra cash. More than 35 states provide less funding per student than they did before the 2007 recession (Leachman and Mai), and unnecessary technology is not a good use of the little money schools have. The laptops we received were $549 according to the Lenovo website ('Lenovo Yoga Laptop Series | Convertible Entertainment Laptops'). That in itself is an extremely high cost, and seems irresponsible for a public school to spend.

Caity's use of language like "unnecessary," "extremely," and "irresponsible" served to express her attitude to the audience, with substantive evidence used to support her points. This use suggests that Caity had a firm attitude towards her stance grounded in her own experience that aided her language choices.

Nevertheless, students did struggle with certain elements of language, particularly as they used language in response to audience to set up their reasons and evidence to support their claim, as well as using consistent modals to maintain a strong tone throughout their piece. For example, Alex (3) struggled to use intentional language to incorporate a reason, supported by evidence, that would be found to be compelling by his audience:

> ```
> A lot of people say that the computers will be a
> distraction in the class room, like if a student was
> playing games instead of working on the assignment,
> which is the student's fault, if they don't want to
> pay attention in class and get a bad grade it's their
> own problem.
> ```

By using vague references like "a lot of people" and ineffective hypotheticals by repeating the "if . . ." structure, Alex encountered obstacles when attempting to position his reasons and evidence with his audience in mind. Similar to the other experiences in year one, these student writing excerpts suggest the need for additional instruction and support to aid students as they connect their audience awareness to their language choices.

Project experience 4 – Mountain High (year two).

Field / Topic: Drones; Audience: General public (Op-Ed)

Name / Pseudonym	Teacher-assigned Argument Writing Level	Introduction	Reasons	Evidence	Cohesive Text
Aubrey	Average	3	2	2	2
Cassie	Average	3	3	3	3
Hannah	Below average	3	2	2	2
Lizzy	Above average	3	3	3	3
Lucas	Average	3	3	3	3
Maggie	Above average	4	3	3	3
Mason	Below average	3	3	3	3
Noah	Below average	2	2	2	2
Zoey	Above average	4	4	4	4
Average	N/A	3.1	2.8	2.8	2.8

Table 5.7. Project Experience 4 Overview, Purpose and Stages

Name / Pseudonym	Teacher-assigned Argument Writing Level	Language of Reasons & Evidence in Response to Audience	Technical Vocabulary	Evaluative Vocabulary	Modality	Types of Sentences & Grammatical Person
Aubrey	Average	2	3	3	2	2
Cassie	Average	2	3	3	2	3
Hannah	Below average	2	3	3	3	3
Lizzy	Above average	3	3	3	3	4
Lucas	Average	3	3	3	3	3
Maggie	Above average	3	4	4	4	3.5
Mason	Below average	2	3	3	3	3
Noah	Below average	2	3	3	2	2
Zoey	Above average	3	4	4	3	4
Average	N/A	2.7	3.2	3.2	2.8	3.1

Table 5.8. Project Experience 4 Overview, Language

Although Betsy was in her second year of participating in the collaborative argument writing projects, her students (compared to the previous year) experienced static progress or increased struggle in areas of choosing relevant reasons and evidence in response to their audience, and in using language intentionally to frame their argument and support it consistently throughout their writing. For example, Mason included vague and wavering constructions (e.g., "just about anything," "Maybe we should"), which weakened other sections of his writing in which he included thoughtful reasons and evidence:

```
Drones could be used for just about anything that
humans want to design them for, as long as they stop
with the innocent killing of civilians around the
entire world. Maybe we should use them for non-lethal
purposes so people will stop dying, or getting
injured.
```

Beginning this section with "just about anything" suggests that his stance is so broad that he is unable to provide a concrete alternative to the "innocent killing of civilians." As will be discussed below, it seems likely that these challenges resulted from an unclear understanding of audience, described to the students as the "general public" by Betsy in an aim to increase student choice, which then led to difficulties when both choosing reasons and evidence to cohesively support a claim and choosing language to establish a strong, consistent argument. Since this project experience included student interview data, this project experience and analysis of student writing receives much greater attention below as the student interview data serves to validate interpretations of student

writing to better understand the students' thought processes, awareness of audience, and language choices as they constructed their arguments.

Project experience 5 – Farmland (year two).

Field / Topic: Drones; Audience: State representative from community

Name / Pseudonym	Teacher-assigned Argument Writing Level	Introduction	Reasons	Evidence	Cohesive Text
Alicia	Below average	4	3	2	2
Amanda	Average	3	3	3	3
Chloe	Above average	2	3	3	3
Derek	Above average	3	3	2	2
Elliott	Average	4	3	3	3
Emilia	Below average	2	3	2	2
Juan	Below average	4	3	3	2
Liam	Average	3	3	3	3
Sammy	Above average	3	3	3	3
Average	N/A	3.1	3.0	2.7	2.6

Table 5.9. Project Experience 5 Overview, Purpose and Stages

Name / Pseudonym	Teacher-assigned Argument Writing Level	Language of Reasons & Evidence in Response to Audience	Technical Vocabulary	Evaluative Vocabulary	Modality	Types of Sentences & Grammatical Person
Alicia	Below average	2	3	3	2	3
Amanda	Average	3	3	4	2	2.5
Chloe	Above average	3	4	4	4	4
Derek	Above average	2	3	4	2	3
Elliott	Average	3	3	4	3	4

Emilia	Below average	3	3	3	3	3
Juan	Below average	3	3	3	3	3
Liam	Average	3	4	4	3	4
Sammy	Above average	3	4	4	4	4
Average	N/A	2.8	3.3	3.7	2.9	3.4

Table 5.10. Project Experience 5 Overview, Language

The Farmland (5) students had relatively improved scores compared to those that

Erin saw with her students the year before, as well as Betsy's students in year two.

Overall, students constructed clear claims with appropriate reasons, strengthened by

effective technical and evaluative vocabulary to communicate their attitude to their

audience, their state representative. Though the students experienced these successes,

they still encountered struggles in providing consistent evidence to support their points,

in writing a cohesive text, and in using certain language variables, such as modals, to

support their stance. For example, Elliott (5) included farming as a reason to support his

claim because farming was a crucial sector of the local economy, which the state

representative would be aware of. He wrote:

```
Imagine a farmer finding out where in his field is

lacking water and being able to fix it within seconds.

This would all be with the help of drones. They could

fly above the fields and survey or create an image to

show the farmer the dry spots. This could be super

beneficial to the amount of yield the farmer has now

because the crops will be watered.
```

Though Elliott highlighted the potential benefits of farming, he vacillated with his use of modals, using both "could," "would," and "will" in this excerpt. Though Elliot may have used these mixed modals to match his hypothetical construction, this approach lacks a consistently strong statement for why the drones will be beneficial to the farmer. Additionally, other students, such as Amanda (5), attempted to incorporate too many reasons and evidence into their argument, weakening their cohesion. After effectively describing how drones could benefit farmers and those in the military, Amanda took a broader approach saying,

> Drones do have some advantages and disadvantages to
> them, but so do people. If a person has disadvantages
> to them are you going to ignore them or ban them?

Here, Amanda switched to second person and used vague references to "people" in attempt to make a global statement. Instead, she weakened her focus and asked a vague rhetorical question which did not advance her previous points.

Though students in this Farmland (5) experience still encountered issues with certain areas of language, their improved writing analysis scores compared to the Farmland experience from the previous year (2), as well those from Mountain High in year two (4), suggest that an element of this particular project may be related to the areas of improvement. The notable difference is the audience, with Farmland (5) students writing to their state representative, who lived in the same rural community as the students, as opposed to a vague or unknown audience. However, issues related to project instruction and support may also be related. The student interview data, presented and discussed below, will be used to further explicate the unique elements of the Farmland

audience, as well as to more deeply probe into the challenges with language that still remain.

Summary of analysis of student writing.

As illustrated, students across project experiences were found to have both strengths and weaknesses in their argument writing. Common strengths across projects were related to technical and evaluative vocabulary. Some students were able to choose reasons that supported their claim well, particularly when considering their audience, though this was found to be inconsistent and potentially related to students' audience. Language variables, particularly those related to tenor, such as modal use, grammatical person, and the way in which students used language to support their reasons and evidence, were areas of struggle and demonstrated that additional instruction and support were needed. Thus, some elements central to appraisal and evaluation in argument, such as attitude, were strengths, while others, such as graduation, were weaknesses.

In analyzing the student writing, it was clear that the analysis of writing completed for this study did not always match the evaluation and comparative leveling conducted by the teachers. In reviewing the teacher categorizations and the students' writing, it was found that factors such as written length and amount of research incorporated into the essay were associated with a high scoring essay, while language use often did not receive the same attention. This observation reinforces the earlier position that both the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and instructional and development resources for ELA teachers privilege cognitive or structural factors, including written length, and the use of research to substantiate evidence, as opposed to considering how

language use appropriately (or inappropriately) situates the audience and demonstrates an awareness of audience in the intentional selection of language throughout the argument.

Teachers' and Students' Familiarity with Audience and Language

Before discussing the themes related to the students' argument writing and language choices in response to their respective audiences, evident primarily through student and teacher interviews, I first describe if and how teachers and students felt prepared to address issues of language and audience in their writing in the argument writing projects. Because students were largely unfamiliar with argument writing as a genre, as well as the concept of making intentional language choices in response to audience, Erin (5) recognized that she would need to have focused conversations and targeted instruction on audience:

> For some [of the students], they got it right away, they understood, well, if we're writing for [the state representative], then we need to be more formal in how we speak. For others [other students], they weren't exactly sure, you know, how you speak differently to someone like that versus how you would write an editorial in the paper versus how you would write if you're just writing to your friends. So I tried to show them a couple of examples of letters written to different people just so they could see audience.

As described previously, these models and mentors were important elements of instruction as a means to introduce the idea of writing to a particular audience. Additionally, Erin discussed specific issues of language with her students. In general, she addressed tone and vocabulary, but also attended to particular grammatical issues, such as person, which influenced tone and voice:

We talked about formal writing versus informal writing. And, like I said, we looked at those letters where, you know, write one to a friend and then write one to the newspaper and so forth. And . . . one thing I had them do was write in third person, so they couldn't use 'I.'

This attention to grammatical person illustrates that Erin attended to the grammatical conventions of the argument genre, particularly given the particular purpose and audience of writing to a state representative. While some students still struggled with grammatical conventions of the genre, such as person, students in Erin's class expressed a clear knowledge of their intended audience. As Elliott (5) stated, the chosen audience in Farmland, the state representative, was relevant and informed by the nature of the unique, interpersonal relationships in their small, rural community: "I know who he [the state representative] is, so I knew who I was writing to and I wanted to make sure that it sounded good enough for him, I guess." Chloe (5) echoed this sentiment of familiarity with the state representative saying, "Well, writing to him, because we know him, was fairly easy because we personally know him . . . He lives in our town." Therefore, even though year two Farmland students lacked familiarity with the argument genre and had not participated in writing activities involving authentic audiences previous to this project, many of them were able to readily identify the state representative as their audience and had general ideas for how this would influence their writing. Though they had audience awareness and a general sense for how to respond, though, their writing choices illustrated that other factors beyond an authentic audience were at play when choosing language to construct an effective argument on drones.

The students participating in the year two Mountain High project had less of an awareness of a specific audience, in part because of the nature of their audience – the general public (open to personal interpretation) in the mode, or form, of an Op-Ed. As Betsy admitted, part of her students' awareness of audience (or lack thereof) was due to how she structured the project saying, "I don't think I did as good of a job to have them focus on writing to an audience." As evident in the student writing samples and the student interviews, "general public" was not consistently conceptualized across students. Therefore, students had different intentions when writing. For example, Cassie (4) said that she was thinking of her audience to some degree, but her conceptualization of public led to an informal tone. In response to a question asking if she was aware of her audience in this project, she responded:

> A little bit. Well she [Betsy] said it was for a general audience or like the general public. So I used words and sentences that you would use in normal-day conversations, like writing a little bit more casual so that everybody could understand it rather than writing with giant fancy words that people professionally doing this would know.

But others, such as Maggie (4), viewed the general public as adult readers who would expect a more formal tone saying, "you couldn't talk in slang or abbreviate everything. Because if your audience is an adult you have to be more appropriate, professional, and use bigger words." This difference in conceptualizing "general public" may have been a result of students negotiating multiple "publics," their small, rural community in Mountain High or a broader adult public not situated in a particular context. In part, and

as Betsy identifies, this audience uncertainty resulted in variation in student writing, often leading to writing that lacked clarity.

Students' Language Choices in Response to Audience

Examining student writing data across experiences, students' interview responses while reflecting on their writing, and teachers' responses about student writing yielded four main themes about the manner in which students made language choices in response to audience across argument writing projects: 1) student language choices, specifically related to their reasons, evidence, and technical language (related to field), reflected an awareness of their audience in their argument writing; 2) students who could identify their audience, especially an authentic, community-based audience, were more likely to make language choices (related to both field and tenor) that resulted in a more effective argument; 3) students, because of audience uncertainty or confusion, or an attempt to reach multiple or broad audiences, crafted an argument with structure and language (related to both field and tenor) that decreased cohesion and clarity; and 4) some students, especially when attempting to reach multiple or broader audiences, utilized first person voice and made other language choices (related to tenor) that were inconsistent with the norms of the genre given the writing purpose. Together, these themes illustrate how differing experiences of conceptualizing audience, as well as factors related to their experiences of the writing project, contexts of situation, and rural contexts informed and impacted the conceptual choices and material writing crafted by the students.

Reasons, evidence, and technical language (field).

A majority of student writing samples included reasons, evidence, and technical language, comprising the ideational content or field of the text, that were chosen in

response to their intended audience. While it was more common for students with a known, community-based audience, such as the audience of the state representative for the Farmland project (5), to intentionally include reasons and evidence in response to their audience, some students at Mountain High (4) conceptualized the "public" to be from their local, rural context and, therefore, included reasons, evidence, and technical language that would be appropriate for those readers. In year two, the reasons and evidence for drones clustered around three main topics related to the local, rural context: farming, privacy and safety, and the military. In year one, the reasons and evidence for 1:1 technology clustered around financial costs and potential medical implications. I place greater focus on year two writing in this section because it is accompanied by student interview data in which students reflected upon and responded to questions about their writing.

Students generally included reasons and evidence on the topic of farming to argue for the beneficial use of drones. Many students directly cited their state and local context as a means to make a relevant point directed at their audience, the state representative. For example, Amanda (5) wrote:

> Since [Farmland's state] has a large amount of people
> who farm, drones could be a great beneficiary device
> for them. The drone would be able to fly over the
> field and take high definition photos of the crops for
> the farmer to see.

Amanda indicated that choosing to identify farming as an issue directly related to her state and local, rural context was done purposefully with the state representative in mind saying, "And we live around like a lot of farmland, so that kind of just popped in. I

thought that it would be beneficial to all farmers here to help grow their crops and stuff."

Amanda described how she used technical language, such as "beneficiary device" and

"high definition photos" to demonstrate her knowledge of drones as related to farming,

believing that the state representative would be looking for her ability to know the subject

well to write an effective argument.

Sammy (5) followed a line of thinking similar to Amanda. She wrote:

> Drones are now being used for agricultural purposes.
> Farmers are now using precision agriculture in order
> to become more efficient. Most farms become large in
> size; this means farmers need to watch over more land.
> With a drone, a farmer can now be monitor more land
> and then be notified when there is a problem. A farmer
> can see when an area needs more attention than the
> rest of the crops. Only the certain area would be
> treated so the farmer would use less fertilizer,
> pesticides, and water, saving money and energy.

