Draft – Not for further distribution

National Academy of Education

Civic Reasoning and Discourse

Learning Environments and School/Classroom Climate

As Supports for Civic Reasoning, Discourse, and Engagement

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August 2020

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This paper was prepared for the National Academy of Education's Civic Reasoning and Discourse Project. The research reported here is supported by the Hewlett Foundation, through Grant #2018-8363 to the National Academy of Education. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Hewlett Foundation.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND SCHOOL/CLASSROOM CLIMATE AS SUPPORTS FOR CIVIC REASONING, DISCOURSE, AND ENGAGEMENT

Abstract

The success of educational endeavors is closely tied to the environments in which those endeavors take place. It is therefore important for educators wishing to promote civic discourse, reasoning, and engagement to consider how elements of the learning environment interact to promote or inhibit the development of these skills and dispositions. This chapter reviews the research literature on the relationship between learning environments at school and the development of civic discourse, reasoning, and engagement. We identify four main areas of focus: definition and assessment of learning environments, establishing conducive climates for reasoning and discourse in schools and classrooms, varying student perceptions of climates, and barriers to establishing climates for civic discourse and reasoning. Based on our review of these four areas, we provide recommendations for research that responds to changing political and social landscapes. These recommendations include: 1) exploring relationships between communities and schools in ways that can enhance young people's sense of empowerment; 2) considering a broader range of educational contexts; 3) directly focusing on supports in the classroom and school contexts for reasoning and discourse; 4) connecting more explicitly to differing theories and approaches, such as socio-emotional learning; and 5) expanding research infrastructure to support access to current data and further research. Further, we provide recommendations for practice; these include establishing consistently positive values and climates within schools, supporting teachers in the classroom, modeling civic discourse in multiple aspects of school experience, and creating opportunities for collaboration among students.

Learning Environments and School/Classroom Climate as Supports for Civic Reasoning, Discourse, and Engagement

John Dewey and Lev Vygotsky, among other prominent educational theorists, broadly noted the social nature of education, inquiry, and human conduct (Dewey, 1922; Vygotsky, 1978). In more recent decades, researchers interested in understanding young people's social and political development have become increasingly aware of the contextualized nature of the learning process, focusing on how individuals' social interactions in both formal and informal learning environments promote or inhibit learning (Carretero, Haste, & Bermudez, 2016). Most civic education policymakers and many practitioners have remained focused on factual learning about structures of government and expectations of civic behavior (such as voting); they have paid less attention to students' developing capacities for civic reasoning and discourse with others, or to the specific characteristics of the learning environments that allow practice and development of such skills.

As research on civic education from several disciplinary perspectives has expanded, however, some common understandings regarding these developing skills have emerged. These understandings include, for example, that the nature of the climate or context within learning environments is integral to developing the skills (cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal) and dispositions necessary to engage in civic reasoning and discourse. Thus, research to support effective encouragement and practice of civic reasoning and discourse requires identifying and mapping not only this development but also the characteristics of the broader classroom and school climates in which this development is most likely to occur.

In particular, largely missing has been an examination of research on these issues in order to identify trends, gaps and areas for collaboration, especially activities that the National

Academy of Education might encourage. The purpose of this paper is to synthesize existing literature on how formal learning environments support (or detract from) young people's civic reasoning, discourse, and (in turn) civic engagement. In addition to relevant literature from several areas of education, we incorporate concepts from political science as well as several branches of psychology (including community, developmental, educational, and political psychology) that approach this topic from different theoretical perspectives. Taking into account the strengths and limitations of available literature, including how well it generalizes across educational settings and contexts, we follow this review with recommendations for strengthening research on this topic. We conclude with some initial recommendations for teachers and administrators who seek to develop learning environments to foster students' civic skills and dispositions in a variety of contexts.

Defining the Problem Space and Challenges

It is important first to define the scope of our focus on *learning environments* in general and on school and classroom climate in particular. The academic journal *Learning Environments Research: An International Journal* describes learning environments as including "the social, physical, psychological, and pedagogical contexts in which learning occurs and which affect student achievement and attitudes" (Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2020). Based on this definition, we posit that a given learning environment comprises numerous, interrelated, and constantly shifting factors. Young people are exposed to numerous learning environments that can influence how civic discourse and reasoning skills develop, including family, neighborhoods, peers, and community and religious organizations, and online spaces as well as schools. In this chapter we focus on formal learning environments within K-12 schools, as perceived by students, administrators, and teachers. For consideration of the impacts of out-of-school factors

on student learning, we refer readers to Rubin, Abu El-Haj, and Bellino's chapter on the social and ecological contexts of schooling (this volume). We focus primarily on face-to-face interactions, with some discussion of digital learning opportunities as employed within formal educational settings; we encourage readers to consult Kahne, Garcia, McGrew, Mirra, and Tynes (this volume) for a broader exploration of online spaces for civic reasoning and discourse.

Moreover, and as further defined below, we focus our paper on *school and classroom climates*, or the qualities of these formal learning environments as experienced by members of the school and classroom community, including though not limited to teachers, administrators, and (importantly) students (Schweig, Hamilton, & Baker, 2019). As climates within a given school or classroom are formed from the collective experiences of multiple people, they develop and change over time as the individuals within them develop and change. This forms a recursive loop between the development of the individual and of the learning environment within the classroom/school (Freedman, Hull, Higgs, & Bootman, 2016). The importance of climate has been underscored by Cohen, Pickeral, and Levine (2010), who described school climate as "the single most powerful K-12 educational strategy" (p. 74) for supporting the knowledge, skills, and dispositions central to participation in a democracy. While the climates of learning environments within schools are theorized to be distinct from formal curriculum and pedagogical strategies, they affect how students may respond to course content or activities. Teachers' pedagogical choices have a reciprocal relationship with the learning environment: While the selection and effectiveness of teaching methods is informed by the broader environment in which specific activities take place, feelings of support, safety, or challenge within the environment are in turn determined in part by the use of particular teaching methods (Hahn, 1996). In this chapter, we consider pedagogy insofar as it shapes the learning environment but do not provide in-depth

descriptions of specific teaching methods; rather, we refer readers to Conklin (this volume) for further elaboration on pedagogies that are successful in promoting civic reasoning and discourse.

We also acknowledge the need to place the emphasis on *civic reasoning, discourse, and engagement* including its manifestation in contexts outside the school. This means focusing on publications that exhibit a clear connection between learning environments and these particular processes and/or outcomes. In defining these terms, we consider Stitzlein's (this volume) posing of the "key civic question" as "what should we do." The focus is on actions, taken by a group, toward a desired outcome that is aligned with a sense of ethical responsibility. Within this framing, Stitzlen considers civic discourse as a context for reasoning, in which individuals work together through discussion and deliberation to support inquiry and empirical investigation while also engaging with the emotional aspects of civic questions. For the purposes of this paper, we consider "engagement" as broadly inclusive of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors (current or intended) that both represent and inform courses of action that could be taken in response to a civic issue or opportunity. This is similar to what Torney-Purta and Amadeo (2011) have called "emergent participatory citizenship." While those in the field generally theorize that engagement follows civic reasoning and discourse, it is important to acknowledge that experiences in other contexts shape the background that young people bring to formal learning environments. In turn, these environments will shape students' civic discourse and reasoning skills, as well as their propensity for future inquiry and civic engagement beyond the classroom.

