Chapter Three
Writing Persuasive Research Essays or Open Letters
Writing Persuasive Research Essays or Open Letters

The purpose of the persuasive research essay is to focus on a controversial issue and then write a multisided argument that attempts to persuade a resistant, or at least highly skeptical, audience to consider accepting your claim. Why will your argument be multisided rather than just one that reflects only your point of view? As a member of a diverse society, you’ll often encounter moments of disagreement and misunderstanding. It’s crucial in these moments that you’re able not only to simply voice your opinion, but also to understand the viewpoints of those who do not agree with you. Doing so helps us avoid unproductive disagreements. At a more structural level, those in power (whether a supervisor at job site, the head of a local governing committee, or even the president of the United States) must listen to a number of credible points of view in order to make the most just and fair decisions about policies and procedures. On all levels, a multisided argument is simply more persuasive for a resistant audience than a one-sided argument is. One-sided arguments are good at rallying support for those who already agree; multisided arguments, and especially delayed-thesis arguments, are much better at persuading those who hold different views than the rhetor. Multisided arguments often work toward consensus and compromise, focusing on being partners in dialogue with those who hold alternative views, seeking common ground that lessens the risk (or threat) of disagreement. This assignment provides a platform to explore a compelling social or political issue that matters to you and to gain experience in a type of persuasive writing that likely will have practical benefits to your professional and civic life.

While this chapter will take you through more detailed steps to help you write your persuasive research essay, here are a few guidelines to consider at this beginning stage:

**Audience**—Make sure that you identify an audience that is resistant to, or at the very least skeptical of, the claim you are making about a controversial issue. You may want to imagine that you are writing to an organization or community group that has something at stake with the issue you are raising so that you are able to hold a specific and vivid impression of them as you write. We’ll ask, too, that you list your resistant audience at the top of your research essay submission.

**Significance and Focus**—Controversial topics are ones that present complex issues that hold more than a “yes” or “no,” or “right” or “wrong,” response, and ones whose outcomes matter deeply to your audience (and to you). You will need to narrow your issue, though, to an angle that is manageable for a short research paper. Huge topics, such as “American Foreign Policy” or “Technology,” are much too broad for the scope of this essay. However, finding a manageable angle to explore, like “America’s use of diplomacy in Iran” or “driverless cars and highway safety,” might work.

**Rebuttal Strategies and Audience-Based Reasoning**—Because your audience is resistant, you will need to work harder than in previous assignments to demonstrate that you understand their position, and to anticipate what their objections might be to your claim, reasons, assumptions,
and source use. You’ll need to make sure you’re using *audience-based* reasoning throughout your essay in order to most effectively persuade your resistant/skeptical reader.

*Research and Documentation*—Your outside sources will be important for building your own ethos and for helping to control the development of your argument. So, just as you have been doing in the previous essays, carefully evaluate the credibility of your sources and integrate them into your essay. You should be prepared to undergo an extensive research process since you’ll be working to understand your issue from many perspectives. **While your instructor will set their own requirements about the number and type of sources, it’s hard to imagine being successful in this assignment with fewer than five credible outside sources; indeed, you might be required to include far more.**

It might be helpful here to consider some examples of a multisided argument. Here’s one from the professional academic world: Katherine Hayhoe, a professor of atmospheric sciences at Texas Tech, hopes to persuade conservative, evangelical groups that climate change is real and that action needs to be taken immediately. Hayhoe reports that approximately 65% of the evangelical audience that she is trying to persuade does not believe in climate change. In order to start to persuade this skeptical audience, Hayhoe emphasizes the need to take care of the planet—what she calls the “stewardship message”—as well as the values she holds in common with them: “We all want a better world for our children, we all think it’s good to conserve our natural resources and not be wasteful, we all want to be able to invest in our economy and not be held hostage to foreign oil.” These values will act as the starting points for her to create reasons that her resistant audience will be willing to listen to.

Another example is from an ENGL 200 class. A student writing an essay for a local restaurant association hopes to persuade restaurant owners to require that nutritional information be added to their restaurant menus. Several members of the restaurant association may be skeptical or resistant about this idea because it means more work for them, including the need to redesign their menus, and they also may be worried about a drop in profits if customers are aware of how unhealthy certain popular menu items are. The writer, therefore, needs to find reasons that will allow for some common ground between him and the skeptical members of the restaurant association. As he formulates his reasons, he decides that his audience will be interested in presenting an image of healthy and wholesome food for customers as that will demonstrate care for their patrons. His persuasive research essay will argue that the restaurant association will not lose money because they will be able to attract more customers with the transparency of their menus’ nutritional information.

As you think about potential audiences and topics, keep in mind that your persuasive research essay will be between 1500-2000 words (the equivalent of 5-7 double-spaced pages, in standard 12-point font). Additionally, we’ll encourage you to use a delayed-thesis structure for this multisided argument, as this form is typically the most effective for persuading a resistant audience. Finally, as you may be asked to write a formal proposal later, in which you ask an audience member to take a particular action, for this assignment, while you might include a brief
call to action at the end of your essay, your focus should be broader than that of a specific
problem for a workplace or local community; your purpose, moreover, will be more focused on
changing minds at the policy level.

When you submit your persuasive research essay, it is a good idea to identify your intended
audience explicitly for your readers (e.g., by writing your intended audience down at the top of
the first page); identifying your intended audience will not only help your instructor and
colleagues evaluate the effectiveness of your audience-based reasoning but will also serve as a
good reminder to you that you are reaching out to your resistant and skeptical audience and
negotiating differences in values and beliefs.

The Open Letter

Alternatively, your instructor may ask you to write an open letter, an intriguing way to deliver
your persuasive research goals to a skeptical audience. The open letter can be especially
effective in that you are imagining that you are writing to only one reader or a small group of
readers, which allows you to become more personal and interactive. At the same time, an open
letter, even though it may be addressed to only one reader, is designed to be read by the larger
public. Famous open letters like Émile Zola’s famous “J’Accuse..!” (accusing the French
government of anti-Semitism and corruption in the 1890s) or Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter
from a Birmingham Jail” (emphasizing the need for nonviolent action) helped shape public
attitudes and political debates. More recently, CEOs of large American corporations, such as
Steve Ells of Chipotle and John Schnatter of Papa John’s, have taken to the open letter to mollify
angry customers and defuse company crises (these corporate open letters can also serve as
elegant forms of advertising).

When writing an open letter, find a stakeholder audience, someone who is prominently
connected to an issue and who presents a skeptical or resistant position to yours. While writing
to this specific reader, you will then imagine that you are also writing to many more readers who
you will need to persuade. For example, if you are hoping to reduce the influence of the National
Football League, given the violence of the game, you might address Roger Goodell, the NFL
Commissioner, but you must also consider football fans across the nation as you craft your
argument. If you are writing about the need to regulate social media companies to deal with
cyber-bullying among adolescents, you might consider Mark Zuckerberg, the co-founder of
Facebook, but must also keep in mind all those users of Facebook, as well as people who do not
believe in these forms of regulation.

Objectives

By the end of this unit, your Persuasive Research essay will be able to:

- Explore multiple perspectives of a controversial issue
- Summarize fairly a resistant audience’s perspective on a controversial issue
• Provide common ground between the writer’s views and the audience’s
• Develop persuasive claims with reasons, assumptions, and evidence/research
• Identify, evaluate, and integrate credible research sources
• Document and consistently cite research sources

Beware of these common Persuasive Research essay weaknesses:

• The writer chooses an issue or topic that is not controversial, or that is too broad for the scope of the assignment, or that is not significant to either the writer or reader.
• The writer chooses an issue or topic that is too controversial and therefore will be unable to find common ground or persuade the resistant audience.
• The writer does not demonstrate understanding of the intended audience, and therefore does not anticipate how that audience will resist the essay’s claims.
• The writer uses reasons and evidence/research that are not based on the values and interests of the resistant audience.

Writing to Persuade Skeptical or Resistant Audiences

Writing for audiences already in agreement with you is a relatively easy task: you can rely on one-sided arguments, choose research that your audience already expects and respects, and easily accommodate the beliefs and values of your readers or listeners. In many ways, you are not actually arguing but stoking your audience’s enthusiasm for the issue and your position.

However, if you are thrown into a rhetorical situation in which you have to consider skeptical or resistant audiences, you’ll need to contend with many significant rhetorical constraints. To start off with, you need to grapple with the various perspectives on the issue (multisided argumentation); understand your audience’s positions, beliefs, and values; consider research that counters your position and find ways to respond to that information; shape your ethos to make you a more trustworthy and sympathetic writer for your readers; find moments of common ground and compromise; and imagine ways to use pathos-based appeals to reach your readers.

The difficulty of addressing skeptical and resistant audiences can be found in popular adages or sayings. If we are “preaching to the choir” in one-side arguments (with audiences that are in accord with our positions), what are the similar sayings for dialogical arguments?

A few have negative connotations of the audience: “Casting pearls to swine” (imagining your arguments as “pearls” and your audience as “swine” may not be the best way to plan for persuading them); similarly, “Talking to a fence post” and “Banging your head against a wall” may depict opposing audiences in ways that are not useful for you. “Leading a horse to water” is a good possibility, as it shows that good persuasion is similar to good teaching. “Winning hearts and minds,” meanwhile, summarizes pathos- and logos-based persuasive strategies. All of these
phrases make clear, though, that persuading a resistant audience is more difficult than addressing an audience who already agrees with you.

Here is one recent example of an attempt to approach skeptical readers. Alarmed by the competition of plant-based meat substitutes, meat producers have been grappling with ways to reach resistant consumers through appeals to organic and natural values: in short, eating meat is more “natural” than eating plant-based meat alternatives. The conservative consumer organization, The Center for Consumer Freedom, addresses readers who may be tempted by these plant-based substitutes:

Are the chemicals in fake meat harmful? Probably not. But many people want to avoid them anyway. So if fake meat companies or their marketing surrogates tell you fake meat is natural and healthy for you and your family—make up your own mind about whether that’s true.¹

In this example, The Center for Consumer Freedom is reaching out to, quite possibly, more liberal consumers and parents, those who may be looking for meat alternatives for environmental reasons; these very same readers, though, will be interested in healthy, “natural,” and “organic” alternatives; they may find the focus on “chemicals” a good rationale for steering away from plant-based substitutes.

Depending upon the level of resistance of your audience, you may decide that persuasive strategies will not be useful. For especially hostile audiences, you can only hope to make them more open for persuasion in the future. Therefore, instead of offering an argument that they will immediately reject, you might use a dialogical or invitational approach: you pose questions, tell stories, and try to get them to reflect on their own values and beliefs and to at least better understand alternative viewpoints, even if they don’t agree with them.

And, here’s some bad news. According to Ezra Klein in Why We’re Polarized (2020), Americans are getting more and more entrenched in their own views and becoming more unwilling to listen to views and opinions that are different from their own. Consequently, the rhetorical strategies of this chapter and in ENGL 200 are extremely important for you to consider. Learning how to communicate across difference is a crucial skill, not only in college, but in the workplace and in society more broadly.

Invention Activity: Finding a Topic

Let’s begin with how this assignment relates to you. With your classmates, think about everything you know about controversial issues in the world on the local, state, national, and global level, and generate a class list.

Using that class list as a reference, think about each topic from an individual level (as a student, as an employee, etc.). What are some topics that you relate more to on an individual level? Which do you want to find out more about? What are some potential angles of vision you might bring to those topics?

Then, with that same list, think about each topic from the public level (as a citizen, as a political activist, etc.). What are some topics that you relate more to on a public level? Which do you want to find out more about? What are some potential angles of vision you might bring to those topics?

What two topics do you most want to find out more about? Write them down. Then, use the four following questions to challenge these topics. If you answer negatively to any of these questions, then you should strongly consider revising or changing your issue.

1. As the writer, would you be willing to change your mind about your position?
2. Is your issue a controversial one? Does a skeptical or resistant audience exist?
3. Is there the possibility to establish some common ground between your position and that of your skeptical readers?
4. Does the argument have significance for a larger public audience?

Invention Activity: Exploring and Narrowing an Issue through Research

Once you have decided upon your potential issues, you’ll want to read a variety of credible sources to help familiarize yourself with the issues more comprehensively. Keep careful notes, such as in a reading log, and try to find ways to find connections or patterns in these sources and, ultimately, put them into conversation with each other.
While you are researching, track the ways that you see different researchers agreeing and disagreeing with each other. Based upon what we already know about logos, your sources may

- agree or disagree about the facts, definitions, statistics -- anything about the "reality" if the issue
- agree or disagree about the underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions of the issue

Use your research notes to track these moments of agreement and disagreement and to clarify your understanding of the issue as a whole. Be sure to record your research citations as you will be expected to cite your sources later in the writing process.

While you are taking notes on your research, these are questions you can ask yourself:

1. What would writer A say to writer B? To C? D?
2. After I read writer A, I thought __; however, after I read writer B, my thinking on this issue has changed in these ways: ______.
5. Can I find any areas of agreement, including shared values and beliefs, between writer A and B (and C and D and E)?
6. What new, significant questions do these texts raise for me?
7. After I have wrestled with the ideas in these texts, what are my current views on this issue?

As you explore your issue, you may find it useful to discuss your findings and ideas with other people. Such discussions often reveal insights of your own and provide access to new information and suggestions.

Reviewing your research notes will help prepare you to introduce your issue, define/describe it, and explain why you find it a significant matter. Your classmates, instructor, tutors, and others are good people to dialogue with.
Invention Activity: Choosing and Analyzing Your Audience

Once you have settled on a topic, you must identify a specific resistant audience for your essay. This audience might be one who has a prominent voice in your issue’s conversation and whom you would like to engage directly (similar to Chapter 2) or it might be a collective set of readers who belong to an organization representative of your opposing view (PETA members, for example, would be a resistant audience for someone advocating luxury furs). While you likely already have that reader in mind from your initial research—maybe a particular text or author from your bibliography, or a key organization or group that your research has already revealed—take a minute to reflect and make sure that it is a person engaged in your issue who holds a sharply different perspective than you but one with which you believe you can find some common ground. Then, conduct any additional research on this audience so that you can find enough information to answer these questions:

1. What does your audience have at stake when it comes to your issue? Why is it important to them? Why would they be interested, therefore, in reading what you have to say?
2. What position does your audience hold regarding this issue? How is this position different from yours? Why do you think they hold this position? That is, what reasons do they have, or what values or assumptions do you need to be aware of? (Note: if possible, you may want to find a mission statement or some evidence of what your audience values.)
3. List at least two reasons with which your audience supports their main viewpoint about this issue. How can you respond to these reasons? How will your audience accept your rebuttals?
4. What assumptions underlie the audience’s own argument regarding this issue? What evidence does the audience rely on to support those assumptions? What are points of agreement, or areas of common ground, that you share with your audience? (Note: if you hold nothing in common, your essay will be impossible to construct.)
5. What type of research and outside sources do you think your audience expects and respects?
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Audience Analysis

These questions will help you analyze your audience and enable you to plan your persuasive draft more effectively. Take notes on the following questions to get a better sense of your readers:

- What is the exact purpose of my argument?
- What is my audience’s purpose in reading my argument?
- Am I writing to a single or multiple audience?
- Exactly who are my readers?
- Do my readers belong to any definable groups: age, sex, race; socioeconomic or educational level; geographic, religious, occupational, or political background?
- What identifiable characteristics or values do my readers share?
- Which of these group memberships, characteristics, or values are relevant to the purpose of my argument?
- What is the extent of my readers’ knowledge about my subject?
- Given my readers’ level of expertise, what information must I include and what should I withhold?
- What are readers’ likely beliefs about my subject?
- What are the likely causes of these beliefs?
- Must my communication reinforce or counter these beliefs?
- With what predictable expectations are my readers likely to approach my argument?
- Are these expectations positive or negative, and what allowances must I make for these expectations in my argument?
- How credible am I likely to appear to my readers?
- Must I make a special effort to improve my credibility?
- What are my readers’ precise interests?
- How can I best write to my readers’ interest in order to achieve my purpose?
- What rhetorical and organizational choices must I make based on this information about my audience?

Logos: Audience-Based Reasoning

The most important rhetorical strategy in this chapter is to understand your skeptical or resistant audience:

- Why do they think differently from you?
- What reasons do they find persuasive, and why?
- What assumptions do they make—what values, beliefs, principles, and attitudes do they hold that you need to be aware of?
• What kind of evidence and sources do they find appealing and trustworthy?