Similar to Amanda, she intentionally used technical language related to drones and

farming, describing how using drones to "monitor" could be an element of "precision

agriculture." Further, she addresses real issues of fertilizer, pesticide, and water use that

farmers, and those concerned with the local economy like the state representative, would

likely be interested to read. When asked why she made these choices, Sammy said, **"I**

tried to figure out how they [would be] used here, like how they could be used in a rural

town where I'm from so that I could connect more to it." She then connected this

intention of being mindful of her rural context to the audience of the state representative,

recognizing her relationship with her audience and his likely interests based on his role. Sammy described how "his wife was my second grade teacher and he had been around all of the farms here. So I had researched more about how the drones would benefit farmers around our town." Additionally, Sammy reflected on how she intentionally chose farming in response to her audience saying,

> When I was thinking about him, I was thinking he's thinking about the community and how this would help us. And so the farmers and agriculture are very important in our community. And so if he's helping us and the agriculture helps the community, then if I'm putting in my argument saying how drones would help agriculture and the farmers, then the drones would be helping the community.

Elliott (5), too, spoke of intentionality when writing about farming with his rural community and his audience of the state representative in mind. He included the following in his argument:

> Imagine a farmer finding out where in his field is lacking water and being able to fix it within seconds. This would all be with the help of drones. They could fly above the fields and survey or create an image to show the farmer the dry spots. This could be super beneficial to the amount of yield the farmer has now because the crops will be watered. Pictures from satellites that most farmers use to see where they have dry spots are not only expensive but take a couple of days to get to them. This could cost the

farmer money by not knowing where the dry spots are in

his fields. Another positive attribute they could

bring is displaying an equal amount of pesticides or

herbicides without overdoing it like some farms do.

Giving more of an equal amount to the crop can lead to

healthier crops, which means people are going to

benefit more from them. This will not only benefit the

farmer because of the quality of his crops are better

but also the public that buy it will have a much safer

crop to consume.

Elliott described his relationship with the state representative and its influence on his writing saying, "I know who he is, so I knew who I was writing to and I wanted to make sure that it sounded good enough for him, I guess." "Sounding good" is directly related to including technical language, both in terms of reasons and evidence, as well as language used to transition or organize. He described his intentionality here saying, "In the next paragraph, I mention the farmer. The sixth sentence in that one. It starts with, 'Another positive attribute…'. 'Another positive attribute' would be some vocabulary that would hit me." Elliott also described how drones can assist with equal distribution of pesticides and herbicides, using vocabulary specific to farming. When asked what elements of his text made for an effective argument, Elliott responded saying, "Definitely farming, all about the farmers, because we live in a really rural area with farms all around us. So anything that would help the farmers would be a really good recommendation." Elliott was acutely aware of his local, rural context and the issues faced by community members, issues that he believed the state representative would also be concerned with

when reading his argument. Finally, Liam (5) incorporated evidence from the Federal

Aviation Agency (FAA), thinking that the state representative would recognize the

importance of including this source as a means to support his argument. He wrote:

> Farming can also increase greatly with the usage of
> drones. If sending drones above crops to maintain
> watch over them, this will increase $5 per acre which
> will save billions, according to the agency FAA
> (Federal Aviation Agency). It would make farming a
> little easier to maintain, and can also make a huge
> different in the profit made for the farmers.

Here, he drew on his knowledge of his audience to support an economic point that the

state representative would likely support, particularly given the source. Similar to other

students from Farmland (5), Liam made intentional choices related to reasons, evidence,

and technical language in response to his audience in his effort to craft an effective

argument.

At Mountain High, even when not thinking of a specific audience such as the state

representative, some students incorporated reasons and evidence related to farming into

their arguments when conceptualizing "general public" as their local, rural context. For

example, Cassie (4) addressed the benefits of efficiency when using drones in farming:

> Drones can also be useful tools for farmers. Farmers
> often have large fields of crops to take care of, and
> because there are so many it is often hard to make
> sure they are all healthy. Walking through the fields
> to check them all can take days or even weeks, and if

a group of crops is unhealthy it can spread and cause

other crops to because unhealthy as well. This is why

farmers need a tool that can help them check on the

health of all of their crops quickly and efficiently.

A drone could be flown over the crops quickly, making

it easy to spot any dying crops in a matter of

minutes. In fact, there is a company in Indiana called

Precision Drone that issues drones to farmers to be

used to check on their crops regularly.

In contrast to students from Farmland (5), though, she referred to an example from

Indiana, missing an opportunity to connect back to her home state. This reference is not

problematic in and of itself since it was used as an example, but had she been aware of a

particular audience, she could have better connected the example to the potential interests

of a given audience. Lucas (4) followed a similar approach, using an article as evidence

to support a point about farming, but maintaining a more general stance that was not

directed towards a particular audience. He wrote:

Drones are very useful for agriculture. In the

article, "Drones for Agriculture", Writers at Drone

and Quadcopter explain how drones are time saving

because farmers no longer have to monitor their crops

by foot, and drones can survey their farmland in

minutes instead of hours or days. Drones also make

farming easier because they are advanced in

technology. In other words, drones can count the

```
crops, soil properties like moisture level, and they

can also analyze water usage. We can count on them for

being more efficient than humans.
```

Even though Lucas was writing to a general public in the form of an Op-Ed which

affected some of his language, he still chose reasons and evidence that would be

appropriate when writing to someone from a rural community that relies on farming. He

names specific ways in which drones can benefit farms, such as identifying "soil

properties like moisture level," to address real issues that farmers would face.

When students wrote to discourage the use of drones, they common cited issues of

safety and privacy. For example, Chloe (5), wrote:

```
A third disadvantage to drones is that they can be

used inappropriately causing destruction and security

issues. They can fly into or over restricted areas, or

they can fly into sporting events. At [Farmland's

state] University, when they have sporting events

going on they have a sign that does not allow drones

into the events area where it is being held.
```

Chloe connected the concern directly to a local site, a university a few hours away which

some students from Farmland would likely go on to attend and which many students and

families supported for sports. Additionally, she chose to include issues of safety knowing

the state representative's background saying, "he [the state representative] used to be a

cop, so . . . I put as a disadvantage for drones I put in [information] about criminal

activity." Thus, her awareness directly informed her writing decisions.

Students at Mountain High demonstrated their ability to use research to provide evidence to support their reasons, particularly those related to safety. Though their writing did not address a specific audience, the students determined that including strong evidence would be appropriate for their "general public" readers. For example, Zoey (4) wrote:

```
The most common and everyday issue with drones is that
they invade personal privacy. Where is the line
between flying over a house and prowling? Is the air
over a private property public or private? According
to CNN, "under current law, it's illegal to shoot down
a drone, even if it's hovering above your own
property." (3) This is a serious invasion of privacy
that has up to now been protected with fences and
trespassing laws. Now personal space is being invaded
and homeowners are helpless against it.
```

Zoey's language illustrates how she aimed to address the concerns of the everyday reader. She used evidence to back up her reason and used technical ("invasion of privacy") and evaluative language ("serious invasion," "invaded," "helpless") to connect with her conceptualization of the "public." However, because her understanding of the public was so broad, she was not able to add specific details appropriate for a clearly indicated audience. Maggie (4) pursued a similar approach, aiming her argument for a broader public. She wrote:

```
Since 2001 there have been 418 major drone accidents
along with hundreds of minor accidents. Recently
```

inexperienced drone flyers are using the drones in
inappropriate and harmful ways that has raised
awareness to the FFA, causing members to decide to
write a set of regulations to improve the usage of
drones. Drones should be used for professional
occupations and beginners should only be allowed to
use drones after taking proper classes.

Reflecting on her writing, Maggie described how she used technical language related to

drones based on mentor texts and research that she had found saying, "I had seen them

[technical vocabulary] in different articles, using debris as a word and hobbyist and just

mixed them all in, threw in some of mine." Maggie equated the general public to an

audience that would want technical vocabulary and strong evidence to be convinced. In

the students' writing, they implemented what they had learned about reasons, evidence,

and technical language to craft an effective argument. However, they indicated that

audience was much less of a factor when making these decisions, beyond identifying the

need to include substantive evidence.

Several students at both Farmland and Mountain High also wrote about drone use

in the military. Often, students wrote about how drones were a safer way to engage in

battle, citing a desire to protect US soldiers. For example, Liam (5) wrote:

Drones can reduce danger in the military. Having a
drone perform a mission other than sending a soldier
in a plane is a lot safer and can keep a life safer
than before. Also, maintenance of drones and fuel is a
lot cheaper than an actual plane.

Elliott's (5) inclusion of the military was based on his knowledge of the state representative's background saying, "He was a cop, so I'm sure that he definitely supports out military." Though he made an assumption here about the state representative, it was informed by his relationship and knowledge of his personal background. By knowing the state representative, Elliott was able to choose a reason that connected both to his local, rural community, as well as his audience's experience.

Students' decisions to write about the military also makes sense given students' relationships to individuals in their school or community who served in the military, recognizing this as a community issue and one the state representative would likely identify with. Amanda (5) described her choice in writing about the military saying,

> I think that including the military makes it a strong argument because there's a lot of veterans that have the disease of PTSD and our math teacher is also a veteran and he has that. And so every once in a while we catch a glimpse, a glimpse of him going through, like, I don't know how to explain it...

Amanda had seen firsthand how a military veteran was impacted by combat and identified it as a broader community issue. With her community and school in mind, aware of issues that her state representative would likely be concerned with and respond to, Amanda demonstrated an intentionality when including the military in her argument.

In the year one arguments, students' writing samples also suggested that students chose reasons, evidence, and technical language in response to their audiences, various school or community members who would be deciding on or potentially funding 1:1 technology adoption. These reasons and evidence focused on issues of potential medical and funding implications. Though student interview data are lacking to confirm, student

writing suggests that students were intentional in their choices, but inconsistently included their local context. For example, Gabriel (2), arguing against 1:1 technology adoption, cited medical evidence to support his stance writing:

> Hand held devices actually affect your vision,
> according to American Optometric Association, 'People
> who use Electronics such as hand held and other
> devices usually have eye strain, headaches, and
> blurred vision that can lead to permanent eye damage.'

Though he does not connect this to a local concern, Gabriel likely chose this point with the understanding that those in a position of authority would find medical evidence to be an effective means of supporting his stance.

Other students included issues of funding directly related to potential implications in their own schools and classrooms. Carlos (2) wrote that "One to one devices will save the school money by not using so much paper for assignments, worksheets and other things that require a paper and ink," likely thinking about relevant fiscal issues that school or community members would want to consider in their decision. Grace (2) added nuance to her response, describing a cost-benefit analysis in which 1:1 technology would ultimately be best for the school:

> The initial cost may be high, but the devices will pay
> for themselves and more in the long run. 1-1 devices
> can completely replace textbooks, which are very
> expensive themselves, costing hundreds of dollars.
> Textbooks go out of date and become worn within a few

years, and schools spend thousands of dollars

replacing them repeatedly. With devices, however,

online textbooks can be downloaded for low or even no

cost, and can be updated at any time. Books students

are assigned to read for their classes could also be

replaced with e-books, eliminating the worry of losing

and replacing books. Plus, with online versions of

books, teachers will never have to worry about running

out of copies. Additionally, paper usage can be

greatly decreased with the use of 1-1 devices. Instead

of printing off presentations or articles to give to

students, teachers can have digital versions available

for students. Students can also do notes, journals,

worksheets, and other assignments online instead of on

paper. This cuts down on ink and paper costs

dramatically.

Finally, Caity (3), also mindful of issues of funding, included research to indicate exactly

what the cost would be to advocate against 1:1 adoption:

School budgets are not exactly overflowing with extra

cash. More than 35 states provide less funding per

student than they did before the 2007 recession

(Leachman and Mai), and unnecessary technology is not

a good use of the little money schools have. The

laptops we received were $549 according to the Lenovo

website ('Lenovo Yoga Laptop Series | Convertible
Entertainment Laptops'). That in itself is an
extremely high cost, and seems irresponsible for a
public school to spend. Not only does the school have
to buy the laptops, but they have to purchase $65
specially padded backpacks to protect the devices
('Brenthaven - Pacific Laptop Backpack — Blue'), and
pay any damage repair costs, which can be $250 just
for minor damages ('Accidental Damage Protection').
For just 20 students, the school would be spending
over $12,000, not including repair costs.

Caity used real numbers from her experience at Hillside to indicate exactly why the costs,

both direct and indirect, associated with 1:1 adoption would be overbearing and not worth

the benefit of the 1:1 adoption.

Throughout all of these examples, students across projects demonstrated their

ability to select reasons, evidence, and technical language. Often, this ability was directly

related to audience awareness, though the nature of the audience influenced students'

intentionality in their language choices. But students overwhelmingly chose reasons and

evidence that they felt would best match the interests and backgrounds of their audience

and be most effective when crafting an argument to persuade them of their stance.

Language choices (field and tenor) in response to audience awareness.

Examples of students demonstrating an intentionality of language choice in

response to audience was only able to be observed in the year two projects with the

addition of student interview data. Connected to the reasons, evidence, and technical

language incorporated into students' writing, some students also were mindful of multiple language variables in response to audience. Students often referred to vocabulary in their interviews, but their language represented technical vocabulary related to the content, or field, of their argument, along with language related to the tenor of the piece. Evaluative language, which expresses appreciation or judgment to influence the argument, was used intentionally by students. Related, students made decisions about grading and intensity, admittedly not aware of these concepts from an SFL or appraisal theory framework, in response to their audience. Further, some students were conscious of avoiding weak modals or other language constructions, such as "I think" or "I believe" which has a weakening effective on an argument. Similar to issues related to field, students from Farmland (5) demonstrated more intentionality in response to their authentic audience of the state representative. However, students from Mountain High (4) who conceptualized their general public audience as requiring more of a formal tone were also cognizant of some of these language issues, though this occurred less frequently.

At Farmland (5), multiple students reflected on how their writing was influenced by the role of the state representative. Amanda (5) referenced her writing saying, "Okay, so in the 5th paragraph, um, where I said that they're 'a great beneficiary device for farmers' -- I wouldn't have used that sentence if I was talking to, like, a middle schooler or an elementary kid." She went on to say, "I use different vocabulary when I'm talking to adults than I do when I'm talking to like younger kids. And so I focused more on using vocabulary that is on a higher level than I would if I was writing this for like middle schoolers." Amanda connected this approach of more formal writing to adults to her audience, the state representative, and what he would likely expect to read if he was

hoping to be convinced. Further, Amanda illustrated that formal writing incorporated appropriate use of evaluative language; here, calling a drone a "beneficiary device," instead of describing device in a neutral manner. Another student, Sammy (5), described her intentionality when including more formal language and the inclusion of particular evidence, here related to animals and science, when writing to the state representative saying,

> We had to make sure it wasn't too simple, because we weren't just talking to our peers, we were talking to an adult and the state representative. So we had to watch what we were saying and how we were phrasing our sentences […] When I was writing that I was thinking, 'Okay, this is an adult . . .' so I was trying to sound like I knew what I was talking about. And especially animals around here are important also. I tried to think about what I was saying, especially with science, in our science class, we had learned to write scientific papers, so I was trying to think about the habitats and the extinction and the poaching.