Even with this framing, considering civic reasoning and discourse in formal K-12 learning environments presents challenges. The first challenge is that neither "learning environments" nor their "climates" are unitary entities. Rather, there are a number of features of

an environment that scholars, practitioners, or policymakers may have in mind when using these terms. As a case in point, Lee, Nasir, and Smirnov (this volume) describe effective learning environments for civic reasoning and discourse as constituting a number of characteristics, in that they must:

> ...draw and build on students' prior knowledge, promote a sense of emotional safety, establish relevance through engagement with real-world problems, provide opportunities to develop personal and collective efficacy through scaffolded and iterative challenges, support students in questioning sources of information and beliefs, interrogating their own assumptions, and wrestling with complex and contradictory ideas, and ensure access to a multiplicity and variety of cultural and ideological perspectives, including ones that resonate with students' own lived experiences and those that are less represented in the dominant culture (p.8).

This statement suggests that any of a number of features of an environment's climate may act as a support (or deterrent) for providing students opportunities to engage in civic reasoning and discourse in ways that support further engagement. In a similar vein, Conkin (this volume) describes a positive classroom discourse climate as being characterized by three factors: establishing personal trust between teachers and individual students; containing developmentally-appropriate scaffolding by the teacher; and continuing consistent threads of discussion over time (as opposed to moving between multiple varied, isolated points of discussion). What is clear from both papers is that, when we refer to a "positive" climate, we may mean one that is supportive, safe, and/or intellectually challenging for any of a number of reasons. Because of this, careful attention to how terms are used and how researchers assess different aspects of school and classroom environments is warranted when looking to apply research findings to policy and practice.

Second, the effectiveness of any approach toward creating an effective formal learning environment may depend on where a school is situated geographically and within broader discourse communities. At the time of this writing, the United States and other countries have

seen a recent rise in political contention and what many see as a decline in democratic norms of discourse. At the same time, social divides pertaining to race, immigrant status, gender, wealth distribution, and many other characteristics have exposed stark differences in how people perceive and address issues. Levinson and Fay (2019) noted that completely open discourse may even pose threats to the safety or wellbeing of some students (e.g., deliberations about immigration policy for immigrant students or bathroom access for transgender youth). Consideration of the specific learning environments in which students address civic issues thus becomes important, both for supporting individual students' learning and for raising policy- and practice-based questions about how educators should balance competing considerations and interests when promoting civic discourse and reasoning.

This consideration of multiple, dynamic social and cultural contexts also raises a third challenge, in that each individual's particular set of contexts inhabited and experiences garnered uniquely shapes how they learn (National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018). Schweingruber (2020) pointed to this report (also known as *How People Learn 2)* as indicating the socially situated nature of civic reasoning, distributed across students. This is based on the fact that various individuals in any given learning environment perceive its climate differently (a feature also noted by Conklin, this volume), and may learn from that climate differently. Students enter schools and classrooms with differing life experiences that are embedded in different life settings, informed not only by the beliefs of adults around them but broader cultural beliefs as well (Torney-Purta & Amadeo, 2011). In turn, they interact with classmates, staff, and faculty in their schools in ways that inform the approach they take to civic issues. These approaches may at times, be different from learning processes experienced in community or family settings (Freedman, Barr, Murphy, & Beširević, 2016), particularly when

those out-of-school experiences are characterized by conflict or marginalization (Rubin, Abu El-Haj, & Bellino, this volume). Also important are individuals' identities and attitudes toward various groups or institutions, as well as the extent of interest in social or political issues. Other variations reflect systemic ways in which educational contexts tend to privilege or dismiss voices of students from particular backgrounds or those who embrace particular identities (as Mirra & Garcia, 2017 have documented). This challenge is especially salient among adolescents, who are beginning to construct their own political identities (Prior, 2010; Sears, 1983) and becoming cognitively and socially equipped to take perspectives of others holding different viewpoints (Franzoi, Davis, & Young, 1985; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). However, adolescents are also very sensitive to the reactions of the peer groups with which they affiliate, to the attitudes which their parents express, and to a wide range of emotions that they may experience in interpersonal interactions. Thus, attention to the developmental status of students within particular school and classroom settings becomes another dynamic process to take into account.

Given this context, our review addresses four questions:

1. What is meant by the term "climate" in the context of formal learning environments? What specific features of the learning environments are important to address, both in individual classrooms and schools?
2. What features of learning environments and climates support students' civic reasoning and discourse, and why are they effective?
3. How do students perceive and shape these learning environments? What might account for individual and group differences in experiences within a particular school or classroom? In particular, what role is played by social group membership (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, immigrant status, sexual identity) and/or individual identity?

4. What are the barriers that educators face in establishing learning environments that promote civic reasoning, discourse, and engagement?

Our exploration of these four questions has led to envisioning a program of research with the potential to shape the design and implementation of robust school climates for students' civic reasoning and discourse that would be effective with a wide range of students. In addition, we provide recommendations for teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders (including teacher educators and professional organizations) who wish to help establish learning environments that foster civic discourse, reasoning, and engagement.

What is Meant by the Term "Climate" in the Context of Formal Learning Environments?

Prior to making recommendations for creating educational climates conducive to civic discourse and reasoning, it is important to understand what is meant when describing an environment's "climate" or using other related terms. Educators taking steps toward productive climates should do so with an understanding of the various ways in which it has been operationalized and studied in the literature. As described earlier, distilling the specific characteristics of climates within formal learning environments is complex, as "climate" is not a single, static characteristic or entity. Nor is it necessarily experienced in the same way by different individuals. Rather, it is a collection of factors interacting with each other that can sometimes change even over short periods of time. Appropriately, research on formal learning environments tends to use multi-dimensional models to capture the various aspects of an organization's climate, although some dimensions are more often studied than are others. Adding further complexity, the "climate" of a learning environment can be applied to a school as a whole or to a particular classroom within it. In this section, we pose two questions that Schweig,

Hamilton, and Baker (2019) believe that educators should ask when examining the interrelated features of school/classroom climate: 1) What is meant by climate? and 2) How is it assessed?

What is School and Classroom Climate?

Berkowitz and colleagues (2017) reviewed several models outlining core components of school climate. While specific definitions varied across models, the most prominent positive dimensions were strong interpersonal *relationships*, *a sense of safety* (emotional as well as physical), a feeling of *connectedness*, and reliable *supports* for learning. Beyond these broad dimensions are more specific terms. These include the *"ethos"* of a school (Campbell, 2006) or of teachers (Flanagan, Cumsille, Gill, & Gallay, 2007). Others are the *pedagogical climate* resulting from teachers' classroom organization and setting of an atmosphere (Geboers, Geijsel, Admiraal, & ten Dam, 2013), *relationship quality* among peers or between students and teachers (including the absence of bullying: Shukla, Konold, & Cornell, 2016), the role of *student voice* in meaningful school decision-making, perceptions of *equity* in how students from different backgrounds are treated, *openness* in discussions, and general sense of *belonging*. Taken together, these various constructs capture many ways in which the quality of learning environments can support student learning: Students are motivated to learn when in an environment where they feel emotionally safe and valued (by adults or by each other), and where they are supported to engage in authentic and meaningful ways (Lee, Nasir, & Smirnov, this volume; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018a).

While these general characteristics of climate have been considered in relation to civic outcomes, some other aspects of climate pertain more directly to the perception of environments as supportive for specific civic reasoning and discourse activities. From this latter vantage, a focus on the degree of openness for discussion, specifically of social issues where controversy

may exist, is particularly important. From this viewpoint, a climate conducive to students' development of competencies for civic engagement is one that fosters discussion in ways that expose youth to differing and sometimes conflicting opinions (see review by Campbell, 2019). Such an environment incorporates many traditional features of climate identified by Berkowitz and colleagues (2017) and aligns with the way learning environments can be informed by core learning principles (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2018a): open discussion requires the feeling of a sense of safety for sharing one's viewpoints and this can be fostered by positive interpersonal relationships.