For example, imagine that you watched Joaquin Phoenix in *Joker*, and you thought it was one of the best films that you’ve ever seen. Yet, when you look at some of the reviews online, you discover that many viewers hated this film. If you were going to try to persuade them to think again about *Joker* and recognize its greatness, you would need first to consider what drew them to this negative evaluation of the film. Just conceiving of your audience as “people who didn’t like *Joker*” won’t be helpful for you.

Instead, you’ll want to read and listen for their reasons and assumptions for why they evaluated this film so negatively, which could be:

• *Joker* glorified violence  
• *Joker* made a direct correlation between mental health and criminality, which is an unethical position  
• *Joker* was marketed as part of the DC Comics franchise, yet it had little to do with the comic book series and the previous versions of Batman

You then may come up against three different types of audiences, each of whom are resistant to your positive evaluation of *Joker* for different reasons—and, these audiences may each hold far different values and beliefs. For example, the skeptical readers who felt that *Joker* was not treated enough as a comic book villain may have no qualms about comic-book violence or about the depiction of characters with mental health problems. You’d therefore need to construct your argument—your reasons, your evidence, your assumptions—differently for each audience.

**Activity: Matching Claims with Resistant Audiences**

When you are conceiving of your skeptical or resistant audience, try to fully understand who this audience might be comprised of.

Example Claim: Video games can make teenagers violent and aggressive.

Who would be a skeptical or resistant audience for this typical argument? In short, who would question or dispute whether video games have this connection to violence and aggression?

• Programmers and video game company executives (obviously)  
• The video-game-playing teenagers themselves?  
• Many parents and sociologists who claim that the sources of violence and aggression are much more complicated and deep-seated  
• Academic researchers who dispute the link between video games and violent behavior; indeed, they may claim that video games actually make a society safer—as they keep young males off of the streets.
For these following issues and claims, try to come up with a few skeptical or resistant audiences. Then, justify your choices. Who are these people, what are their values, and what organizations or communities might they belong to?

Issue: Community bans on certain breeds of dogs  
Claim: We should allow all breeds of dogs (e.g., pit bulls) into our community.  
Skeptical or Resistant Audiences:

Issue: Public school lunches  
Claim: Though well intentioned, the Obama-era regulations on public school lunches need to be loosened to lower costs and reduce food waste.  
Skeptical or Resistant Audiences:

Issue: Diversity and inclusivity training  
Claim: All K-State students should be required to take at least one three-credit-hour course on raising their awareness to diversity and inclusivity.  
Skeptical or Resistant Audiences:

**Audience-based Reasoning & Assumptions**

Again, a powerful component of attempting to persuade skeptical or resistant audiences is that you may be confronting different values, beliefs, attitudes, and worldviews. In order to open your audience for the possibility of persuasion, you may need to target some of these assumptions. In other words, you need to find common ground, the ways in which you and your skeptical audience agree—the values that you hold together.

According to the Toulmin Model, the assumptions—what Toulmin calls “warrants”—are those values or beliefs that serve as a “bridge,” linking the reason and the claim together. Oftentimes, these assumptions are left unstated; that is, readers will accept them because they are commonsensical -- they see the link between the claim and the reason to be a natural and reasonable one:

**Claim & Reason:** I have started knitting to reduce stress because it was suggested to me by my doctor.

**Assumption?** In this case, the assumption is that personal doctors are a credible source of information regarding health-related concerns. (Hint: Try fitting in substitutes for “my doctor” to identify some assumptions that may not be so reasonable and commonsensical.)

**Claim & Reason:** Give your nine-year-old child a smart phone because all of their friends already have one.
Assumption? Many readers may not find this argument to be convincing or reasonable because they will not share the assumption, which is that parents should make parenting decisions based upon their children’s friends’ practices.

Claim & Reason: Don’t read *American Dirt* because its author isn’t Mexican, and she doesn’t know anything about the immigrant experience!

Assumption? As you will discover, complicated arguments may have more than one assumption; that is, different sets of beliefs and values come into play for readers to make sense of the argument. In this case, one prominent assumption may be that books should be valued according to whether they fit the life experiences and social identity of the author. Whether you hold this assumption or not – and many people are divided on this issue – will dictate the degree to which you will accept this claim and reason.

Finally, take a look at this visual argument, in which an activist is protesting mandatory mask policies by holding up this sign, which reads, "My Body, My Choice" and includes this symbol:

![Figure 1. Anti-Mask Protest Sign, "My Body, My Choice"](image)

Claim & Reason: Governments should not impose mandatory mask policies because mask wearing should be an individual choice.

Assumption? A libertarian, individual-focused belief system links together this claim and reason. According to this belief system, the desires and rights of individuals should be promoted above anything else, even the public good. Many readers would not agree with this position, and they would promote the role of medical science above these libertarian views; in this case, mask wearing is not an individual choice because the spread of diseases such as Covid-19 has consequences for others beyond individuals themselves.
Activity: Unpacking Claims, Reasons, and Assumptions

In the following statements, be able to distinguish the claim from the reason. Then, supply the assumption that the audience would need to hold in order for the claim and reason to make sense. If you feel there is more than one assumption, please include those as well.

The movie version of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was awful; it had nothing to do with the book.

Claim: 
Reason:  
Assumption(s): 

I can tell that she is not a very good student because she says nothing in class.

Claim:  
Reason:  
Assumption(s): 

I certainly don’t agree with the alt right, but I just don’t feel comfortable tearing down all those Confederate statues. Aren’t we erasing history when we do that?

Claim:  
Reason:  
Assumption(s): 

The expository writing program should offer more online classes because they are easier to fit into students’ busy schedules.

Claim:  
Reason:  
Assumption(s): 

For these examples, who might represent a skeptical or resistant audience? Would they hold these assumptions? If not, how can the claim and reason be modified to make it more reasonable and convincing for these skeptical readers?
Logos: Claim Types

As you explore your issue, different claims and reasons, as well as tentative skeptical or resistant audiences, consider the rhetorical strategy of “claim types” to help you. It provides you with several different categories to place your own argument. You might find it useful to focus your argument and consider the ways in which you and your skeptical readers differ.

Here is a brief description of the different claim types:

Claims about the reality of your world

**Definitional or Categorical:** You are arguing that something fits into a particular definition or category.

- *Star Wars* is more than just a science-fiction movie; it is actually a Western.

- The debate about gun control really has nothing to do with the constitution.

**Resemblance:** You are arguing that something is similar to something else.

- The Percy Jackson series shares the same motifs and themes as the Harry Potter books.

- Millionaire teenage TikTok stars are similar in many ways to gold miners from the nineteenth century: they have made a lot of money, yet with little talent to show for it.

**Causal:** You are arguing that something will cause something else to happen—which may or may not be beneficial for the audience.
In my opinion, reducing the size of the menu and simplifying the number of ingredients will bring in more customers.

I am going to argue in this presentation that the *Harry Potter* series helped stimulate interest in reading by diverse young people throughout the first decade of this century.

**Claims about policy**

*Proposal:* You are arguing that your readers should do something because it will be good for them and/or will help solve a problem. In this case, you are implying a value judgement about what your audience should do.

As teachers, we should consider making our grading practices more rigorous.

In order to stop the phenomenon of towns dying out in Western Kansas, we should stimulate new growth in organic farming.

**Claims about values or judgments**

*Evaluation or Ethical:* You are arguing that something is good (or bad), or, similarly, that it is ethically right (or ethically wrong). Unlike definitional/categorical, resemblance, or causal claims, you are not arguing about the “truth” or “reality” of something; instead, you are implying a judgement, basing your decision of what is “good” or “bad” on criteria that you have assumed to be important.

France has the best cuisine in the world.

Eating meat is wrong.

**Activity: Identifying Claim Types**

In the list below, figure out the type of each claim:

- Even though many viewers may see it as yet another comic book or Superheroes adaptation, *Joker* actually fits in the movie genre of the 1970s drama because...
- Eating meat harms the environment because...
- You should become a vegetarian because...
- Not allowing transgender people to use the bathrooms of their gender identity is similar to laws that instituted segregated bathrooms based upon race because...
- Cheerleading is the same as gymnastics because...
- Eating meat is the same thing as abusing animals because...
- Waterboarding is a form of torture because...
• Allowing guns on campus will increase the suicide rate of young men because...
• Guns should not be banned on campus because the right to bear weapons is enshrined in the constitution.

**Invention Activity: Using Different Claim Types**

One strategy to analyze the logos of your persuasive research essay is to identify the type of claim you are making and then consider other possible claim types. Here is an example based around the issue of cheerleading:

**Definitional:** Cheerleading is a sport because...

**Resemblance:** Cheerleading is similar to gymnastics because...

**Causal:**
- Cheerleading causes body image problems in young women and men.
- Cheerleading is a good extracurricular activity for young women

**Evaluation:**
- because... (your reason will be based upon what features makes up a “good extracurricular activity for young women”)

**Proposal:** Cheerleading should become a recognized college sport because...

You can use the claim types strategy to clarify audience-based reasons and to consider the differences between your claim and those of your skeptical readers. Looking through these differences may allow you to figure out a point of common ground.

Here is another example based on the issue of whether all expository writing classes should be offered online.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Your position</th>
<th>Your skeptical reader’s position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definitional</strong></td>
<td>Online learning is a type of education.</td>
<td>Online learning is a form of training, not education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resemblance</strong></td>
<td>For students, taking online expository writing classes is similar to how they use social media.</td>
<td>Online learning is the same as correspondence courses from the 1960s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Causal</strong></td>
<td>Online expository classes will enhance students’ twenty-first-century digital literacy skills.</td>
<td>Online classes will lead to more plagiarism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Making all expository writing classes online is a good policy for K-State.</td>
<td>Making all expository writing classes online is a bad policy for K-State.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The student writer, when looking at this chart, may be able to consider ways to qualify their argument and make it more persuasive for their skeptical reader. For example, they may concede the importance of establishing teaching policies that offset plagiarism; they may also consider finding common ground in the particular type of students who should be allowed to take these courses and, moreover, the types of classes that may best utilize online learning.

Use a chart like the one below and fill out your own claim types as well as those of a skeptical reader. Then, look for ways to clarify your own position and the common ground.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Issue:</th>
<th>Claim Types</th>
<th>Your position</th>
<th>Your skeptical reader’s position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Proposal</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How do the claim types clarify the differences between these two positions? How do they help point to any possibilities of common ground? How do they help you generate audience-based reasons?

After you have a good grasp on your position and that of your audience, fill out this following table. It may enable you to help create a strategy to write for your skeptical audience and anticipate their concerns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My main claim and reason:</th>
<th>My skeptical reader’s main claim and reason:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How I can anticipate and respond to my skeptical reader’s main claim and reason: How my skeptical reader may respond to my main claim and reason:
Dialogical and Invitational Strategies

You have several rhetorical strategies that you can experiment with to craft your message to make sure that your skeptical or resistant readers keep on listening to you and keep themselves open for persuasion. You can think of these strategies as “dialogical,” as many of them ask you to engage your readers as if you are having a dialogue with each other; in this case, you may provide questions, enabling readers to respond and include themselves in the conversation. You can also think of these strategies as “invitational,” as you are inviting your readers to consider the issue with you and trying to find common ground with them. Finally, some researchers may call these approaches “nonthreatening” or “nontraditional,” as you are being empathetic with your readers, trying to understand their point of view and not necessarily trying to win. Overall, you are establishing trust and common ground and attempting to understand what separates your values from those of your audience.

As Carl Rogers suggests, though, these types of dialogical, nonthreatening approaches can be unsettling for writers:

If you really understand another person in this way, if you are willing to enter [their] private world and see the way life appears to [them], without any attempt to make evaluative judgments, you run the risk of being changed yourself. You might see things [their] way; you might find that [they] have influenced your attitudes or your personality.  

Remember the challenge of this rhetorical situation: if you hope that your readers will consider changing their mind on the issue, then you as well have to be willing to change and compromise.

In this section, you will encounter several strategies to help you promote this dialogical approach. Here is one example, from the University of Oklahoma, in which the former university president, David Boren, informs his readers, OU students, that he is going to have to raise their tuition. Though only the first six paragraphs have been included, you will be able to detect several strategies Boren uses to connect to his resistant audience.

Dear OU Students:

I am writing to bring you up to date on the status of our University budget and on the recommendations which I will make in regard to tuition to the University of Oklahoma Board of Regents. As a family, I believe that we should have candid and frank discussions of our financial situation.

---


As you have read, the national recession has forced budget cuts in more than 40 states across the nation this year. Oklahoma is in that number. The Oklahoma state government revenues declined this year by more than $300 million from last year.

The bad news is that to make up for the shortfall the budgets of state agencies have to be cut. The good news is that the governor and the Legislature have placed a priority on support for education and are cutting education even less than other units of state government.

At OU our operating budget has already been cut by about $4 million. In addition to these cuts, we will also have approximately $6 million - $8 million in increased costs which we cannot control. These include items like the rising cost of health care, books and periodicals at the library, and carryover payments for faculty and staff salary increases which took place last year. It is now clear that the Legislature will have no additional funds to help us pay for these added costs. In short, our budget has been hit by a problem in the neighborhood of $10 million - $12 million.

It is also now clear that we cannot solve this financial problem without raising tuition. To try to close the deficit solely with more cuts would harm the quality of education at the University. It would force us to compromise the standard of excellence our students have a right to expect. Even with tuition increases, we will not be able to provide raises for our faculty and staff. All of us will be sharing in the effort to keep up our high standards during this tough budget year.

I have waited as long as I can wait in conscience to make this difficult decision. Other universities in Oklahoma including OSU have already announced increases. I wanted to raise our tuition as little as possible and have been working at the State Capitol to try to find other sources of funds.

What are some of these strategies?

- Boren provides a “buffer”; instead of delivering the bad news about the tuition increase directly, he first builds a rapport with his resistant readers, provides background, and makes it appear that they are a part of this decision-making process.
- Boren delays his main thesis until the fifth paragraph, easing readers into the bad news.
- Boren uses pronouns such as “we” and “our,” emphasizing the fact that he and the students are in this together.
- Boren uses a family analogy, with himself as the father and the students as children that he cares about.
- Boren avoids explicitly stating who is making this tuition increase decision.
As you draft and revise your persuasive research argument, consider the following strategies. They will be organized in three groups:

- Ethos- or Pathos-based Strategies
- Research Strategies
- Organization Strategies

**Ethos- or Pathos-Based Strategies**

Connect to your readers by building a relationship with them (ethos) or appealing to their emotions (pathos):

- Consider using pronouns, such as “we” and “you,” that help connect you to your readers.
- Flatter your resistant readers and show that you are working hard to understand their side.
- Narrate a vivid story, one that highlights the issue and that appeals to your readers emotionally; in other words, make your readers care about the people in the story and less about their own claims, reasons, and assumptions.
- Make the issue personal for your resistant readers, again possibly through a story or an anecdote.
- Pose questions and show your desire to interact with your readers and get their input.
- Show your humility (another understated type of ethos); share a story of how your thinking on the issue has changed: “I used to feel just like you until...”
- Accurately and fairly summarize your audience's position and values to show that you respect them.
- Gently show the risks for your audience if they maintain their position.
- Use humor when appropriate; try to get your resistant readers to laugh.

**Rhetorical Research Strategies**

Rebecca Moore Howard, in her *The Citation Project* (see [http://www.citationproject.net/](http://www.citationproject.net/)), reported several concerns with how college student writers used research. For example, students cited material from the first page of their research sources 46% of the time, suggesting that they were not reading these sources carefully and comprehensively. Of their sources, 56% of them were cited only once in their drafts. Furthermore, 52% of the sources involved “patchwriting” in some way—an indication that student writers were paraphrasing and/or quoting these sources in ways that would concern their instructors.
Another concern that students show in their research is their tendency to only choose sources that confirm their ideas and perspectives. In short, these are sources that their skeptical readers may not find persuasive and credible. As a 2014 PEW Research study on political polarization shows, these student writers are acting similar to Americans in general: they prefer to read or view media sources that confirm their worldviews. For example, the PEW study found that 47% of conservative viewers watch a single news source, Fox News.