Other students recognized that this opportunity to write to the state representative was a chance to express their voice, which motivated the language used. As Liam (5) described,

> I took it a lot more serious. I wanted it to be – I thought I could be heard. So I tried to express how I felt about it and tried to get my point across clearly […] I was just trying to sound more professional. I wasn't trying to use slang or anything like that. I was trying to use words that would get my point across […] Because I felt like the state representative, if he was just to read it and it was just me talking like how I would with my friends, he wouldn't take me seriously and just push my paper aside.

This notion of "being heard" presents is important as it illustrates how students felt that they had a sense of agency by writing to an authentic, community-based audience. This agency affected Liam's motivation and engagement, and also impacted the way in which he made language choices in his argument. Elliott (5) echoed this point saying, "I definitely want[ed] to act professional and not have any slang so that he would give it a thought." For Liam and Elliott, using a more formal tone and including reasons, evidence, and language that responded to the audience of the state representative was related to an increased chance in their opportunity to have their voice heard.

Though students at Mountain High had less clarity in their audience, some students were still mindful of a more formal tone, including use of modality and evaluative language, that would be more effective. For Lizzy (4), this approach, as a means to influence effectiveness regardless of the stance, was an important lesson:

Even if it's the most unbelievable topic [or claim, really], if you say it a certain way, people will believe it. And that's what I learned how to do. I learned that I had a really bad habit of saying 'I believe' or 'I think.' So when she made us focus a lot on trying to not say those things in our writing, it makes it sound a lot more professional and persuasive, even though it's just a minor detail. It makes it sound more like a hard fact than an opinion, which makes people more likely to believe it.

Though lacking consideration of audience in this reflection, Lizzy demonstrated what other students across projects learned – that having an awareness of tone, voice, and language variables, including elements like modals and constructions like "I think" and "I believe" which effectively weaken an argument, plays a roll in an audience's decision to

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adopt or reject the claim. However, as indicated by the students at Farmland (5), having a clearer understanding of audience can result in greater intentionality when considering language choices.

Negotiating multiple, broad audiences led to decreased cohesion and clarity.

Although many students expressed intentionality in choosing reasons, evidence, and language in response to their audience, particularly those from Farmland (5) who wrote to their state representative, the majority of students' arguments lacked consistent clarity or cohesion. Upon investigation, especially when adding student interview data, these issues with clarity or cohesion appeared when students conceptualized or negotiated multiple or broad audiences within their single argument. Though this was notably evident in the Mountain High (4) arguments because of their lack of a clear audience, students at Farmland (5) also struggled. These issues of clarity and cohesion led to ineffective language use, including unclear participants, ineffective use of questions (which were not used effectively or appropriately given the audience), use of first and second person (typically not preferred in argument writing), and inconsistent modal use. Additionally, students included several unrelated points as reasons and evidence, detracting from the effectiveness of using select reasons and evidence that were responsive to their audience and context.

Though Amanda (5) was intentional about including issues of farming and the military in her writing, she also included reasons that attempted to introduce a counter-point, but actually served to weaken her argument. In these sections in which she discussed a counter-point, her language became more unclear with vague generalized participants ("people"), use of the second person, and use of an ineffective question:

> Drones do have some advantages and disadvantages to
>
> them, but so do people. If a person has disadvantages
>
> to them are you going to ignore them or ban them?

Amanda described how her attempt to include multiple perspectives was intentional saying,

> well I tried to include, like, a lot of facts so that it didn't look like I just wasn't on
>
> one side. So I kind of broke it down to the things that are good about drones and
>
> the things that are also bad about having drones around.

Unfortunately, Amanda's attempt to include these multiple perspectives reflected a departure from her focused attention to the state representative, which then affected her language use. It seems that Amanda's attempt to include multiple perspectives came as a response to Erin (5) providing multiple perspectives on drones in her mentor texts. Erin described her initial intent saying,

> We read an article supporting drones and we read an article that showed the
>
> disadvantages of drones and the problems that they can cause and some of the
>
> legal issues. So they had kind of different perspectives and also they got the idea
>
> of what a drone actually is.

It is possible that, in an attempt to address multiple perspectives, Amanda was striving to address multiple audiences, losing focus on the state representative. Similar to Amanda, Derek (5), who also thoughtfully incorporated issues of farming and the military in his argument, included other tangential reasons and evidence related to science, nature, and even Amazon deliveries. For example, he included the following two points in his argument:

> For example, they can get us never before seen footage
> of volcanic eruptions; they can track endangered
> species with precision.
>
> With all of this being said, I think it is fair to say
> that again drones should be allowed for personal and
> commercial use because they can provide society with
> great services such as educational,
> research/discovery, and occupational uses, as long as
> regulations are set in place. With strict regulations
> being set in place, all of this could be safe and
> possible. These regulations probably being background
> checks, permitting, and things of that nature. There
> is definitely a large controversy over the subject,
> but it will for sure benefit the people of modern day
> society.

Derek described how, although he was aware that his audience was the state representative, he shifted to writing in a more general tone, which served to weaken his argument:

> I was trying to write it as if maybe he liked drones or maybe thought they should
> be permitted to the public. I was just trying to think of both sides, the two
> different opinions he might have, so that I might be able to appeal to him more.
> So I was trying to write a two-sided paper.

This general tone negatively affected his writing when he included use of the first person ("I" and "we") and inconsistent modal use, such as his use of "I think," "probably," and

"could," which, when compared to his earlier writing, illustrates a less confident tone than what is necessary when writing a strong argument. Similarly, Juan (5) expressed how a broader approach resulted in more general language and a weaker argument: "For my audience, I just said how great drones could be because they can help in so many ways […] Just like anything else . . . drones can be a good thing, or a bad thing." When too many perspectives are presented, though, argument writing loses its focus, particularly when addressed to a specific audience.

This lack of focus was also present in the year two Mountain View experience, which lacked a specific audience. For example, Noah (4) said that drones would be beneficial for multiple unrelated reasons. He began by discussing farming, but in a way that was not related to his context, writing, `"In south Florida, one of the main areas for growing avocadoes, there are bugs infecting the avocado trees with fungus. But some people have a plan."` Again, the example in and of itself is not a problem, but this detail would be more convincing for a particular audience or if connected back to the audience. Further, after discussing how drones could be useful for farming, architecture and engineers, ocean pollution, and animal preservation, he finally determined that, `"If I had to decide what drones should be used for, I'd have to say cleaning up the world."` In his interview, it was clear that Noah struggled to have a focus saying,

> I tried to talk about how drones could help the world. I talked about how they saved a whole field of avocados and like animals and stuff. So I guess mine would probably appeal more to the hippy-ish kind of people, like tree-huggers.

When asked about the multiple and unrelated issues addressed, Noah admitted that "That was something [he] realized after-the-fact." Unfortunately, he did not recognize that having disparate points led to an unfocused piece with unclear and ineffective language, including the use of first person and other language constructions (e.g., "I'd have to say…," "If I had to decide…") that weakened his argument.

Similar to Noah (4), Cassie (4) spoke very generally in sections of her argument. For example, she wrote:

> If used appropriately and with caution drones can be incredibly useful. They can make long and difficult tasks quicker and easier and possible even save lives. Drones can change the way we do things, the way we see the world, and even the way we live our lives. They can make a positive impact, so why would we ban them?

Using general language, such as "the way we do things, the way we see the world, and even the way we live our lives," did not clarify who "we" referred to. Additionally, discussing the topic so broadly without consistently used concrete examples resulted in a lack of internal clarity and overall cohesion. Cassie said, though, that her language use was purposeful given the general public audience given. When asked if she was thinking of her audience, Cassie responded:

> I did. A little bit. Well she [Betsy] said it was for a general audience or like the general public. So I used words and sentences that you would use in normal-day conversations, like writing a little bit more casual so that everybody could understand it rather than writing with giant fancy words that people professionally doing this would know […] So the research that I would put in it, I had to find

things that people living normal, everyday lives would be interested in. Like

things that would appeal to them . . . that the general public could relate to and be

interested in. Not necessarily just here, but anywhere with people living normal,

everyday lives […] One of the examples I used was to rescue people from natural

disasters. The general public will be thinking with emotions instead of hard facts.

I was trying to indirectly appeal to that by talking about how if drones can help

save lives, and indirectly appeal to how they would feel about that.

Cassie's response indicates that she was, in fact, making intentional language choices, but

that the general public audience resulted in her making choices that were less effective

overall. Lizzy (4) echoed this intent saying,

What I tried to include in my essay was mainly for normal, everyday people. I

tried not to include farming or any sophisticated job that would require drones. I

tried to think of it [drones] more as an entertainment or hobby sort of thing,

because that addresses more people. So I tried to include more information that

would refer to the public as a whole and not just specific people.

Unfortunately, reaching out to such a broad audience resulted in language that was

largely ineffective. For example, Mason's writing sample uses weak suppositions ("just

about anything," "Maybe we should"), which undermines other sections of his writing in

which he includes thoughtful reasons and evidence:

```
Drones could be used for just about anything that

humans want to design them for, as long as they stop

with the innocent killing of civilians around the

entire world. Maybe we should use them for non-lethal
```

```
purposes so people will stop dying, or getting

injured.
```

Some students, though, identified that another issue with their unfocused, vague writing

was the need for more instructional support in their writing. After reflecting on her

writing (see excerpt below), Aubrey determined that "I don't think there was a lot of that

[language/vocabulary instruction]. I think I needed help in my paper with that."

Aubrey's excerpted writing sample:

```
Many things are dangerous and drones should not be

one. Bombs have been attached to drones that are not

being used for military purposes.  A drone could be

flying above you and you're not going to know whether

it is equipped with a bomb or not and no one wants a

drone to invade your private property.
```

Again, Aubrey's use of unclear generalized participants ("Many things…"), repeated use

of second person (you), and the discussion of multiple reasons in one section served to

weaken her argument. Though she attempted to use technical language (e.g., "private

property") that was appropriate for the topic of drones, she recognized that she would

have benefitted from additional support, especially in response to audience.

Additionally, Emilia (5), a Spanish-English bilingual student shared that

"language is really hard for me because I know two languages and sometimes I get really

confused . . . so I would ask [Erin] for help." She welcomed the opportunities for

feedback and the way in which Erin welcomed questions and collaboration. Still, Emilia

felt that, "Definitely my vocabulary wasn't big enough, wasn't professional enough."

Though Emilia described that Erin provided support in response to her needs, Emilia's

response suggests that additional language supports would be useful to students, especially those from bilingual backgrounds who are negotiating multiple languages, as well as learning genre- and topic-specific language like her fellow students. This insight, however, requires additional investigation as few students, particularly those who were bilingual, brought up this particular challenge with language.

The year one writing samples, though they lack student interviews to substantiate, also illustrate how students likely perceived the need to address multiple perspectives, confusing other purposes and audiences with the ones they primarily understood. This confusion affected multiple language variables, including inconsistent modal use. For example, Victoria (1), a student in Betsy's class, repeatedly used the phrase, "It seems . . ." in her essay when presenting evidence, while also using stronger modals, particularly in her conclusion. This lack of consistency may have been a result of addressing multiple perspectives, affecting her language choices and weakening her overall argument.

Across argument writing projects, students struggled maintaining clear and cohesive writing through their entire text directed at the intended audience. While important to note that this challenge occurred regardless if students had a clear understanding of a singular audience or an unclear, broad audience, data demonstrate that having a broader audience results in more frequent language issues negatively affecting the tenor of the students' argument and the overall effectiveness. The desire to address multiple perspectives and multiple audiences may have been a result of students' confusion when being exposed to multiple perspectives to be weighed depending on their particular stance, but also suggests that additional instruction is needed for students to

better understand the language variables related to tenor and tone that are affected by audience awareness.

First person voice and other language issues when audience is unclear.

When analyzing student challenges in maintaining a consistent focus on a singular audience or in response to apparent confusion with too broad of an audience, one ineffective use of language that developed into a theme was the use of first person. For example, Noah (4) framed his writing in relation to his preference for drone use saying:

> If I had to decide what drones should be used for, I'd
> have to say cleaning up the world. The earth is filled
> with garbage and pollution, and that affects
> everything, plants, animals, and us. So if we build
> drones for cleaning the earth up it won't become a
> wasteland […] Yes, I know some people may think that
> drones should be used in combat, but they're killing a
> lot more people than just terrorists. I do agree on
> something though, drones have been used in war for
> many years, and I don't think they will ever stop. So
> let's just use them for happiness.

In describing his language decisions, Noah said that he chose reasons and evidence that he found compelling: "This one article that I found by this doctor . . . to save whales . . . he created this drone called the SnotBot […] When I read it, I believed it." This approach may have been a general misunderstanding, but it illustrates that students may have privileged their own perceptions above others in argument writing, particularly when not guided by a direct purpose and audience. Further, students may have adopted a first

person voice because of a lack of teacher instruction or support to clarify the need to focus on audience when crafting an effective argument. Another example of this first person use shows Mason (4) taking an approach similar to Noah:

> According to an 'Investigation by the Washington Post' highlighting the dangers posed by technology, more than 400 large U.S. military drones have crashed in accidents around the world since 2001. So I think that is way too many deaths for drones that shouldn't have been used at the time.

Mason included his opinion, using a weak modal, because as he described, "I pretty much just wrote for myself, but for everybody reading my thing I'm pretty sure they had a good view into where I'm coming from and what I'm saying in my essay."

Writing samples from year one projects incorporated this focus on the self, as well. For example, Devin (2) wrote:

> Teachers probably don't like to have papers all over their desks, at least I know that I wouldn't like to have my desk a mess with student papers. Having 1 on 1 devices can help clean it up. By emailing teachers assignments it helps them stay organized and for those of you with messy hand writing this can help your teachers read your papers easier. So at the end of the day 1 on 1 devices can help teachers just as much as they help the students.

This use of first person weakened the argument, but also suggests an important insight about argument writing, especially if students are confused by or perceive multiple audiences or the need to include multiple perspectives. These students demonstrated that they may have a desire to include their own identities, experiences, and opinions in their argument. For example, Elliott (5), even though writing to his state representative, included multiple perspectives and, when choosing to write about the military, said that he did so in part because "I'm going into the military, [so] less casualties on the battlefield [is important to me]. That's definitely a plus." Given his plans, it made sense for him to include this point about the military and to find this to be a salient point. However, given the writing purpose and audience, it would have been helpful to connect a point about the military to the broader stance and audience, as the argument was not intended to persuade someone based on personal experience. While revealing students' identities and the manner in which they portray themselves to their audience(s) may explain this use of first person, this theme also indicates that more instruction and support are necessary so that students better understand the purpose of argument writing and choose reasons, evidence, and language in response to their audience, instead of predominantly focusing on themselves. The theme, though, may also suggest that students need other discursive spaces, either through writing or oral discussion, to further probe these complex issues, especially as they relate to students as individuals, their particular rural contexts, or broader global issues which students either do or do not feel connected to.

Teachers' Responses to Students' Language Choices in Response to Audience

As has been illustrated above, the teachers participating in this project recognized, that while they strove to include sufficient supports in language in response to audience in writing, they needed to more. Erin (5) described her instructional support directly related to audience saying:

So I tried to show them, like, a couple examples of, um, letters written to different people just so they could see audience. And that helped a little bit, but I know they kind of struggled with that because most of them are so used to just writing as they speak, sort of that flow of conscious writing that they, you know, stream of consciousness writing that they just, they don't even think about it as they're writing.