A further distinction is required between school and classroom climate. One of the earliest, most influential articles on civic education climate, by Ehman (1980), was a review written soon after the "first wave" of political socialization research. It distinguished between school-level and classroom-level factors supporting civic discourse and participation. At the school level, he argued that norms, policies, and opportunities for student participation contribute to a community where civic discourse is (or is not) valued. Following Ehman's work, others have focused on how shared civic norms and values among students and staff at a school in support of particular civic outcomes (e.g., voting, civic character) can in turn shape the climate of a school (Campbell, 2006, 2019; Seider, 2012), in a mutually reinforcing way.

A second layer suggested by Ehman is climate within the classroom. Even within a single school, students interact within several different environments that can facilitate or inhibit their learning (each with its own climate: Berkowitz et al. 2017). Authors who discuss this level describe a consistent connection between the pedagogies enacted in the classroom for the purposes of encouraging discussion, argumentation, and dialogue along with the overarching atmosphere (e.g., its degree of support and safety) in which these activities take place. This

connection between climate and pedagogy, detailed earlier (e.g., through discussion of Hahn, 1996) was also reflected in Geboers and her colleagues' (2013) use of the term "pedagogical climate" in their literature review to discuss ways in which civic education influences student outcomes.

How Is Climate Assessed?

Beyond acknowledging the multiple aspects of climate, it is also important to consider the variety of ways in which these constructs have been operationalized (Schweig, Hamilton, & Baker, 2019). Researchers have employed a variety of methodologies to assess various components of climate, both as they characterize the learning environment generally and as specifically related to environments designed to support civic learning and engagement. Some use observation and case study, identifying exemplary schools and classrooms (e.g., Seider, 2012) or documenting the range of openness found in typical classroom environments (e.g., Hahn, 1991). However, while features of climate can be construed as organizational characteristics, they are experienced uniquely by each person within an environment. Thus, researchers also interview individual students and teachers (e.g., Flanagan, 2013), or conduct content analyses of the nature of particular discussions (e.g., Kuhn, Zillmer, Crowell, & Zavala, 2013). That said, the most common way to assess aspects of climate, both by researchers and by educational leaders at both state and local levels, is through the use of students' self-report scales (Berkowitz et al., 2017; Schweig, Hamilton, & Baker, 2019). Such scales are often based on only a few questions; therefore, even when they have undergone rigorous psychometric testing, their brevity limits the extent to which they provide actionable information. In fact, sometimes only a single question is used: For example, Campbell (2012) acknowledged that a distinct limitation of

his measure of school "ethos" is that it was based on one item about the importance of voting for good citizenship.

Assessments of the openness of a classroom discussion climate, the most frequently assessed facet of climate pertaining specifically to civic reasoning and discourse, often do not capture quality or even frequency of discussion. Instead, they provide information on whether participants perceive the classroom environment as conducive to such discussions. One of the most well-known and rigorously-tested measures of this construct is the Openness of Classroom Climate for Discussion scale, initially developed by Ehman (1969). This scale was developed around the same time as several survey-based studies of young people's political socialization in the fields of psychology and political science (Hess & Torney, 1967; Jennings & Niemi, 1965). Different versions have been developed over the years, using items from several sources (Hahn, 1998; Hahn & Tocci, 1990; Torney, Oppenheim & Farnen, 1975; Walberg & Anderson, 1968). Notably, versions of this scale have been adapted by international teams of researchers for the civic education studies fielded by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) beginning in the 1970s (Torney et al., 1975), including the 1999 IEA Civic Education Study (CIVED: Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001) and the International Civics and Citizenship Studies of 2009 (ICCS:09: Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2011) and 2016 (ICCS:16: Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Losito, Agrusti, & Friedman, 2017). These studies have reported very similar results based on nationally-representative samples of students in schools drawn from more than forty-five countries. The scale contains the following items:

> When discussing political and social issues during regular lessons, how often do the following things happen? (Never, rarely, sometimes, often)
>
> 1. Teachers encourage students to make up their own mind.
> 2. Teachers encourage students to express their opinion.

3. Students bring up current political events for discussion in class.
4. Students express opinions in class even when their opinions are different from most of the other students.
5. Teachers encourage students to discuss the issues with people having different opinions.
6. Teachers present several sides of the issues when explaining in class.

The Openness of Classroom Climate for Discussion scale has been a robust predictor of students' civic knowledge and engagement both across countries and across more than five decades, not only in the IEA studies themselves (e.g., Knowles, Torney-Purta, & Barber, 2018; Lin, 2014; Torney et al., 1975), but also in smaller-scale data collections (e.g., Avery, Levy & Simmons, 2013; Gniewosz & Noack, 2008; Hahn, 1998). Results from these analyses are featured prominently throughout the remainder of this paper. Although it is the most widely-used and discussed scale embedded in the IEA civic studies, there are other scales measuring students' sense of the effectiveness of student voice in addressing school issues (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald & Schulz, 1999), students' assessments of the quality of student-teacher relationships (e.g., Maurissen, Claes, & Barber, 2018) and teachers' or principals' reports of the openness of climate (e.g, Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013). Other large-scale survey programs, such as the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, similarly provide scales both for use in secondary data analyses and in primary data collections (e.g., Flanagan et al., 2007).

Outside of these large-scale survey instruments, survey-based studies have incorporated other self-report measures of climate characteristics including students' perceptions of discussion openness (e.g., Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013) or fairness within the classroom (e.g., Gniewosz & Noack, 2008) or within the school (e.g., Karakos, Voight, Geller, Nixon, & Nation, 2016). For example, instruments by Brand, Felner, Shim, Seitsinger, & Dumas (2003) assessing school climate in the middle school context, have been used by several researchers to assess aspects of climate in association with civic engagement (Geller, Voight, Wegman, & Nation, 2013;

Guillaume, Jagers, & Rivas-Drake, 2015; Karakos et al., 2016). These include dimensions with specific connections to civic participation at school (e.g., experience of a democratic school climate), as well as more general measures of perceptions by students of their relationships with each other and with teachers that may be associated with civic outcomes. Taken together, the variety of measures used underscores the complex and myriad ways in which a school or classroom "climate" can support civic reasoning and discourse. It provides background to keep in mind when considering key findings from research employing these measures and approaches as they are presented in subsequent sections of this paper.

Challenges of Defining and Measuring Climate

Practitioners should bear in mind the assumptions and contexts in which school and classroom climate research takes place. Learning environments are complex and assessing them necessitates simplification, especially if one is limited to survey measures. Further, as Morrine-Derschimer (2006) notes, investigations of the discourses present in classrooms are often tied to the subject matter of the course being observed. Insights gleaned from research in one context and subject might not translate to another. This issue becomes particularly salient when considering that much of the research on the formal learning environments for civic discourse and reasoning at the class level has been situated in social studies classrooms. Lee, Nasir, and Smirnov (this volume) note that civic discourse and reasoning take place in all subject areas. In addition, although research on climate (both qualitative and quantitative) has produced important insights, several measurement challenges remain to be addressed. Researchers should be explicit about which aspects of climate they are measuring (and from whose viewpoint) and to which outcomes these features are expected to connect. For example, in theorizing approaches to studying Black youths' sense of belonging at school, Gray, Hope, and Matthews (2018)

conceptualized institutional and instructional opportunity structures (including teachers' modeling of civic behavior and frequency of sociopolitical discussions) as being predictive of students' sense of belonging. Beyond this, many consider outcomes that measure civic engagement or action (current or intended), but do not include assessments of civic reasoning or discourse. Rather, reasoning and discourse are assumed to be the mediating mechanism through which characteristics of a learning environment's climate produce the engagement outcome.

