



**Migrant Education Debate Tournaments:  
Situated Learning and Literacies as Access to  
Dominant Discourses in a Democratic Society**

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*Julie Kay Antilla-Garza*

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**Abstract**

Migrant students who participate in Migrant Education debate tournaments access the dominant discourses in a democratic society through situated learning and literacies. The findings in this study reveal that participants learn through apprentice relationships with peers and adults and through the social practice of meaning making. The data of this ethnographic study was collected over two years of regional and state Migrant Education debate tournaments. More than 50 hours of video records of debates, interviews, and setting shots were collected and analyzed using narrative inquiry and constant comparative method. This study contributes a greater understanding of the functions of the Migrant Education debate tournaments. Furthermore, it is hoped that the findings from this study will be used in future determinations of state and federal support for the Migrant Education Program (MEP) in general and for the Migrant Education debate tournaments, specifically.

**Key Words:** *Migrant Education Program, Scholastic Debates, High School, Situated Learning, Communities of Practice, Literacies*

**Introduction**

In the past decade, hundreds of migrant students in California have participated in the extracurricular debate tournaments hosted by the Migrant Education Program. The students and adults who have participated in the events extol the program and claim that wonderful things take place in the tournaments. The apparent impact of these events motivates a deeper exploration of the Migrant Education debate tournaments. The Migrant Education Program (MEP) has existed as a federally-funded, supplemental program for 50 years. However, the presence of migrant education programs is relatively limited and does not receive adequate exposure. A statewide debate community comprised entirely of active migrant students has only been known to exist for the past 15 years, and only in California. There is little reportage of

how migrant students benefit through their participation in the debates. This study remedies the lack of published knowledge available on the Migrant Education debate tournaments by addressing questions of how and what students learn from participating in the debates. Specifically, it addresses the research questions:

1. How do migrant students learn, change, and grow through their participation in the debates?
2. What do the Migrant Education debates afford students as learning opportunities?

In 2003, the director of a regional Migrant Education Program (MEP) in Southern California initiated an annual speech and debate tournament for migrant students in middle school and high

school. Migrant students from 13 school districts in the county were invited to compete in speech or debate, in either English or Spanish. The number of migrant students who participate in this regional event has steadily increased since 2003. In 2011, with more than 800 migrant students participating, the annual Migrant Education speech and debate tournament officially became a statewide program.

The Migrant Education speech and debate tournament served as the setting for this study. For the purposes of concise data collection and focused research questions, only the high school debate component of the Migrant Education speech and debate tournament was analyzed for this project. In this article, the tournament — officially titled as the “Migrant Education Program Annual Speech and Debate Tournament” — is referred to as the “Migrant Education debate tournament.” Note that formal speech competitions and middle school debates were also taking place during the tournament referenced in this study.

I took the stance of an ethnographic researcher and used narrative inquiry (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, 2006) to analyze debate rounds, tournament events, and video recordings of interviews over two tournament years. Narrative inquiry is “a way of understanding experience. It is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). What is happening in the Migrant Education debate tournaments is situated in a larger narrative of a democratic society; it is from within this nested setting that I sought to understand how and what students were gaining from this experience.

### Theoretical Framework

This study is framed by two sociocultural theories relating to the construction of knowledge in social activities. One framing theory is *situated learning in communities of practice*, based in the activities of “groups of people who share a common passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 2009, p. 1). A second framing theory for this study is *literacies as a social practice of meaning making* (Gee, 2004, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Street, 1984, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2005a, 2005b). Literacies, in this sense, consider what the participants know and do with reading, speaking, writing, and listening in certain settings to convey certain attitudes and values.

Sociocultural theories are influenced by Lev Vygotsky’s research on learning and child development. Vygotsky (1986) emphasized the social formation of the mind, meaning that learning takes place in social interaction and cannot be considered apart from its social and cultural context. Vygotsky’s understanding of learning through social interaction includes the concept of learning from a more knowledgeable other; in other words, in novice-expert relationships. This investigation takes a sociocultural perspective on the learning opportunities and learning relationships within the migrant debate community.

This study considers these theories within the construct of *social justice*, which includes the concepts of literacy as a form of *democratic enlightenment* (North, 2006; Parker, 2003), participation in a democratic society as a result of public education (Larson & Murtadha, 2002), and “redistribution of access to dominant discourse and literacy” (Cazden, 2012). The redistribution of access comes from Fraser’s (1997) theory of *social justice* which, from an

educational perspective, includes intellectual matters such as literacy and literate practices (Cazden, 2012).

### **Situated Learning**

Situated learning could be considered a redundant term as there is a strong argument that all learning is situated. Learners ascertain knowledge in their relationships with others — those who are more knowledgeable as well as others who are also novices. Learners learn by participating in social practices within social structures. Purcell-Gates (2002), in writing about the intersection of literacy and power, observes that “we all have learned whatever we know about different language variants or registers by being with people who are using them” (p. 139). These social structures, in which learning is situated, are based on relations of power, and as such, are either empowering or disempowering for the learner (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Thus, through the lens of situated learning, the connection between the social practices of the debates and socially just universal access to dominant discourses becomes clear. Bartolomé and Balderrama (2001) refer to educators as exemplary models of the more knowledgeable, or expert, participants in communities of practice who “equalize the unequal playing field” for the learners, and who “provide students with ‘the best’ educational experience” (p. 63).

### **Literacies as Social Practices**

Current theories on literacies as social practices, literacy practices, or literate practices, often have as their foundation the language theories of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin (1986) writes that the “word (or in general any sign) is inter-individual” (p. 121) meaning that language is socially constructed (Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, and Degener, 2004). Gee (2012) explains that literacy as a social practice “has no effects — indeed, no meaning — apart from particular cultural context in which it is used and it

has different effects in different contexts” (p. 77). With these parameters shaping this study, the literacy practices of the migrant debaters are analyzed within the context of scholastic debating. The social practices of high school forensics shape the findings from the Migrant Education debate tournaments and provide the historical setting for the evaluation of literacy opportunities within the migrant debates.

Lankshear and Knobel (2011) define literacies as “socially created constitutive elements of larger human practices — discourses — that humans construct around their myriad purposes and values” (p. 76). They explain learning within the realm of new literacies as progressing “toward a fuller understanding and fluency with doing and being in ways that are recognized as proficient relative to socially constructed and maintained ways of ‘being in the world’” (p. 190).

Cope and Kalantzis’ (2009) explanation of a pedagogy of multiliteracies aligns with the sociocultural theories of situated learning in generative communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in that the concept of transformation is central:

All forms of representation, including language, should be regarded as dynamic processes of transformation rather than processes of reproduction. That is, meaning makers are not simply replicators or representational conventions....