While she knew that her students had an awareness that their audience was the state representative and made some appropriate choices, particularly around reasons, evidence, and technical vocabulary in relation to their audience, she recognized that their language use was inconsistent, indicating additional support was necessary. As Erin described, "And I feel like that's an area, the language and the audience, that I feel like maybe we need to beef up if we do this project, if the other projects want to do this project again."

In her own interview, Betsy (4) described the efforts she took to provide instruction on audience saying,

Some areas that I focused on was . . . concrete details and commentary. You can't just throw your facts in there and walk away from them. You need to share what they mean to you and how they connect to your audience.

Similar to Erin, though, she recognized the need for additional support saying that students' awareness of audience was,

> Not as strong, I think, as it could have been. And that is a drawback of an Op-Ed piece, you're joining the conversation. I shared with them some of the articles and told them you're going to do a similar thing, but the focus isn't as heavy on audience. And I think that was a weak point on me as the teacher. My attention was drawn more to other issues in their writing. I don't think I did as good of a job to have them focus on writing to an audience.

Teachers' Evaluation of Student Argument Writing

As noted in the methodology, teachers chose student participants based on their [the teachers] evaluation of students' argument writing. Examining teachers' evaluations of student writing indicated that teachers placed greater emphasis on students' ability to craft a clear claim, to choose reasons and evidence that were well supported by research, and to maintain a formal tone for an adult audience. Formal tone, though, was broadly conceived or understood. However, less attention in their evaluation was given to language variables in response to audience. Students who were evaluated by the teachers to be above average and average did well with choosing reasons and evidence based on research and maintaining a formal tone, but even they had difficulty maintaining a consistent focus on their designated audience, as well as the use of broader language variables that would have supported writing to that audience (such as focused reasons and evidence, use of modality, use of clear and consistent generalized participants, and consistent use of person, sentence type, and tone). Most students had difficulty

negotiating audience consistently throughout their piece, with students often addressing both local issues related to their audience and context and larger global issues.

It should be noted, however, that this finding on teachers' evaluations should not be interpreted solely as a fault of the teachers. As noted earlier, the CCSS, as well as instructional resources based on the CCSS, have placed greater emphasis on the need for students to attend to research-based evidence and a clear writing structure, including the claim, in argument writing. Thus, teachers were largely aligning their own work with the dominant approach to argument. The findings presented in this study offer important implications for the way in which arguments are conceptualized and supported for researchers and policy makers, individual teachers supporting argument writing, and the students who participate in writing in the argument genre.

Chapter 6

Discussion

This study was guided by three research questions: a central question related to how students make language choices with awareness of and in response to audience, and two supporting questions interrogating teachers' and students' experiences of the projects, and the rural contexts in which the experiences were situated. The findings from this study indicate, however, that there are multiple factors related to these experiences of argument writing in rural contexts, as well as the manner in which students make language choices with awareness of and in response to their writing audience (Figure 6.1). Guided by the research questions, as well as the themes found from the data, the four key elements in which or around the other factors exist are: the student, the audience, the teacher, and the rural context. The sub-factors within and around each illustrate the complexity involved when students make language choices with awareness of and in response to their audience. This discussion summarizes these factors, analyzes how the factors inform and influence students' argument writing and their language choices, and then describes the following salient point from the study: the impact of rurality, identity, and audience on student writing; the need for attention to audience and language in teachers' instruction; and the impact of audience on student language choices.
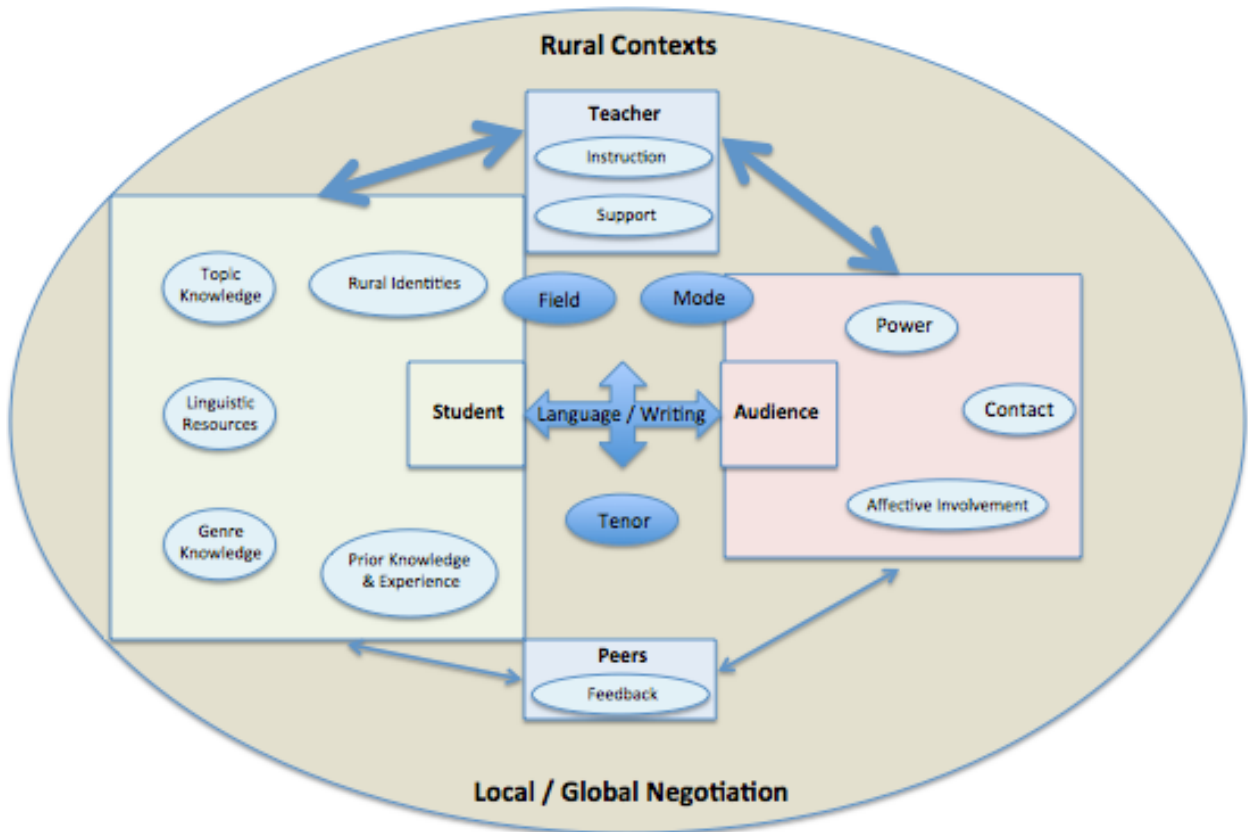
Figure 6.1. Factors across Argument Writing Project Experiences

After this discussion, I review the limitations of the study. Following the

limitations, and with them in mind, I present implications for policy and practice.

Drawing on the experience of conducting this study and the resulting findings, I then

offer implications for researchers, including an extension of appraisal theory when used

as a theoretical framework to inform student argument writing in diverse educational

contexts and a reflection on the importance of student interview data to complement and

enrich student writing data in writing and literacies research. I conclude by articulating

why standards, curricula, and instructional resources would benefit from the findings of

this study, emphasizing the importance of expanding how language is addressed and how

writing experiences should be constructed to create authentic, engaging opportunities for

students to meaningfully explore and improve their writing craft with audience and context in mind.

The Dialogic Space Between Writer and Audience

Informed by my theoretical frameworks, the dialogic space between writer and audience is complex and non-linear, involving the relationships and interactions (or non-interactions) between writer and audience across the argument writing project experiences. The register variables of field, tenor, and mode exist in this space and are mediated and affected by the other factors present in the figure (e.g., student identities and background knowledge, teacher instruction, and rural contexts). The register variables also overlap with and are incorporated within students and their audience to indicate that they do not exist in isolation and are necessarily impacted by the actors in the figure. The nature of the variables as factors is discussed in greater detail below.

Student Factors

The students in this study did not arrive at school as neutral, static, or empty receptacles awaiting the opportunity to passively receive knowledge (Freire, 2010). They entered learning spaces with dynamic and complex identities, including those that have developed from being situated in their respective rural school and community contexts. As articulated in their student interviews, students were aware of perceptions and generalizations of rural communities, schools, and students that may be equated with a deficit perspective. Students, and in particular those who had moved to these rural contexts, often used comparative language to illustrate that which they either did or did not have access to in their rural school or community. Though being in a small, isolated place affords many positive benefits (instructional and otherwise), it also has the potential

to create a desire within students to speak beyond that which they are familiar, their rural context. When these complex identities were activated within a particular experience of an argument writing project which included audience interactions, the identities, and namely the rural identities, that students brought to the project experiences affected, in part, the manner in which they made language choices with an awareness of and in response to their respective audiences.

Student identities also involved the prior knowledge and previous experiences that informed students' learning and experience of the argumentative writing project. Importantly, not all of the participating students were the same secondary grade level. While the majority of students were in 10th or 11th grade, Betsy's (4) year two class was predominantly 9th graders. As indicated by both teacher and student interview data, though, students across project experiences were largely unfamiliar with the argument writing genre, and differences in familiarity did not appear to break down along grade level lines. Some students had experiences with persuasive writing but not arguments, some had basic knowledge of the purpose of writing arguments and key structural elements, and others had classroom or extracurricular experiences with speech and debate, informing their knowledge of and the skills to be used in argument writing. Additionally, while students were largely unfamiliar with drones in the year two project, topic background knowledge variation existed across students, with some students knowing individuals who had drones and others who were not familiar with drones as a topic before the argument writing project began. Finally, students had variations in their linguistic resources, predominantly related to their prior knowledge and previous experiences with the argument genre and the topic of drones. Students also came to class

with different linguistic resources based on their experiences outside of school. For example, students who knew someone with a drone would likely be more familiar with the technical language of drones compared to a student who had never heard of a drone before. These linguistic resources grounded in family and community experiences (McCreight, 2012) reveal salient variables across students, as well as another factor, background knowledge and experience, that influenced students' language choices in their argument writing. Again, it did not seem that these variations fell into grade level patterns. Instead, individual students' identities, backgrounds, and experiences informed their prior knowledge and previous experiences.

By participating in the argument writing project, though, students increased their awareness and knowledge of the argument writing genre, the given topic, and the language available to be used in their writing. Students became more familiar with the argument genre when teachers provided mentors and models to students and discussed structural and content-based elements of effective arguments. Students increased in their knowledge of drones by learning more from texts and other media provided by the teachers, as well as through their own research. Students learned technical vocabulary from their research and resources on drones provided by their teachers to include in their writing. Students often chose reasons and evidence that were relevant to their audiences, especially when audience was made explicit, though some students attempted to address too many reasons as a result of audience confusion or difficulty when negotiating their explicit audience and global perspectives. Some students chose a more formal tone and more formal language to be used based on their audience, but this choice was not consistent across all students. Similarly, all of the student factors discussed, which

individually and collectively impacted student language choices in response to writing in their argument writing, were variable and changing because of the dynamic nature of students, the different knowledge and experiences that they brought to their writing, the different relationships (perceived and enacted) with their audience, and the different realities encountered across project experiences.

Audience Factors

Audience factors in the argument writing project, as described by the teachers and students, can be best illustrated by three dimensions of relationships related to tenor, conceptualized in the form of continua (Eggins, 2005, Poynton, 1985). These dimensions are power, contact, and affective involvement. Eggins (2005), citing the work of Poynton, describes power as a factor that "positions situations in terms of whether the roles [the writer and audience] are playing are those in which [they] are of equal or unequal power" (p. 100). Contact is described as that which "positions situations in terms of whether the roles [the writer and audience] are playing are those that bring [them] into frequent or infrequent contact" (p. 100). Last, affective involvement "refers to the extent to which [the writer and audience] are emotionally involved or committed in a situation" (p. 100). Across the argument writing projects, these dimensions were experienced differently according to project experience, audience, rural context, and individual student. Generally, though, project experiences in which an authentic, community-based audience, such as the state representative for the year two Farmland project (5), would be expected to have higher levels of contact, potentially higher levels of affective involvement, and potentially less pronounced power differentials when students express a sense of familiarity with the state representative, a much different experience of power

than having no familiarity and only viewing the representative as an authority figure. In contrast, when students write to the general public, as they did in the year two Mountain High (4) project, there was a general lack of contact between writer and audience, unless students actively conceptualized the general public to be their local community. Further, students had a lower sense of affective involvement because they were not connecting their audience to a particular person. Perceptions of power would likely be mixed depending on audience conceptualization. But the lack of an explicit audience would make it difficult for students to concretely consider these factors. As Eggins and Poynton suggest, these factors, both present and absent, influence the tenor in a student's written piece. In particular, they influence language variables related to appraisal theory, affecting the attitude, judgment, and engagement communicated via writing (Martin & White, 2005). Knowledge of and familiarity with the audience allowed students to better perceive the continua of power, contact, and affect involvement and to consider how it could or should influence language choices. Of course, intentional student awareness of these continua related to tenor is ideal, and suggests how instruction can be provided to support students' knowledge of the decisions able to be made related to language in response to audience and considering particular issues of tenor.

Teacher Factors

Teachers' instruction and support matter as students are introduced to the argument genre and the idea of responding to an audience with intentional language use. As described, teachers used mentors and models to provide examples of arguments and identify key structural elements of arguments. Additionally, teachers provided examples of research on the topic which could be used to inform reasons and evidence that support

a given claim. By working together via their collaborative job-alike group in the NW RISE network, teachers created opportunities for students to provide feedback to one another as they further revised their writing. Finally, the overall learning environment was central to the students' experience of the projects, as students felt comfortable to approach the teacher and to work with other students to advance their learning.

Though these examples describe positive examples of instruction and support, other sub-factors within instruction and support affected the way in which students interpreted their audience and made language choices in their writing. As Betsy (4) aptly described, "that [instruction on audience] was a weak point on me as the teacher. My attention was drawn more to other issues in their writing. I don't think I did as good of a job to have them focus on writing to an audience." As discussed, this instructional choice was tied to a particular aim of having students write an Op-Ed to the general public, a choice of mode, or form, which then had effects on students' understanding of audience and resulting language choices. These themes confirm that teachers are an important factor as students negotiate issues of language and audience in their argument writing.

Rural Context Factors

Though most students and their respective teachers expressed general sentiments of "everybody knows everybody" in their rural schools and communities, deeper probing revealed multiple factors associated with rural contexts that influenced students' language choices and their experiences of audience and the writing project. Students indicated that "everybody knowing everybody" had both its benefits and drawbacks, influencing their learning and social interactions within and outside of school. Though students overwhelmingly had positive interactions with their teachers and fellow students,

illustrated by numerous examples of teachers taking extraordinary efforts to enhance learning opportunities and students working together for collective learning, both students and teachers emphasized that because of the small, isolated nature of their schools, there were limited individuals to build relationships with. If conflicts arose in relationships, individuals either felt ostracized or, because of their regular contact and proximity, learned to co-exist. Thus, teacher-student and student-student relationships are necessary factors to consider in rural contexts and can inform the way in which instruction, support, and feedback (from the teacher and peers) are perceived and experienced. These relationships become even more critical when students attend schools that lack resources or opportunities because of their small size and isolation.