Because of the nature of existing large surveys, it is not usually adequate to use these methodologies alone to examine the specific meanings that students place on climate, or the specific ways in which it is embedded into school contexts. Although survey-based studies of classroom and school climate are useful, a broader array of methodologies would enhance understanding of learning environments. These include qualitative and mixed-methods studies, as well as longitudinal work tracing students' experiences and activities. Examples include Sakiz's (2017) evaluation of interventions designed to improve perceptions of school climate among Turkish students with disabilities, Mischel and Kisantis's (2019) mixed methods study about the impact of bullying on school climate, and Malin, Ballard, and Damon's (2015) longitudinal, mixed-methods study on civic purpose in adolescence as expressed in different contexts. Qualitative studies are time consuming but important, especially because of their ability to describe several dimensions of context in addition to discussion processes or to deeply assess the nature of discourse within a targeted learning environment (e.g., the micro-ethnographic discourse-analytic approach described by Green et al., 2020). Multi-method studies, perhaps including methods such as focus-group interviews with teachers, could also advance research in this area (Torney-Purta, Amadeo, & Andolina, 2010). Regardless of approach taken, a challenge for researchers is to distill and adequately describe results gained with a variety of methods

(often in a variety of contexts with a wide range of students) to make them helpful to those outside the research community.

Which Features of Learning Environments and Climates Support Students' Civic Reasoning and Discourse, and Why are they Effective?

There is a consistent connection between the environment in which learning takes place and the success of learning activities (see Hahn, 1996; 1998 for an overview). A climate that is open for discussion of issues and respectful of student voice, even when it involves disagreeing with peers or teachers, has been found to support reasoning and quality discourse about civic issues. This in turn fosters important civic engagement outcomes, such as the exploration of alternative courses of civic action and understanding the kinds of reasons individuals give for holding particular opinions. Green (1983), in a review of early studies on the then-emergent field of linguistic process research in teaching, found that classroom contexts for discourse arise through teacher and student interactions, and that these contexts impact how discourse takes place and how it is interpreted by participants. Likewise, learning environments and climates for civic discourse and reasoning specifically are co-constructed by educators and students in schools and classrooms. In this section, we focus specifically on the role of educators in creating climates for civic discourse and reasoning, both through their own actions with students and by providing opportunities for students to engage with teachers and with each other (Kuhn, Feliciano, & Kostikina, 2019).

Climate at the Classroom Level

Overall impacts of classroom climate. Although based on correlational findings, an association between an open classroom climate for discussion and youths' civic outcomes is well-documented, spanning over 40 years and across many countries (early examples being

Hahn, 1998; Torney, Oppenheim & Farnen, 1975). This association was one of four key findings in Knowles, Torney-Purta, and Barber's (2018) review of 100 research studies that had analyzed survey data across multiple nations from the IEA's CIVED and ICCS:09 studies. Similarly, two literature reviews drawing from studies employing a broad range of data sources have highlighted an open discussion climate (or "pedagogical climate") as an important factor for teaching civic or moral education (Geboers, et al., 2013; Schiutema, ten Dam, & Veugelers, 2008). Although both of these reviews were conducted by European researchers, they each drew from research conducted across multiple national contexts. The literature summarized in these reviews documented associations between positive climates and civic engagement as defined in a number of ways, including knowledge, attitudes, and current and intended action in both conventional civic and social-action oriented spheres. For example, an analysis of ICCS:09 data across 38 countries and more than 5000 schools found that variation in open classroom climate accounted for 5 to 8% of the variance between schools in egalitarian values (Carrasco & Irribarra, 2018).

The extent to which students vary in their perceptions of climate have led some to wonder to what extent teachers shape classroom climate (Hart & Youniss, 2018). We focus here on research that describes features of open climates over which teachers have some control, and will later discuss students' perceptions and experiences. A first step toward establishing a classroom climate conducive to discourse is willingness on the part of the teacher to encourage civic discourse at all, and then being able to incorporate appropriate pedagogies to do so (Hahn, 2010). As Stitzlein (this volume) notes, civic reasoning and civic discourse differ from reasoning and discourse more broadly because of their connection to questions of common action (i.e., the "What should we do?" question). Many teachers feel unprepared to lead students in discussions

of controversial public issues that would help develop students' civic reasoning and discourse skills (Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Kuhn, 2019; Parker & Hess, 2001; Reznitskaya & Wilkinson, 2017). In some cases, teachers fear negative reactions from parents or community members if they include contradictory views on controversial topics, a subject we discuss briefly in a later section (see also Hess & McAvoy, 2015; McAvoy & Hess, 2013). A larger number of teachers, however, simply lack confidence in their classroom management abilities to effectively lead such discussion. Teacher educators could address this problem by modeling strategies for future teachers and providing space to practice (Pace, 2019; Parker & Hess, 2001).

One specific solution Kuhn and colleagues have reported as effective is transferring more of the managerial role to students themselves, having them engage in discourse in various structured forms in pairs and small groups (Kuhn, Feliciano, & Kostikina, 2019). Middle-school students, these researchers have found, are quite able to engage in serious discussion of challenging issues, with an adult largely overseeing rather than serving as a conduit through which all talk passes. In fact, one product of students' engaging in argumentation in the classroom is the likelihood of their becoming increasingly aware and accepting of norms governing their discourse. During the course of an intervention designed to facilitate the development of argumentation skills in electronically-mediated dialogs, Kuhn et al. (2013) observed an increase in metatalk (i.e., talk about the discourse in which one is engaging). Students increasingly held themselves accountable to these self-imposed norms regarding acceptable argument moves and called their peers to task when these were violated. This indicates development of the metacognitive skills needed for these learners to direct their own activities in similar situations in the future (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018a). Indeed, in reflecting on such findings, Zorwick and Wade (2016) noted that

such norms potentially go beyond the context of a specific activity and inform behavior in a broader range of deliberative contexts. These student behaviors have the potential to impact the character of future interactions in classrooms as well as communities; this speaks broadly to the importance of the role of the student in shaping the climates within a variety of learning environments.

Second, teachers can model cogent political reasoning, disclosing their opinions and leaving space for student disagreement (Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Journell, 2017). Interestingly, while many teachers believe that neutrality (rather than disclosure) creates an appropriate class climate, many researchers argue this is not necessarily the case. Certainly, disclosing opinions with the explicit or implicit understanding that the teacher's opinion is the "correct" view can be counterproductive and even unacceptable (Kelly, 1986), yet many teachers actually create more closed climates while trying to remain neutral. This is particularly so if opinions are inadvertently disclosed (Niemi & Niemi, 2007) or teachers unintentionally choose materials or topics for discussion that privilege one position over another (Clark, Schmeichel, & Garrett, 2020; Journell, 2017). Although teachers should not make the classroom a platform for their political views, the other extreme of providing no models or opportunities for expressing opinion sends the implicit message that political thinking is not important or even dangerous. We recognize, however, that this is often difficult for teachers, as they may fear sanctions as a result of expressing their opinions (Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017). For example, Geller (2020) noted that recent political circumstances have made even some basic facts politically charged. Teachers in Geller's study feared that correcting misconceptions, addressing inaccurate media, or even supporting student advocacy (for example, during the March for Our Lives walkouts protesting gun violence) could be viewed as biased by students, parents, or administrators.