Meaning makers don’t simply use what they have been given; they are fully makers and remakers of signs and transformers of meaning. (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 10)

The concepts of transformation of being and of meaning are related and inseparable, as Freire (1970) would attest, which makes the situated learning in communities of practice and literacy —

compatible theories in this study. The Migrant Education debate tournaments' data are analyzed within these theoretical frameworks.

Consider a few wide-angle views on literacy, schooling, and learning. Cook-Gumperz (2006) writes, "In a school society individuals undergo a transformation through learning, by virtue of which they become members of the wider society" (p. 12). The arguments in this study share this perspective of the transformation through learning. As migrant students learn, change, and grow through apprentice relationships and in various literacy domains, they become included in a larger debate community; they become members of a democratic society. Perry (2012) writes that literacy is "what people *do* with reading, writing, and texts in real world contexts and why they do it" (p. 54). In the context of this study, the analysis of literacy is embedded in the actions of the debate participants. The descriptions of literacy practices in the findings are understood within the context of the debate rounds. The analysis of literacies in the migrant debate setting is communicated in this study as interpretations of students' use of literacies in the context-specific setting and moment-by-moment decision making processes of the debate rooms.

#### **The Migrant Education Debate Tournament Setting Preparation for the Annual Tournament**

The Migrant Education Program's regional director and school district migrant coordinators of the Southern California region that hosted the first state-endorsed tournament in May 2011 assembled a planning committee that served as the model for subsequent annual tournament planning. The committee began working on the preparations six months prior to the state tournament. The members of the planning committee met monthly with the regional director to determine the assigned proposition, or topic, for the

tournament and to discuss the logistics of supervising, housing, and feeding the hundreds of students that would be arriving from out of town.

#### **Recruitment**

By January of each year, four months prior to the state tournament, the participating Migrant Education regions reported that they had identified and hired their coaches to work with their debate teams. The background experiences of the debate team coaches varied by the individual. Some coaches were credentialed teachers at the school sites, some were MEP school counselors, and some were former migrant students who return to their local schools to help with the program. Of the 10 high school teams in the Southern California region that participated in the debate tournament in 2011, only one team was coached by someone who had previous formal debate experience outside of the MEP.

The participating students had also been selected or recruited from among the migrant students in each district's MEP by the beginning of the calendar year. Enrollment in the MEP forensics events is voluntary and students hear about the tournaments from their campus migrant staff. Debate participants began working with their coaches upon returning from winter break, but teamwork began in earnest at the end of February. Between February and May the debate teams met at least weekly, making their own schedules to fit around their other school, family, and extracurricular obligations. Debate teams met on weekends and during spring break to prepare their arguments and to synthesize their research.

The MEP debate tournament offers competitions in English and in Spanish. The migrant students who agreed to be debaters, agreed to be on either a Spanish or an English team. The teams were required to have not less than three and not more

than five members each. Debate teams practiced the individual sections of the debate rounds and prepared arguments for both sides of the proposition in the months prior to the tournaments. Some schools with both an English and a Spanish debate team had the two teams practice against each other to strengthen their debating skills.

#### **The Annual Tournament Schedule**

Both the regional and the state tournaments followed similar schedules. The tournaments were held on a middle school or high school campus on a Saturday and started at approximately 7:30 a.m. with the arrival of volunteers who set up the venue. At 8:00 a.m. the participants, coaches, MEP coordinators, and judges arrived. The approximately three dozen judges, who are school district and community volunteers found through snowball recruitment methods, were each assigned to a room, usually in pairs or triads, and received a large envelope with scoring sheets, pens, and a timer. At approximately 8:30 a.m. all of the students, coaches, and district coordinators gathered in the school auditorium where they were officially welcomed, introduced to key district and community representatives involved in the tournament, and given a participant packet with their schedule for the day.

At 9:00 a.m., the tournaments officially began with three or four classrooms being used for high school English debate rotations, and a similar number of classrooms being used for high school Spanish debate rotations. The English and the Spanish debate teams remained separated for all of the debate rounds and the judges evaluated only one language throughout the day. The scoring criteria, the sections of the rounds, and the time limits were the same for both languages.

The debate's itinerary contained a total of six rounds lasting one hour each. Three rounds were held

before lunch and three rounds after lunch. The debate teams were assigned a rotational schedule at the beginning of the day but were not notified which side of the proposition they would be arguing in each round until the beginning of the round. Often the judges would flip a coin in front of the two teams to assign the sides of the argument in the students' presence. Between each round the team members all took a ten-minute break. The debate teams progressed through all the rounds without receiving scores or indications of their winning/losing status from any individual rounds. At no time during the tournament did they receive scores or in-progress rankings. The winning ranks are not announced until the award ceremony in the evening.

At approximately 6:30 on Saturday evening the awards ceremony started. The ceremony began with a master of ceremonies giving a brief introduction, a keynote speaker giving a speech to the audience, and then with the grand unveiling of the trophies. The winners were invited onto the stage and the winning teams posed with their trophies while various coaches, coordinators, and volunteers took their photos. As soon as all the trophies had been awarded, the participants and their coaches were chauffeured back to their residential districts or to the host hotel in leased school buses.

#### **The Debate Round Schedule**

Each round of debate followed the same schedule of progression. The affirmative side of the proposition always started the round. Regardless of the number of participants on the teams, every member was required to speak at some point during each round. Between each section in the rounds, the teams were given three minutes to prepare themselves for the next section.

STEPS	ACTIONS	MAXIMUM TIME
STEP 1	JUDGE MODERATOR calls debate to order, announces the debate, and maintains order	3 minutes
STEP 2	JUDGE IDENTIFIES team on Affirmative Position and team on Negative Position	2 minutes
STEP 3	Both sides prepare for debate	3 minutes
STEP 4	<i>Affirmative Position Presents</i> LEAD DEBATER describes the overall argument of the Affirmative Position <i>Negative Position takes notes to question later</i>	5 minutes
STEP 5	<i>Negative Position Presents</i> LEAD DEBATER describes the overall argument of the Negative Position <i>Affirmative Position takes notes to question later</i> <i>Teams prepare for next step (huddle)</i>	5 minutes
STEP 6	CROSS EXAMINER asks the Negative Position team questions about its argument <i>Negative Position takes notes to respond later</i>	3 minutes
STEP 7	NEGATIVE CROSS EXAMINER asks the Affirmative Position team questions about its argument <i>Affirmative Position takes notes to respond later</i> <i>Teams prepare for next step (huddle)</i>	3 minutes
STEP 8	AFFIRMATIVE RESPONDERS answers questions about team's position	5 minutes
STEP 9	NEGATIVE RESPONDERS answers questions about team's position <i>Affirmative Position takes notes to respond later</i> <i>Teams prepare for next step (huddle)</i>	5 minutes
STEP 10	AFFIRMATIVE REBUTTAL presents opposing evidence to arguments raised by questions	3 minutes
STEP 11	NEGATIVE REBUTTAL presents opposing evidence to arguments raised by questions	3 minutes
STEP 12	AFFIRMATIVE SUMMATION sums up Affirmative Position, referring to issues raised in the debate	3 minutes
STEP 13	NEGATIVE SUMMATION sums up Negative Position, referring to issues raised in the debate	3 minutes