Related to student and audience factors, the rural context also influenced the way in which students perceived and responded to their audience. For example, though the Farmland (5) students were partaking in an authentic writing experience writing to a figure of authority, their state representative, about an issue relevant to their community, many of the students were familiar with the state representative because he was from the same small, rural community. As Chloe (5) described, "Well, writing to him, because we know him, was fairly easy because we personally know him . . . He lives in our town." Erin (5) expanded on how most students were familiar with the state representative saying,

> We were lucky enough that we had a guy who lives in town who was actually our
> mayor's husband and he runs the little opera theater in town, as well. So the kids
> knew him, you know, intimately, some of them. And he was the state
> representative and that's who we chose to be our audience, as if we were writing

to the state representative giving our arguments for whether or not drones should

be allowed in [Farmland's state] for personal use.

While these themes do not suggest that students in other contexts, such as urban,

suburban, or town communities, are unable to be familiar with their audience, they do

indicate that because of the small, isolated nature of the rural communities, it is more

likely for students to have knowledge of and potentially a relationship with the state

representative. Following the continua of power, contact, and affective involvement,

students in rural communities will be more likely to have contact and a relationship

(affective involvement) (Eggins, 2005; Poynton, 1985) with adults and authority figures

who may potentially serve as authentic, community-based audiences, as the state

representative did for the Farmland (5) project experience. At the same time that contact

and affective involvement may be increased, it must be recognized that these factors exist

on a continua and that all students will not experience them in the same way. Identifying

and social characteristics, such as race, class, language, and extent of residency, likely

influence these factors in relationships and interactions. Though not explored in depth in

this study, these issues are nevertheless recognized as potentially affecting factors

relevant to rural contexts. Therefore, awareness of these factors associated with the rural

context should be identified and considered when examining writing project experiences,

audience interactions, and students' language choices.

Impact of Rurality, Identity, and Audience on Student Writing

Based on these multiple factors, argument writing in rural secondary classroom

contexts is a unique and complex phenomenon. Students have a keen awareness of their

rural surroundings and the communities in which they are situated. They look inward and

see a strong community and committed teachers, but also the complexities of relationships. However, students also have a tendency to look outward, aware of the resources and opportunities that they do not have. This comparative effect also serves to cause students to look outward in their language when writing arguments. Though it can and should be viewed as important for rural students to consider global topics and audiences throughout their schooling and writing experiences, students' attention to the global, in terms of research, tone, and voice that is more appropriate for a broader "public" audience, should be guided by writing purposes, audiences, and contexts of situation. Therefore, when writing to a local, community-based authentic audience, like a state representative, students may bring in global knowledge, but position it using tone and voice in a way that informs and connects it to their local context and community. Taking such action would reflect knowledge of the person as a member of the rural community and be consistent with language use and framing, instead of haphazardly transition from a local to global tone and voice. These changes in tone and voice affect tenor variables related to appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005). Though students largely had strengths in using evaluative language to express attitude, their struggles with modal use, grammatical person, and other language variables indicate that issues of judgment and engagement were affected by their language choices.

Though students sometimes had difficulty negotiating their local and global self as members of a rural space, they also turned inward, reflecting on their own identities, perspectives, and preferences. This reality, reflected by increased use of the first person ("I" statements), illustrates that students, when not clear or confident in how to address their audience, refer back to themselves. This use of first person changes the engagement

of a piece, lacking a consistent emphasis on the audience and recognizing the various audience factors at play when making language decisions. While it may be argued that this self-focused approach may be characteristic of adolescents, it can also reflect their rural realities. For many students, they conceptualize themselves living in a small, isolated space that lacks opportunities and resources. Often times, this rural reality translates to individualism, with both positive and negative connotations. Thus, a sense of rugged individualism may influence rural students to focus on themselves in the first person, removing the focus from their audience as a result of uncertainty in how to address an audience in their argument writing. However, it should be noted that this use of first person may also have been a result of insufficient instruction and support in audience and language. Thus, this study adds to previous considerations of how rural students reflect on their identity, perspectives, and positionality, and suggests that writing and dialogue could be a valuable means to have students explore these factors and investigate how they respond. In doing so, students can differentiate perspectives that inform their writing, "recognis[ing] their ability to see their own communities from their insider position with a perspective that nonresidents and people who participate in problematic discourses of the region did not share" (Slocum, 2014, p. 204).

Attention to Audience and Language in Teachers' Instruction

As indicated, because there are numerous and varied factors informing students' argument writing, including but not limited to their rural contexts, the particular writing topic and audience, and students' prior knowledge and experiences, the role of the teacher in providing instruction and support to students is critical. As was expressed by Betsy (5) and Erin (4), recent emphases on argument writing instruction informed by the

CCSS have placed a focus on structural and content-related issues: writing a clear claim or thesis, conducting research to find relevant reasons and evidence, and then using those reasons and evidence to support the claim. Unfortunately, attention to audience and language received much less attention. However, when structuring a collaborative writing project experience around an authentic audience, which teachers found increased students' motivation and engagement, teachers' learned that additional instruction and support of language and audience are essential. Realizing the particular interpersonal relationships between individual students and their audience, as well as the broader characteristics of the audience that students should attend to, deserve a place of privilege in a writing project such as those discussed in this study. Using a framework of appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005), and incorporating the continua of power, contact, and affective involvement (Eggins, 2005; Poynton, 1985), emphasizes the register variables and particularly tenor as necessary instructional elements which influence the voice, tone, and language choices.

Additionally, this study illustrates why it is important for teachers to provide specific audiences to their students. When students do not have a clear understanding of an audience, they are much more likely to have unclear, incoherent, and inconsistent writing that may attempt to address one or more disconnected audiences or merely reflect their own affective opinions or preferences. If the audience is authentic, local, and community-based, students may transfer back and forth between local and global audiences, reflected in their tone, or fall back to first person use because of a lack of understanding and uncertainty as to how to respond. But students also need to be prepared to talk to audiences outside of their communities, including broader audiences,

but recognize that in these moments there is still, or should be, an explicit or intended audience to inform language choices. No writing occurs in a vacuum and no audience is neutral. Thus, making audience explicit, regardless if it is directed to a local, community-based audience or a broader, distant audience, and providing instruction and support to support students' awareness and response to audience can lead to more effective argument writing. This critique is substantiated by the students' own interviews, in which they had difficulty stating their audience and specific purpose for writing. As Betsy (4) indicated, though she aimed to increase student choice by having a "general public" audience, it ended up resulting in more difficulties for students as they conceptualized their audience and strove to write in response to it.

It should also be noted that effects from repeating the argument project from year one to year two also likely affected instruction. For example, Erin repeated use of an explicit audience after doing so in year one, while Betsy chose a broader audience to allow for more student choice. Nevertheless, both teachers were more familiar with argument, audience, and the nature of the collaborative writing projects in year two. Though students still experienced challenges, particularly with audience and language, the teachers attempted to include more instruction to introduce the project and were able to recognize the areas of challenge after seeing the results of the project. The teachers' recognition suggests that change will again happen and inform future iterations of the argument writing project experiences.

Impact of Audience on Student Language Choices

This study demonstrates that students' language choices, indeed, are informed by their awareness of and response to audience. However, the manner in which audience

informs students' language choice varies by the multiple factors described. For example, an authentic, community-based audience, like the state representative in Farmland (5), was found to be associated with students' increased audience awareness, and informed their language choices. Their language was informed primarily in the form of field, as students repeatedly illustrated that they chose reasons and evidence to support their claim based on what they knew of or posited about the state representative, including his personal experience of being a police officer and the local community issues of farming and the military. Additionally, students used evaluative language to express their attitude, express judgment, and engage their audience. Because of his status, even though students had varying contact and relationships with him, many students knew the need to assume a formal tone appropriate for the particular context of situation of writing to a state representative. Here, though, some elements of the register variable of tenor were found to have greater inconsistency and variability. Students, even with their audience in mind, shifted from the local audience to global issues and tones, potentially reflective of issues related to their rural identities and uncertainty of language and audience due to insufficient instruction and support. When students did not have an explicit audience, they struggled more with most aspects of the argument genre, but especially with the register variables associated with tenor. Because their audience was not explicit, they lacked the ability to engage concretely, which also affected their decisions to express attitude and judgment. Writing analysis from the year one project experiences supported the findings that students were more effective in choosing reasons and evidence, as well as using evaluative vocabulary to express attitude, but struggled with other language variables related to tenor. However, less is known from the three year one experiences

due to a lack of student interview data to corroborate and better understand their perceptions of and responses to their audiences. All of these elements point to the notion that audience does, indeed, inform students' language choices in their argument writing, but that an awareness of the multiple factors related to the experience of relating to an audience and writing in response to audience complicates and nuances this experience. This salient point is in agreement with Miller et al.'s (2014) findings that "the inconsistent positioning of author and reader [weakens the argument]. It is not enough for students to merely demonstrate awareness of alternative voices; when this is done without consistency, it undermines the force of their overarching claim" (p. 115). Thus, attention to these factors, and elevating the factors related to students' rural contexts and the instruction and support that they receive from their teachers, should be included in discussions and conceptualizations of argument writing projects for rural secondary students. Doing so can lead to more intentional student awareness and response to audience throughout the entire argument text, leading to a more effective argument appropriate for the given audience.

Positionality Revisited

In light of these factors and discussion points, it is necessary to return to my positionality to discuss how I believe my own participation as a facilitator of the ELA job-alike group may or may not have helped contribute to the effective nature of the group, including the teacher-generated argument writing projects. While the project ideas were teacher-generated, I did help to support and facilitate the teachers' collaborative practices throughout both years of the argument writing projects. As described in chapter three, my participation included assisting with finding instructional resources and

research content on the two argument writing project topics, 1:1 technology and drones. I helped to coordinate and schedule regular virtual meetings, which promoted regular teacher collaboration to continue progress with the projects. Further, I helped to coordinate, support, and troubleshoot technology issues using the collaborative LMS platforms, EdModo (year one) and Schoology (year two).

While some readers may view these supports as potentially mitigating, I argue that these supports are good practice necessary in collaborative practices. As described, participation in the NW RISE network and ELA job-alike group was the first real collaborative experience for these teachers, who teach in isolated, small schools where they are often the only grade-level or content teacher. It is unreasonable to expect that teachers will automatically be familiar with best practices in educational collaboration without having initial modeling, mentoring, and support, similar to how participating students needed these supports when learning the argument writing genre. Even with these supports, the collaborative activity was largely teacher driven, with the teachers designing the project, choosing the emphasis, and ensuring the completion of the project. While I helped to create the conditions necessary for collaboration, it was ultimately the teachers who chose to participate, to involve their students, and to reflect on and extend their own practice per their collaborative plan.

It should be noted that I stepped down as ELA job-alike facilitator at the conclusion of the second year of the argument writing project experiences (4 and 5). At that time, Erin (2 and 5) assumed the role of facilitator of the group and has subsequently remained the facilitator as the ELA job-alike group has both grown and evolved. The group continues to develop ongoing collaborative projects, including additional iterations

of the argument writing projects, extending into new collaborative work involving multimodal writing and presenting on issues of students' identities and communities. The success of the group beyond my facilitation illustrates that, though my initial supports (as well as the broader NW RISE network supports) may have been helpful, it is ultimately the continued purposeful participation of the teachers who find the collaboration tied to the improvement of their professional growth as teachers and students' engagement and learning which drives effectiveness and impact.

Limitations

This study was designed as an exploratory study, with the knowledge that the select project experiences, school sites, teachers, and students would provide insight into the phenomena under study without resulting in the ability to broadly generalize. Limitations included the limited number of experiences, the limited number of students who participated within each experience, the loss of one teacher participant between years one and two due to retirement, and the lack of student interview data in year one project experience data collection. Having student interview data from the year one project experiences would have been particularly useful to see if the students' authentic, community-based audiences (e.g., the school technology committee or community members considering funding the initiative) had a similar impact on students and their language choices as they did for the Farmland (5) students in year two when writing to their state representative. Additionally, because of the physical distance between the school sites and myself, I was not able to collect observational data to provide further triangulation. Having more regular in-person interactions with the teachers and students

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would have resulted in additional opportunities for data collection. Interpretations from the study's findings should be made with these limitations in mind.

Although these limitations are acknowledged and presented for the readers' consideration, numerous efforts were made to ensure data triangulation and validity of the exploratory, qualitative findings. These include triangulation of data sources across available data sources and project experiences, the use of member checks with teacher participants to confirm and receive feedback on findings and interpretations, and placing findings in dialogue with existing empirical research and theoretical framings. These efforts have been made to help the reader situate the findings and consider them in light of extant research and theory, particularly when utilizing the findings to inform implications for policy, practice, and research.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Implications for policymakers.

As educational policymakers continue to emphasize the importance of informational and argumentative texts and writing through initiatives like the CCSS and state standards that are near replicas of or draw heavily from the CCSS, policymakers need to increase emphasis on the importance of language in relation to specific genres, and of language instruction more broadly, including at the middle and secondary levels. Language in the CCSS standards exists on language, audience, and purpose, but because they are vague, written without connection to specific genres, and receive less attention than structural elements of argument, these areas are largely overlooked in practitioner resources or treated in a cursory manner. Language variables, especially related to tenor in response to a designated audience in the argument genre, are not addressed at all.

Argument writing overwhelmingly continues to focus on the importance of developing a clear claim and having substantive reasons and evidence to support in an organized, structured piece of writing. While these elements are important in argument writing, placing such an emphasis overlooks instruction that helps students to understand the dimensions of tenor in argument writing, including how issues of power, contact, and affective involvement (Eggins, 2005; Poynton, 1985) inform the writer's tone and voice through language variables like modal use, grammatical person, evaluative language, and the intentional selection of reasons and evidence which affect attitude, judgment, and engagement (Martin & White, 2005). Seeing how standards dictate teacher preparation, professional development, and practitioner resources for curricula and instructional strategies, it is imperative that policymakers follow the recommendations of Fang and Schleppegrell (2010), as well as those offered in this study, to increase attention to diverse language factors and variables that attend to specific genres, purposes, and audiences in writing and literacy standards.

Implications for practitioners and teaching practice.

After participating in two years of the argument writing projects, both Betsy and Erin reflected on how they needed to further support their students in their argument writing by providing more direct instruction addressing language and audience. This realization is supported by the student writing analysis, demonstrating that language variables, particularly those related to judgment and engagement, required greater attention. Additionally, Betsy's realization of the importance of having an explicit audience illustrates how incorporating an authentic, community-based audience, or at the very least naming an authentic audience for the students to envision writing to, has the

potential to increase students' awareness of audience in order to make more intentional language choices. Language instruction and students' language practices become more realistic when they have an authentic writing activity in which to participate. It should be noted, though, that authentic writing experiences take effort on the part of the teacher. Thus, while practitioners should pursue working with authentic, community-based audiences when possible to create authentic writing opportunities for students, teachers should always, at the very least, identify the audience and purpose (even if imagined, as described in Oliver, 1995) to reinforce the regular practice of identifying and considering purpose and audience across writing activities to inform language choice (supporting the recommendations in Magnifico, 2010). These implications also support the findings from Peterson (2011), indicating that more teachers can and should pursue authentic, community-based audiences, including in rural communities. Though challenges often follow these engagements, such as logistical coordination and other resource-related issues, students learn important lessons about language and writing when engaging with an authentic audience. Students would also benefit from instructional strategies that differentiate audiences as a means to practice differing language choices, a relatively uncomplicated strategy that would increase students' knowledge of audience. For example, McCreight (2012) describes the use of a translation chart activity in which students consider different uses of language dependent on the audience, including classmates, family members, and other adults or authority figures. As McCreight described, "Register, then, gave us a structured way to categorize and think about how we spoke with different people, but students' responses were not limited to pre-identified options labeled as 'right' or 'wrong.'" (p. 114). Though she was working with elementary

students, this practice would still be valuable for adolescent students at the secondary level, modified appropriately given the writing task. Similar instructional strategies were pursued in some instances in the argument writing project experiences, but with less attention to language and register. Additional instructional activities that would encourage students to reflect on language and register could include pre-writing and discursive activities in which students reflect upon and share their perceived position in relation to a particular audience. For example, if students write to a civic leader, they could reflect on how they view that person holding power and authority, and if and how they know the person, to consider how they will make language choices in response to that audience. By sharing their reflections with other students, students can recognize the ways in which different students perceive audience and the interpersonal relationship, providing further opportunity for reflection in their own writing when making language choices in response to their audience.