As this chapter asks you to consider argumentation as taking on risks — after all, you are making yourself vulnerable and allowing for the possibility that your ideas about the issue will change — you should also look for research sources that your own skeptical or resistant readers will find persuasive. In other words, you want to make sure you’re using research rhetorically: with consideration for your audience, message, and persuasive purpose.

We will look at these three strategies for using research rhetorically:

- Consider the credibility and bias of your research sources
- Use different types of research that your skeptical readers will find credible and persuasive
- Shape your research sources to fit your skeptical readers’ assumptions and values

Consider the Credibility and Bias of Your Research Sources

As you choose sources, you’ll want to determine how credible they will be for your readers. Use criteria such as the following to judge how credible your sources are:

- **Currency**: How recent are your research sources? (Be mindful that certain audiences will expect far more recent research than others.)
- **Authority**: How easy is it to determine who the author or sponsoring organization is of the source? (If you are using a website, domain names indicated by .gov, .org, or .edu may have more credibility.)
- **Comprehensiveness**: Does the source include evidence and information that is complete and satisfying for your readers?
- **Accuracy**: Does the information and evidence in the source appear to be accurate?

In addition to these criteria, you should also be aware of the ideological slant or bias of the source you are considering. You can get an idea about the bias of your sources by going to a website such as AllSides (allsides.com/media-bias), which categorizes many media sites according to a “left” (liberal), center, and “right” (conservative) continuum. For example, the following figure shows how a few well-known media sources are categorized:
Though you don’t necessarily need to stay away from media sources that have an ideological bias—all sources in some way will favor a particular ideology or worldview—you do have to be aware of these ideological and political sources, especially when you are using them for evidence to persuade your own readers.

To get better at examining sources, you might want to develop your strategy of “lateral reading.” Unlike “vertical reading,” in which you literally read closely through a single source, lateral reading asks you to jump to different online media sources to quickly determine what they are saying about the site you are interested in. The author of the online text, Web Literacy for Student Fact-Checkers, Michael A. Caulfield, describes the process of lateral reading:

When presented with a new site that needs to be evaluated, professional fact-checkers don’t spend much time on the site itself. Instead they get off the page and see what other authoritative sources have said about the site. They open up many tabs in their browser, piecing together different bits of information from across the web to get a better picture of the site they’re investigating.  

In other words, twenty-first century reading requires intensive and careful reading of sources and, at the same time, scanning of similar sources to figure out how one source fits into a larger network of sources.

For example, how about if you find a source from this organization, the James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal (www.jamesgmartin.center)? How will you know if this organization has a strong ideological bias or not? How can you tell if your readers will consider it to be credible?

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You can find a little bit about this organization’s political position if you go to its “About Us” page in its website. Here is the statement of the organizational goals:

Our goals are to improve colleges and universities, especially in North Carolina. We want to:

- Increase the diversity of ideas taught, debated, and discussed on campus
- Encourage respect for the institutions that underlie economic prosperity and freedom of action and conscience
- Increase the quality of teaching and students’ commitment to learning so that they graduate with strong literacy and fundamental knowledge
- Encourage cost-effective administration and governance

These are goals that many groups, regardless of ideological conviction, may champion, yet two phrases stand out: “diversity of ideas” and “economic prosperity.” These are concepts that more conservative groups will often be committed to.

By searching about this organization and looking at what other sources say about it, you can begin to get a better portrait of the politics of this organization. You will find that it is linked to the *National Review*, a traditionally conservative publication, and to the National Association of Scholars, a conservative academic think tank. SourceWatch, a website curated by the Center for Media and Democracy, defines this organization as a “right-wing 501(c)3 nonprofit and associate member of the State Policy Network,” itself a “web of right-wing ‘think tanks’ and tax-exempt organizations.”

**Use Different Types of Research That Your Skeptical Readers Will Find Credible and Persuasive**

As you conduct library- and Internet-based research, consider the types of research that your audience will value. Although you want to avoid stereotyping your audience, you can make some good educated guesses regarding, for instance, whether your readers will gravitate towards personal stories or towards statistics. Other audiences will be more accepting of information sources such as company blogs, whereas others will expect peer-reviewed academic research articles.

Here is a list of some possible research sources, which is far from complete:

- Primary research sources, including field research, observations, interviews, and surveys
- Peer-reviewed articles from library databases
- Statistics
- Government white papers
- Editorials and commentary
- Human-interest stories or examples from newspaper or Internet sources
Internet blogs
Social media sources, including user comments and chat room transcripts
Personal stories or anecdotes
Textbooks and class notes

One research strategy, coming from the social sciences, is that of “triangulation”—to find different types of research sources to satisfy your readers. For example, you might find yourself blending several different types of research sources together to enhance your persuasiveness, such as starting off your introduction with a personal story related to the issue, then reviewing alternative perspectives by using library-based research, and then supporting your own position with an interview of a professor, statistics that come from a textbook, and a statement from a company press release.

Shape Your Research Sources to Fit Your Skeptical Readers’ Assumptions and Values

Your research will take on several different purposes. Among many possibilities, it will

- Support your main reasons
- Support your assumptions
- Show your understanding of alternative perspectives
- Reach your audience emotionally
- Emphasize strengths in your argument and subordinate weaknesses
- Rebut the reasons, assumptions, or evidence of alternative or oppositional sources
- Provide an example of the issue
- Demonstrate your commitment to the issue

You should use readerly cues and explain your use of the research to help guide your readers and shape their reading experience. (If you look up “Transitional Devices” on the Purdue Online Writing Lab, you’ll find a substantial list of these readerly cues.) In fact, rhetorically researching and using research rhetorically implies that you are thinking about your readers and how they will be interacting with the information, and, hopefully, being persuaded by how you are using the research.

Here is one example of how Kelsey Reith uses research rhetorically in her essay, “Bathroom (In)Security” (please see the Student Example in the back of this chapter):
Next, safety is not only a concern for those that would support the strict sex-assignment use of public restrooms; safety is a huge issue for the transgender community. Imagine a woman, who would for all intents and purposes appears to be woman, but perhaps her birth certificate says otherwise. What might happen to her if she were to follow her sex-assignment, and walk into the men’s bathroom? This is the reason that harassment is frequently reported by the transgender community. The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that in the past year 59% of those surveyed had avoided the bathroom out of fear of conflict, 12% had been verbally harassed, and 1% had been physically and sexually harassed while using public restrooms (Barnett). The way transgender people are politically and socially treated in bathrooms is an issue of discrimination. This treatment has been shown in several studies to lead to violence, poverty, and isolation. Which puts transgender people’s quality of life at risk. Between 2003 and 2016, there has only been 1 case of a transgender individual committing sexual assault in a public restroom, while there have been 19 cases of cis-gender men pretending to be transgender in order to enter women’s bathrooms and commit sexual assault. There has been no evidence to suggest a connection between laws that permit transgender people to use their preferred bathrooms and an increase in cases of assault by cis-gender men disguised as transgender women (Barnett). What this means is that predators have been committing sexual assault under the guise of the transgender identity for a significant time and there hasn’t been a rise of these occurrences in areas where restroom facility policy is favorable to the transgender community. When it comes to sexual assault in bathroom, laws that allow transgender people to use their preferred restroom are not the problem, and not allowing them to do so is not the solution to the behavior of cis-gender predators.

Importantly, although Reith is only using one research source here, she is paraphrasing the statistics from this source and introducing, contextualizing, and explaining her use of the sources (the chunks that have been underlined). She asks her readers interactive questions, and she explicitly tells them what the research is doing or showing:

- “This treatment has been shown in several studies to lead to violence, poverty, and isolation.”
- “What this means is that predators have been committing sexual assault under the guise of the transgender identity for a significant time...”

Finally, shaping your research sources might also entail having to explain or qualify your use of them. For example, what should you do if you have found the “perfect research source,” yet it’s one that you are fearful will not meet the ideological worldview of your readers? In this case, instead of hiding the ideological angle of the source, admit it and then qualify your use of the source:
• Although the United States Interior Secretary David Bernhardt is well connected to the petroleum industry, we shouldn’t immediately discount his rejection of environmental regulations.
• Undoubtedly, many conservative readers will wonder why I have cited statistics from a study that PETA sponsored. Although, like you, I do not accept some of the advocacy work that PETA does, I think we can all agree that dangerous conditions of farm animals need to be looked at—to increase the safety of meat consumers and relieve the suffering of animals.

Organizational Strategies

Importantly, your organizational decisions—the order in which you arrange your reasons as well as those that represent the alternative positions—are powerful ways to interact with your readers. Experiment with these following types of organizational approaches:

Traditional or Classical Approach

You will likely be familiar with this approach, in which you follow this typical outline:

Introduction: You identify the issue and explicitly state your main claim and reasons

Counterargument: You identify the major alternative or oppositional positions, summarize them, and then attempt to rebut them or concede to them. (Alternatively, you could withhold the counterargument section until after you have supported your own reasons.)

Reasons and Support: You support your own reasons, using evidence.

Conclusion: You restate your main claim and reasons and attempt to maintain a good rapport with your readers.

If you choose this approach, you’ll need to be mindful that your explicit claim, so early in the argument, will perhaps make your skeptical readers even more resistant and defensive. You will want to use some of the strategies from this chapter to invite these readers to understand your own views and values.

Delayed-Thesis Approach

One way around highlighting your position early on in your persuasive research essay—and, consequently, running the risk of losing your audience at the start—is to delay your claim until later in the essay. Like the dialogic approach that we will explore next, you can show sympathy towards your readers’ views, create common ground, and use questions or other strategies before then contributing your own position on the argument. Hopefully, by that point, you will
have created a good relationship with your readers, and they will be more willing to listen to your side.

**The Dialogic Approach**

The dialogic approach to multisided arguments draws attention to the give-and-take nature of discussions on complex topics. It is similar to the psychological therapy models developed by Carl Rogers, who emphasized value-neutral conversations and empathic listening to understand alternative or opposing ideas. In other words, as the writer, you do not pass judgments on your readers’ views—especially if they are different than yours; instead, you demonstrate that you are listening to your readers’ perspectives, values, and concerns. Your main aim is to build common ground between you and your readers with the ultimate goal that you are going to lower their resistance and open themselves up to persuasion.

Those using this strategy take pains to illustrate that they understand the varied positions on a topic and have considered others’ perspectives. Writers will use the delay-thesis approach, as it allows the writer to connect to their resistant readers before acknowledging their own position. Dialogic argument approaches commonly follow this outline:

- **Introduction**
- **Dialogic Discussion**
- **Delayed Thesis and Support**
- **Conclusion**

Maxine Hairston offers another way of organizing dialogic arguments:

1. An introduction that fairly, honestly, and objectively identifies the issue.
2. An explanation of the positions that oppose that of the writer. In this section, the writer is demonstrating they understand the alternative positions and the values and beliefs of skeptical or resistant readers.
3. An explanation of the position that the writer holds.
4. An attempt to clarify the common ground between the writer’s position and the alternative positions. For example, what are the key beliefs or assumptions that the writer shares with their skeptical readers?

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5. An attempt to find a way to resolve the issue that attempts at a compromise between the writer’s position and those of their skeptical readers.

Note: A challenge of the dialogical approach is that because it undercuts the differences between the writer and alternative or oppositional perspectives, many writers end up writing exploratory, informative, or non-persuasive texts. If you choose this approach, you should still acknowledge that you do hold a position on the issue, even though you are attempting to build common ground and maintain a good rapport with your readers.

Drafting Activities

Summarizing Your Audience’s Views

Using the summarizing skills we’ve been practicing, write a fair and objective summary of your reader’s views on the topic you’ve chosen. You’ll want to think here about what it means to write a general summary over a larger topic rather than a specific summary over one text: What is the main problem behind your issue? What is your audience’s stance on that problem? Remember, you need to summarize the reader’s views in a way that your resistant audience would read it and say “yes, that’s what I believe.” You’ll also need to maintain a respectful and professional tone.

Establishing the Conversation

Once you feel as though you have a clear sense of the overall conversation, as well as the views of your resistant reader, you can begin drafting the early parts of your research essay where you explain the issue more broadly as well as the multiple viewpoints present in response to the topic. Remember, for this essay we’re asking you to experiment with a delayed-thesis argument. That means that your thesis statement—your own position—will not be located at the beginning of the essay. Instead, it’s likely to be either near the middle of the essay (if you’re using a version
of a dialogic argument structure) or closer to the end of the essay, if you’re using a more traditionally delayed-thesis structure.

As you think about drafting the earlier parts of your essay, then, you might find that it looks somewhat different than the kinds of research essays you’ve been asked to do in the past. You’ll find an organizational plan for both a delayed-thesis argument and a dialogic argument in the Organizational Strategies section above. These plans can help you structure your research essay in a way that will be most effective for your resistant/skeptical audience.

In each case, you’ll notice that the first few paragraphs of your essay will focus on establishing the broader context for the topic itself and summarizing other viewpoints. With that in mind, and given what you now know from your research about the topic and about alternative viewpoints on this issue, begin drafting the early parts of your essay. How do you want to establish the conversation? What kind of context for the issue is immediately required for your reader?

Your instructor might then ask you to share these drafts with your peers, checking for objectivity and accuracy in the summaries, clarity and thoroughness of establishing the conversation, professional and respectful tone, and overall purpose and structure.

**What Is Your Position?**

By this stage of the writing process, you should be well on your way to a thorough understanding of your issue; you have written a complete summary of your audience’s perspective on the topic, and you’ve begun to establish the larger conversation around the issue. You should have read a lot of credible sources about your topic and considered multiple viewpoints. You’re now likely ready to begin building your own claim.

Consider the ways that your thinking on the issue has changed as you have research and have analyzed your resistant audience. Then, freewrite your own stance or position on the issue; eventually, this will become the main claim that you will offer to your readers.

Here are a few examples that appear in the student examples at the end of this chapter:

- I understand why one might feel that letting transgender people use the bathroom of their gender identity would create more problems than solutions. Nonetheless, I have to disagree with this stance. I believe transgender people should be able to use which ever bathroom they feel best reflects their gender identity. For me the issues of human rights, safety, and the evolution of bathroom policies make it clear how the transgender community should be treated when it comes to public facilities. (Kelsey Reith, "Bathroom (In)Security")
• It is important to recognize that the moral concerns about encouraging drug use, as well as the safety concerns of needle-stick accidents and increased crime rates are valid. However, Needle Exchange Programs are used because they have benefits as well. While critics and proponents of NEPs disagree on whether or not they should be used, both groups are concerned with the safety and health of their communities. (MacKenzie Gwinner, "Should the U.S. Use Needle Exchange Programs?")

• I am excited about these initiatives and am eager to see what the planning groups develop. I am writing, however, to propose that the overall Visionary Plan could be strengthened and that present financial and enrollment challenges could better be addressed by drawing these initiatives together with a common purpose that is aligned with K-State’s mission, vision, and values: addressing climate change. (Sarah Inskeep, "Sustainability & K-State: A Letter to President Myers")

In each of these three claims, you will find that they start from the perspectives of their resistant audience and then shift to the position of the writer.

**Connecting Your Position to Your Audience**

To help you plan and develop the *audience-based reasons* that will make your persuasive research essay effective, use this activity to test whether your reasons, assumptions, and research will be persuasive for your intended resistant/skeptical audience (and repeat for as many reasons as you have):

Claim:

Reason:

Evidence or research to support the reason:

What type of source would have this information?

Assumption(s):

Which assumptions might the audience resist?

Evidence or research needed to support resisted assumptions:

What types of sources would have this information?
Outlining & Freewriting Opportunities

As you continue drafting your persuasive argument, experiment with several of these outlining and freewriting strategies. Because of the sophistication and complexity of the persuasive research argument, you'll want to break it down into distinct drafting opportunities or sections.

**Outlining**

Consider these following organizational components below and create a more specific outline for your argument to help guide you and break up your drafting goals. You'll need to think about where you are going to place your main claim -- without challenging your resistant readers too early -- how you are going to deal with your readers' opposing views, and in what order you are going to organize your own reasons that support your main claim. Here are some generic organizational components you can use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introducing your issue</th>
<th>Inviting your audience to the conversation</th>
<th>Summarizing opposing views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Countering or conceding to opposing views</td>
<td>Establishing your main claim</td>
<td>Finding common ground with your resistant readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting your main reasons</td>
<td>Concluding your argument</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Freewriting**

Use several of these following questions to help you generate more ideas. When you are finished, you will want to go back, reread, and then revise and shape these early freewrites.