Table 1  
Official Order of Steps in Debate Round

### Scoring the Debate Rounds

Each debate room had between one and three judges scoring the two teams competing against each other. The evaluation rubric had 10 criteria for which each team was given a numerical score between one and five. Figure 1 shows a copy of the debate evaluation form from the 2012 tournament.



Figure 1 Debate Evaluation Form

**HIGH SCHOOL**

**DEBATE EVALUATION FORM**

TEAM 1: \_\_\_\_\_ TEAM 2: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_ NAME OF SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

DISTRICT: \_\_\_\_\_ DISTRICT: \_\_\_\_\_

LANGUAGE OF DEBATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Score each team using the point system of 1 (weak), 2, 3, 4, or 5 (excellent)	Team #1	Team #2
Presented overall position clearly with good organization		
Asked challenging questions related to the topic		
Responded to questions accurately and clearly		
Effectively defended their position		
Used authoritative evidence to support position		
Summation of the position was clear and strong		
Were well prepared to debate and appropriately dressed		
Worked well together		
Every team member presented		
Respected the integrity of the debate process		
<b>Total Scores:</b>		

Name of Judge \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

Figure 1. Copy of debate evaluation form used in the 2012 debate tournaments.

## Participants

In 2011, at the regional tournament in Southern California that was studied for this project, 42 high school students competed on debate teams. There were five English debate teams and five Spanish debate teams with between three and five members each. On the high school debate teams, 11 participants were freshmen, five were sophomores, 16 were juniors, and 10 were seniors.

That same year, MEP regions were permitted to send only their top winner for each category of competition to the annual state debate tournament. Debate teams represented 44 school districts from across the state. There were nine English debate teams and five Spanish debate teams competing at the high school level. The participants on the high school debate teams included seven ninth graders, 16 tenth graders, 23 eleventh graders, and 17 twelfth graders.

High school debate participants at the 2012 regional tournament in Southern California that was the focus of this study included 30 females and 18 males. There were 11 high school debate teams with a total of 48 students among them. The debate teams represented eight high schools.

Twenty-eight high school students performed English debates while 24 performed Spanish debates. Fourteen of the high school debaters were returning competitors who had participated on a debate team in 2011 as well.

Fifty-five school districts and fourteen MEP regions were represented at the annual state tournament in 2012. A total of 60 high school debaters were among the participants. There were 15

high school debate teams; nine in English and six in Spanish. Forty-one of the high school debaters were female and 19 were male. One English debate team and one Spanish debate team at the 2012 state tournament represented the Southern California MEP region in which the regional data for this study had been collected.

## Traits of MEP High School Debate Teams

Dozens of students participated as members of the MEP high school debate teams at each of the regional and state events in 2011 and 2012. Table 2 provides a comparison of the significant debate team traits over the four tournaments in which data was collected for this study. The table identifies the number of teams and team members by language, the number of participants by gender, and the number of debaters by high school grade level. The information on the English and Spanish teams is separated in Table 2 because the two languages are tracked separately at the debate tournaments; they do not compete against each other. Table 2

High School Debate Team Traits by Year

Trait/Year	Regional 2011	State 2011	Regional 2012	State 2012
# English teams	5	9	5	10
# English debaters	20	38	24	44
# Spanish teams	8	6	6	7
# Spanish debaters	37	25	24	31
# Freshmen	13	8	10	24
# Sophomores	9	15	9	14
# Juniors	23	25	12	19
# Seniors	12	15	17	18
# Males	10	22	18	15
# Females	47	41	30	60

### Tracer Teams

I selected six Southern California regional teams that I traced over the two-year study for comparison of literacy practices and final ranks. I used data from these six teams for initial coding and to identify the categories in my analysis, but then used a constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965) with all the other teams to warrant my findings. Three tracer teams were Spanish language teams and three were English language teams. The Spanish teams have the pseudonyms Bayside, Country Road, and Sugarland while the English teams have the pseudonyms Citrus Valley, Farmland District, and Riverton. I selected the tracer teams based on their 2011 final ranks and their return to the tournament in 2012. Because the debate teams in the

tournaments were comprised of active migrant students, there was not a single team that had all its members from 2011 return in 2012. Table 3 lists the tracer teams and their ranks at the regional and state competitions in 2011 and 2012. The rank options in the table include 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place, as well as the category “did not qualify” (meaning that the team was ineligible for participation in the tournament that year), and the category “did not place” (meaning that the team did participate in that tournament but did not score in the top three ranks). The teams are ordered in the table according to the number of returning members they had in 2012. The

number of returning members ranged from five – all but one member – to only one member returning. Following Table 3, I’ve listed descriptions of each of the teams’ members in 2011 and 2012 and highlighted the pseudonyms of the returning participants. This information on the debate participants is in Table 4.