Including greater attention to language in response to audience would enhance and increase relevance for instruction and support. The above recommendations are not meant to suggest that non-local, non-community-based audiences are not worthy of attention in writing. Writing to a broader audience, such as in an Op-Ed, can be a valuable activity, but it is important for students to recognize that an explicit audience still exists. For example, writing an Op-Ed in a rural small town newspaper would be quite different from writing an Op-Ed in a publication like *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*. Students need to learn how to write to both local and distant, as well as individual and broader audiences. The key, as described, is for students to have an awareness of their audience in order to make intentional and appropriate language

choices and for teachers to make explicit and discuss audience in writing activities to support students in this learning.

Though not a major focus of this study, the experience of peer feedback, both in-person, within-classroom, and digital cross-classroom feedback was found to be helpful as students crafted their argument. This element of the argument writing project experiences requires further examination, but the use of technology to facilitate digital and virtual peer feedback is a promising finding, particularly in isolated, rural schools and communities, that can inform teachers' practice. This implication is in agreement with extant research demonstrating that technology was found to be a key facilitator of collaboration and learning in rural literacies, proving beneficial both for teachers and students (Elwood et al., 2006; Hunt-Barron, Tracy, Howell, & Kaminski, 2015).

Implications for Researchers

Extending appraisal theory.

This study encourages deeper reflection on the use of appraisal theory in educational research and practice. The use of appraisal theory in this study as a means to frame and analyze the research questions illustrated the need for more nuanced consideration of the register variables of field, tenor, and mode, particularly in relation to audience when situated in complex and diverse contexts. These three variables are affected, in different and important ways, depending on individual student relationships with and conceptions of their audience. As Khote (2014) emphasized, attending to these variables in audience is essential since "the author's control over interpersonal meanings and audience relationships are key in order to establish a coherent stance which he/she is required to defend through the use of evidence, negotiation and logic" (p. 92). Therefore,

it is not enough to simply say that writing to a state representative, or even the general public, provides enough guidance to help students understand the need for a more formal tone. Differing contexts, cultures, and communities, as well as individual student characteristics, affect the way in which students establish an interpersonal relationship with their audience, both in their writing and lived experience. Appraisal theory provides a strong foundation for language use, and especially the issue of tenor, but these additional elements strengthen the theory and make it more applicable across contexts, contexts of experience, and writing experiences. By being able to account for unique factors across levels of an argument writing experience, including the relationship between student writer and audience, appraisal theory will be better able to attend to all register variables, including those of attitude, judgment, and engagement, and to ground its linguistic analyses within the realities of the complex and varied interpersonal relationships that students encounter when making language choices in their writing.

The importance of student interviews in writing analysis.

A salient methodological insight from this study is the value of student interviews when doing student writing analysis. Eggins (2005) describes how the interpersonal metafunction of language and relationship between writer and audience informs the "appropriacy" of language choices. However, to better understand how students understand the particular interpersonal relationship with their audience, the language choices related to tenor that they need to make based on that understanding, and the perceived "appropriacy" of their language choices, it is imperative to ask the students. For example, an analysis of Amanda's (5) writing, in which she argued that drones could be beneficial for farming and military purposes, could be merely interpreted as being

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broadly related to the issues of her rural community. Her interview, though, provided an important interpersonal insight which added nuance to her choices in writing and language use. She said,

> I think that include the military makes it a strong argument because there's a lot of veterans that have the disease of PTSD and our math teacher is also a veteran and he has that. And so every once in a while we catch a glimpse, a glimpse of him going through, like, I don't know how to explain it...

Having regular contact with a teacher who suffers from PTSD illustrates why Amanda chose to include this point in her argument instead of offering a separate point. Additionally, factors related to audience awareness and the tenor of a piece, particularly the continua of power, contact, and affective involvement (Eggins, 2005; Poynton, 1985) are given greater clarity through a student interview. As Elliott (5) stated, the state representative who served as their writing audience was a known member of the community for many of the students: "I know who he [the state representative] is, so I knew who I was writing to and I wanted to make sure that it sounded good enough for him, I guess." Though student-to-audience relationships were varied and informed by numerous factors, the specific interpersonal relationships and the resulting language choices with a particular relationship in mind can only be known by interviewing the students. Though researchers may attempt to speculate or discern the thoughts of students while writing, which I did to some degree in the year one project experiences, these speculations carry much less validity than writing analysis supported by student interview data.

Understanding the choices that students make in their writing and language use gives teachers and researchers valuable information about their writing and the meta-cognitive processes and socially and contextually situated factors that inform their language choices. When student interview data are coupled with their writing, especially when analyzed and compared across schools and project experiences, this methodological approach results in greater validity and data triangulation. Further, there are also instructional benefits and implications for teachers as teachers often are not able to sit down with every student to ask them about their intentions in writing. By demonstrating the explanatory and meaning-making power of linking student interviews, or other forms of teacher-student talk or dialogue, teachers can see the transformative power of this student-centered and student-responsive practice. Though some writing programs or pedagogies, such as the work of the Reading & Writing Project (Teachers College, Columbia University, 2014), incorporate conferencing or student-teacher talk, the methodological insight from this study recommends that interviewing students during and after writing can provide valuable insights into students' understanding of audience and the language choices made in response, regardless of the instructional model. These insights can assist the teacher in providing direct, relevant feedback to the student, as well as providing additional instruction or support to help the student(s) further consider how audience can inform their language choices.

Future Research

Building on the work of this study, future research should be pursued in the following areas: additional qualitative investigations into how students make language choices in response to audience, the incorporation of student interviews in response to

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student writing as an essential methodological element; investigations into how students' rural identities and perceived and enacted relationships with authentic, community audience members inform language choices; focused inquiry into how students who may feel marginalized from their communities for reasons of race, culture, language, recent residency, or other factors perceive audience relationships in different ways; and how relationships between student writers and their writing audience inform language choices across contexts, cultures, and communities, examining other rural contexts, as well as diverse urban and suburban contexts, to better understand how language choices in response to audience are influenced by these factors.

As indicated by the limitations, additional studies of students' language choices in response to audience are necessary given the limited number of project experiences, schools, and students examined in this study. As also indicated in the implications, including student interviews as a regular practice in this research will help to solidify students' understandings of audience, particularly as they inform their language choices. But data should also be collected to inquire more deeply into students' identities and sense of belongingness in their rural schools and communities. As demonstrated, these identities and perceptions are dynamic and different among students, but should be explored to help students understand how these factors inform their perceptions and experiences of writer-audience relationships which inform their language choices. By asking about student identities, issues of marginalization due to race, culture, language, gender, or other identifying characteristic may emerge as critical issues to consider in writing practices, but also when applying appraisal theory.

Further, issues of and factors related to audience awareness and student language choice are not limited to rural contexts. Though attention to rural literacies is important given the dearth of current research, it is also important to research audience and language across contexts to continue to explore if and how context, culture, and community influence audience interactions and student language choices across these contexts and sites of practice. Relationships between writer and audience may prove to be thematically different in urban, suburban, or small town contexts, particularly when attending to different identifying characteristics that may also result in marginalization in these areas. Being able to identify contextual similarities and distinctions will add a salient level of nuance to this research, which can inform research (including theory), policy, and practice. These distinctions would respond to the call, present also in this study, that findings from studies centered in urban contexts should not be uniformly mirrored or generalized to rural contexts (Schafft & Jackson, 2010), with the reverse holding true, as well. Therefore, using a framework of "liberatory critical literacies" (Goodman & Cocca, 2014) can help to better interpret findings within and across contexts. For example, a recent study of audience in an urban classroom with predominantly bilingual 1st grade students found that audience awareness influenced students' language use (English, Spanish, or both) in their writing, as well as other language choices (Durán, 2017). Though in an urban, elementary classroom, it is important to recognize that the findings, similar to those in this study, can be framed as "liberatory," incorporating communities that are often depicted with a deficit framing as critical partners in students' writing development.

Additionally, research should be pursued on the policy and instructional norms in place that often prevent meaningful language instruction from taking place in middle and secondary genre-based writing. This research could include examinations of teaching practices to determine if, how, and to what degree audience and language are being addressed in instruction in genre-based writing and to inquire into teachers' beliefs behind these areas of instruction. Further, this research could explore how the CCSS or other standards, policies, professional development sessions, or instructional resources have informed genre-based instruction and the presence, or lack thereof, of audience and language, which often guide teachers' enacted classroom practices.

Finally, it should be recognized that these project experiences came as a result of innovative and collaborative activities through the teachers' participation in the NW RISE network to connect rural teachers across their small, isolated schools (Hargreaves, Parsley, & Cox, 2015). Therefore, further inquiry should explore how these collaborative activities support new and engaging opportunities for teachers to improve their practice to create more engaging writing activities for students. In an age when professional collaboration in education is facing increased opposition (Hargreaves & O'Connor, in press), describing and highlighting the contributions of these collaborative activities, both in rural and other contexts, can help lay the foundation for future collaborative work that can lead to innovative practices in writing and literacies. Another innovative practice was the coordination of peer feedback. Thus, research should be pursued on the experiences and potential benefits of students participating in multiple peer feedback opportunities as a means to enhance their writing, including in-person, within-class feedback and digital or virtual feedback occurring across classrooms, schools, states, and other boundaries.

While peer feedback was taken up as one element of the project experiences, further inquiry is necessary to understand the impact on student writing development in the context of argument writing projects with an authentic audience, as well as other writing opportunities that could benefit from peer feedback. Again, all of these research areas would benefit from studying phenomena in rural contexts, answering the call posed by Azano (2015), but also demonstrate potential to provide valuable insights into literacy practices across contexts, cultures, and communities.

Conclusion

Though there are many different approaches to argument writing, including the cognitive and social (Newell et al., 2011), argument writing has been largely characterized by its structure and content – establishing a clear claim that is then supported by relevant and substantive reasons and evidence. This characterization has been supported and propagated by those creating practitioner resources (e.g., Hillocks, 2011; Smagorinsky, 2010), professional development in response to the CCSS, and research in argument writing. Research in argument writing has largely been guided by quantitative studies examining the effect of instructional interventions on length of writing and argument effectiveness, determined by the use of reasons and evidence to support claims (e.g., De La Paz & Felton, 2010). Though these types of studies provide some insight, they fail to address argument writing and language in context, which an appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005) and SFL framework saliently adds. Additionally, argument writing, along with most literacy research, has received minimal attention in rural contexts (Azano, 2015), overlooking the intricate issues of context, culture, and community present in these sites of learning which have implications for

student writing experiences. As indicated, rural schools and communities are diverse and complex spaces in which learning and writing occurs. These differences in rural contexts, and developing a broader contextual awareness across sites of research and practice, are salient factors that necessitate deeper focus and greater attention in policy, practice, theory, and research.

As this study illustrates, and which has been supported by previous literature such as Fang and Schleppegrell (2010), explicit attention to and instruction of language is essential for secondary students' argument writing development. Having instruction rooted in an understanding of audience and language will allow students to become more familiar with register variables and their role in communicating meaning, particularly in relation to the tenor of their writing. When students have increased awareness of these variables, as well as an awareness of their audience, they will grow in their intentionality of language use. Adapting this instruction to the factors present in rural communities, including the unique relationships and complex identities present, allows teachers to meet the needs of their rural students while providing an engaging writing experience. Ultimately, then, teachers can support students to become skilled at understanding their use of language in context, and draw on interpersonal audience interactions in rural contexts to guide intentional language choices to craft effective arguments.

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Appendix A: Consent Forms

Institution Consent Form
Informed Consent for Participation as a Subject in Study:
Investigating How Audience Influences Language Choice in Argument Writing Lessons in Rural Secondary Classrooms

Dear Sir or Madam,

I, _____, principal of _____ in _____ grant permission to Michael T. O'Connor, doctoral student in Education at Boston College, to conduct research activities at my school. Michael has shared the title of his research project (Investigating How Audience Influences Language Choice in Argument Writing Lessons in Rural Secondary Classrooms) and has described the project to me. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me using the information below.

Signatures/Dates

_____
Date

_____
Consent Signature of Principal

_____
Print Name of Principal

Contact Information

_____
Phone

_____
E-Mail

Teacher Participant Consent Form
Boston College Lynch School of Education
Informed Consent for Participation as a Subject in Study:
Investigating How Audience Influences Language Choice in Argument Writing Lessons in Rural
Secondary Classrooms

Introduction
- You are being asked to participate in a research study exploring students' language choices and your instruction in an argument writing project.
- You were selected to be in the study because you are a member of the Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) network's secondary English / Language Arts job-alike group and participating in this collaborative writing project.
- Please read this form in its entirety and ask any questions prior to agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of the Study:
- This exploratory study will investigate how students' awareness of and response to audience informs language choice in argument writing in English classrooms in rural secondary schools. The study will: 1) explore the relationship between a writer's audience and language choice (both the student's use and teacher's instruction and support of language), highlighting language as an essential component of argument that reflects how a writer meets the purpose of a writing task given the audience, and 2) examine this phenomenon of argument writing in rural schools, inquiring into the unique opportunities and challenges for audience interaction in often-overlooked and over-simplified settings.
- The total number of participants in this study is expected to be 21 (three teachers and 18 students, six from each of the three schools).

Description of Study Procedures:
- If you agree to be in this study, you agree that data from the following may be used for research purposes:
  o One 30-minute to 1-hour long semi-structured interview.
  o Artifacts from the argument writing project, including instructions, graphic organizers, support materials provided by you to the students.
  o Select students' writing samples from the argument writing project (student and parent/guardian permission will also be requested)
  o Select student reflections on the argument writing project (student and parent/guardian permission will also be requested)

Risks/Discomforts of Being in the Study:
- There are minimally expected risks to participation, which may include stress during the interview. **Every effort will be made to minimize these risks.** The study may include additional risks that are not known at this time.

Benefits of Being in the Study:
- Teacher participants will have the opportunity to provide feedback about their experiences with other secondary English teachers in the NW RISE network. This opportunity encourages ongoing reflection about teaching practice, while also allowing teacher participants to meaningfully engage in ongoing professional development with colleagues. However, I cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefit from this study.

Payments and Costs:
- Participation is voluntary.
- There will be no financial payment for participating in this study.
- There is no cost to you to participate in this research study.