*Establishing the Conversation*

- What are the most important positions that make up this issue?
- Why do people care about this issue? How is it significant for the public?
- Why do people disagree about this issue? What is at the heart of this disagreement?

*Resistant Readers' Perspectives*

- What is your resistant readers' most persuasive reason? Why is it persuasive or challenging for you? How will your rebut or concede this point?

*Common Ground*

- At the heart of the issue, with what do you and your audience both agree?
Chapter 3 Writing Persuasive Research Essays or Open Letters

Designing Arguments

Your Claim & Reason

- What is your most important reason? Why? How will your readers react to this reason? To what extent will this main claim and reason satisfy their beliefs, assumptions, and values?
- What specific research, personal experience, examples, statistics, expert testimonies, and other types of evidence will your audience find the most compelling? Why?

Your Conclusion

- What main idea do you want to leave your readers with? How do you want to make them feel?
- What is the "bigger picture" of your argument? What other larger issues or concerns can you connect your audience to?
- How can you reaffirm your common ground and your positive relationship with your resistant readers?

Revision: Avoiding Dropped-In Quotations

A common usage concern in papers that use the outside voices of secondary sources is the “dropped-in quotation,” sometimes called a “dropped quote,” in which the quotation is inserted into the paragraph without enough of an introduction or context. Readers will find the quotation to be too abrupt, and, additionally, they will require more explanation to understand why the quotation is being used. Readers will also be worried that the secondary voice of the quotation is dominating the paragraph—doing the work that the writer should be doing.

Here is an example of a dropped-in quotation:

Another reason that Manhattan High School should develop a vaping awareness program for students is because vaping companies have been directly marketing teenagers. “As recently as 2017, as evidence grew that high school students were flocking to its sleek devices and flavored nicotine pods, the company refused to sign a pledge not to market to teenagers as part of a lawsuit settlement” (Cresswell and Kaplan). Companies like Juul should not be allowed to market directly to high-school students.

To avoid the dropped-in quotation usage problem, experiment with these strategies:

Introduce the quotation

In the underlined passage below, the writer has provided some more context and directly introduced the quotation:
Another reason that Manhattan High School should develop a vaping awareness program for students is because vaping companies have been directly marketing teenagers. For example, one company that has attracted a lot of attention has been Juul, which has been marketing to teenagers for several years. According to a *New York Times* article, “As recently as 2017, as evidence grew that high school students were flocking to its sleek devices and flavored nicotine pods, the company refused to sign a pledge not to market to teenagers as part of a lawsuit settlement” (Cresswell and Kaplan). Companies like Juul should not be allowed to market directly to high-school students.

**After the quotation, provide a summary or explanation in your own words**

This strategy further develops the use of the quotation, emphasizing to readers why the quotation was used and how it meets the persuasive goals of the writer.

Another reason that Manhattan High School should develop a vaping awareness program for students is because vaping companies have been directly marketing teenagers. For example, one company that has attracted a lot of attention has been Juul, which has been marketing to teenagers for several years. According to a *New York Times* article, “As recently as 2017, as evidence grew that high school students were flocking to its sleek devices and flavored nicotine pods, the company refused to sign a pledge not to market to teenagers as part of a lawsuit settlement” (Cresswell and Kaplan). In other words, Juul has not been doing what cigarette companies have been doing for decades. Juul has not been telling young consumers the health risks associated with vaping. Companies like Juul should not be allowed to market directly to high-school students.

**Tell your reader why you used the quotation or why the quotation is important**

Similarly, this strategy asks you to directly respond to the “So What?” question. Why did the writer actually decide to use this quotation?

Another reason that Manhattan High School should develop a vaping awareness program for students is because vaping companies have been directly marketing teenagers. For example, one company that has attracted a lot of attention has been Juul, which has been marketing to teenagers for several years. According to a *New York Times* article, “As recently as 2017, as evidence grew that high school students were flocking to its sleek devices and flavored nicotine pods, the company refused to sign a pledge not to market to teenagers as part of a lawsuit settlement” (Cresswell and Kaplan). In other words, Juul has not been doing what cigarette companies have been doing for decades. Juul has not been telling young consumers the health risks associated with vaping. This quotation shows that Juul’s main marketing strategy has been to market to young consumers. Companies like Juul should not be allowed to market directly to high-school students.

**Shift the quotation to a paraphrase and/or use a fragment of the quotation in your paraphrase**
A final strategy asks writers to decide whether they actually need the full quotation; they may opt instead for a paraphrase, which they cite, or for a fragment of the quotation. The benefit of this approach is that it allows writers to more smoothly connect their position to that of the secondary source.

Another reason that Manhattan High School should develop a vaping awareness program for students is because vaping companies have been directly marketing teenagers. For example, one company that has attracted a lot of attention has been Juul, which has been marketing to teenagers for several years. According to a *New York Times* article, from 2017, lawmakers have learned that high school teenagers have been attracted by Juul’s “sleek devices and flavored nicotine pods,” but Juul refused to acknowledge the importance of teenage consumers in its overall marketing plan (Cresswell and Kaplan). In other words, Juul has not been doing what cigarette companies have been doing for decades. Juul has not been telling young consumers the health risks associated with vaping. In fact, as Cresswell and Kaplan have pointed out, Juul’s main marketing strategy has been to market to young consumers. Companies like Juul should not be allowed to market directly to high-school students.

**Workshop Option #1: Peer Review**

Use these workshop questions to evaluate your own persuasive research argument or a classmate’s argument:

**Focus/Purpose**

- Where has the writer clearly identified the topic/issue/problem? How do they explain why that topic is controversial and timely?
- Who is the resistant audience? What does the writer do to engage that audience with their argument?

**Development**

- What are the various perspectives on the issue? Does the writer represent those perspectives fairly?
- Where does the writer invite the audience to consider *with them* other viewpoints?
- How well does the writer integrate research sources and explain how that evidence supports their overall claim?
Chapter 3 Writing Persuasive Research Essays or Open Letters

Designing Arguments

Organization

- Is the writer using a delayed-thesis or Rogerian organizational structure in order to best persuade the resistant audience? Which structure does the writer seem to be using? Is it effective?
- Is the presentation of the argument consistent with its thesis and general organizational approach?
- Where does the writer utilize topic sentences, transitions, and/or other writing choices that help guide the reader from one idea to the next (both within individual paragraphs and within the essay as a whole)? Where are these necessary “signposts” missing in the draft?

Tone/Style (and Focus)

- Evaluate the essay’s overall rhetorical effect by assessing its use of logos, pathos, ethos, and kairos.
- What is that overall effect and what comments/suggestions would you offer the writer to strengthen how those appeals work for the resistant audience?

Workshop Option #2: Peer Review Using Role Play

For this workshop, work in small groups and take on one or more of these following workshop roles. Each role will be responsible for examining a different aspect of your classmate’s persuasive research essay draft. Make sure you jot down useful notes for your classmate.

1. Controversy Pulse Checker and Opposing View Finder

Make sure that the writer has actually chosen a multisided controversial issue that’s manageable for this assignment’s length. If the topic seems more informative than persuasive, or too broad, alert the writer and brainstorm ways to create a more controversial or tighter claim.

Also, make sure the writer has summarized the possible alternative/opposing views and then rebutted those views to strengthen their argument.

2. Significance and Source-Control Detector

Look for the significance of the issue, the “so what?” factor: why is this topic important for the writer, the public, or the audience? If the significance is not clear throughout the essay, ask the writer why they are invested in the issue and why it is an important one for the audience.
Check, too, that the writer is not simply stringing sources together. Point out places where the writer does not integrate, or loses control of, their sources. Note places, too, where the writer is making clear and explicit connections between points and sources.

3. Claim Confirmer and Support Supporter

Underline the sentence(s) that provide(s) the writer’s claim. If you cannot find a clear claim, let the writer know that they need to be more explicit. (Remember, the claim is likely to come in the middle or at the end of the essay).

Additionally, examine the writer’s “because” reasons that support the claim. Each of these reasons should be developed by specific examples and other types of evidence and explanation. If there is little support, indicate the places where more support and explanation is needed.

4. Audience Analyzer and Organizational Engineer

Make sure that the writer indicates a specific audience, one that should at least be slightly resistant to or uncomfortable with the writer’s claim.

Then, assess the “because” reasons and make sure that they are based upon the audience’s values and beliefs. Do you find those reasons to be effective at persuading the audience? Why or why not?

Finally, make sure that the organization plan is appropriate for a multisided argument. Are transitions or other cues useful to guide readers? Do the sections of the writer’s essay make sense and help enhance the argument?
Student Example

Kelsey Reith wrote this persuasive research essay in Brenda Martin’s ENGL 200 class. Kelsey’s target audience are those who are skeptical of allowing transgender people to use their preferred bathroom.

Bathroom (In)Security

Often when there is debate over a political issue, Americans will look to the Constitution for guidance. But how can a solution be reached when that legislation is vague or incomplete in the context of today’s society? There are many factors that the politicians of our past would have never even considered when making the policy to govern their future country. Even something as seemingly straightforward as policy on public restrooms is now under question. It is no longer as simple as men use the men’s room and women use the women’s room, because the people’s general conception of sex and gender are no longer that simple. A glaring question has been raised against public policy: which bathroom are transgender people supposed to use? When one’s sex assigned at birth is different from their current gender identity or expression, which bathroom are they to use, the bathroom that matches their birth certificate, their genitals, or their identity?

Many who think transgender people should use public restrooms according to their birth sex-assignment are reasonably worried about several issues. They may be concerned about their personal privacy rights, protecting them from having to use bathrooms with those of the opposite sex. A mother in Oregon is suing her school district over the “uncomfortable,” “embarrassing,” and “awkward” encounter her son experienced when a transgender peer entered the bathroom while he was using it. She first responded by asking the school to take action and perhaps have the transgender student use a single stall bathroom. The school consulted the law and decided to continue to let the transgender student use the men’s bathroom. Concerned for her son’s privacy rights, she filed a lawsuit (Cegavske). Law professor Eugene Volokh argues that it’s unconstitutional to let transgender people use bathrooms of their identity rather than their biological sex. Under the Equal Protection Clause persons must be protected from being observed partially clothed by the opposite sex. This idea has been supported in several court cases over the years. York v. Story (1963) stated that “the desire to shield one’s unclothed figure from view of strangers, and particularly strangers of the opposite sex, in impelled by elementary self-respect and personal dignity.” Sepulveda v. Ramirez (2012) stated that “the right to bodily privacy is fundamental... common sense and decency protect a parolee’s right not to be observed by an officer of the opposite sex while producing a urine sample” and many more (Volokh). We are all put in a vulnerable position when using public bathrooms and showers, and it’s laws like these that protect us from humiliation and loss of dignity.

Another concern is that of safety. There is a possibility that a transgender person could sexually assault someone in the bathroom, but it’s even more worrisome that cis-gender men that are
sexual predators will dress as a woman, pretending to be transgender, in order to enter women’s bathrooms and commit assault. Mike Huckabee, a former governor of Arkansas, once joked, “Now I wish that someone told me that when I was in high school that I could have felt like a woman when it came time to take showers in PE,” highlighting the very mindset that would strike fear into any woman (Barnett). The threat of a predator taking advantage of the transgender identity is simply too high of a risk.

Finally, this group may feel that what isn’t broke shouldn’t be fixed. Bathrooms have been separated by sex since the 19th century. Law professor Terry Kogan theorizes that sex-separated facilities were originally created as a way to protect women for purposes of sanitation and privacy during the Industrial Revolution when more men and women worked side by side (Barnett). Bathrooms as they stand are sufficient in creating a safe environment for the larger population. Why change it now and take the unnecessary risks of privacy violation and sexual assault?

I understand why one might feel that letting transgender people use the bathroom of their gender identity would create more problems than solutions. Nonetheless, I have to disagree with this stance. I believe transgender people should be able to use which ever bathroom they feel best reflects their gender identity. For me the issues of human rights, safety, and the evolution of bathroom policies make it clear how the transgender community should be treated when it comes to public facilities.

First, transgender people’s ability to use the correct bathroom is not simply a matter of transgender rights, but human rights. There is a misconception that transgender people are people who used to be one gender and are now another, or somewhere in between. A transgender man, for example, is not a man who used to be a woman, he is a man, and he would like to be treated as a man and to be able to use the bathroom as such. Tyler, the transgender student involved in the lawsuit discussed earlier explains this idea, “See it like this, why do we call a musician a musician? It’s because that’s what they are. They don’t ‘feel’ that way they ‘are’ that way” (quoted in Cegavske). This distinction is vital to continue a conversation on the treatment of the transgender community. It is often forgotten that transgender rights are in fact human rights and humans have a right to use public restroom and facilities. A suit filed by the Justice Department states that not allowing transgender people their human right of using public bathrooms of their identity “results in their isolation and exclusion, and perpetrates a sense that they are not worthy of equal treatment and respect” (Berlinger). The transgender community is a marginalized group in the U.S., and they will continue to be an oppressed group if they are continued to be treated as if their rights are not equal to all human rights.

Next, safety is not only a concern for those that would support the strict sex-assignment use of public restrooms; safety is a huge issue for the transgender community. Imagine a woman, who would for all intents and purposes appears to be woman, but perhaps her birth certificate says otherwise. What might happen to her if she were to follow her sex-assignment, and walk into the men’s bathroom? This is the reason that harassment is frequently reported by the
transgender community. The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that in the past year 59% of those surveyed had avoided the bathroom out of fear of conflict, 12% had been verbally harassed, and 1% had been physically and sexually harassed while using public restrooms (Barnett). The way transgender people are politically and socially treated in bathrooms is an issue of discrimination. This treatment has been shown in several studies to lead to violence, poverty, and isolation, which puts transgender people’s quality of life at risk. Between 2003 and 2016, there has only been 1 case of a transgender individual committing sexual assault in a public restroom, while there have been 19 cases of cis-gender men pretending to be transgender in order to enter women’s bathrooms and commit sexual assault. There has been no evidence to suggest a connection between laws that permit transgender people to use their preferred bathrooms and an increase in cases of assault by cis-gender men disguised as transgender women (Barnett). What this means is that predators have been committing sexual assault under the guise of the transgender identity for a significant time and there hasn’t been a rise of these occurrences in areas where restroom facility policy is favorable to the transgender community. When it comes to sexual assault in bathrooms, laws that allow transgender people to use their preferred restroom are not the problem, and not allowing them to do so is not the solution to the behavior of cis-gender predators.

Finally, bathrooms policy isn’t nearly as stagnant as many would believe. A long history exists of reconsidering and changing the laws that dictate public restrooms. Policies and social standards surrounding bathrooms have been questioned, rallied for, and adapted numerous times. It wasn’t until 1954 that laws were instated that prevented bathroom to be segregated by race, and it wasn’t until 1990 that laws were made that protected bathroom discrimination against those with disabilities (Killermann). Policies for public facilities have and are meant to evolve with the changing times. The inclusion of a transgender population growing in numbers and voice is the next logical step in bathroom equality.

As an advocate for equality of all, and consequently an ally of the LGBTQ+ community, I want to know all I can about the issues that concern and affect transgender people. While I understand the concerns against more permissive restroom laws, I believe the best course of action would be to allow transgender people to use the bathroom which matches their gender identity. The importance of human rights, safety, and progressive law-making reveal to me what I believe would be best for our society.

Works Cited


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Student Example

Yusuf Ciftci wrote this persuasive research essay in Caitlin Hymans’ ENGL 200 class. It won first place in the 2021 Expository Program Writing Awards. Ciftci’s audience is legislative leadership in states that have not expanded to Medicaid.

**Healthcare Equity and Social Justice**

The ideals of the American Revolution were founded on the concept of unalienable rights, described as “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” in the Declaration of Independence. The inclusion of an endowed right to life is rather interesting. What constitutes the right to life? How can the government ensure a right to life among constituents? These difficult questions have dominated political discourse surrounding American healthcare since the early 20th century. In recent decades, rising healthcare costs, barriers to healthcare access, and deteriorating health outcomes among the general population have threatened this fundamental right to life. In response, legislative reforms have focused on mending inequalities within the American healthcare system. Most notably, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), colloquially known as Obamacare, significantly altered the structure of American healthcare in the past decade. A critical, yet controversial, component of the ACA focused on increasing healthcare coverage through Medicaid expansion, the premier federal safety net for socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals.