Table 3  
Tracer Team Characteristics

Team	Language in Debates	2011 Regional Rank	2011 State Rank	2012 Regional Rank	2012 State Rank
Riverton	English	1 <sup>st</sup> Place tie	3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	Did not qualify
Bayside	Spanish	Didn't place	Did not qualify	1 <sup>st</sup> Place	3 <sup>rd</sup> Place
Country Road	Spanish	1 <sup>st</sup> Place	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	Did not qualify
Citrus Valley	English	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	Did not qualify	1 <sup>st</sup> Place	Did not place
Farmland District	English	1 <sup>st</sup> Place tie	1 <sup>st</sup> Place	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	Did not qualify
Sugarland	Spanish	Didn't place	Did not qualify	2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	Did not qualify

Team	2011	2012
Riverton	<i>Paula: 10<sup>th</sup> grade</i> <i>Rolando: 11<sup>th</sup> grade</i> Lizette: 11th grade Fabiana: 11 <sup>th</sup> grade Catalina: 12 <sup>th</sup> grade Carlita (alt): 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	<i>Paula: 11<sup>th</sup> grade</i> <i>Rolando: 12<sup>th</sup> grade</i> <i>Lizette: 12<sup>th</sup> grade</i> Fabiana: 12 <sup>th</sup> grade Carlita: 10 <sup>th</sup> grade
Bayside	<i>Eliava: 10<sup>th</sup> grade</i> <i>Ava: 10<sup>th</sup> grade Janet: 11<sup>th</sup> grade</i> <i>Toni: 11<sup>th</sup> grade</i> Melissa: 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	<i>Eliava: 11<sup>th</sup> grade</i> Ava: 11 <sup>th</sup> grade Janet: 12 <sup>th</sup> grade Toni: 12 <sup>th</sup>
Country Road	Cristina: 11 <sup>th</sup> grade Rene: 11 <sup>th</sup> grade Eunice: 11 <sup>th</sup> grade Cesar: 11 <sup>th</sup> grade	Cristina: 12 <sup>th</sup> grade Eunice: 12 <sup>th</sup> grade Cesar: th
Citrus Valley	Xochitl: 11th grade Norah: 11th grade Yelena: 11th grade Consuelo: 12th grade	Xochitl: 12th grade Norah: 12th grade, regional only Socorro: 12th grade Luisa: 9th grade Miguel: 12th grade Vanna: 10th grade, state only
Farmland District	Luis: 9th grade Chuy: 12th grade, on Sugarland team at regional tournament Jacinta: 11th grade Marina: 11th grade	Luis: 10th grade Selena: 9th grade Melina: 11th grade Becky:
Sugarland	Katrina: 11 <sup>th</sup> grade Rebecca: 12th grade Chuy: 12 <sup>th</sup> grade, on Farmland District team at state tournament Yesenia: 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Katrina: 12 <sup>th</sup> grade Alex: 9 <sup>th</sup> grade Hilario: 11 <sup>th</sup> grade Jerry: 12 <sup>th</sup> grade

Table 4

Tracer Teams Descriptions

\*italics refers to return debaters

### Data Collection Procedures

I arranged nine video cameras on-site with the cameras in the debate rooms set in record mode before the beginning of each tournament round, often as debaters were entering the rooms, so several conversations and pre-debate practices were captured on video. I assumed the role of participant observer, taking field notes primarily in the high school speech competitions and entering the debate rooms only to check the cameras and change the batteries or memory cards between rounds. I distributed three cameras among the teams with the encouragement for the camera holders to record whatever they experienced during the day. I kept one camera with me for interviews and setting shots. In total 11 hours of video was captured in 2011, 20.5 hours at the 2012 regional tournament in Southern California, and 22 hours at the state tournament in 2012.

The data collection procedures at the four Migrant Education debate tournaments in 2011 and 2012 yielded a great quantity of writ, as well as audiovisual, records. Table 5 provides a categorization of data collected at each of the tournaments. In total, 59.5 hours of video, 28 interviews, 40 pages of notes, and 58 hours of direct observation were amassed during the tournaments held in 2011 and 2012.

Table 5  
Data Collection by Tournament

Tournament	2011 Regional	2011 State	2012 Regional	2012 State	Totals
Hours of Video	6	11	20.5	22	59.5
Number of Interviews	0	0	11	17	28
Pages of Notes	7	6	12	15	40
Hours of Observation	12	12	13	21	58

### Data Analysis

I sorted each of the videos into files by tournament year and type (regional or state). I created separate sub-files for the interviews and award ceremonies. Each tracer team also received its own file; copies of their video records were stored directly under their name.

To begin the analysis, I read back through my field notes and then reviewed the videos. Over the course of a year, I re-watched the videos, or portions of the longer debate rounds, approximately 10 times. I used the individual files for the tracer teams to view their files and interviews repeatedly. Once I had read through my field notes one more time, I began identifying repetitive descriptions of skills and meaning-making (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) among the participants who were interviewed. I also began identifying literacy practices in the videos of the debate rounds.

With rough notes of the participant patterns in the migrant debate community, I returned to the

videos and began transcribing portions of the tracer team videos. The portions that I transcribed were transcribed verbatim at the intonation unit level (DuBois, 1991). I transcribed in intonation units because it follows the contours of spoken language and my data contained primarily spoken, rather than read, speech. In my transcriptions, I used conventions based on Bucholtz's (2010) transcription conventions.

Once I had a comprehensive list of included terms (Spradley, 1979) and actions, I grouped them into categories through semantic relationships of inclusion (Spradley, 1979) using thematic terms based on my theoretical framework. I then returned to the larger corpus of data to warrant the claims made by the choice of categories with evidence from other debate participants and their actions and words during the tournaments (Freeman, Marrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007).

Once I had transcripts coded and the codes categorized from both the tracer teams and the other collection of records, I reevaluated my choice for the category labels. I returned to my theoretical framework and decided to use certain terms, influenced by Lave and Wenger (1991), for the roles played by members in communities of practice to describe the findings for the research question about how students learn, change, and grow. I also sorted the data related to the second research question on the learning opportunities for participants in the debate tournaments. Finally, I selected representative transcripts and photos to include in the findings.

Throughout the analysis process, I sought to ensure the *inference quality* (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003), or credibility, of my findings and claims. I sought to match my representation of the Migrant

Education debate tournaments to *constructed realities* (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) of the tournament participants and volunteers through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and member checks (Coe, 2012). I conducted member checks with individual returning participants at the regional tournament in 2012 and additional member checks with debate teams in the spring of 2013. Additionally, I sought to triangulate my evidence for my interpretations. I engaged in constant comparison of data as I collected video, written, and observation records over two years and across four debate tournaments.

### Analytic Unit

To explore the research questions, I used debate teams as the analytic unit. Specifically, I focused on six tracer teams that participated in the 2011 and 2012 tournaments. I verified my use of data by creating two tables of methods used to warrant the identified learning relationships and literacies discussed in the findings chapters. An X indicates the methods used in the analysis that resulted in the term listed at the beginning of the row.

Table 6  
Methods Used to Warrant Categories for how Students

Category	Observation	Field notes	Video of debate	Video of Interview	Other Video
Apprentice to Apprentice	X	X		X	X
Expert to Novice		X		X	
Becoming Experts	X	X	X	X	X

Learn through Debates



Table 7  
Methods Used to Warrant Categories of Literacy Opportunities

Role	Observation	Field notes	Video of debate	Video of Interview	Other Video
Multiple Perspectives	X	X	X	X	
Sound Arguments	X	X	X	X	
Questioning Opponents	X	X	X	X	
Public Speaking	X	X	X	X	

their parents as individuals who supported them through the debate season. The type of support they identified included explicit instruction on strategies of debate, guidance on questions to ask, and feedback on the coherence of their arguments. Table 8 shows the source and type of support students identified during interviews.