Beyond modeling reasoning, teachers play an important role in setting the norms for civic discourse in all classroom interactions. In reflecting on what was learned about improving classroom civility in their study of deliberation on contentious social policy issues in four Midwest high schools, Crocco, Halvorsen, Jacobsen, and Seagall (2018) acknowledged that skillful facilitation is key. In deliberative contexts, explicit teacher guidance is vital to ensure that students respond to their peers' viewpoints in a respectful manner. Such guidance is especially important when classrooms include individuals from both dominant and marginalized social groups (such as those defined by race or ethnicity or by immigration status). Discussion without close teacher guidance can increase the likelihood of intergroup conflict and stereotyping (Banks, 2008). One approach is to incorporate students' perspectives when setting ground rules for deliberation. Parker (2006; 2010) argued that deliberative elements should be pervasive in classrooms, for example, when setting behavioral expectations. Some teachers opt for structured methods, such as "accountable talk" protocols, to make sure that the classroom environment remains respectful and conducive to discussions, while scaffolding intellectual standards and reasoning skills such as the need for evidence (Michaels, O'Connor, & Resnick, 2008). Such efforts appear to be noticed by students: Gniewosz and Noack (2008) found that it was students' perceptions of fairness within the classroom that predicted lower intolerance toward foreigners among German youth.

Finally, teachers can establish respectful and supportive relationships with students. While emotional support and positive relationships are key components of positive climates generally, they are especially crucial for the development of civic reasoning and discourse given the potential discussion of controversial social issues and the propensity for disagreement or discomfort among members of the classroom community. Maurissen, Claes, and Barber (2018)

argued that positive student-teacher relationships set the context in which deliberations can openly take place. Using data from the ICCS:09 study in 38 countries, they found a correlation between students' positive perceptions of relationships with teachers (both individual and aggregated across the school) and their perceptions that their classrooms are open for discussion. In addition, the quality of such relationships were themselves positively related to greater civic knowledge and stronger norms of citizenship (Isac, Maslowski, Creemers, & van der Werf, 2013). We also see this focus on strong relationships, particularly between educators or adult leaders and students, as a core component of action civics programs (e.g., Andolina & Conklin, 2019, when discussing Project Soapbox; Mikva Challenge, 2020).

Climate in groups within the classroom. Teachers also have opportunities to construct micro learning environments such as small groups and online spaces. These can have substantially different dynamics when compared to the macro class environment. A full recounting of group pedagogies is beyond this review's scope. The social interactions within group contexts, however, are significant to the development of civic reasoning and discourse. Kuhn (2015) found little difference between the quality of work in tasks devoted to concept acquisition completed by individuals compared with groups. However, she found that collaborative work both between students who shared a position, and with those who held an opposing view, was a key advantage in the development of argument skills. Both approaches to collaborative work require seeking to make one's ideas understood, as well as seeking to understand those of another. It has been known for a couple of decades that differences in group structure as well as task structure influence this process (Cohen, 1994). In addition, according to Johnson, Johnson, & Roseth (2010), collaboration can benefit students' socio-emotional well-

being by, for example, reducing anxiety and raising self-esteem, as well as promoting positive feelings towards classmates and peer-to-peer interactions.

Group work can also cultivate feelings of collective efficacy among students. This is particularly true in cases where group activities focus students' attention to working together to address issues of importance in their communities beyond the school. For example, Gallay, Pykett, Smallwood, and Flanagan (2020) drew upon work by Elinor Ostrom to describe how characteristics of effective groups (including mutual respect, responsibility and communication) could be applied in educational practices designed to cultivate students' support for the environmental commons. One of the themes identified by Gallay and colleagues in analyzing 4th-12th graders' essays on their experiences with place-based stewardship education in Michigan was the importance and power of working as a team of change agents in their communities, alongside peers as well as teachers and community partners. Relatedly, some students' responses indicated that they had personally developed skills needed as a member of a team, especially when navigating diversity in experiences and perspectives within groups.

Online spaces such as discussion forums are another approach increasingly used by teachers to foster civic discourse. Here we focus only on classroom-based applications of digital learning spaces. For a fuller treatment of the opportunities and limitations of online environments for supporting student civic reasoning and discourse, see Kahne et al. (this volume). Choosing to use digital spaces as a classroom environment for civic reasoning and discourse involves trade-offs, some of which may be more or less appealing to teachers depending on their goals for student knowledge and skill development. For example, online learning environments differ in terms of the pace and type of interaction among students and instructors. These environments are typically asynchronous and rely on reading and writing skills instead of speaking and listening

(Blankenship, 2016; Larson, 2003). They noted that written interactions tend to require more investment of student time than verbal interactions. Content analysis of student work, however, suggests that a benefit of the slowed pace is that students have more time to process information and compose more thoughtful responses (Blankenship, 2016). In addition, online discourse has the benefit of preserving a record of the exchange, enhancing opportunity for reflection by students as well as teachers (Kuhn, 2015).

Asynchronous online environments also tend to elicit broader participation than face-to-face settings. Larson (2003) noted that students who are reluctant to participate in classroom discussions are more likely to contribute to online forums. Recently, Clark, Bordwell, and Avery (2015) found that female high school students tended to express a preference for online forums when discussing controversial issues and participated in them at levels similar to male students. Anonymity in discussion forums also appears to encourage female participants. Clark and colleagues found that female students' participation in online forums was related to perceptions of the overall classroom climate when student names were visible. When students discussed a controversial issue using a pseudonymous screen name, the association with classroom climate perceptions disappeared and participation rates were roughly equal for male and female students.

Educational websites may also offer students a means of developing civic discourse and reasoning. Stoddard, Banks, Nemacheck, and Wenska (2016) offered one of the few in-depth analyses of an online civic learning platform in their study of the iCivics program. While the game-based structure of the content of iCivics offered many learning opportunities, these researchers identify ways in which iCivics could improve, such as providing students more opportunities for deliberative thinking or weighing multiple considerations or perspectives. Some of these issues may have been mitigated more recently to strengthen its use as a means of

developing civic discourse and reasoning skills. The iCivics platform is only one example, however, and more research is needed to evaluate the potential of such digital environments.

Climate at the School Level

Turning to the school level, one reason that a positive climate is thought to be associated with civic discourse, reasoning, and engagement outcomes is due to the presence of widely-shared core values among members of the school community. Early research on school-level climates for citizenship education focused on comparing public schools, private schools, and charter schools in the United States. Campbell (2012) noted several studies that found differences favoring private and charter schools in civic skills and volunteer activity, although findings on civic attitudes (including tolerance) were more mixed. In reflecting on these differences, Campbell posited that the sense of mutual trust and shared values, presumably afforded by a common religious tradition, could result in a shared "ethos" within a school that fosters civic outcomes.

Campbell (2012) also noted that Catholic schools were not the only settings able to cultivate a civic "ethos." When members of the school community shared strong views on the importance of certain activities for good citizenship (e.g., voting), civic outcomes among students were stronger. He suggested research on charter schools could explore what it means to have a strong school "ethos" for civic education, particularly when they incorporate a civic mission explicitly in their mission statement (e.g., Cesar Chavez Schools for Public Policy in Washington DC: Chavez Schools, 2020). Broad school missions also provide a context through which teachers can make instructional decisions that are aligned with school values: For example, Ladson-Billings (2000) described how a math teacher within an African-centered school in Milwaukee selected activities designed to hone math skills in application to racist

zoning laws, thus connecting to youths' developing understanding of sociopolitical consciousness. These principles are extensively illustrated in Seider's (2012) research on the connection between school culture and civic character development in a Boston charter school. Specifically, he noted a shared commitment to working for continuous improvement and a sense of community in fostering civic character. In earlier grades, this included a focus on behaviors leading to a harmonious environment within specific classrooms; in older grades, this included respect for diverse viewpoints about issues and students working together across differences.