To explore why some legislators oppose Medicaid expansion, I will initially analyze the short-term fiscal impact of Medicaid expansion, barriers to healthcare delivery, and limitations on patient autonomy. Following this analysis, I will explore research on health outcomes, long-term health expenditures, and healthcare delivery reforms in Medicaid to understand the positive impacts of expansionary policies.
Many legislators who oppose Medicaid expansion are concerned about inefficiencies in Medicaid, directing attention to high tax rates and excessive spending throughout the years to maintain the program. Bryce Ward, a researcher on health economics with a Ph.D. from Harvard University, states that the median cost of Medicaid expansion for each state is approximately $100 million each year. Moreover, the federal government only covers the cost of expansion for the first three years of implementation, followed by incremental increases in state responsibility for the cost of expansion in successive years (2020). The substantial cost of Medicaid expansion, at $100 million each year, is concerning for legislators who are tasked with allocating limited funds to improve their communities. As a result, legislators may view opposing such large amounts of government spending as an appealing prospect to garner support among constituents.

Additionally, some are worried about the fiscal burden of Medicaid expansion on states after the three-year grace period. Given legislative term limits and recurrent election cycles, there is limited political incentive to undertake such a burdensome expansion in the view of some policymakers. Instead, legislators may focus on policies that are more likely to provide tangible short-term benefits to their communities. Rising tax rates introduce another dimension of complexity on the issue of Medicaid expansion. Ward (2020) states that “several states have explicitly raised taxes and fees to cover their share of Medicaid expansion.” Therefore, legislators who value limited government interference may be unwilling to adopt government-subsidized healthcare coverage and leverage their opposition to high tax-rates for constituent support. The fiscal impact of Medicaid expansion is a challenge that must be addressed if the ACA is to succeed in its goal of increasing access to healthcare.

Opponents of Medicaid expansion are also worried that expanding Medicaid may not improve short-term health outcomes because of barriers to healthcare delivery. Gordon et al. (2018), a group of health policy professors in leading medical schools across the nation, explored this endogenous relationship between healthcare delivery and health outcomes. According to their study, relatively low Medicaid reimbursement rates and the “administrative burden of navigating a state-run insurance program” led to historically low provider participation rates in 2018. Physicians are confronted with several barriers that prevent them from providing care for those in need. These include both bureaucratic restrictions on scope of practice and insurance companies requiring prior authorization for treatments. Moreover, providers interviewed as part of the study explicitly stated that inadequate investment placed a strain on providers and was not feasible in the short-term (Gordon et al., 2018). Thus, legislators may believe that Medicaid expansion negatively impacts healthcare workers who are reluctant to undertake the additional administrative burden of Medicaid expansion without adequate compensation.

On the other hand, such policies introduce an additional barrier to healthcare delivery and reinforce detrimental health outcomes among at-risk communities. One pediatrician specifically addressed barriers to mental healthcare, stating that “They [patients] have very poor access...[to] mental health services. The mental health services they do have, on paper don’t seem to solve the problems” (Gordon et al., 2018). Barriers to healthcare delivery place an
undue burden on physicians, ultimately reflecting on patients in the form of disparate health outcomes. Presumably, a majority of legislators are concerned with public service and improving the lives of their constituents. As a result, some legislators may be hesitant to endorse Medicaid expansion without fundamental changes in healthcare delivery.

Finally, some legislative opponents of Medicaid expansion argue that the policy limits patient autonomy, the intrinsic right of patients to decide on medical care. In 2012, the Supreme Court reached a landmark decision ruling that critical parts of the ACA, including the Medicaid expansion mandate, were constitutional (National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius, 2012). However, on the question of whether Congress exceeded its power in withdrawing federal funds for states refusing to expand Medicaid, the Supreme Court ruled that “the Medicaid expansion provisions were unconstitutionally coercive as written.” Therefore, the federal government exceeded its power in leveraging federal funds to incentivize Medicaid expansion. This apparent overreach of power by the federal government may be worrying for some legislators who oppose Medicaid expansion. Among policymakers who value individual autonomy, the prospect of the federal government dictating medical care and coercing individuals to enroll in government-subsidized health coverage is likely to elicit strong opposition. As a result, legislators may appeal to constituents by publicly opposing “coercive” Medicaid expansion mandates and appearing to advocate for the common citizen in the face of government overreach.

I understand why some legislators may oppose Medicaid expansion as a mandate of the ACA because of its fiscal burden on constituents, inefficient healthcare delivery, and constraints on patient autonomy. However, I respectfully disagree with these arguments for several reasons. I believe that Medicaid expansion will decrease long-term healthcare costs, incentivize the development of efficient healthcare delivery models, and ultimately increase patient autonomy by resulting in a healthier population.

Medicaid expansion will lead to improved long-term health outcomes, effectively reducing healthcare costs and compensating for short-term costs. In his article “The Long-term Health Impacts of Medicaid and CHIP,” Owen Thompson, a professor of health economics, longitudinally tracked health outcomes among children benefitting from Medicaid coverage. The study suggests that “an additional year of public health insurance eligibility during childhood... substantially reduces health limitations, chronic conditions and asthma prevalence while improving self-rated health” (2017). The results indicate that healthcare coverage in early childhood translates to improved health outcomes and lower rates of chronic illness in adulthood. Essentially, Medicaid expansion serves to improve the health and lives of children. These long-term impacts may serve as an incentive for legislators who value intrinsic concepts like “the American Dream” and equality of opportunity. Essentially, children will have the opportunity to succeed and contribute to society as healthy individuals without experiencing burdensome health disparities. By endorsing Medicaid expansion, legislators will position themselves as advocates for future generations and demonstrate their investment in the long-term success of the communities they represent, an appealing prospect for any policymaker across the country.
Conversely, improved long-term health outcomes will reduce the fiscal burden of disease on individuals and the healthcare system, lowering healthcare costs as a result. The Centers for Disease Control, the leading public health institute in the nation, reports that treatment costs for individuals with chronic conditions constitute roughly 90% of all healthcare expenditures in the United States. Moreover, approximately 42% of the general population is diagnosed with a chronic condition (Buttorff, Ruder, and Bauman, 2017). Given that the United States spends $3.5 trillion on healthcare each year, chronic conditions represent a tremendous financial burden on patients, providers, and taxpayers alike. Additionally, the annual cost of Medicaid expansion is estimated at 100 million each year, a significantly smaller amount compared to the healthcare cost of treating chronic illness (Ward, 2020). As established by Thompson (2017), Medicaid expansion is correlated with improved long-term health outcomes and reduced rates of chronic disease. Therefore, reduced healthcare expenditures to treat chronic illness in the long-term will offset the short-term fiscal impact of Medicaid expansion on constituents. Once again, endorsing Medicaid expansion allows legislators to entrench themselves as advocates concerned with long-term success in communities they represent. Moreover, legislators concerned about the fiscal impact of Medicaid may view the long-term payoffs in the form of improved health outcomes and reduced expenditures as appealing factors.

Medicaid expansion has also benefited from flexibility at the state level, where different states have implemented various programs to improve Medicaid. States are commonly referred to as laboratories of democracy, as they often practice innovative or controversial programs before such policies are implemented on a federal level. Medicaid expansion is no exception to this trend. The State Innovation Models Initiative, sponsored by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), offers grants for states to implement innovative healthcare delivery models. For example, Maine and Minnesota have utilized these grants to implement the Patient-Centered Medical Homes (PCMH) primary care model for Medicaid recipients. This innovative healthcare delivery model coordinates patient care among providers, including primary care physicians, specialty providers, and long-term care specialists, among others (Van Vleet and Paradise, 2014).

Moreover, the PCMH model incorporates community and personalized wellness coaching into healthcare. According to a longitudinal study on the effect of PCMH on health outcomes, researchers found that patients receiving care under this coordinated care model had lower mortality rates, decreased rates of chronic illness, and lower numbers of visits to the emergency room (Jackson et al., 2013). These key indicators of long-term patient health outcomes may be encouraging for legislators who desire to improve the lives of their constituents and communities. Considering that the PCMH is one aspect of flexibility in healthcare delivery, there exists tremendous potential to implement other innovative models of healthcare delivery and improve healthcare outcomes across the nation through Medicaid expansion.

Another key provision of Medicaid integrates social determinants of health (SDOH) into healthcare, ultimately leading to reduced healthcare disparities and increased patient
autonomy. The SDOH are commonly defined as socioeconomic and environmental factors that influence individual health. These include income, education, housing, and transportation (Alderwick and Gottlieb, 2019). According to a study by Braveman and Gottlieb (2014), socioeconomic status “follows a stepwise gradient pattern, with health improving incrementally as social position rises.” Moreover, this same study reported that “the number of U.S. deaths in 2000 attributable to low education, racial segregation, and low social support was comparable with the number of deaths attributable to myocardial infarction, cerebrovascular disease, and lung cancer, respectively.” The SDOH are a significant systemic barrier to healthcare access and negatively impact health outcomes among individuals.

Furthermore, these determinants limit patient autonomy, as patients are forced to choose between healthcare and essential expenses like food and rent. Thus, individuals are not afforded the right to choose medical care for themselves simply because they are unable to access healthcare. Provisions of Medicaid expansion integrate programs targeting SDOH inequalities with healthcare delivery, demonstrating tremendous potential to alleviate these systemic barriers to patient autonomy. This is an appealing prospect for legislators who value patient autonomy and desire to portray themselves as advocates of limited government interference.

Like many issues that impose significant challenges on the status quo, Medicaid expansion remains a controversial issue among legislators across the nation. There are legitimate concerns with the fiscal impact of Medicaid expansion, inefficient models of healthcare delivery, and possible limitations on patient autonomy among legislators who oppose Medicaid expansion. Nonetheless, I believe that the beneficial impacts of Medicaid expansion warrant its consideration as a tool to reduce healthcare disparities in the American healthcare system. Expansionary policies can achieve this goal by decreasing long-term health expenditures, incentivizing flexibility to develop efficient healthcare delivery models, and ultimately increasing patient autonomy. These outcomes represent important progress toward achieving the Declaration of Independence’s ideals of “right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

References


**Student Example**

MacKenzie Gwinner wrote this persuasive research essay in Jonathan Blake’s ENGL 200 class. Gwinner’s resistant readers are police officers.

**Should the U.S. Use Needle Exchange Programs?**

Needle Exchange Programs, also known as Syringe Exchange Programs, provide free syringes to people without a prescription. These are mostly used by people who use intravenous drugs. Many Needle Exchange Programs (NEPs) also provide access to and information about medical professionals and rehabilitation facilities and require one needle turned in for every needle given. Needle Exchange Programs are a controversial topic in America. Critics cite moral and safety concerns. Many people see Needle Exchange Programs as promoting drug abuse, increasing criminal activity, and creating unsafe communities. Law enforcement in particular may see these programs as contradictory to their job and the “War on Drugs.” Proponents point out the role of NEPs in decreasing the spread of HIV/AIDS, preventing improper disposal of dirty
needles, and connecting people to medical personnel. For whatever reason that people are opposed to or in favor of NEPs, the bottom line appears to be safety and health.

One of the main reasons that people oppose Needle Exchange Programs is the concern that they support and encourage drug abuse. Danny Jones, Mayor of Charleston, West Virginia, in an article published in *The New York Times*, opposes NEPs and had the program in this town shut down, “citing...what he saw as a weekly influx of people using drugs” (Katz). Jones is not the only public official rallying against these programs. Miami police chief Javier Ortiz believes that the program enables people who abuse drugs and labels drug abuse as acceptable behavior (Wright). The police are on the frontlines of the issue with Needle Exchange Programs. Not only is their support necessary to create an effective program, they are also placed in danger when interacting with people who are addicted to drugs from needle stick injuries.

A second concern against Needle Exchange Programs is that they will increase the prevalence of improperly discarded needles, which would increase the danger of a needle stick accident. Miami police chief Ortiz spoke out against NEPs after one of his officers was pricked with a used needle while making an arrest (Wright). The immediate concern for that officer is if that needle was infected, he has a chance of contracting HIV. The concern for safety does not only apply to police officers; adults and children in the community can be put at risk if they come into contact with an infected needle. This is one of the reasons that Mayor Jones shut down the NEP in his town: a five-year-old girl received a needle stick injury while using a McDonald’s restroom (Katz). These accidents have the potential to result in devastating outcomes and are a major safety concern for areas with a high population of people who abuse drugs. Needle stick accidents are not the only concern community members and officials have about needles.

An unexpected consequence of Needle Exchange Programs was the creation of a community-funded black market for syringes, where people pick up dirty syringes to exchange for clean ones which they sell (Jacobs). Reselling syringes is illegal; however, it is easy because the needles are free and obtained in a legal way. This consequence is another reason that people may oppose Needle Exchange Programs, particularly those in law enforcement. In areas with NEPs, needle possession is not considered illegal. This fact makes their job more difficult since they must be caught selling the needles to arrest them; moreover, law enforcement may see an uptick in crime related to Needle Exchange Programs.

It is important to recognize that the moral concerns about encouraging drug use, as well as the safety concerns of needle-stick accidents and increased crime rates are valid. However, Needle Exchange Programs are used because they have benefits as well. While critics and proponents of NEPs disagree on whether or not they should be used, both groups are concerned with the safety and health of their communities.

HIV/AIDS is a major public health and safety concern, and decreasing its prevalence is one area that both critics and proponents of Needle Exchange Programs support. Over 1.1 million people in the United States are living with HIV, and in 2014 over 6,500 people died from the disease.
Decreasing the prevalence of HIV is important to protect people who are not infected and make it less likely that they will contract the disease in the future, no matter how it is transmitted.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Needle Exchange Programs have been associated with a 70% decrease in new HIV cases among people who inject intravenous drugs as well as a decrease in persons at risk for HIV (CDC). This is one of the main reasons that NEPs are used in the first place. The current Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Jerome Adams, advocates for these programs and convinced then-Governor of Indiana Mike Pence to legalize Needle Exchange Programs in 2015 (Forman). They were legalized in Indiana following what was called a public health emergency, where cases of HIV rose from 26 to 158 in only 8 months (Forman). Needle Exchange Programs discourage the reuse and sharing of needles, which is how they decrease the prevalence of HIV. The benefits of Needle Exchange Programs are not limited to disease prevention amongst intravenous drug users, but cause other positive outcomes.

A scientific study in Baltimore, Maryland completed in 1997 concluded that Needle Exchange Programs have not been found to increase the amount of improperly disposed of needles (Doherty et al., “Discarded Needles”). When that study was followed up two years later, the researchers found that the number of improperly disposed of needles had decreased in the areas surrounding NEPs and were unchanged in areas far from the site (Doherty et al., “Effect”). Consequently, fewer syringes are on the ground in areas with Needle Exchange Programs, which would also decrease the likelihood of someone accidentally being stuck by a needle. A study done in 1992 in Connecticut found that needle stick injuries among police officers were decreased once the possession of syringes without a prescription was decriminalized (Groseclose et al.). Needle Exchange Programs can increase the safety of a community by decreasing the amount of syringes discarded on the streets and decreasing the amount of injuries received by police officers due to those syringes. In addition to the decrease in accidents, Needle Exchange Programs can also help decrease the amount of people using intravenous drugs.

Needle Exchange Programs are credited with helping people who have addictions enter rehabilitation facilities. A 2000 study in Seattle found that people who used NEPs were more likely to reduce or stop their drug abuse and five times as likely to enter treatment compared to people with drug addictions that had never used a NEP (Hagan et al.). People with addictions are still members of the community, and they also need to be protected. The face-to-face interactions with health care professionals and referrals to rehabilitation facilities can help them conquer their addiction and return to being a functional member of the community. This approach helps to reduce criminal activity and increase the safety in communities.

There has been research on the effect of Needle Exchange Programs on crime levels. A study of arrests made in Baltimore in areas where there were and were not NEPs revealed that there were not more arrests made near NEPs than far away (Marx et al.). This finding helps to dissuade
the fear that Needle Exchange Programs will increase the rate of criminal activity. There is also evidence that shows NEPs do not encourage drug use. The Foundation for AIDS Research released a fact sheet that cites studies demonstrating that NEPs do not cause people to begin using drugs or those who already use to increase their frequency of drug abuse (amfAR). The current research shows that the presence of Needle Exchange Programs in a community do not increase crime or drug abuse. Thus, it is unlikely that police officers would make more arrests and could still spend the same amount of time on other aspects of community protection.