Boston College IRB
Approved
MAR 2 3 2015
Thru: Mar 22, 2016

Confidentiality:

* Audio files (interviews) and written documentation and notes (student writing, artifacts, memos) will be kept private. **Physical research materials and data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigator's office. Electronic research materials and data will be stored on Boston College MyFiles on a password protected computer accessible only to the principal investigator. Once audio interviews are transcribed, original audio interviews will be destroyed.** Pseudonyms will be substituted for participant names on all written materials. In any report that may be published, no personal information will be included that would allow participants to be identified. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Boston College, internal Boston College auditors, and government agencies may request access to the data. In any report that may be published, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:

* Participation is voluntary.
* You need not answer every question that is posed, for whatever reasons.
* You are free to withdraw your participation at any time, for any reason.
* If the study ends unexpectedly, or if you are unable to participate in the interview or observation, you may be asked to leave the study.
* Your withdrawal will not affect current or future relations with your school, district, the NW RISE network, or Boston College.

Contacts and Questions:

* The **principal investigator** conducting this study is Michael T. O'Connor. His faculty supervisor is Dr. Maria Estela Brisk of the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact Michael T. O'Connor at oconnooq@bc.edu or Dr. Brisk at brisk@bc.edu.
* **If you have any questions about your rights as a person in this research study, you may contact: Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu**

Copy of Consent Form:

* You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:

* I have read the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Audio Recording Permission

_____ Initial here if you will allow me to tape record your interview.
_____ Initial here if you do not want to have your interview tape recorded.

Signatures/Dates

_____
Date

_____
Consent Signature of Participant

_____
Print Name of Participant

Student Participant Consent Form
Boston College Lynch School of Education
Informed Consent for Participation as a Subject in Study:
Investigating How Audience Influences Language Choice in Argument Writing Lessons in Rural Secondary Classrooms

Introduction
- You are being asked to participate in a research study exploring **the words that** students' **choose to use when writing to argue for a particular point or claim.**
- You were selected to be in the study because your English teacher is a member of the Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) network. Your teacher participates in a group with other high school English teachers who created **this writing project**.
- Please read this form **completely** and ask any questions before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of the Study:
- This study will ask how students' awareness of and response to **those who read your writing help to choose words when writing to argue for a particular point or claim. The study explores this type of writing** in English classrooms in rural **high** schools. The study will explore how you, as a student, choose words to include in your writing based on **why you are writing and to whom you are writing**. It will also explore how your teacher teaches and supports you and other students **when you write**. Last, the study will **ask what it means to write like this** in a rural school and community. Rural schools and communities have not been given enough attention from researchers in the past.
- The total number of **people participating** in this study is expected to be 39. There will be three teachers and 36 students, with six to nine students participating from each of the three schools. Should you **give permission**, you will be one of the 36 students participating.

Description of the Study:
- If you agree to be in this study, **you agree that the following may be used for research**:
  o **One 30-minute to 1-hour long virtual interview conducted using Skype.**
  o Your writing **drafts** from your argument writing project.
  o Your written reflections on the argument writing project (if **this applies to you**).
  o Materials from the argument writing project, including instructions and worksheets which you received from your teachers. However, your teachers will provide these resources.

Risks / Discomforts of Being in the Study:
- There are **minimal** expected risks to **participate**, **which may include stress during the interview**. **Every effort will be made to minimize these risks.** The study may include **other** risks that are not known at this time.

Benefits of Being in the Study:
- By allowing your teacher and the **principal investigator** to examine **your writing and to talk with you about your writing**, we hope to better understand the importance of **choosing words when** writing. We also hope to better understand how students and teachers think about **the person or persons to whom a writer writes**. This work may affect how your teacher teaches writing in the future. However, I cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefit from this study.

Payments and Costs:
- Participation is voluntary.
- There will be no financial payment for participating in this study.
- There is no cost to you to participate in this research study.

Confidentiality:
- **Audio files (interviews), writing, and notes will be kept private. Once audio interviews are recorded in writing, the original audio files will be deleted.**
- All **writing** and notes (student writing, **worksheets**) will be kept private. Your writing and other **research** will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the **principal investigator's** office. Electronic research materials will be securely stored on Boston College Google Drive **with cloud lock** on a password protected computer accessible only to the principal investigator **and supervising professor**. **A fake name** will be substituted for **real** names on all written materials. In any report that may be published, no personal information will be included that would allow participants to be identified. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Boston College and authorities from Boston College may request access to the data. In any report that may be published, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal:
- Participation is voluntary.
- You are free to **leave** the study at any time, for any reason.
- If the study ends **suddenly**, you may be asked to leave the study.
- **Leaving the study** will not affect current or future relations with your teacher, school, district, the NW RISE network, or Boston College.

Contacts and Questions:
- The **principal investigator** conducting this study is Michael T. O'Connor. **The professor supervising his work** is Dr. Maria Estela Brisk of the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact Michael T. O'Connor at oconnooq@bc.edu or Dr. Brisk at brisk@bc.edu.
- **If you have any questions about your rights as a person in this research study, you may contact: Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu**

Copy of Consent Form:
- You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Statement of Student Consent:
- I have read the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Signatures / Dates

_____   _____
Date   **Consent Signature of Student Participant**

_____
Print Name of Student Participant

Parent/Guardian Participant Consent Form
Boston College Lynch School of Education
Informed Consent for Participation as a Subject in Study:
Investigating How Audience Influences Language Choice in Argument Writing Lessons in Rural Secondary Classrooms

Introduction
- Your child is being asked to participate in a research study exploring **the words that** students' **choose to use when writing to argue for a particular point or claim.**
- Your child was selected to be in the study because **her or his** English teacher is a member of the Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) network. **The** teacher participates in a group with other high school English teachers who created **this writing project**.
- Please read this form **completely** and ask any questions before **giving your child permission** to be in the study.

Purpose of the Study:
- This study will ask how students' awareness of and response to **those who read your writing help to choose words when writing to argue for a particular point or claim. The study explores this type of writing** in English classrooms in rural **high** schools. The study will explore how your child, as a student, chooses words to include in **her or his** writing based on **why she or he is writing and to whom she or he is writing**. It will also explore how your child's teacher teaches and supports your child and other students **when they write**. Last, the study will **ask what it means to write like this** in a rural school and community. Rural schools and communities have not been given enough attention from researchers in the past.
- The total number of **people participating** in this study is expected to be 39. There will be three teachers and 36 students, with three to six students participating from each of the three schools. Should you **give permission**, your child will be one of the 36 students participating.

Description of the Study:
- If you agree to allow your child to be in this study, **you agree that the following may be used for research**:
  o **One 30-minute to 1-hour long virtual interview conducted with your child using Skype.**
  o Your child's writing **drafts** from your argument writing project.
  o Your child's written reflections on the argument writing project (if **this applies to your child**).
  o Materials from your child's argument writing project, including instructions and worksheets which your child received from her or his teachers. However, the teachers will provide these resources.

Risks / Discomforts of Being in the Study:
- There are **minimal** expected risks to **participate**, **which may include stress during the interview**. **Every effort will be made to minimize these risks.** The study may include **other** risks that are not known at this time.

Benefits of Being in the Study:
- By allowing your child's teacher and the **principal investigator** to examine **your child's writing**, we hope to better understand the importance of **choosing words when** writing. We also hope to better understand how students and teachers think about **the person or persons to whom a writer writes**. This work may affect how your child's teacher teaches writing in the future. However, I cannot guarantee that your child will receive any direct benefit from this study.

Payments and Costs:
- Participation is voluntary.
- There will be no financial payment for participating in this study.
- There is no cost to you to participate in this research study.

Confidentiality:
- **Audio files (interviews), writing, and notes will be kept private. Once audio interviews are recorded in writing, the original audio files will be deleted.**
- All **writing** and notes (student writing, **worksheets**) will be kept private. Your child's writing and other **research** will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the **principal investigator's** office. Electronic research materials will be securely stored on Boston College Google Drive **with cloud lock** on a password protected computer accessible only to the principal investigator **and supervising professor**. **A fake name** will be substituted for **real** names on all written materials. In any report that may be published, no personal information will be included that would allow **you or your child** to be identified. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Boston College and authorities from Boston College may request access to the data. In any report that may be published, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you **or our child**.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal:
- Participation is voluntary.
- Your child is free to **leave** the study at any time, for any reason.
- If the study ends **suddenly**, your child may be asked to leave the study.
- **Leaving the study** will not affect current or future relations with your teacher, school, district, the NW RISE network, or Boston College.

Contacts and Questions:
- The **principal investigator** conducting this study is Michael T. O'Connor. **The professor supervising his work** is Dr. Maria Estela Brisk of the Lynch School of Education at Boston College. For questions or more information concerning this research you may contact Michael T. O'Connor at oconnooq@bc.edu or Dr. Brisk at brisk@bc.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a person in this research study, you may contact: Director, Office for Research Protections, Boston College at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu

Copy of Consent Form:
- You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Statement of Parent/Guardian Consent:

As the parent/guardian of _____, I have read the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent for _____ to participate in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

_____   _____

Date   **Consent Signature of Parent/Guardian**

_____

Print Name of Parent/Guardian

Appendix B: Teacher Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Investigating How Audience Influences Language Choice in Argument Writing Lessons in Rural Secondary Classrooms

Interview Participant: A secondary English / Language Arts teacher participating in the

Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) network and the collaborative

argument writing project

Introduction:

Thanks for being willing to participate in this interview. I will ask questions about the

argumentative writing project, your instruction and support of the project, perceptions of your

students' writing, and your perceptions of what it means to teach in a rural school.

Background – Class Context:

Transition: First, I want to ask a few questions to get to know what it is like to be a student in

your class and what it is like to teach in your class. Please note that when I say "class" I am

referring to the class in which the argument writing project took place.

1) Please briefly describe the students in your English class. What types of experiences and

background knowledge do they bring to class?

Probe: How many students are there in the class?

Probe: Do students come from diverse backgrounds?

Probe: Have students had much experience writing arguments in the past?

Background – Conceptualizing "Rurality":

Transition: Now, I want to ask some general questions about what you think it means to teach in

a rural school.

2) In general, when you hear of a "rural school," what kind of picture do you form in your

head?

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Probe: What does the school look like? What do the students look like? How do they act? What do the teachers, administrators, and staff look like? How do they act?

Probe: Where do you think this depiction comes from?

3) Would you describe your school as a rural school? Why or why not?

Probe: Does your school match the depiction you described earlier of a rural school, in general?

Probe: What are benefits of teaching in a rural school? What are some of the challenges?

Teacher Perceptions of the Argument Writing Project

Transition: Now I have some questions about how you perceived the argument writing project.

4) Can you describe how the argument writing project was created and carried out?

Probe: How did participation in the NW RISE network help facilitate its creation?

Probe: What was the topic of the project?

Probe: What did you do as the teacher to introduce the project and support your students throughout the writing process?

Probe: Was there a focus on the writer's audience in your instruction? Why or why not?

Probe: Was there a focus on students' language choices in your instruction? Why or why not?

5) Was the project successful? How do you define success?

Probe: What helped to support you during the project? What challenges did you face?

Probe: Would you do the project again? If yes, would you make any changes?

Teacher Perceptions of Students' Writing

Transition: Now I have some questions about how you perceived students' writing during the argument writing project.

6) Did students have an awareness of their writing audience during this project?

Probe: How do you know? Was it reflected in their language choices in their writing? How they talked about or reflected upon their writing?

Probe: Did it matter that the students' audience was real and a member of the school/local community? Why or why not?

7) Did students' argument writing improve as a result of this project?

Probe: How do you know? What do you look for to see that students are able to write a meaningful and effective piece of argument writing?

Probe: Were students more engaged in their learning and writing as a result of this project? How do you know?

Closing:

8) Is there anything else that you would like to share that is related to the argument writing project or this study that we did not discuss?

Thank the participant!

Student Interview Protocol

Investigating How Audience Influences Language Choice in Argument Writing Lessons in Rural Secondary Classrooms

Interview Participant: A 10th or 11th grade student in an English / Language Arts classroom in a rural school. The student's teacher is a participant in the Northwest Rural Innovation and Student Engagement (NW RISE) network and the collaborative argument writing project.

Introduction:

Thanks for being willing to participate in this interview. I will ask questions about the argumentative writing project, your argument writing, and your perceptions of what it means to teach in a rural school. As we discussed, I will be audio recording this virtual interview. When referring to you in the study, I will do so anonymously using a pseudonym. Do you have any questions?

Background – Class Context:

Transition: First, I want to ask a few questions to get to know what it is like to be a student in your class. Please note that when I say "class" I am referring to the class in which the argument writing project took place. I am also curious to learn of your previous experiences with writing in school.

1) What does a typical day in English class look like? Sound like? How do you participate as a student?

Probe: How do you interact with the teacher?

Probe: How do you interact with other students?

2) When do you write in English class? What types of units, activities, and projects have you done that involve writing?

Probe:

3) What experiences have you had doing argument or persuasive writing in school?

Probe: In this class? In previous classes?

Probe: What did you learn about argument or persuasive writing in previous classes?

4) Do you like writing? Why or why not?

Probe: Do you like particular writing genres (e.g., narrative, argument)?

Probe: Do you like particular writing forms or projects (e.g., poems, essays, journal entries)?

<u>Background – Conceptualizing "Rurality":</u>

Transition: Now, I want to ask some general questions about what you think it means to be a student in a rural school.

5) In general, when you hear of a "rural school," what kind of picture do you form in your head?

Probe: What does the school look like? What do the teachers, administrators, and staff look like? How do they act? What do the students look like? How do they act?

Probe: Where do you think these images comes from?

6) Would you describe your school as a rural school? Why or why not?

Probe: Does your school match the image you described earlier of a rural school, in general?

Probe: What are benefits of being a student in a rural school? What are some of the challenges?

Student Perceptions of the Argument Writing Project

Transition: Now I have some questions about how you perceived and experienced the argument writing project.

7) Can you describe how you, as a student, participated in the argument writing project?

Probe: What was the topic of the project?

Probe: What did your teacher do to introduce the project and support you throughout the writing process?

Probe: Was there a focus on audience in the assignment? What was your audience? How did you interact with your audience?

Probe: Was there a focus on reasons, evidence, and language during the project? What was that like in your class?

Probe: How was the process of writing evolving drafts of the argument essay?

Probe: How did you use Schoology (online learning management system, or LMS) to participate?

Probe: What was it like giving feedback to other students from other schools? How was it to receive feedback?

8) Was the project successful? How do you define success?

Probe: What helped to support you during the project? What challenges did you face?

Probe: What did you learn about argument writing through this project? What else did you learn?

<u>Student Perceptions of Their Argument Writing</u>

Transition: Now I have some questions about your writing during the argument writing project. (Note that for this section of the interview, the interviewer and interviewee will look at the students' final draft of the argument essay)

9) Can you show me some examples in your writing that show that you are making a strong argument? Why are they good examples?

10) Did you have an awareness of your writing audience in this essay?

Probe: How do you know? Can you show me how your reasons, evidence, and language demonstrate your awareness of audience?

Probe: Do you think it was important to think of your audience when writing this essay? Why or why not? How did it affect your writing? Can you show me an example?

11) Did your argument writing improve over the course of this project? How did it change? Can you show me?

Probe: What helped your writing to change? Instruction? Peer feedback? Audience?

Probe: Were you interested in this project? Did you feel engaged? Why or why not?

<u>Closing</u>:

12) Is there anything else that you would like to share that is related to the argument writing project that we did not discuss?