Table 8  
Sources and Type of Support Identified by Debate Participants

**FINDINGS**

The first research question exploring how migrant students learn, change, and grow through their participation in the Migrant Education debate tournaments revealed that participants learned to view themselves as participants in a wider public sphere. As Luis from the Farmland District debate team said of the Migrant Education debate tournament, “It gives us a chance to get a view on the controversial topics we have in society and give our point of view.”

**Situated Learning in Communities of Practice**

In answering the research question on how students learn through the debate process, the concept of support was explored through apprentice relationships with peers and with adults. Participants named teammates, coaches, other adult personnel, and

Team Name	Source of Support	Type of Support
Riverton	Parents	Encouragement to be involved in extracurricular activities
Riverton	Coach	Feedback on soundness of Argument
Sugarland	Experienced debate Participants	Training in debate strategies from experienced team members
Farmland District	Teammates	Decisions on strategies for use of research binders
Bayside	Coach and other migrant Personnel	Organization for debate Rounds

More than just the identification of sources and types of apprenticeship this research question sought to examine the process of support for migrant students during the debate tournament season. To explore this facet of the research question, video data of practices, of team discussions on tournament days, and of debate rounds were reviewed for evidence of support. This study found that migrant students were supported in their choice to make debate a priority through apprentice relationships, especially with their coaches and their parents, and through socialization into the practices of a larger forensics community.

### Peer to Peer Apprenticeship

Students were also supported in the debate tournament process through apprenticeship with their teammates. Lave and Wenger (1991) wrote, "It seems typical of apprenticeship that apprentices learn mostly in relation with other apprentices" (p. 93). The participants in the Migrant Education debate tournaments supported each other in the learning process by grappling together over their research topics, by sharing personal knowledge with other apprentices, and by asking other team members for help with strategies. Although each team in the Migrant Education debates had at least one coach present with them during the tournaments, the participants relied on each other to plan for upcoming debate rounds. The following transcript gives an example of the Riverton team debriefing after a debate round and discussing one of their opponent's arguments. The Riverton team members supported each other in understanding the argument and in determining what strategies they would use to counter such claims in future debate rounds.

Excerpt 1 Riverton Team Debrief between Debate Rounds 2011.

Line #	Speaker	Text
1	Paula	Hey
2		Why is it unconstitutional?
3	Rolando	Yeah
4		Why was it unconstitutional?
5	Paula	Was it because
6	Carlita	If it was unconstitutional then ###
7	Rolando	Yeah
8		Cause it goes against the 10th Amendment
9		Hold on a second
10	Lizette	The 10th Amendment ###
11	Paula	Let me write that down
12	Lizette	The Bill of Rights was recommended
13	Paula	Where's my pen?
14		Let me write this down on a piece of paper
15	Rolando	It goes against the 10th Amendment
16	Paula	Can I see the paper?
17		<taking Rolando's photocopied page to copy into her notebook>
18		Yeah
19	Rolando	Oh well
20		We'll be
21		The thing that I wrote down?
22	Paula	Yeah uh
23		Um
24		This <holding up Rolando's photocopied page>
25	Rolando	It goes against the 10th Amendment
26		It also goes against the 14th Amendment
27		And the 10th Amendment
28	Lizette	It goes against what?
29	Rolando	The 10th Amendment
30		But if they ask us the question during the debate do we
31		First answer with the 10th Amendment
32		And then go to the rebuttal and say the 14th Amendment also
33		To back it up?
34		<silence>
35	Lizette	Yeah
36	Paula	Yeah that's fine
37		So it goes against the 10th and 14th Amendment?
38	Rolando	Yeah

The preceding transcript shows Rolando, Lizette, and Paula learning from each other as they debrief the debate round they had just completed. Rolando supported his teammates by providing a decisive answer in line 8 to Paula’s question from line 2. Paula and Lizette also supported their fellow apprentices by confirming Rolando’s answer in lines 10 and 11 and by providing additional information to the team in line 12. Rolando continued the apprenticeship among peers by providing resources in lines 17, 18, and 24 and by sharing his expert knowledge in lines 25-27. His teammates also supported him by answering his opinion question in lines 32-34 with affirmative responses in lines 35 and 36. Despite the presence of their coach, the Riverton debate team used novice to novice apprenticeship to strengthen their own understanding of the debate topic and the best strategies to use in future debate rounds. This excerpt is but one example of the apprentice to apprentice support for learning evidenced in the Migrant Education debate tournaments.

Another team used Socratic circles during their practice season to prepare for the debates. This allowed all the team members, as novices, to argue back and forth and to learn from each other in the process. The students reported that they answered each other’s questions to the best of their abilities, which required them to use each other’s insights and knowledge to build stronger, more explicit arguments for and against the debate proposition. Through the Socratic circles activities, although a teacher was always present, the participants were supported in their learning process by fellow students. The novice to novice apprenticeship provided the support for content learning and for the process of learning.

### **Apprenticeship from Expert-Novice Relationships.**

Many migrant students acknowledged the support given by coaches and parents to help the

participants prepare for success. Adult support included encouragement to be involved in the Migrant Education debate tournaments, assistance with professional attire, and honest feedback on the quality of any prepared arguments. Through each of these types of support, the participants’ parents and coaches were supporting their future success. As Carlita from the Riverton team explained, her parents told her “to take opportunities to be in as many clubs as you can because it will definitely look good in college applications.” By giving her this message, Carlita’s parents were imparting to her the forward-thinking mentality that includes college attendance as a future plan. They were also providing her with the knowledge of what steps she needs to take to prepare for that future. Other parent support came in the form of advice for success in the debate competitions. The following excerpt is a portion of an interview with a Northern California debate team at the state tournament in 2013.

### **Excerpt 2 Debate Team Members Acknowledge Family Support**

Line #	Name	Text
1	Researcher	How do you learn the things you need to know for debate?
2	Bertha	Practice
3		Lots of practice in front of other people
4		Like family members
5		In front of them
6		And then they would tell you what you did wrong
7		Maybe you should do this
8		Maybe you shouldn’t say that word
9		This one sounds better
11	Cindi	You know
13		They tell you straight up
14	Bertha	Yeah
15		Family always tells you

In this transcript, Bertha explains how parents and family members gave direct, honest, and blunt feedback to support the debaters in their preparation for the tournaments. By telling the students “straight up” as Cindi said, their families prepared them for their best chance of success in the debate competitions.