After researching the positive and negative outcomes of Needle Exchange Programs, I believe that these programs are an important tool that should be used in the United States due to their ability to decrease the prevalence of HIV, decrease the number of improperly disposed needles and accidents caused by them, and to help people with drug addictions enter a treatment facility; in addition to these benefits, little evidence supports a correlation between NEPs and increased level of crime or drug abuse. It is important to still remember that not every community will have the same outcome. There may be instances where NEPs are producing the opposite result. I believe that in these cases, rather than ending the program, it would be worthwhile to discover why the program is failing and to take steps to remedy it. The controversy surrounding Needle Exchange Programs is centered around the issue of safety and health, and how that can be improved in communities. With the proper resources, Needle Exchange Programs have the ability to increase the safety of law enforcement, people with addictions, and community members as a whole.

Works Cited


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**Student Example**

Emily Schwein wrote this persuasive research essay in Brenda Martin’s ENGL 200 class. The intended audience are politicians and others who would be against exempting feminine products from taxation.

**Go with the Flow**

One quality that many find valuable in leadership is relatability. It provides one with a sense of security knowing that their leaders have had similar life experiences as them and have their best interest in mind. Some argue that this is not the case for women in the US today. Women have been a part of Congress since 1917, and the number has gradually increased as the years go by.
In Kansas Legislature, 26% of the seats are filled by women, leaving 74% to men (Shorman). Some would say that this is harmful to women because those who haven’t experienced all that comes with being a woman are making decisions that have an impact on their health and well-being. Menstruation has been a constant in women’s lives, but only just recently have women spoken up about the tax that comes along with it in Kansas.

When nature calls, should women have to literally pay the price?

Those who believe that feminine hygiene products should be taxed have reasonable claims. They bring up something that is difficult to define: necessity. To some, necessity could mean a certain brand, absorbency, or ingredients, and to others, it could mean the cheapest version that would get them by. Like many issues in the US, the tax on tampons also falls in the grey area because as simple as it sounds, “[I]t is surprisingly hard to define the place where toiletries end, and medication begins” (Barro). For example, in Illinois, the Department of Revenue has to verify that “medicated lip balm is not medication, and neither is dandruff shampoo” (Barro). How can you tax exempt something on the basis of a subjective topic? This is a valid argument because it is impossible to have women from all walks of life come to a consensus on what they deem a necessity.

Another logical concern of those who believe that feminine hygiene products should be taxed has to do with budgetary concerns. Because sales tax varies from state-to-state and each state has a different budget, it is difficult to make feminine hygiene products tax exempt everywhere. For example, “[I]n California, it is estimated that exempting tampons and pads from tax will reduce revenue by $20 million a year and in Utah, by $1 million” (Durkin). Money is a valid reason for wanting to keep the tax on tampons. Not only would Kansas lose money from removing the tax on feminine hygiene products, but it would also “open the flood gates for toilet paper or soap” to be tax exempt as well (Durkin). If the tax on feminine hygiene products were to be removed, the lost money would have to be made up somewhere and Kansas citizens will be paying either way.

I hear and understand that necessity is subjective to the individual and that exempting feminine hygiene products from sales tax would financially burden Kansas, but I have to disagree with the taxation. I believe that this discussion should be centered around the human life on the other side of the cash register. Regardless of the subjectivity of necessity, all people who experience menstruation can’t just ignore it. The argument about money makes it even clearer to me why feminine hygiene products should be tax exempt: because it shouldn’t be about money. Feminine hygiene products are an unquestionable necessity, and decisions regarding them should be made by those who have experienced menstruation.

Menstruation is natural and unavoidable, but the government doesn’t treat it as such. Various states exempt necessity items from sales tax, but “the majority of states impose a general sales tax on tampons, pads, reusable menstrual cups, and other menstrual hygiene products,” meaning they deem feminine hygiene products as a luxury item (Bennett). While I understand
that the line between necessity and luxury items can be blurred, I still believe that tampons should be treated as an unquestionable necessity. According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, one’s physiological and safety needs must be met before any other progress in life can be made. For example, when girls reach the age of menstruation, school attendance begins to drops because according to the Department of Education Deputy Chancellor Elizabeth Rose, “[H]aving access to feminine care products is essential to ensuring that girls have the support they need to focus on learning and feel comfortable during class” (“Free Feminine Hygiene”). Imagine sitting in class and being expected to pay attention while constantly worried about getting blood on your seat. This is a reality for many young girls whose parents can’t afford feminine hygiene products. Tampons are not a luxury; they are a necessity not only for comfort but for the health of women. Women all across the world who either aren’t provided with or can’t afford feminine hygiene products are forced to “use rags or soil their clothes because they don’t have the access to appropriate hygiene products” (Rabin). Even when they do have access to tampons or sanitary napkins, it’s not enough to last through their entire cycle. Women “on average have their period every 28 days, for 4.5 days and [are] advised to change [their] tampon or pad every four to eight hours.” When this four to eight-hour requirement is not met, women could contract toxic shock syndrome, “an infection causes by bacteria associated with tampon use,” and become very ill or even die (Durkin). Feminine hygiene products aren’t just necessary for comfort, but for health and well-being as well; therefore, they should not be taxed.

Furthermore, while women are involved in Congress, they are far outweighed by their male counterparts. Only 26% of Kansas Legislature consists of females (Shorman). This fact is an issue when it comes to laws being passed that effect the reproductive and overall health of women. Men haven’t experienced all that comes with being a woman and shouldn’t be put in a position that impacts their well-being. When asked about the tax put on tampons, many men, including former President Barack Obama, respond with the following: “I have no idea why states would tax these as luxury items. I suspect it’s because men were making the laws when these were passed” (Sahadi). Obama’s statement solidifies many women’s frustration. Men simply have never experienced a period and shouldn’t be making decisions that impact those who do. These taxation laws were made during a time when women didn’t have as much of a voice in Congress, so why should they continue to reign true without the opinion of women?

As a menstruating woman, I am intrigued and want to learn about the monetary concerns and the experiences of other women. While I understand that necessity is difficult to establish and that taxes are seemingly set in stone by mostly male legislatures, I believe that feminine hygiene products should be tax exempt in Kansas. The concerns of the opposing side are valid and deal with logistical issues, but I believe that it is more important to care for other human lives than it is to put a label on necessity and profit from an unavoidable bodily function.

Works Cited


Student Example

Libby Couture wrote this persuasive research argument in Mary Cook’s ENGL 200. Note how Couture uses her own academic major – architecture – to motivate her issue. Couture’s audience are architects who prefer to demolish structures instead of repurposing them.

Adaptive Reuse in Architecture

Within architecture there are many smaller niches to focus on. One such niche is adaptive reuse, which has grown in popularity over the past few decades. Due to the changing needs of society and, consequently, the changing goals of architecture, the term “adaptive reuse” has also been redefined. Today, adaptive reuse is defined as “the act of modifying a building to accommodate uses that are different from those originally intended” (Rayman 140). Further, adaptive reuse achieves such results by changing the “capacity, function and performance” of the building through a “process of upgrading and enhancing […] while retaining most of the original building” (De Silva 1). Although there is still some ambiguity in regard to how much of the original building must be kept and to what extent the purpose changes, this definition provides us with a much better understanding of adaptive reuse and its intentions, processes, and results.

Early in the history of architecture, adaptive reuse was not as prevalent due to the amount of untouched, accessible land to build on. However, as areas became more populated and open land increasingly difficult to come by, new building sites often came with preexisting structures...
on them. From here the architects, builders, engineers, and anyone else involved in the project had two decisions: demolish the preexisting structure and build from the ground up or incorporate the building into the new design with the idea of repurposing the structure. This latter idea is known as adaptive reuse.

The advantages and disadvantages of demolishing or repurposing buildings should both be viewed through the lens of the architect and the values they wish to uphold. While there are many differing and more specific values architects hold, there are a few overarching themes as mentioned by the American Institute for Architects (AIA), which is a leading organization for architects in the United States. One of the most important values is that of equity and human rights, which is demonstrated through the “accessibility to the built environment for all” (“Where Architects Stand”). In addition to equity, it is the goal of architects to strengthen the community by building relationships with community members, providing an opportunity for cultural expression, and working to solve problems by bringing about social change. AIA also mentions that environmental sustainability and protection from climate change are ways architects can and should approach projects (“Where Architects Stand”). These various goals and values of designers are taken into consideration in the design of a building and are one way to measure the success of a completed design. In analysis of adaptive reuse, it is important to consider these goals, especially in relation to the benefits and drawbacks. Evaluating adaptive reuse in the context of values that architectural designers hold helps gain a better understanding of how this approach lines up with the larger goals of architecture.

Some architectural designers don’t see the benefit in adaptive reuse because it can be considered a little more constraining in the way to design, contradicting the value for more freedom and control over the building. Because adaptive reuse starts with a preexisting structure, there are some limitations to what can be changed due to structural integrity and feasibility of moving or removing components. The inability to move certain walls, columns, or floor slabs can lead to more restricted floor plans and sections. Additionally, material choice is sometimes limited as the materials of the old structure must be considered, rather than having the ability to develop a material pallet from scratch (De Silva 3). This, among other factors, influences the aesthetic of the building and limits the design options for the architect. Because of these obstacles an architect might encounter during an adaptive reuse project, using this approach might become less ideal and can contribute to the decision to demolish a building, rather than repurpose it.

The aforementioned claims are extremely valid points to be made and should definitely be considered in analysis of this architectural method. However, we can also consider these values in a different light and rethink how they can be successfully applied to adaptive reuse. Although there are many different ways to evaluate the effectiveness and success of a design, three factors will be examined: economics, the environment, and the surrounding culture.

Many individuals believe that adaptive reuse comes at a high cost, especially for the firms and individuals carrying the project out. Such high of costs are due to remediation, maintenance, and renovation, which are all important to address in the repurposing of an old building.
Sufficient measures must be taken at a cost to ensure a stable and well-maintained structure as to keep all users safe and healthy (De Silva 3). While these costs do add up, there are many other costs architects and builders must factor in when building from the ground up. Two main costs include demolition and extensive material costs, both of which are minimized when using adaptive reuse. Additionally, many of the high costs associated with finding skilled individuals to restore structures are lowered when adaptive reuse takes place at larger scales and when the economic activity in an area increases (Stas 30). Ultimately, the savings for developers outweigh the costs associated with adaptive reuse. In order to fully analyze the economic impacts of adaptive reuse, multiple perspectives must be taken into consideration. By repurposing buildings, more space becomes available for business to occupy and the area becomes much more desirable for economic activity to occur. As such, there are extensive opportunities for economic growth in the community including new jobs, higher incomes, increased tax revenues, and higher property values (Stas 38). Also, many areas see an increase in heritage tourism, often bringing in millions of dollars annually to various communities (Stas 30). Adaptive reuse provides many economic benefits for the individuals involved in the design and construction process as well as for the public and local community following installment.

Aside from the economic benefits, there are numerous reasons to apply adaptive reuse to projects because of its environmentally sustainable nature. There are three main factors contributing to the environmental sustainability of adaptive reuse: material use and waste, land conservation, and energy consumption. Because adaptive reuse preserves as much of the building as possible, including structure, infill, and even ornament, there is a considerate reduction of material production and waste. Not only are less materials required to complete the project because some can be reused, but less materials are also sent to the landfill upon demolishing a structure (De Silva 2). By reusing materials and not requiring as much new material, adaptive reuse is advantageous in minimizing waste and limiting use of valuable resources. Even in the case of building from the ground up without demolishing structures, a new plot of land is necessary to build. When adaptive reuse is implemented however, land can be reused and is conserved, proving to be environmentally equitable (De Silva 3). Another aspect to consider in environmental sustainability is energy consumption. In the case of demolishing and rebuilding a new structure, extensive amounts of energy are needed for the demolition and construction.

Because demolition and construction are minimal in adaptive reuse, the associated energy use is also minimized, making this method more environmentally sustainable (De Silva 2). In a world that needs to solve climate change and protect the environment, architects must reflect these ideals in the projects and designs they make. Adaptive reuse provides architects with the opportunity to address the value of environmental sustainability and should therefore be a more prominent design solution.

One misconception about adaptive reuse is its inability to move communities forward and allow for growth; instead, many believe that it focuses too much on the old. Because of this preconceived idea, building from the ground up is seen to be more culturally advantageous.
Contrary to this belief, adaptive reuse can be extremely beneficial in terms of the cultural impact it has on the surrounding community. Adaptive reuse allows for the recognition of cultural heritage and provides decaying areas with an opportunity to be revived. Because adaptive reuse preserves old structures, the process “allows for these buildings to remain historically relevant in a modern context” (Smallwood). The older architectural styles display the area’s history and authenticity and begin to tell a story of its past. However, rather than having an overwhelming number of historical structures, adaptive reuse allows for the integration of contemporary architecture. This balance between historic and modern creates a unique atmosphere and environment, reviving the local area and making it a much more attractive destination. Such changes provide a new sense of place and are integral in the societal and cultural advantages of adaptive reuse.

As land and structures are becoming more valuable, adaptive reuse should become more of a focus for architects because it benefits both the society and architectural designer. Adaptive reuse is economically beneficial, environmentally sustainable, and culturally rewarding. Adaptive reuse provides architects with an amazing opportunity to integrate the foundational values into a design and make an even greater impact on the community they are serving. Because of the increasing number of buildings and decreasing amount of open land, adaptive reuse will only continue to grow in popularity. These changing conditions result in a need to change the way we find solutions. As architects, whose jobs are to solve problems and strengthen communities, implementing adaptive reuse is one step towards being successful and making a difference. Practicing adaptive reuse demonstrates the architect’s ability to adjust to the changing demands from society and shows care of economic, environmental, and cultural sustainability, benefitting the architect, developers, and local community. Adaptive reuse’s advantageous nature makes it an excellent candidate for future projects and should be a design method that architects highly value.

Works Cited


### Student Example: Persuasive Research Open Letter

Sarah Inskeep wrote this persuasive research open letter in Rachel Schaller's ENGL 200 class. As you'll see, K-State's President Myers is the intended audience.

**Sustainability & K-State: A Letter to President Myers**

May 22, 2020

Dear President Myers,

To begin, as a student, I would like to thank you for your steadfast leadership and encouragement through the uncertainty and changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. I am immensely grateful for the efforts that have been made both to support students during these difficult times and to continue providing education and opportunities.

This spring, I graduated with a major in physics and a minor in conflict analysis and trauma studies. I am proud to be a part of the K-State family and am passionate about our role in bettering our community and our world. Being a part of two quite different academic programs has made clear to me the diversity of K-State’s strengths and inspired me to get involved with the review process of the 2025 Visionary Plan.

I understand that, at present, planning groups are focused on three strategic initiatives: innovation in education; global food, health, and biosecurity; and becoming a cyber land-grant university (2025 Visionary Plan). I am also aware that additional areas of emphasis—data science, research, and resilience—were proposed by the College of Arts and Sciences (Sustainability Meetings). I am excited about these initiatives and am eager to see what the planning groups develop. I am writing, however, to propose that the overall Visionary Plan could be strengthened and that present financial and enrollment challenges could better be addressed by drawing these initiatives together with a common purpose that is aligned with K-State’s mission, vision, and values: addressing climate change.

Sustainability, I know, was addressed by the 2025 Sustainability Strategic Action (2025 SSAP) in the original 2025 Visionary Plan and is a common element in 2025 Refresh. I believe we should instead make it a defining element—something explicitly and intentionally integrated into each strategic initiative as well as into the mission and vision of the university—not because the other goals are unimportant, but because it is what brings them together. Global food, health, and biosecurity are inextricably tied to climate change, as detailed in the IPCC’s *Global Warming of*
1.5 °C, in reports from the US Department of Defense, and in research presented by K-State faculty. There is a need, both locally and globally, for a better understanding of how to mitigate and adapt to changes in our food and health systems due to climate change. As the first land grant school in the nation with expertise in many fields, close ties to agricultural communities, and a dedication to maintaining dialogue on difficult topics, we are perfectly equipped to take the lead in developing that understanding. Then, through innovation in teaching and strengthening our presence as a cyber land-grant, we could also ensure it is available to all who need it. Doing so would create a brand for K-State, making us known as a place that develops holistic solutions to the most complex and pressing problems.