Seider's case-study research highlights additional features of the overall school culture that speak to broader principles about what constitutes a positive school climate for civic discourse, reasoning, and engagement. School leaders can intentionally strive to create a particular culture (or "ethos") in their schools. A review of research sponsored by the Wallace Foundation (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004), found that superintendents and principals played a valuable role in shaping the culture of schools and promoting student learning. In particular, the report found that effective school leaders articulated a vision for the school, provided the necessary tools and training to achieve that vision, and created the support structures needed to sustain work towards the community's goals. That said, what is unique about setting a school climate in support of civic reasoning and discourse is that, practically by definition, the most supportive climates are those in which leaders explicitly take into account student voice in these processes. School leadership is in and of itself a learning environment for civic reasoning and discourse, and the focus on consequential decisions to the schools that students attend means that the issues being discussed are relevant and connected to personal experience (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018a). Yet, despite the benefits that come from having students involved in decision-making processes, authentic

opportunities for student engagement remain limited (Brasof & Mansfield, 2018), often due to perceptions of youth as unprepared to contribute meaningfully to the work of a school.

Nevertheless, research has documented benefits of incorporating and valuing student voice, particularly when it comes to students' subsequent civic action. Mansfield, Westin, and Halx (2018) presented a continuum of incorporating student voice, building upon work by Mitra and others, ranging from students "being heard" to collaborating with adults to being prepared to take on leadership roles. Flanagan (2014) noted that students who believed that teachers within their schools respected students' diverse perspectives were themselves more committed to civic dispositions. However, student voice appears especially effective in encouraging further civic action when it contributes meaningfully to school decision-making. Studies employing data from the IEA civics studies, both in the United States (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014, using CIVED) and cross-nationally (Maurissen, Claes & Barber, 2018, using ICCS:09), found a positive association of students' perceptions of schools as responsive to students' voice in decision-making (which can be considered a feeling of collective efficacy within the school context) to their perceptions of classrooms as open to discussion. Perceived responsiveness to student voice also had strong and unique effects on important civic outcomes themselves. In a separate analysis focusing specifically on Flemish youth participating in ICCS:09, Maurissen and colleagues found that both individual perceptions of the importance of student voice in school decision-making and averages at the school level were related to greater support for immigrants' rights (Maurissen, Barber, & Claes, 2018). However, the openness of classroom climate itself was not. Similarly, using CIVED data, Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld, and Barber (2008) found that confidence in the value of student voice was related to knowledge about children's rights, although classroom discussion climate was not. Student voice in school was also a stronger

predictor of attitudes toward immigrant rights and social-movement citizenship than was classroom climate.

Mitra, Serriere, and Kirshner (2014) have pointed out that active and meaningful student participation in school decision-making is rare in the United States. Yet Mitra and colleagues did identify some examples of school-wide efforts that engaged youth meaningfully. They described a California secondary school serving immigrant and working class youth that engaged students as leaders in responding to important school issues. One key feature was the importance placed on cultivating skills for civic reasoning as well as capacities for taking on leadership in school improvement efforts: skills and roles at the higher end of the continuum of student voice. Situating these activities within the broader community context was also important.

More broadly, a positive school climate also contains positive and supportive relationships among individuals in the school, building upon the need for feelings of emotional safety within learning environments identified earlier. Guillaume, Jagers, and Rivas-Drake (2015) used surveys to examine the association between school climate, measured by Brand et al.'s (2003) school climate measure, and "emergent" civic engagement behaviors among middle school youth of color from a city in the Midwestern United States. They found that perceiving a more positive school climate, defined by characteristics such as teacher helpfulness and positive relationships among students, was related indirectly to civic engagement through perceptions of connectedness at school. This suggests the importance of meeting students' needs for support and inclusion when supporting their participatory development. Moreover, Jagers, Lozada, Rivas-Drake, and Guillaume (2017) found that positive climates within homeroom classes (e.g., involvement in setting rules) were predictive of civic engagement of Black and Latino middle-school youth only when the school at large was perceived as treating students of different social

group backgrounds equitably. This suggests that part of the effectiveness of overall school climates comes from providing a setting in which individual classroom climates can be effective.

Similar findings emerge when operationalizing school climate in other ways as well. Flanagan et al. (2007) found associations between students' perceptions of teacher "ethos" in the school (standards of respect, fairness, and tolerance as perceived by students) and students' civic commitment and belief in America as a just society; these findings were consistent for students across racial/ethnic groups. A context of safety in the school is also important. Using a person-centered analytic approach with ICCS:09 data, Reichert, Chen and Torney-Purta (2018) examined how perceptions of various aspects of school and classroom climate cohered into different patterns across countries within the Nordic region. In examining predictors of such patterns, Reichert and colleagues noted that, when there are substantial instances of bullying and social exclusion in a school, climates for developing active citizenship appear to be reduced.

Finally, extracurricular activities within the school environment provide contexts in which skills of deliberation may be honed, much in the same way as classroom activities. As one example, student councils are commonly considered as a mechanism for providing students a voice in school decision-making and in creating an open climate that is respectful of students' opinions. A survey of 524 administrators conducted by the *Education Week* Research Center (2018) found that student government was the most commonly reported place where students were thought to be able to express their civic voices and rights (36%), ranking slightly higher than classroom activities and assignments (33%). However, there is mixed evidence on the extent to which student councils effectively provide authentic and consequential opportunities to inform how schools function. Importantly, McFarland and Starmanns (2009) noted that U.S. public schools serving students from low-income and/or minoritized racial and ethnic groups

often lacked student councils altogether, or had councils charged with overseeing social functions rather than contributing to decision-making within a school in meaningful ways. To contrast, elite public schools (which tended to serve more privileged students) granted their student councils more decision-making power and autonomy. The nature of involvement itself can also vary across student councils: Halfon and Romi (2019) classified student councils in Israel into four groups along two dimensions: one representing the extent to which councils encouraged volunteering in the community and the other representing how councils fostered students' rights. Of note is that there was one group of councils that did not encourage either type of involvement.

Other activities center on the importance of democratic deliberation in schools and other contexts to promote civil discourse (Ladenson, 2012; McGranaham, 2020). Particularly important in these activities is having students justify their ideas, as part of a mutually accepted norm of discourse (Kuhn et al., 2013; Michaels et al., 2008). Ladenson's Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl program asks students at the high school or college level to develop arguments about a variety of issues taking into account stakeholders' values as well as relevant facts. The quality of these arguments and students' responses to counterarguments is judged in a competition. However, equitable access to such extracurricular contexts is often limited due to the fees that many schools charge to participate in such activities (Putnam, 2015).

In summary, in addition to classroom environments, the structures for discussion and participation introduced by a school's influential adults is essential in creating the supportive context needed for civic discourse and reasoning. Creating a school-wide culture for civic discourse can reinforce and enhance such learning in the classroom. Extracurricular activities can provide additional opportunities for discourse, reasoning, and engagement.

Limitations of Research on Features of Learning Environments

While researchers have highlighted the substantial role of class and school climate, there are areas that remain under-studied. Earlier work contains notable studies relevant to climates for civic reasoning and discourse for elementary students (Angell, 1991; Bickmore, 1999), but most of the research described here focuses on climates as experienced by adolescent students. Notable exceptions include Seider's (2012) focus on civic character development in the early grades and Mitra, Serriere, and Kirschner (2014)'s discussion of "carpet time democracy" activities. While adolescence is an important period for the development of civic reasoning and discourse skills, as mentioned earlier, additional research on the nature of learning environments in the early years of schooling is warranted (Lee, Nasir, & Smirnov, this volume; Patterson, Bigler, Pahlke, Brown, Hayes, Ramirez, & Nelson, 2019). In addition to research on class and school climate, progress continues in attempts to understand the nature and patterns of development of fruitful student discourse on social and civic issues, particularly as it relates to students' developing moral positions (Lee, Nasir, & Smirnov, this volume) and as it ultimately connects to civic reasoning, discourse and engagement.