Receiving support from novice to novice apprenticeship and from coaches and parents to make debate a priority and to prepare for a successful future were ways that migrant students learned through the debate tournaments. Students were also supported to learn through the generative process of becoming experts in their community of practice.

### Becoming Experts in a Community of Practice

The first research question asked how students learn, change, or grow through the debate tournaments. One fundamental aspect of the learning theory promoted by Lave and Wenger (1991) is that members in a community of practice change as they participate and learn. They describe one of the roles in communities of practice as newcomers- becoming-old timers, or novices becoming experts. One Spanish debater, Tres, describes this process of generative learning:

#### Excerpt 3 Learning Something New

1 Y realmente cada año pues un equipo aunque ven  
constantemente  
(And really every year then a team who goes  
constantly)

2 aprenda cosas nuevas cada año, ¿no?  
(learns new things each year, no?)

3 Son diferentes temas,  
(There are different themes,)

4 preparando en una manera distinta, hay más  
integrantes.  
(they prepare in a distinct manner, there are more  
team members.)

5 A veces se repita unos integrantes.  
(Sometimes some of the team members return.)

6 Entonces cada vez va pues aprenda lo nuevo, ¿no?

(Then every time you go, well you learn something new, no?)

In the excerpt Tres described how in a team’s continued participation they would continue to learn new things. This is precisely how Lave and Wenger describe the participation of new comers becoming experts in practices of situated learning, that they continue to move from the periphery to full participation supported within their community of practice. In an excerpt from Nina on the Farmland district she described the Spanish team from her school as novices who were evolving into experts.

#### Excerpt 4 Interview with Farmland District at state tournament 2013

Line #	Name	Text
1	Researcher	You guys did a practice session
2		Or more than one
3		With your Spanish team
4		Tell me about that
5	Nina	Oh my God
6		I thought it was so helpful
7		Because they
8		Have grown so much
9		I can say I'm really proud of them
10		And when it came to rebuttal and the cross-examiner
11		They were giving us questions that
12		Kind of left us
13		Not speechless
14		But we were surprised that
15		How good their questions were

In this transcript Nina discussed the Spanish team from her school and claimed that she could see the learning that has taken place because of their participation in the tournament season. She stated that the team’s growth was evident in the quality of the questions they asked the Farmland District team during

their practice sessions. In relaying this story, Nina evidenced her support for other debate participants as they became experts in the migrant debate community.

Support for becoming experts includes individuals' self-positioning farther along in the generative process of learning in a community of practice. The most senior of the participants on both the Riverton and the Farmland District teams positioned themselves as experts during interviews in 2012. They did so by indicating that they served as guides and role models for their teammates. Rolando from the Riverton team said, "Since I've been in debate the longest I think a lot of responsibility was put on me to be the good example, to let my team know not to give up and stuff." Luis from the Farmland District team said, "I play the role of lead debater, basically getting the whole team together, making sure they have the right information."

The following transcript provides a different illustration of how multiple members identify with the process of becoming debate experts. This transcript shows three senior members of the Riverton team describing their identification as experts that resulted from their participation in the debate community and how it impacted their college applications and future plans.

Excerpt 5 Interview with Riverton Team at Regional Debate 2012

Line #	Name	Text
1	Researcher	What did you do with your experience with debate?
2	Rolando	I wrote one of my personal letters (for college)
3		The second one
4		Personal statements
5		The second question asked
6		About a quality or talent you possess
7		And I talked about debate and how it allowed me to grow
8		and talk in front of people

9	Lizette	I did the same
10		And for some of
11		For my personal statement
12		I wrote about it too
13		And hopefully in the future
14		I become a lawyer
15		And I think that debate
16		I use debate because it's
17		And not a lot of people are
18		And not many people have
19		to be on the debate team
20		So it kind of puts you like
21	Paula	I also used it in my second
22		Of my personal statement
23		And also
24		For scholarships
25		To talk about
26		Any roles that you took on
27		a leadership role
28		And also public speaking
29		Because not everybody is
30		To speak in front of crowds
31		And that's something that I
32		think I possess that others
33		I feel really comfortable
34		when I talk in front of people

Rolando described in lines 2 through 8 how he wrote about his growth through the debate tournaments in his college application essays. Then in lines 9 through 14 Lizette mentioned that her participation and growth in debate positively influenced her life goal of having a career as a lawyer. She positioned herself advantageously in comparison to students who aren't in the Migrant Education debate tournaments in lines 17 through 20. Finally,

Paula clearly stated that she has claimed an identity as an expert, or leader, through her participation in the debate community. Each of these migrant debaters positioned themselves as experts in the debate community and identified ways that this domain specific expertise will support them as they become experts in college and beyond.

### Literacy Learning Opportunities in the Migrant Education Debate Tournaments

The research question about what the Migrant Education debate tournaments afford students as learning opportunities is explored within the construct of social justice and can be understood to analyze which literate practices in the culture of power are made explicit in the Migrant Education debate tournaments (Delpit, 1995). The social justice construct includes the concepts of “redistribution of access to dominant discourse and literacy” (Cazden, 2012). The redistribution of access comes from Fraser’s (1997) theory of social justice which, from an educational perspective, includes intellectual matters such as literacy and literate practices (Cazden, 2012).

Findings for this research question come from participant interviews and video records of debate rounds. They provide evidence that there are learning opportunities available to develop civic skills. Civic skills are defined as “personal communication skills, knowledge of political systems, and the ability to critically think about civic and political life” (Comber, 2003). In the following section, the skills of seeing multiple perspectives and effective argumentation are discussed as findings from an analysis of the Migrant Education debate tournaments.

### Seeing Multiple Perspectives

Students participating in the Migrant Education debate tournaments are required to be prepared to argue both sides of the annual debate proposition during the tournament. Often, the assignment of teams to the pro and con positions takes place at the beginning of a round by way of a coin toss. Throughout the tournament day, the debate teams may argue each side of the same topic several times against several different opponents. Therefore, it is advantageous for the migrant students to have strong arguments both in favor of, and against, the proposition.

By preparing themselves to argue both sides of a topic, the students are socialized into the practice of seeing multiple perspectives of a topic. This practice is a norm in formal debates, as well as a virtue in a democratic society. Seeing multiple perspectives is a civic skill in the culture of power that is made explicit in the Migrant Education debate tournaments. Table 9 lists the tracer teams and the number of times they argued each side of the propositions at the regional tournaments in 2011 and 2012. The table reveals that every team argued both sides of the propositions during the debate tournaments.