That K-State is uniquely equipped to take on the challenges of climate change is not a new idea. The team that created the 2025 SSAP shared it, too. Since last fall, I have been a part of a new team of students, faculty, and staff from across the university voluntarily working to review that plan. From that work, I understand the primary concerns of administration at present are related to enrollment and to finances. As a student, I have worked with state and national organizations through the conflict studies program and do not at all intend to downplay the significance or complexity of those issues. They are not, however, issues that inhibit us from moving forward with the 2025 SSAP. On the contrary, I believe they are issues that may be remedied by moving forward with it. Reducing energy use and improving efficiency is becoming increasingly cost-effective, especially in places like Kansas where we have plenty of wind and, according to NOAA, more sunny days per year than Florida. Though solar and wind projects may have an intimidating price tag, they often have short payback periods and save money after that. Furthermore, they provide a living laboratory for students to work in and learn from, giving them concrete experience in the growing renewable energy sector.

Big projects aside, much of the plan requires no additional investment because we already have the personnel and expertise we need on campus. Just as our campaign for diversity and inclusion has largely emerged from existing faculty and staff, a campaign for sustainability could be created through collaboration among those who are already a part of the K-State family. Scientists like Jesse Nippert, director of the National Science Foundation’s Konza Prairie Long Term Ecological Research Network, have been researching the effects of a changing climate on native prairie plants and food crops. Agronomists like Chuck Rice, Noble Prize Laureate for his work with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, have been studying how we can mitigate agricultural emissions and adapt our agricultural systems to changing environments. The National Science Foundation also chose K-State for a National Research Traineeship to support collaborative research on water conservation and renewable energy generation by faculty and graduate students in agronomy, engineering, anthropology, and sociology. There are numerous other projects also already underway, from an interdisciplinary environmental sciences major, to pollution prevention and biodiesel development, to natural landscaping and studies in sustainable design. Why not take advantage of this emerging theme?

In last fall’s survey for the 2025 Refresh process, respondents were asked about the changes made to the university’s visionary goal. One respondent wrote that the problem with the previous goal was that it “provided no vision to rally around” and that it “reflected a lack of
understanding of KSU’s potential to help Kansas and the world.” The respondent was supportive of the new goal but suggested more specificity. Becoming a Top 50 Research University may not be within our reach, but we don’t need it to be to succeed. “KSU can’t do everything, but it could do some things very well, if only we commit to areas that we can impact (food security, prosperity in rural communities, stewardship of natural resources),” they wrote. “The current proposal would be more powerful if it acknowledged the particular scope over which KSU could be held accountable” (2025 Visionary Plan).

This response is well worth consideration. Increasingly, young people identify climate change as the challenge of our times and are searching for ways to make a difference. According to recent Gallup polls, 70% of people age 18-34 are “worried a great deal/fair amount” by climate change (Reinhart). These groups of people are looking for ways to contribute, to learn how they can help create a brighter future, and we have the resources and the expertise to provide a world-class education regarding these issues in a way no other school can. If we commit to sustainability, to addressing climate change, we will attract those young people and thereby realize our vision of preparing “each generation to advance society and enrich the world for those who follow” (2025 Visionary Plan).

As for the concern, presented to me by faculty and administration, that overtly addressing climate change would be taking too political a stance: it’s true that climate change has become a politicized issue, but it is first and foremost a scientific one. With a careful approach we could help remind society that this is the case. Time and again, we at K-State have made clear our commitment to maintaining dialogue and opportunities for free speech about typically divisive topics. Our reputation on this can aid us in depoliticizing climate change for the betterment of all. At present, because climate change is seen as an issue associated with a certain political party, the problem is not taken seriously by many and there is a severe lack of innovation in figuring out what can be done to address it. The same dilemma is playing out with COVID-19. As a result, 93,800 people have died in the United States as of May 21, and each day there are 1,000-2,000 more deaths. With crises like these, we must change the perspective so that people of different ideologies can agree on the scientific basis of the problem and engage in constructive dialogue about solutions. This is exactly the kind of "Republic of Science" approach upheld by one of our lead donors, Charles Koch. Through it, creative tension allows for much swifter progress. K-State can play a leading role in creating this change in perspective. We are only one school, but we are nestled in the heartland of the United States, and our family is made up of brilliant people from around the world. Our actions and our words ripple out into our community, to our state, to other land-grant schools, and on from there. We may not be able to see those more distant effects, but that does not mean we should ignore them.

As our seal reminds us, we can only rule by obeying nature’s laws. As stewards of the land, air, and water, we have made a commitment to doing so—to protecting our future, to ensuring the health and prosperity of communities at home and across the globe. It is both our legacy and our responsibility to uphold that commitment, even when it is not easy, even when doing so requires facing problems more complex than any we have known before. Already the health and prosperity of communities and ecosystems around the world are declining, but through research
and creativity, through harnessing the power of innovative learning and discovery, we may yet find answers to today’s questions and solve the problems of tomorrow. That is why we should move forward with the 2025 Sustainability Strategic Action Plan and make sustainability an overarching part of our mission and vision as a university.

We cannot overlook our ability to make a difference.

Sincerely,

Sarah Inskeep
Physics | Conflict Analysis & Trauma Studies
Kansas State University

References


Student Example: Persuasive Research Open Letter

Lilly Holthus wrote this persuasive research open letter in Wendy Matlock’s ENGL 200 class.

Living with Physician-Assisted Suicide

November 6, 2020

Dear Government Officials of Kansas:

I am coming to you as a student from Kansas State University who is passionate about healthcare and bettering the lives of others. As a student who is studying integrative physiology, I have an understanding of the type of care that is provided to patients, and I am further interested in broadening the minds of the Kansas legislature about providing more options to a specific group of patients: the terminally ill.

Physician-assisted suicide is the act of a doctor prescribing a lethal drug to a terminally ill patient. The patient then administers the drug by dissolving it in a glass of water and then drinking it, placing the drug in their feeding tube, or taking the drug intravenously (Gather). The act of physician-assisted suicide was first legalized in the United States in the state of Oregon in 1997. This law, also known as the Death with Dignity Act, states that a terminally ill patient who has less than six months to live can request self-administering drugs (Plaisted). Physician-assisted suicide is now legal in more states including Washington, Vermont, California, Colorado, Montana, and the District of Columbia (Legault). Despite physician-assisted suicide already being legalized in these states, it is a highly debated topic amongst others, weighing ethics and the rights of terminally ill patients to the type of care they receive. Because of the importance of this upcoming topic in the state of Kansas, it is necessary to discuss and view the impact that it could have on the future of healthcare.

Some are worried that if physician-assisted suicide becomes normalized for terminally ill patients, it has the potential to devalue the patient and put the patient at risk. A common belief of physician-assisted suicide is that it devalues the patient’s life because it is a suggestion to end their life just because of an illness. It is also believed that because a patient is already in a vulnerable state due to the high degree of their illness, they are more prone to fall victim to suggestions such as physician-assisted suicide (Goligher). These fears and concerns are relevant to the fact that taking one’s life is a serious matter, but statistics have shown that this option is specifically designed for the mentally capable, terminally ill patients. Data that was taken from Oregon between 1998 and 2015 and Washington between 2009 and 2015, show that only 0.4% of deaths in the two states were a result of physician-assisted suicide. 75% of those physician-assisted suicides were made by cancer patients who had less than six months to live. The remaining 15% had a neurodegenerative disease (Emanuel). These statistics tell us that patients’ lives are not being devalued, nor are they being put at risk. Because of the predicted time-period a patient has left, they are fully aware that death is coming for them and choosing...
to participate in speeding the process up does not devalue their life. We can also see that these patients are not being subjected to vulnerability as they account for so little of deaths in total, and the decision is completely autonomous.

Although a patient has the right to determine their care, many see that a physician’s job is to improve the well-being of an ill patient, and physician-assisted suicide contradicts that goal. An article in CMHJ stated that physician-assisted suicide is detrimental to the trust in the doctor-patient relationship (Smith). This is because patients or family members viewed the situation as the physician not trying to save the patient. One article also indicated that “the physician’s most basic tasks and considerations are to ‘always bear in mind the obligation to respect human life’ and ‘the health and well-being of the patient’” (Goligher). While it is true that it is a physician’s job to provide the patient with the utmost care, 85% of patients were able to trust a physician who participated in assisted suicide just as much as a physician who had not (Smith). This goes to show that having the option of physician-assisted suicide provided does not damage the relationship. Although it is not a physician’s choice to determine whether a patient receives physician-assisted suicide, a 2014 survey showed that 54% of physicians in the United States supported physician-assisted suicide and their patient’s decision to partake in the process (Emanuel). Even with the high amount of support from physicians, they are not obligated or required to participate to take part in the process or give permission (Smith). This proves that it does not contradict a physician’s goal of improving their patient’s well-being because they are supporting their patients in the type of treatment that they choose to receive.

Due to the seriousness of deciding to end one’s life because of terminal suffering, patients are required to go through a series of interviews and psychological evaluations to determine if they are in the right mind frame to make the decision. A patient must first prove that they have less than six months to live with at least two physicians’ predictions (Smith). They must also show that they can make an autonomous decision. This means they must be able to make a choice, understand their illness and the treatment they are currently receiving, appreciate that they have been affected and are receiving treatment, and finally be able to rationalize and process the information and look at the consequences or other alternative treatments (Gather). The patient must then request the lethal drug on multiple accounts with consent from a physician, receive an opinion from a second physician, participate in a psychiatric evaluation, and wait 15 days between the physician’s consent and the actual administration of the drug (Smith). Because of the strict protocol, we can assure that a patient is only being influenced by their own opinion. This process ensures a patient genuinely wants to go through with physician-assisted suicide and determines that they have the mental capacity to willingly accept the outcome of physician-assisted suicide.

Because of the suffering that a terminal illness entails, physician-assisted suicide allows a patient to pass with dignity and autonomy. As mentioned before, physician-assisted suicide was first passed as a law called the Death with Dignity Act, and many other states have followed in suit. Lawmakers first decided on this name because their goal was to provide terminally ill patients with an option that allowed them to speed up the slow dying process, and instead die with dignity and meaning (Smith). This leads to a complete, autonomous choice of the patient
to make this decision. Many patients who know they are dying prefer to make that last decision confidently before they lose control of their own body (Plaisted). There are even some religions, such as the United Methodist, who believe that God has granted them “the right of personal choice and that this authority must extend to matters of life and death” (Thobaben 1997), and express that they should be able to exercise this ability within physician-assisted suicide (Burdette). Autonomy is a moral right that we as humans have, and we should respect any autonomous decision that a patient makes including their choice to participate in physician-assisted suicide. Although it is currently not legalized in the state of Kansas, this shows that we are stripping terminally ill patients of an option that could relieve them of their misery and allow the control to be in their hands.

As someone who is passionate about caring for others and wants to provide the best options for patients, I believe that it is important for the state of Kansas to consider moving forward with the rising option of physician-assisted suicide and at least allow the terminally ill a second choice. Many of us are aware and respect that human life is valuable and important, but if a terminally ill patient is suffering and is aware that a slow, and painful death is upon them, should we not give them the right to autonomously decide to end their pain? One defender of physician-assisted suicide and the Death with Dignity Acts stated, “Aiding an autonomous person at his or her request to bring about death is, from this perspective, a way of showing respect for the person’s autonomous choices. Similarly, denying the person access to other individuals who are willing and qualified to comply with the request shows a fundamental disrespect for the person’s autonomy” (Plaisted). With this in mind, I ask of you to acknowledge and respect that patients have the right to determine the care they receive, and we should consider allowing terminally ill patients to exercise this right through the option of physician-assisted suicide.

Let us make a difference in a patient’s suffering.

Sincerely,

Lilly Holthus
Kansas State University
Integrative Physiology | Pre-Occupational Therapy

Works Cited


# Conclusion: Summary of Key Rhetorical Concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience Analysis: A pre-drafting activity to learn as much as possible about the beliefs and values of the audience.</th>
<th>Audience-based Reasoning: Identifying reasons that match with the beliefs and values of the audience.</th>
<th>Causal Claim: An argument that shows readers the cause-effect consequences of the issue.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Common Ground</strong>: The attempt by writers to find places of agreement and compromise with their resistant readers.</td>
<td><strong>Conversation</strong>: The discussion and previous research that has gone into the issue. The multiple perspectives that constitute the issue.</td>
<td><strong>Definitional Claim</strong>: An argument that focuses on how to define or categorize something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dialogical</strong>: A quality of an argument in which you are attempting to involve the reader.</td>
<td><strong>Delayed Thesis</strong>: A strategy to delay the main claim to better engage a resistant audience.</td>
<td><strong>Evaluation/Ethical Claim</strong>: A claim that argues a particular judgement about something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Invitational</strong>: The quality of being open and vulnerable to an audience and of being interested in listening to alternative views.</td>
<td><strong>Proposal Claim</strong>: A claim that tells readers that they should do something.</td>
<td><strong>Resemblance Claim</strong>: A claim that compares something to something else that is meaningful to the audience.</td>
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Chapter 3 Appendix: Additional Student Examples

Parental Leave in the United States

Emily Frakes

Emily Frakes wrote this persuasive research argument in Natalie Liptak’s ENGL 200.

For many Americans, having to take time off work can be a big hassle. For new parents, however, it can become a massive anxiety. Along with having to balance the new responsibilities of parenthood, so many parents are not given enough time off work to adjust to the new life changes and spend needed quality time with their new child. According to an analysis of the World Policy Analysis Centre Adult Labor Database, “The United States is the only high-income country that does not mandate paid leave for mothers of newborns” (Gault et al.). Every other developed country in the world has recognized the need for paid maternity leave, but the United States has failed to help these new mothers. New parents also must worry about financially supporting a child. If their parental leave is not paid, like it is for most Americans, a great deal of stress gets burdened on the parents. So many employers do not want to offer a lengthy, paid leave because of fears over the financials of their business. It can be difficult for anyone to part with their money, and this proves to be especially true for business owners. As a result of the employers’ actions, parents are put under unnecessary strain mentally, physically, and financially. I believe that the United States needs to implement paid family leave policies countrywide and make it accessible for everyone regardless of pay.

The main reason an employer would not support a long PFL (paid family leave) policy is because they believe that it will hurt their businesses’ financials and productivity. Currently, the only national family leave policy in the United States is the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), “which offers 12 weeks annually of unpaid, job-protected sick leave that can be used for newborn or newly adopted children” (O’Neill Hayes and Barnhorst). The FMLA Act has strict employee work requirements that only cover about 60 percent of all workers and “those not eligible for the FMLA do not have a guarantee of a job at the end of the leave period” (Gault et al.). Many employees who do qualify for this unpaid, job-protected leave cannot take advantage of the opportunity because of personal financial problems. Those who do not qualify for FMLA cannot afford to take an extended leave from work either without going into serious financial ruin. Workplace morale can especially take a hit if an employee must worry about financial issues on top of not having enough time off work to spend with their child. This forces so many new mothers to go back to work just weeks after their child is born so they can continue to make money and support their families. A paid family leave policy was put in place in California in 2004 at the State level—becoming the first state to do so. Since this paid leave policy was enacted, California businesses have reported a decrease in “per-worker wage bill and a lower turnover rate today than it did before California’s paid family leave program was introduced” (Stearns and Rossin-Slater). Instead of companies being harmed under this law, they ended up reaping the benefits from it. If more state-wide policies are implemented across
the country like the one in California, companies will inevitably profit along with their employees.

Employers may also worry that giving a long leave for new mothers will hurt their attachments to their jobs and it will be less likely they come back to work. In 2004, authors Lawrence Berger and Jane Waldfogel found that “women with access to leave are about 40 percent more likely to return to work at any time after giving birth than those who do not have access” (Gault et al.). Mothers who are offered any type of job protection after leave, paid or not, are more likely to be attached to their jobs. When the mother comes back after work, it will save the employer time and effort from trying to find a replacement. If employers want to keep their employees at work after they have had a baby, then offering paid family leave will greatly increase those chances. Along with increased job attachment, paid family leave also increases employment. A study conducted by Charles L. Baum II and Christopher J. Ruhm on the effects of the paid family leave policy in California found that “CA-PFL [California Paid Family Leave] is estimated to raise employment by 5 to 10 percent during the four months before the birth and work by around 5 percentage points for most of this period” (Baum II and Ruhm). Again, offering job-protected leave will keep mothers at work longer before their delivery. Expecting mothers will no longer have to quit their jobs in fear of being laid off just for having a child. If an employer’s priority is getting parents back to work, then offering paid leave proves to be the best option.