Second, there is room in this research arena for a more nuanced discussion of the intended civic outcomes of positive school and classroom climate. The work presented here focuses on a variety of civic reasoning, discourse, and engagement outcomes. Certainly, the positive impact of climate on such outcomes is generally consistent. More innovative research, however, might detail the nature of supports for specific civic competencies that encompass lived experiences out of school and take into account ways in which broader social structures in and out of school either privilege or marginalize those experiences. Some existing work in this area is discussed in the next section, but more is clearly needed.

Moreover, additional research should focus on how learning environments for civic reasoning and discourse may function similarly or differently across subject areas. While opportunities for civic reasoning and discourse exist across the disciplines (Lee, Nasir, & Smirnov, this volume), the vast majority of the research that considers the nature of classroom climates for civic learning focuses on civics or other social studies-related content areas. This makes it challenging but important to bring the perspectives of other disciplines to bear when discussing civic issues: For example, the consideration of climate change as a civic issue inspiring youth action involves the incorporation of knowledge from an array of scientific disciplines to engage in informed reasoning and discourse (Cherif, Gialamas, Pelonis, Harris, & Siuda, 2019). Little is known about the nature of science classroom climates as they support civic reasoning and discourse specifically, however. Work exploring the teaching of socio-scientific issues in science classrooms holds particular promise, as many of the same principles described above are discussed in research in this area (Walsh & Tsurusaki, 2014; Zeidler, Appelbaum, & Sadler, 2011). However, researchers and practitioners alike focused more on how these learning environments support scientific reasoning rather than on civic reasoning about social issues or on potential civic actions (e.g., Nuangchalerm, 2009, in Thailand; Kuş, 2015, in Turkey). Citizen Science approaches may further inform this work through their focus on the scientific process as experienced in community contexts (National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018b).

Turning to literacy education, Mirra and the Debate Liberation League (2020) provide an example of research foregrounding climate issues through their description of how a group of middle-school students integrated personal identities and experiences into their experiences with policy debate. This resulted in an English/Language Arts learning environment in which student

voices and experiences were central and valued as part of civic dialogue in ways that are not typical of conventional debate programs.

The role of schools and (especially) classrooms in the development of competencies for critical consciousness (Watts, Diemer, & Voigt, 2011) is one area that would benefit from additional work, even while acknowledging the limitations of traditional civic education in cultivating these abilities (Rubin, Abu El-Haj, & Bellino, this volume). Godfrey and Grayman (2014)'s analysis of CIVED data is one example of research tying classroom climates to these specific outcomes. Diemer, Hsieh, and Pan (2008)'s analysis of data from the National Longitudinal Study of 1988 focused on the role of race relations in school as predictors of sociopolitical development among low-income youth of color. Each of these studies noted the limitations inherent in using existing data to measure the types of social action thought to be fostered through critical consciousness. However, this also suggests ample room for further research. Given the role of students' own backgrounds in such development (and specifically, their experiences with marginalization), some relevant research appears in the following section.

Finally, research is needed to connect teacher education practices to teachers' abilities to establish open climates in K-12 schools. Researchers should examine the features of teacher preparation programs that best prepare teachers to establish climates where civic discourse and reasoning can thrive. In one of the few studies of teacher education practices related to establishing open climates, Pace (2019) documented the practices of four teacher educators in Northern Ireland, England, and the United States as they prepared future teachers to facilitate the teaching of controversial issues and to create open classroom climates. The teacher educators utilized contained risk-taking strategies, which alerted preservice teachers to be prepared for unforeseen difficulties that might be associated with addressing controversial issues in their

744 class. Strategies were discussed for addressing some of these potential difficulties (such as
745 managing emotional moments and reflecting on positionality) before they actually happened in
746 class. Follow up studies that track preservice teachers as they move into their own classrooms
747 should investigate the extent to which teachers effectively follow through with such strategies
748 from their methods courses. Professional development focusing on promoting civic discourse in
749 the classroom shows promise in increasing both teacher self-efficacy and student perceptions of
750 climate (Barr et al., 2015). However, more thorough study is needed to identify best practices
751 for such programs, especially in classrooms where students are not used to being allowed to
752 express their opinions or where they perceive risk to themselves in doing so.

753 **How Do Students Perceive and Shape these Learning Environments?**

754 It is especially important for educators to understand the influence of students in shaping
755 classroom and school climates. The *Education Week* survey of administrators (2018) found that
756 respondents viewed the classroom as one of the principle places in schools where students can
757 express their civic voices and opinions. We assume that students who participate in learning
758 environments with the features described above are more likely to have positive experiences
759 engaging in high-quality civic discourse, compared to students lacking such opportunities.
760 However, students' own perspectives on topics and their prior experiences both inside school and
761 in the community more broadly shape how learning environments are ultimately formed, and
762 also how students perceive and benefit from experiences in their schools and classrooms. As
763 Green (1983) notes, and as acknowledged earlier, discourse and the construction of meaning in
764 classrooms is dependent on interactions between and among both teachers and students. Thus,
765 understanding student perceptions of the classroom and events therein is an important part of
766 understanding classroom climates for civic discourse.

Students' Experiences in the Classroom

Differences in perceptions of classroom climates. Not all students share the same view of a given classroom as a space to talk and learn, or one in which civic discourse is encouraged. Indeed, individual perceptions of climate have been found to be more predictive of student outcomes than aggregate ratings or ratings provided by teachers or principals (Quintelier & Hooghe, 2013). Both Hart and Youniss (2018) and Campbell (2019) cite this variation as evidence of a problem of endogeneity, where variables that have not been measured impact the outcome of a study. In short, cross-sectional surveys cannot disentangle respondents' pre-existing differences from their reports of recent experiences. Students who have long had more interest in political and social issues, for example, may both feel more comfortable in classroom discussions and report stronger dispositions toward civic involvement. Temperamental characteristics such as shyness may also similarly contribute. Another explanation (and our primary focus in this paper) comes from Michaels, O'Connor, and Resnick (2008), who acknowledged that some youth are socialized (by specific aspects of their family background or interactions in their neighborhood) to shy away from engaging in discourse in public, including at school. Such differences in socialization are an expected part of a diverse educational landscape reflecting varying norms and values across (for example) religions, ethnicities, nations of origin, or community groups. Because such variation in norms among members of a classroom reciprocally contribute to how learning environments are perceived by those in the classroom, this issue makes causal direction hard to specify.

One set of such individual differences includes enduring personal and group identities. Individual identities are multifaceted and, especially in young people, may shift. In addition, different elements of an individual's identity can become more or less salient depending on

790 circumstances. Lee, Nasir, & Smirnov (this volume) have reviewed literature on the development
791 of identity and its relation to civic discourse and reasoning. Here we focus on what happens
792 when aspects of student identities intersect and interact with features of their learning
793 environments, how they are perceived, and how students learn to negotiate within them.
794 Researchers have been able to associate elements of individual or group identity to
795 perceptions of learning environments relevant to civic discourse and reasoning. For example,
796 group differences, both in terms of demographic characteristics such as race or gender and in
797 terms of affiliations such as religious or political beliefs, can impact individuals' prior
798 knowledge or framing of a given issue. In one study, Crocco, Seagall, Halvorsen, and Jacobsen
799 (2018) noted the role of positionality in determining students' approaches to the discussion of
800 immigration policy. Students' identities in relation to the topic under consideration, particularly
801 as members of immigrant families, informed their approach to classroom discussion. While
802 classroom discussion and deliberation pedagogies might be egalitarian in their intent, members
803 of some groups may find their voices ignored or repressed by the majority in such exercises
804 (Conklin, this volume; Fraser-Burgess, 2012; Rubin, Abu El-Haj, & Bellino, this volume;
805 Young, 2000). Thus, providing support for engaging with diverse perspectives may be an
806 especially important part of an open classroom climate, especially for students whose
807 experiences with the political and legal system are characterized by conflict, uncertainty, and
808 marginalization (Rubin, Al Haj, & Bellino, this volume). In part because group identity deeply
809 informs participation and boundaries of acceptable topics for debate, these students may benefit
810 from experiences designed to allay their anxieties, foster a sense of trust, and facilitate a gradual
811 learning process about being members of a "civic public." Conklin (this volume) similarly
812 suggests that when the teacher opens questions of current concern to class members, such as their

experiences of inequality, lack of connection to the community or discrimination, discussion can be an entry point to "critically relevant civics." Taken together, this suggests that educators may benefit from training on how to be sensitive to these issues as they attempt to create these settings.