Table 9

Number of Times Arguing Each Side of the Proposition

Team	Number of Rounds Arguing 2011 Pro	Number of Rounds Arguing 2011 Con	Number of Rounds Arguing 2012 Pro	Number of Rounds Arguing 2012 Con
Citrus Valley	2	3	2	3
Riverton	4	1	2	3
Farmland District	1	4	2	2
Sugarland	4	2	4	2
Bayside	5	1	4	2
Country Road	3	3	2	4

In 2011, Riverton, Farmland District and Bayside represented the extreme ranges of number of times arguing one side of a proposition. As a result of coin tosses, Riverton and Bayside argued the negative only once while Farmland District argued the affirmative only once. The other 3 teams experienced a balanced day of arguing pro and con. Yet over all, every team experienced the need to take multiple perspective on the proposition assigned.

### Constructing and Presenting Sound Arguments

In a democratic society the practice of constructing and presenting sound arguments is valued. In the Migrant Education debate tournaments, the participants referred to their prepared opening arguments as speeches. In their speeches, the students articulated the position they were taking on the proposition, they cited from authoritative sources that they had deemed to be reliable, and they refuted common misconceptions related to their topic.

Through the debate tournaments, migrant students were socialized into the practice of justifying the validity of arguments. They tested their opponents' arguments by questioning their soundness and logical reasoning. They also prepared to have the validity of their arguments challenged by their opponents. This process of constructing and presenting sound arguments was a norm of civic discourse and is one learning opportunity that is afforded to participants in the Migrant Education debate tournaments.

Most teams in the Migrant Education debate tournaments followed a traditional structure of making assertions. They used the official, annual proposition, either the pro or con position, as their claim. In 2011 the proposition was: All education shall be the responsibility of the federal government. In

2012 the proposition was: Any juvenile, 12 years of age or older, accused of a felony shall be tried as an adult. After stating their claim, the debaters provided data to support their claim. Then they warranted their claims with explanations, or authoritative assurances, that legitimized the connection between the data and the claim (Toulmin, 1958/2003). In the excerpts below, this structure for making sound arguments is evident in both the Spanish transcript from the Country Road team and the English excerpt from the Citrus Valley team.

### Excerpt 6 Opening Argument - Negative Position from Country Road at Regionals 2012

Line #	Name	Text
1	Cesar	Estamos en contra del tema (We are against the topic)
2		Cualquier joven de doce años de edad
3		(Any youth 12 years of age or older) Acosado de un crimen (Accused of a crime)
4		Debería ser juzgado como adulto (Shall be tried as an adult)
5		Y nuestros argumentos son los
6		(And our arguments are the following) Los jóvenes no tienen juzgar como
7		(Young people are not to be tried as adults) Debería no tener la capacidad de un
8		(Because they don't have the capacities of an adult) El cerebro es como una computadora (The brain is like a computer)
9		Y en orden de funcionar
10		(In order to function adequately) Se requiere la programación correcta (It is required to be programmed correctly)
11		Si la computadora no es programada

	(If the computer is not programmed correctly)			
12	O se descompone (Or decomposes)	Excerpt 7	English Opening Argument - Affirmative from Citrus Valley at Regionals 2012	
13	O empieza a fallar (Or begins to fail)	<b>Line #</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Text</b>
14	Eso se atribuido a elemento humano (This is attributed to a human element)	1	Xochitl	We believe that juveniles shall be tried as adults
15	Los jóvenes no tienen la capacidad para razonar	2		If a juvenile is mature enough to commit a serious crime
	(The youth don't have the capacity to rationalize)	3		Like murder or rape
16	Y tomar decisiones críticas en causas de desesperación	4		Then he or she is mature enough to be treated as an adult
	(And make critical decisions in desperate situations)	5		The punishment should fit the crime
17	A comparación de un adulto (Compared to an adult)	6		Harsher punishment that juveniles face in adult criminal court
18	De acuerdo estudios usando la resonancia magnética	7		Will cause juveniles to think twice before committing a crime
	(According to studies using the magnetic resonance)	8		Or even committing a crime in the first place
19	Hecho con la centra diagnosticas MRI (Made with the MRI diagnostics center)	9		The juvenile justice system
20	Gwendel Delonais comprueba que la materia gris de cerebro	10		Which has been in place for about one hundred years
	(Gwendel Delonais verifies that the gray matter of the brain)	11		Has several problems
21	No se acaba desarrollar hasta 20 o 21 años	12		While the juvenile justice system has good intentions
	(Does not finish developing until 21 years of age)	13		The reality is often much different Instead of rehabilitation
22	La materia gris es la responsable (The gray matter is responsible)	14		Juveniles are often warehoused in institutions
23	por las decisiones críticas que tomamos	15		Not much different than adult prisons
	(For the critical decisions that we make)	16		Prevention programs for juveniles are not as effective as hoped
24	Esta comprueba que los adolescentes no tiene la capacidad	17		The juvenile system was originally designed to be more flexible
	(This verifies that teenagers do not have the ability)	18		Than the adult system
25	Para razonar críticamente en comparación de un adulto	19		But that meant that the juveniles were often denied important rights
	(To rationalize critically like an adult)	20		Of due process that adults get
		21		As U.S. Supreme Court Justice Abe Fuertas put in the 1970s quote
		22		There is evidence in fact that there may be grounds for concerns
		23		That the child receives the worst of both worlds
		24		That he gets neither the
		25		

26 protections afforded to adults  
Nor the solicitous care of  
regenerated treatment postulated  
for children

27 As a result

28 There are now fewer differences  
between the juvenile and adult  
systems

These two opening debaters followed a traditional pattern of making a claim and building a foundation for it with data and warrants (Broda-Bahm, Kempf, & Driscoll, 2004; Toulmin, 1958/2003). Cesar from the Country Road team made his claim in line 6, that young people accused of committing a crime should not be tried as adults. He provided data for this in line 7 when he explains that young people cannot reason like adults. Cesar warranted his claim with an analogy of the brain being like a computer in lines 15 through 25. Likewise, Xochitl made her claim in line 1 that juveniles should be tried as adults and then provided data for her claim in lines 2 through 4. Xochitl provided a warrant for her data in lines 6-8. Both Xochitl's and Cesar's opening statements serve as evidence that the Migrant Education debates provide students with the opportunity to learn and use argument patterns as they engage with current topics in civil society.