<u>Thank the participant!</u>

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Argument - Analysis of Student Work: Purpose & Stages (Grades 10-11)

Content Area: **Medium:**   **Intended Audience:**

Key: 1. Needs substantial support; 2. Needs instruction; 3. Needs revision;
4. Meets standard; N/A: Not applicable

	1	2	3	4	Uncoached Writing Comments
Purpose To persuade the audience to do something or to think about something.					
Introduction Thesis statement or claim. Background information, if needed. Preview of reasons.					
Reasons **Statements offered in explanation or justification of the claim**					
Evidence **Concrete details, facts, or points that support the reasons.**					
Reinforcement of statement of position					
Cohesive text (Macro and Hyper theme reflected in text, as determined by genre)					

Criteria

1. Needs substantial support: The student writer needs extensive help developing that aspect of the genre.
2. There are gaps in the writer's understanding of the specific aspect. The writer has insufficient control. S/he needs instruction and practice.
3. The paper needs revision on one or two instances of the feature. A conference would be sufficient to help the writer meet the standard.
4. The paper reflects what the student should be able to accomplish and write independently given the instruction provided for this grade level. (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2004).

Appendix E: Student Writing Analysis Form – Language

Argument Analysis of Student Work: Language
(Grades 10-11)

Type: **Content Area:**   **Medium:**

        Intended Audience:

Key: 1. Needs substantial support; 2. Needs instruction; 3. Needs revision;
4. Meets standard; N/A: Not applicable

	1	2	3	4	Mid-Unit Writing Comments	1	2	3	4	Final Writing Comments
Generalized Participants										
Language Choices Describe reasons and evidence demonstrate awareness of audience.										
Technical Vocabulary Used when presenting evidence.										
Types of Sentences Statements preferred.										
Use of person Third person, except in letters and sermons where first and second person are used.										

| Modality

Medium and low for adults, more respectful.
High modality when addressing students.										
Evaluative Vocabulary

Used to express attitude. | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Grading**

Intensification used appropriately. | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Cohesive Paragraphs: Theme/New information** | | | | | | | | | | |

Criteria

1. Needs substantial support: The student writer needs extensive help developing that aspect of the genre.
2. There are gaps in the writer's understanding of the specific aspect. The writer has insufficient control. S/he needs instruction and practice.
3. The paper needs revision on one or two instances of the feature. A conference would be sufficient to help the writer meet the standard.
4. The paper reflects what the student should be able to accomplish and write independently given the instruction provided for this grade level. (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2004).

Appendix F: Sampling of Mentor Texts, Models, and Instructional Supports

Option 1: Continue to Use Drones Whenever Needed

The terrorist attacks of September 11 were planned in the hidden corners of Afghanistan by people beyond the reach of the United States government. We knew that they were planning to attack us, but we could not reach them to stop them. Since then, we have developed drones that hunt down our enemies and kill them, wherever they may be hiding. There are plenty of extremists loose in the world who want to do us harm. We know how they behave and where they hide. We cannot wait for final and absolute proof of their guilt; we must continue our "signature strikes" that target those whose patterns of behavior match those of terrorists. Drones are effective; they help protect the United States from its enemies. No one, not even U.S. citizens, can be allowed to believe that they are beyond our reach. We must not hesitate to use drones wherever they are needed in the world. These programs must remain secret and in the hands of the CIA. The president should continue to have the sole authority to order these attacks.

What should the United States do?

1. Keep the drone program secret and in the hands of the CIA.

2. Continue to use drones to target and kill terrorist suspects.

3. Allow the president the discretion to decide who is a target. Public debate over the drone program will only help those who seek to harm us.

Arguments for Option 1

1. This secret program has been effective at devastating al Qaeda and weakening our enemies without putting our soldiers or intelligence officers in harm's way.

2. The program is only possible because it is a secret. Putting it in military hands would make these killings impossible for foreign governments, who only allow them on their territory because they are secret.

3. The program has eliminated many dangerous terrorists whom we had little or no hope of ever capturing.

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Option 2: Use Drones Under Strict Limitations

Drones have been used to kill terrorist suspects for more than ten years. The program is effective. It has killed dangerous people who threatened U.S. interests, but the program's secrecy has also created problems. There needs to be more accountability for the decisions that are made, decisions which apparently now rest solely in the hands of the president. The Constitution did not intend for the president to have this unchecked power. Ultimately drones that carry weapons should be controlled by the military and not the CIA. The CIA's secrecy prevents accountability and public discussion by government officials. Once the programs are in the hands of the military, our elected officials can have these debates. There are also complaints and concerns from U.S. citizens and people around the world about how the United States decides who is a target of a drone strike. For example, what are the standards behind "signature strikes," in which the drones attack people who behave like militants, rather than proven terrorists? The Constitution protects the right U.S. citizens to a trial by jury. The killing of U.S. citizens by secret drone programs should be stopped until there are standards that are debated and clear to all.

What should the United States do?

1. Put the drone program in the hands of the military.

2. Reduce the secrecy of the program and force public officials to be accountable for their decisions.

3. Explain to the public the limits of the program and under what conditions the drone program might expand or end.

Arguments for Option 2

1. The program is effective and should be continued in some form.

2. There needs to be greater transparency so that it is understood by the public and officials can be held accountable.

3. The decision to kill enemy combatants including U.S citizens needs to be subject to the checks on power provided by the U.S. Constitution.

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Option 3: End Targeted Killings

The use of drones to kill suspected terrorists should be stopped. These killings should be called what they are: assassinations. It is illegal for the CIA to assassinate anyone, anywhere. It is illegal for the president of the United States to order the killings, most especially of U.S. citizens. The drones kill innocent bystanders and build resentment and hatred against the United States. Many of the CIA's strikes, called "signature strikes," kill people who fit a pattern of extremist behavior, rather than killing specific, known terrorists. The secrecy of the program means that no one can be held accountable for these decisions. U.S. citizens have been targeted and killed by drones. This is a dangerous precedent made more dangerous because of its secrecy. U.S. citizens assumed to have committed a crime have a Constitutional right to a trial. In this secret environment, the government's power can grow and grow. We have devastated al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Osama bin Laden is dead. We can safely end the drone program now and return to adhering to the Constitutional limits of power. Otherwise, we run the risk of being in a permanent state of war and having fewer and fewer rights.

What should the United States do?

1. End the use of drones to kill suspected terrorists.

2. Seek alternative methods to capture or thwart terrorists.

3. Demand that the president and all of the government do not exceed the limits imposed by the U.S. Constitution.

Arguments for Option 3

1. We will be following our own laws.

2. Today, we are safer than we were immediately after September 11. It is time to stop acting like we are at war.

3. We will decrease resentment of the United States, which led to the terrorism of September 11 in the first place.

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Guidelines for Summarizing: Steps to Follow

1. Read or review the source closely.
   - Highlight main ideas.
   - Purpose-Why did the author write the piece?

2. Chunk it-
   - Divide the material into parts, or sections. Where are the transitions to separate ideas? How has the author structured their writing?

3. **Write a statement that answers this question: What is the author doing in this paragraph, part, or section?**
   - Function statements do more than restate the content of the source; they capture the author's purpose or intention. The words and phrases you use to indicate who the author is and what he or she is doing are called *attributive tags*

4. **State the writer's claim/thesis (central idea) or purpose in one or two sentences.**
   - When you introduce the claim/thesis or purpose, be sure to include the author's name and the title of the source. Here's an example:

     In "Student Storm Chasers Develop Drones to Probe Killer Tornadoes", Joshua Learn endorses the university student drone project as being well designed, safer than traditional storm chasing methods as well as expensive. He informs the reader how to contribute to the project.

5. **Draft your summary.**
   - The standard way to begin a summary is to state the writer's thesis or purpose.
   - Follow your introductory statement with statements that reflect the chronological or logical order of the source material. Remember that the summary is not just a list. You must not only mention ideas but also explain the connections between them. In other words, avoid writing that the author stated this and then the author stated that and next the author mentioned so and so. Here's an example of the types of links in thought you should account for:

     Jillson discusses various views on the work ethic of most Americans. He focuses on positions taken by several social theorists to prove his point that most Americans spend more time working than taking care of their personal lives. To support his view, Jillson cites statistics indicating that

on average Americans work more than citizens of other industrialized countries—and play less.

Understanding Drones

Instructions: Watch the videos about drones and answer the questions below.

What do drones do?

List countries mentioned in the videos where the U.S. has used drones.

Advantages of drones:

-
-
-

Disadvantages of drones:

-
-
-

What are the controversies about the use of drones?

-
-
-

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Academic Vocabulary for Argumentative Writing Unit

- Claim
- Counterclaims / Refutation
- Reasons
- Evidence
- Tone
- Audience
- Point of View
- Formal versus Informal Style
- Concluding Statement
- Bias
- Clarifying
- Cohesion
- Authoritative Print
- Digital Sources
- Annotate
- Opening Statement / Thesis

Appendix G: Peer Feedback Resources

Editor's Name _____

Writer's Name _____

Argumentative Essay Peer Editing Form

1. Read the essay.

2. Underline any passages or sentences that are not clear to you. Write in specific questions when you think of them. Do you want to know more? Would you like to see specific examples? Circle obvious mistakes but don't stop to correct them.

3. Now go back through the paper and pay attention to the following specific issues:

    a. Introduction:

    - Does the opening paragraph clearly set the context for what the paper is about?
    -
    - Does it contain a strong, clear thesis statement that lets the reader know the writer's topic, his or her stance on that topic, and the evidence that will be argued?

    - Does it suggest "so what" or some sense of the significance or relevance of this topic?

    b. Argument:

    - Are you at all persuaded by the argument or given reason to second-think your own stance on the topic? Explain your reasoning.

    - Is the audience indicated? Do you think the audience would be persuaded by the argument? Explain your reasoning.

    - Does the writer need to provide more evidence to support his or stance?

    - Is there enough analysis of the evidence that is provided by the writer?

    - Is there too much summary and not enough direct analysis?

c. **Quotes / Evidence:**

- Are quotes used to support or illuminate arguments?

- Are the quotes too long?

- Has the reader provided documentation?

- Has the reader explained why the quotes are significant?

d. **Organization:**

- Does the development of the argument flow smoothly from the introduction to the supporting paragraphs to the conclusion?

- Can you follow the logical transitions? Are there transitions?

- Would you change the order of the arguments?

- Would you make clearer transitions?

e. **Citations:**

- Are the quotes or paraphrased material cited in correct MLA format?

- Do the parenthetical citations match up with the citations on the Works Cited page?

f. **Development:**

- Can you think of "pieces" of the argument that might be missing?

- Are there elements that could be added to give the argument more complexity?

- If you were to disagree with their argument, what would you point out or say to them in refutation?

- Has the writer anticipated questions posed by the opposing side?

- Does the writer provide a refutation paragraph?

g. **Conclusion:**

- Does the writer answer "so what"? If so, how?

- Does the writer suggest the implications of the argument? If so, what are they?

- Does the writer do more than restate the thesis statement and the main points of the argument?

Posting/Discussion Protocol for Online Forum

Following are suggestions for posting comments or having an academic discussion online. These suggestions are designed to help you communicate your ideas clearly in a professional manner:

1. Do not use slang *(Wassup...)*

2. Spell out words *(you vs. u)*

3. Humor is difficult to convey because tone, facial expressions, and body language which are key to the delivery of humor can't be conveyed online.

4. Read your comments out loud before posting to check your tone and clarity.

5. Be specific in your comments and provide support/examples for your feedback. Avoid general unsupported statements that give the writer no real feedback. *(Great! Cool! Wow!)*

6. Use RPPQD as a guiding tool as well as the rubric to help you find something constructive to say. *(repeat, praise, point out, question, discuss)*

7. Be kind and helpful.

NETIQUETTE WORKSHEET

Use the following web site address to answer the following questions:
www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html

1. What is Netiquette?

RULE 1
2. In cyberspace, it is important to remember the _____. Basically, do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

3. Could you really be caught for being offensive online?

RULE 2
4. Is a lower standard of ethics or personal behavior in cyberspace acceptable? Why or why not?

5. What is shareware?

6. Why should you pay for shareware?

RULE 3
7. What is acceptable in one area may be dreadfully rude in another. Why?

RULE 4
8. What is bandwidth?
9. Why is it rude to send multiple copies of documents to people on the Internet?

RULE 5
10. Why is spelling and grammar especially important on the Internet?

RULE 6
11. What is the real strength of Cyberspace?   Explain.

RULE 7
12. What is flaming?

13. Is flaming NOT allowed in Cyberspace?

RULE 8
14. Is it okay to read other people's files and email without their permission?

RULE 9

15. If you are in a position of a lot of control or power (of a network), what do you need to be careful of?

RULE 10

16. What should you do about a newbie who continually makes the same error on the Internet?

FAQ QUESTIONS

1. What kind of program do you use to explore the World Wide Web?

2. What does HTML stand for?

3. What does URL stand for?

4. What does a URL resemble?

Using the SC Evaluating Web Sites link, answer the following questions:

1. Looking at the following address, what does it mean:

   http://www.kchs.esu10.k12.ne.us/Academics.html

   a. "http" is what?
   b. "www" is what?
   c. "Academics" is what?
   d. "html" is what?

2. Match the following domain names with their abbreviations:

   _____1. edu   a. commercial business site
   _____2. Com   b. networks, internet service providers
   _____3. gov   c. U.S. non-profit organizations and others
   _____4. mil   d. educational site
   _____5. net   e. U.S. government/non-military site
   _____6. org   f. U.S. military sites and agencies

3. What are the seven new suffixes that have been added recently and what do they mean?

Argumentative Writing Assignment
Topic: Drones

For this assignment, you will be learning about drones, both the military and personal use of these unmanned flying vehicles. Once you have read articles, watched videos, and debated the topic, you will then write an argumentative essay using the following prompt as your guide:

Prompt: Write an essay to [name of state representative] stating whether or not you believe the personal and commercial use of drones should be banned, regulated, or allowed without censure in [Farmland state]. Be sure to provide very specific, factual, research-supported evidence to support your claim.

Objectives / [State] Common Core Standards

Students will:

- Analyze the issues and controversies surrounding the use of drones.
- Identify and articulate the core values of different policy options, especially those in Idaho.
- Work cooperatively within groups to discuss and debate the arguments and beliefs of these options
- Explore, debate, and evaluate multiple perspectives on U.S. policy regarding drones.
- Debate the ethics of drones
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1
  Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.a
  Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.b
  Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.c
  Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.d
Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1.e
Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5
Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.6
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8
Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.1
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2.b
Spell correctly.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.3
Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.3.a
Vary syntax for effect, consulting references (e.g., Tufte's *Artful Sentences*) for guidance as needed; apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading.

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.5
  Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.5.a
  Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.5.b
  Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.6
  Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

You will be working with students from [two states in the US Pacific Northwest] throughout the writing of this essay. We will use Schoology to communicate with these other high school students. Throughout the process, you will critique one another and give one another suggestions for improving one another's essays using some very specific guidelines.

You and the other students will also meet a series of due dates in order to complete the Writing Process for this assignment:

Due Dates:
- **Claims/Thesis:** XXXX
- **Feedback on Claim/Thesis:** XXXX
- **1st Supporting Paragraph:** XXXX
- **Feedback for 1st Paragraph:** XXXX
- **Complete Rough Draft:** XXXX
- **Feedback on Rough Draft:** XXXX
- **Final Draft:** XXXX

Grading:
- [Grading based on the] Argumentative Writing Elements Based on the Idaho Common Core Standards
- Meeting Due Dates / Handing in Each Step of the Paper
- For your Constructive Feedback and Participation with Oregon and Washington Students (Netiquette also)
- [Grading based….] On the Strength of Your Revision
- [Grading based….] On Your Overall Final Draft