No mother should have to worry about their image and security at their place of employment being tarnished over their desire to have a family. Unfortunately, evidence has been found that “the longer new mothers are away from work, the less likely they are to be promoted, move into management, or receive a pay raise once their leave is over” (Hideg et al.). The issue of a mother’s devotion to work while balancing a family can be a tough issue to tackle. The problem needs to start at the top level, the CEOs and employers who make the decisions. Some solutions to this problem have been presented, though; for example, “‘keep-in-touch’ programs [...] allow parents on leave to stay in contact with their workplace and colleagues while they are away” (Hideg et al). These “keep-in-touch” programs have been shown to help keep the relationship between working mothers and employers strong after leave and have reduced the number of layoffs. The program has also helped increase the number of pay raises and promotions given to working mothers because they were allowed to take time to be with their family while still proving to their employers that they intend to come back to work once their leave ends. If this program can be implemented along with PFL, then companies may be more willing to offer more paid leave for their employees.

So many researched benefits have been shown through PFL policies including the lessened stress levels of expecting parents. When an expecting mother experiences unnecessary stress during a pregnancy, it can lead to poor mental health, which can ultimately harm the mother after the birth of a child. According to an article written by Tara O’Neill Hayes and Margaret Barnhorst on the benefits children receive from family leave policies, “PFL [paid family leave] policies that allow mothers to wait at least 12 weeks before returning to work after childbirth reduce the likelihood of depressive symptoms and stress in the mother” (O’Neill Hayes and Barnhorst). A lessened chance of developing postpartum depression can help ensure the
mother can take the best possible care of her child. A new mother will likely do better at her job after returning from leave because of good mental health, which in turn benefits her employers. Not only does decreased maternal stress rates benefit the mother, but it can have a positive impact on the baby’s health as well. A mother battling with her mental and physical health can affect a baby’s birth weight. A large-scale study showed that “paid leave decreased the rate of low birth weight infants by 3.2 percent and decreased the likelihood of pre-term births by 6.6 percent” (O’Neill Hayes and Barnhorst). When the child has a greater chance of being born healthy, it can lessen the amount of time new parents and babies will have to spend in the hospital. Less time spent in the hospital directly affects the amount of medical bills the parents will have to pay. Allowing these parents paid leave time will help them prepare for any financial burdens that may arise. If the child spends less time in the hospital, the quicker mom and dad can get back to work.

Along with PFL benefitting the mother, it can greatly benefit the father as well. Having the father at home with both mom and baby can have so many excellent outcomes. Paternal leave can allow the father to spend quality time with their child, time that is often taken away when a father must go back to work very soon after birth. Not only can fathers spend more time with their child if offered more paternity leave, but it can “increase the chances that the mother is able to return to full-time work, increasing female participation in the labor force and usually increasing household income” (O’Neill Hayes and Barnhorst). Getting parents back to work full time after parental leave may be a priority for many employers. Giving paid time off to fathers will benefit the employment and turnover rates within their business.

By allowing parents to stay home with their child after birth, it can help with the child’s health and development. With lengthened PFL comes the increased likelihood of a mother breastfeeding for longer. A variety of studies have shown the positive effects of breastfeeding a baby for as long as possible. According to the World Health Organization, those positive effects include “strengthening an infant’s immune system, stimulating positive brain development, and decreasing the risk of infections” (O’Neill Hayes and Barnhorst). Along with keeping the child as healthy as possible—which proves crucial for a young infant—comes decreased medical costs burdened on the parents. When a child can remain relatively healthy, it generally means fewer doctor visits which can help ease any financial anxieties the new parents may have. If the parents can avoid doctor visits, especially as the child grows up, it means less time they must take off work in the future. This, of course, will make their employers happy. A parent must be able focus on the health of their child. They also want to be able to focus on the child’s mental development and continued education. Based on data taken after Norway implemented their PFL program in 1977, a study found that “high school graduation rates increased by 2 percentage points, college attendance rates increased by 3.5 percent and [...] earnings at age 30 rose by 5 percent” (O’Neill Hayes and Barnhorst). These data prove to be so important because when kids graduate and get an education, they are on their way to benefitting society. Just by giving more paid family leave, a larger amount kids will finish their education, whether that be at the high school or college level. A college education can be so important especially in the United States where much of the workforce requires a degree to reach higher-level jobs.
As a young woman who eventually wants to be able to balance a family and a career, I believe that offering paid family leave should be a top priority in the United States. While there have been steps taken in recent years to give leave to parents, it still is not enough. Mothers’ careers are being harmed because of poor maternal leave policies. Even though a father’s feelings about leave may be overlooked more than their female counterparts, they deserve to have time off with their families as well. Children’s health and development will continue to pay the price for a lack of paid leave policies if change does not happen soon. So many different aspects of the workforce are affected by PFL policies, and it is clear to see the positive effects will not shine through without immediate action.

Works Cited


*Tyler Tiede*

Tyler Tiede wrote this persuasive research essay in Cindy Debes’s ENGL 200 class. It won first place in the 2023 Expository Writing Program Essay Awards. Tiede wrote for a resistant audience who believes the merger between Kroger and Albertsons violates antitrust laws and subsequently leads to a monopoly of the grocery industry.
Writing for the Huffington Post, Al Franken, a former Democratic United States Senator from Minnesota, said, “Antitrust law isn’t about protecting competing businesses from each other, it’s about protecting competition itself on behalf of the public.” I agree with Senator Franken and believe the best way to achieve this objective is through robust market competition. Consumers benefit when they have more choice of where to purchase regardless of the product or service sought. However, governments should use caution when enforcing antitrust laws to ensure that their regulatory actions do not unintentionally reduce competition. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the agency charged with enforcing antitrust laws, including the Sherman Antitrust and Clayton Acts, is being called on to evaluate the merger proposed on October 14, 2022, by two major grocery retailers, Kroger and Albertsons Companies, Inc. As Nathaniel Meyersohn, consumer reporter for CNN Business, said, “If approved by regulators, the nearly $25 billion deal would be one of the biggest in U.S. retail history,” causing many consumer protection experts across the country to sound the alarm. “Antitrust advocates say the merger would force out the competition and concentrate power among the largest chains, driving up prices” (Meyersohn).

Sarah Miller, Executive Director of the American Economic Liberties Project, is among those calling for regulators to intervene. Millers says, “There is no reason to allow two of the biggest supermarket chains in the country to merge—especially with food prices already soaring,” and many Americans agree with her (“Kroger-Albertsons Merger”). Miller believes the FTC should block this proposed merger due to the volatility of the grocery market and the critical role these stores have on the public’s ability to purchase food at affordable prices. Miller and many others find the merger especially concerning since it would combine two of the largest companies in the grocery industry and split sixty percent of all sales between just five corporations (“Kroger-Albertsons Merger”). In Miller’s professional opinion, “This merger is a cut and dry case of monopoly power, and enforcers should block it” (“Kroger-Albertsons Merger”). Miller’s position is based on the premise that allowing Kroger and Albertsons to merge will reduce market competition, create a monopoly, and result in all retailers increasing prices. She is also disturbed by the trend of grocery retailers seeking to consolidate in recent years, noting that previous mergers in the industry have “been mismanaged by antitrust enforcers.”

Many people share Miller’s concerns, and for a good reason, because, throughout history, this country has experienced instances when monopolies harmed consumers due to the lack of competition and innovation. Andrew Beattie, a former managing editor at Investopedia, an online financial information platform, says a monopoly reduces competition and “tends to lead to higher prices and inferior products” (Beattie). There is no question the merger of Kroger and Albertsons will form a major conglomerate in the retail grocery industry. The companies acknowledge their combined forces will allow them to “deliver fresh and affordable food to approximately 85 million households with a premier omnichannel experience” operating in 48 states and the District of Columbia (“Kroger and Albertsons”). While the proposed merger will certainly bolster Kroger-Albertsons’ size and market reach, we must ask ourselves whether it meets the enforcement standards of forming a monopoly and whether this newly formed entity will help or harm consumers.
I recognize the importance of antitrust regulation to ensure fair and adequate competition in any market. I agree that a lack of industry competition allows companies to sit back and raise prices on everyday items because there is little to no motivation to lower them. Most importantly, I understand the views of those who oppose the merger, like Stacy Mitchell of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, who argues, “Americans don’t need another mega-grocer. Kroger and Albertsons together would control 20% of grocery sales in the U.S.” (Redman). That said, I respectfully disagree with those who oppose the proposed merger of Kroger and Albertsons because I do not believe the transaction meets the regulatory standards of a monopoly, will not impede competitiveness, and therefore does not violate antitrust laws. By evaluating how the merger may benefit consumers, the grocery market’s current segmentation, and these companies’ ability to remain viable competitors in a changing retail landscape, I will demonstrate how this transaction may prove beneficial to consumers and should be approved by government regulators.

It is crucial to consider how the merger may improve supply chain challenges and how the companies’ increased purchasing power after the merger may benefit consumers. Supply chain issues have impacted virtually every industry since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The ability for Kroger and Albertsons to leverage a combined “66 distribution centers and 52 manufacturing plants” means the combined entity can “optimize its supply chain to deliver the freshest products from field to table to more customers more quickly” (“Kroger and Albertsons”). The merger provides the companies the ability “to better negotiate supply chain relationships, and to invest in technology to run a more efficient (distribution) operation” (Cheng).

In addition to getting products on the store shelves more effectively, the combined market share would allow these companies greater purchasing power, which in turn would help control prices. Reuters, a respected source for business news, reports, “Kroger and Albertsons would together have an edge over negotiations on product prices with suppliers, including consumer goods companies, at a time when prices of groceries and essentials are soaring in the country” (Venugopal). In their announcement, Kroger set forth a plan to lower prices by “reinvest[ing] approximately half a billion dollars of cost savings from synergies (realized from the merger) to reduce prices for customers” (“Kroger and Albertsons”). Allowing Kroger and Albertsons to merge will introduce a significant competitor to Walmart and Sam’s Club, Costco, and Amazon, incentivizing them to keep prices low for consumers. Many people think the merger will cause Kroger-Albertsons and the other retailers to increase prices. Considering the companies’ combined purchasing power and desire to become a retail leader in the industry, I believe the transaction may help drive down prices, which would be highly beneficial to consumers especially given this period of sustained inflation.

As noted above, many are concerned that the proposed merger of Kroger and Albertsons will create a monopoly and want the FTC to block the transaction as a violation of antitrust laws. Jeff Wells with The Grocery Dive, an online publication dedicated to analyzing trends affecting the grocery industry, opined that the FTC’s decision on the proposed merger would be determined based on how they define the market and how the companies deal with
divestitures. I argue these retailers are not setting out to form a monopoly but merging to gain the leverage needed to remain competitive in a changing market. The market has seen a sizable shift toward big-box stores like Walmart, Costco, Sam's Club, and Target, and the emergence of new online grocery options like Amazon. Therefore, the root of the debate on whether the merger of Kroger and Albertsons violates antitrust laws will rest on how the FTC defines the market and if they agree efficiencies can be achieved through the merger that will enhance competition. Daniel Rubinfeld, a law professor at New York University and a former deputy assistant attorney general for antitrust with the Department of Justice, explains the significance of how the FTC segments the market. If the FTC sees Kroger and Albertsons as “the first- and second-largest supermarket chains in the U.S.,” then Rubinfeld believes the merger will undoubtedly be halted for creating a monopoly because “it would effectively mean those two companies have cornered the market” (Wells). Rubinfeld acknowledged, “If this were 20 years ago when I was still working in the government, I would expect the FTC would try to block this deal” (Wells). However, defining the competition narrowly to include only supermarkets does not fully capture the diverse nature of today’s grocery retail options. For this reason, I contend that regulators should consider how the market has expanded over the past two decades when evaluating the legality of this merger.

While that industry landscape of twenty years ago may have dictated that a merger of Kroger and Albertsons would create a monopoly, companies have evolved and adapted to meet customers’ needs. The grocery industry has seen significant expansion in recent decades that has shifted how consumers purchase food. The grocery market segment can no longer be seen to include only conventional supermarket chains. Therefore, the view of what constitutes the grocery market must evolve to account for the expansion of big-box and online retailers. The Wall Street Journal sets forth projections of estimated food sales in the United States among the top ten retailers in the grocery industry. In their projection, Kroger has the second largest market share at 9 percent of sales, while Albertsons is the fourth largest with 5 percent of sales (Kang). Assuming the merger is approved, and the combined Kroger-Albertsons company maintains its current market share of 14 percent, which is unlikely given the divestiture “of between 100 and 375 stores, which the companies have agreed to identify” as part of this transaction, the percentage of sales would still be far less than the largest market share holder, Walmart, with 22 percent of all sales (Kang). Simeon Gutman, an equity analyst for Morgan Stanley, noted, “The inclusion of Walmart as a competitor could be a key swing factor” regarding the retail food market (Wells). While some may argue that this merger would place too much market control with too few organizations, the data do not support that position. Even if we assume Kroger-Albertsons retain a market share of 13 percent following the merger, given generously by the Wall Street Journal, the top five companies would barely hold a majority of the market share. If we examine the existing nine companies and add the next largest supplier, the top ten companies would only hold 59 percent of all food sales in the United States. These projections do not include new grocers that have recently come on the scene, including natural grocers, which alter how consumers procure their groceries (Kang). As one analyzes all the data, this transaction looks less like two major grocers attempting to create a monopoly and more like two medium-sized retailers trying to gain efficiencies to remain competitive and viable in an ever-changing market.
Despite the many well-founded concerns expressed by consumers and market experts who believe the merger of Kroger and Albertsons will reduce competition, this proposed merger may allow these companies to remain viable in a changing grocery retail environment. Without a merger, consumers may lose one or both retailers from the market, thus reducing competition overall. Today’s grocery store looks much different than ten to fifteen years ago. These differences are due to the expansion of groceries in big-box stores, new alternative stores, online grocery shopping, and several other innovations, including drive-thru pickup, contactless delivery, self-checkout stations, and loyalty shopper programs to name just a few. Also, the growing popularity of German-based Aldi and Trader Joe’s has further impacted how consumers shop for groceries. While these stores offer fewer options and alternative brands, many consumers favor these retailers to purchase food at lower prices and find the smaller store size easier to navigate than searching through the thousands of products on shelves at conventional supermarkets. Many consumers purchase from Costco and Sam’s Club to buy items in bulk, saving them from frequenting the grocery store as often and, at times, saving them money on a per unit purchase basis. Finally, alternate stores like Dollar Tree, Dollar General, and Family Dollar have come onto the grocery scene, offering both freezer and shelf-stable foods at affordable prices. These retail alternatives, combined with the impact Amazon has had in online grocery sales, have significantly altered where people buy food. Understanding grocery store innovations and the expanding marketplace is crucial to see why Kroger and Albertsons must merge to remain competitive and viable. The traditional supermarket is no longer conducive to evolving consumer demands, and retailers who fail to adapt may soon become extinct and forced to go out of business. If that happens, we will find fewer retailers and place more of the market share in the hands of Walmart, Sam’s Club, and Costco, losing vastly more than the competition many feared.

Regulators responsible for evaluating the proposed merger of Kroger and Albertsons have an important task before them. Every household in America purchases groceries, so this regulatory decision will affect much of the population. Given that groceries are a staple and a sizable portion of people’s earnings are allocated for food, this decision will significantly impact individuals’ budgets and the overall economy of the United States. The goal for regulators is to ensure the ongoing competitiveness of the grocery market. The initial reaction of consumers, consumer advocates, business experts, and regulators may be to view the proposed merger as creating a monopoly. These individuals should analyze changes in the grocery industry, relevant market data, and input from industry experts to determine whether the Kroger-Albertsons merger will impede competitiveness or instead benefit consumers. I believe the merger will allow these companies to better compete with large-scale retailers and help them to survive this changing retail environment. The merger may not only keep one or both companies from going out of business but allow them to thrive while keeping prices affordable and enhancing the customer experience, which positively affects market competitiveness. Therefore, the FTC should allow the merger to occur because the transaction does not meet the regulatory standards of a monopoly, will not impede competitiveness, and does not violate antitrust laws.
Works Cited