### Questioning Opponents

The norms of a democratic society include appropriate tactics for questioning those with opposing views on a topic. In scholastic debates, these tactics include pushing for details, exposing weaknesses in previous statements, and requesting sources to support the counter-argument. The students in the Migrant Education debate tournaments had the opportunity to learn these literate practices as well. The students learned to take notes during their opponents' opening

arguments in order to prepare their questions based on the information in their opponents' speeches.

When a debater asked an effective question in the cross-examination, it was evident that the question had been shaped by the opponents' opening argument. One such question from the regional tournaments in 2012 was:

The opposing team stated that the juvenile still doesn't know what they have done wrong. And they don't know what the consequences are. And that the reason they justify that by saying they're not fully developed until they're twenty. But how is it that the government gives the kids a license, and they give them many freedoms, if they're not fully developed until 20?

The introduction to the question clarified that the cross-examiner was using the opposing teams' data against them. In doing so, she showed the judges how she wrote the questions during the debate round and addressed the opponents' arguments.

### Public Speaking

The significance of public speaking in the Migrant Education debate tournaments was in the ways that the skill would be exercised in their high school careers as well as how it would influence their college careers. The two transcripts below contain excerpts from interviews that address the oral literacy of public speaking.

Excerpt 8 Interview with Riverton Team at Regional Tournament 2012

Line #	Name	Text
1	Fabiola	It's easier once you debate
2		Easier for you to go up in the class
3		Like if you have presentations it's easier
4		Because first of all
5		In class you do it in front of people you know

6 And here in debate you do it in front of people you don't know And stand up for what I think  
7 So it's way easier is right

### Interview with Central Coast Team at State Tournament 2013

Line #	Name	Text
1	Researcher	Why are you in debate?
2	Melinda	Well the reason I am doing it
3		I'm sure all of you guys too
4		My biggest fear is speaking in public
5		And that's why I want to take that risk
6		Of at least getting better
7		Right?
8	Eunice	Because it will develop how we speak
9		And professionally
10		So when we go
11		For like in our future
12		We can be like
13		[You know]
14	Melinda	Also for research
15		Because in college we're going to do a lot of that
16		Now we have the skills of how to research
17	Stephanie	You learn many new skills
18		Like to speak in public
19		Something before
20		I was like too shy
21		to stand up in front of my classroom
22		And present something
23		And like
24		After doing debate for like so long
25		I'm like
26		Now
27		More confident and stuff
28		Even though it is still nerve-wracking
29		I still feel more confident to like speak up and say what I believe
30		

In lines 1 through 3 of the first excerpt Fabiola explained how participating in the debate the year before positively affected her abilities in school. Her future was changed as a result of her oral speaking development in the Migrant Education debate tournaments. In the second transcript, Eunice, Victoria, and Stephanie talked about the impact the public speaking component of debate will have on their futures. Participants in both of the interviews explained the importance of taking up the oral literacy of public speaking and they credited the Migrant Education debate tournaments with being the catalyst for the development of their public speaking abilities. The students acknowledged the impact public speaking and other literacy development has on their futures.

### Conclusion

The situated learning and the development of literacy is a form of social justice taking place in the migrant debate community. Migrant students in the Migrant Education debate tournament become participating members in a wider democratic society. The MEP has a community of practice in California in which migrant students take up literacies as their specific focus for success. The Migrant Education debate tournament is the community of practice for migrants in which literacy learning is a form of social justice for full participation in the social and civic realm on par with others.

This study examined the learning processes and the literacy practices taken up by migrant students in Migrant Education debate tournaments. Specifically, it addressed the research questions:

1. How do migrant students learn, change, and grow through their participation in the Migrant Education debate tournaments?

2. What do the Migrant Education debates afford students as learning opportunities?

The findings were framed by the sociocultural theories of situated learning in communities of practice and literacies as social practices. The findings of how students learn, change, and grow through the debate tournaments included support through apprentice-apprentice relationships, novice-expert apprenticeship, and the generative process of becoming an expert.

From the perspectives on reading from Freire (1970, 2013) to ideas of redistribution, recognition, and representation (Fraser, 2000, 2003) in educational settings, the findings addressed the second research question about what the migrant debate tournaments afford students as learning opportunities. I presented findings on literate skills in a democratic society which included seeing multiple perspectives, constructing and presenting sound arguments, and questioning opponents.

This study approached the questions of literacies and learning in the Migrant Education debate tournaments within the construct of social justice. Together the findings reveal that the Migrant Education debate tournaments provide the community of practice for literacy development. By providing a community of practice for migrant students to engage in situated learning, the MEP is able to move its members into the dominant discourse in the American educational system.

#### **Interpretations of the Study**

First, this study confirms the value of two theoretical frameworks: learning as situated in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and literacy as a situated practice of meaning making (Gee, 2004, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Street, 1984, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2005a, 2005b). The Migrant Education debate community has a social

practice for meaning making. This study showed that the literacy practices in the debate tournaments are skills for democratic participation through oral and written literacies. This study also showed that learning happens in relationships with experts and other apprentices in social practices and that all members of a community can evolve in their roles by becoming experts.

Second, this study confirms the value of the debate tournaments offered by the MEP. The students take up literacy skills through their participation in the debates and that the debates are communities of practice for situated learning. The debate activities fulfill the declared purpose of the MEP: to support high-quality and comprehensive education programs for migratory children (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).

Third, this study shows how programs of authentic practice can be designed and utilized with all students regardless of mobility or academic risk factors. All students in this program were identified as active migrants and eligible for supplemental services because of their academic risk factors. Important to this program's design is the construct that gives learning a practical purpose and includes multiple modes of meaning making. The literacies displayed by participants in the Migrant Education debate tournaments are comprehensive in that they include literacies that are assessed through standardized tests as well as literacies that are necessary for successful social interaction.

#### **Policy Implications**

The policy implication from this study is singular and clear. The Migrant Education debate tournaments should be state-administered and funded at the state or federal level of the Migrant Education Program. For

the past fourteen years, the regional and state tournaments have been financed by the MEP regions that host them. To develop the tournaments further, and to make access opportunities equitable for all middle school and high school migrant students, the state and/or federal MEP should administer the Migrant Education Speech and Debate Tournaments. With official funding, there is potential for every region to host preliminary tournaments and proceed to be represented in the state finals. Given that migrant students, by literal and legal definition, are highly mobile, they should have the same opportunities to participate in this intellectually demanding scholastic engagement regardless of where their family seeks temporary or seasonal employment. It is hoped that the findings from this study will be used in future determinations of state and federal support for the Migrant Education Program in general and for the Migrant Education debate tournaments specifically.

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