Group identity also guides behavior and shapes the beliefs of individuals who hold that identity (Brown, 1991; Gilbert, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Focusing on students engaging in discussions and deliberations, Fraser-Burgess (2012) argued that group identities incorporate foundational beliefs and ideas (e.g., based on religion or traditions) that play a role in defining an individual's identity. When such beliefs conflict with those of the majority, she argues that engaging in a discussion of those ideas results in a situation where "the student must either repressively transcend his or her group identity beliefs or face further social marginalization" (p. 496). While several responses in this situation may also be possible (particularly if the learning environment itself is adaptable), Fraser-Burgess' framing may be helpful in understanding findings of racial differences in classroom climate perceptions based on group comparisons in large-scale survey data. For example, Campbell (2007) found in analysis of CIVED data from the United States that, on average, white students tended to perceive classroom climates as significantly more open than did students of color. Campbell also noted an inverse relationship between the racial heterogeneity of the classroom and students' overall perception of an open classroom climate. Racially diverse classrooms were generally perceived as less open than homogenous classrooms (regardless of the predominant race of students in the classroom). Similarly, Torney-Purta, Barber, and Wilkenfeld (2007) found that students who indicated they were of Latino ethnicity reported their classrooms to be less open on average than did their peers who did not self-identify in this way. In fact, when these group differences in classroom climate

836 perceptions were statistically controlled, the size of differences in scores on conventional civic
837 outcomes such as civic knowledge and intent to vote was considerably reduced. Findings such as
838 these deserve reflection with the aim of better understanding of how to improve perceptions of
839 classrooms as open by all students.

840 Gender (binary self-report of male or female) has also been predictive of perceptions of
841 classroom climate, with female students perceiving more openness on average than male
842 students in many countries (Barber, Sweetwood, & King, 2015; Hahn, 2010; Knowles, Torney-
843 Purta, & Barber, 2018; Maurissen, Claes, Barber, 2018). The impact of gender on perceptions of
844 classroom climate was moderated by the degree of confidence students had in the value of
845 student voice in school more broadly: Such confidence in student voice was more strongly
846 predictive of classroom climate perceptions for male students, resulting in smaller gender
847 differences among students with high degrees of confidence (Maurissen, Claes, & Barber, 2018).
848 This finding is particularly interesting given that the dynamics of social interaction can privilege
849 the voices of male students over female students in classrooms. For example, Crocco et al.
850 (2018), in their study of deliberation on controversial issues such as immigration policy, found
851 that contributions that were more traditionally masculine in nature (typically couched in
852 statistical explanations, and most often coming from male students) were less often challenged or
853 dismissed than were contributions that focused on relational issues (more often interpreted as
854 feminine). Moreover, as Michaels et al. (2008) noted when reflecting on gender dynamics in the
855 classrooms they observed, girls may be socialized not to raise objections when they disagree
856 with another's viewpoint.

857 Another factor affecting perceptions of classroom climate is socio-economic status. A
858 review of studies conducted using IEA datasets concluded that students of lower socio-economic

status tended to report less openness of classroom climate than did their higher-income peers (Knowles, Torney-Purta, & Barber, 2018). Michaels et al. (2008) described instances of socio-economic privilege that they witnessed when observing the implementation of accountable talk protocols (rules for peer interaction and use of evidence). To put these findings into context, however, analyses of ICCS:09 data from Chile, a country with high degrees of structural inequality and economic segregation impacting the education system, revealed that socio-economic differences in the openness of classroom climate for discussion were not as dramatic as observed differences in civic knowledge (Castillo, Miranda, Bonhomme, Cox, & Bascopé, 2014). However, both were key predictors of anticipated future civic participation. Thus, while Castillo and colleagues raise concern over the ways in which schools perpetuate existing political inequalities through inequitable opportunities for acquisition of civic knowledge, they see promise in the promotion of open classroom climates as a strategy for encouraging more equitable political participation.

Differences in the functioning of small groups. Individual and group differences also impact the dynamics found within smaller discussion groups. In general, there is evidence that identity or salient group membership (national, religious, racial) influences students' interpretation of information (Barton & McCully, 2005; Epstein, 2008; Porat, 2004). However, these factors are associated with varied behavior depending on the identities or affiliations of other group members. Goldberg (2013), for example, found that Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Israeli students' self-reported ethnicity was associated with differences in the way they discussed a controversial issue with group members, depending on whether group members shared a common ethnicity. In discussing the Israeli Melting Pot policy, an instance of controversy

between members of the two ethnic groups, non-mixed ethnicity groups tended to reinforce their own identities more often than did those in mixed ethnicity groups.

Students' political affiliations and their impact on discussion groups has also been examined as an influence on student behavior and perceptions of the classroom (Clark, 2018; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Kahne & Bowyer, 2017), especially in the broader social context of ideological bubbles, fake news, and partisan polarization. Political scientists have found that ideology or prior beliefs can impact reasoning about political and social issues in adults (e.g, Lodge & Tabor, 2013), though studies of the impact of ideological composition of discussion groups have often reached divergent conclusions (Esterling, Fung, & Lee, 2019; Farrar, Green, Green, Nickerson, & Shewfelt, 2009; Kuhn, Floyed, Yaksick, Halpern, & Ricks, 2018; Kuhn & Lao, 1996; Lao & Kuhn, 2002; Schkade, Sunstein, & Hastie, 2007). Empirical research on political affiliation's impact on discourse and reasoning for young people is relatively sparse, particularly in the context of formal learning environments. However, Stoddard and Chen (2016), in a study of discussions about a controversial social issue among small groups of young adults, suggested that political identity affected the dynamics of discussion groups. In particular, mixed-political identity groups (liberal/conservative) tended to have richer discussions with more divergent points of view expressed than did homogenous groups. Clark (2018) found that high school students with strong partisan identities tended to increase their repertoire of arguments (see Capella, Price, & Nir, 2002) in ways that favored their own position shortly after an online deliberation. This took place regardless of whether they were in mixed or uniform partisan identity groups.

Differences in climate's association to civic outcomes. In addition to considering differences among students in their experiences in classrooms, it is also important for educators

to consider the ways in which classroom climate may influence anticipated future engagement differently for students who are members of different social groups. Specifically, there may be a compensatory effect of classroom climate on civic engagement. For example, the openness of classroom climate has been found to moderate gender differences in civic outcomes. Using CIVED data from 28 countries, for example, Barber and Torney-Purta (2009) found that the differences between male and female students in support for women's rights were smaller in schools with higher average reports of classroom climate openness; this was due to more support for gender equality among male students in schools with more open climates. In another analysis of CIVED data in the United States, Godfrey and Grayman (2014) found that the association between an open classroom climate and students' sense of collective efficacy in school decision-making was stronger among non-white students compared to white students. Similarly, Campbell (2008) found stronger effects of open classroom climate on intent to vote among students from lower-socioeconomic backgrounds, compared to those from higher-socioeconomic backgrounds. This set of conclusions, however, should be viewed with caution, as other research has identified ways in which some features of a climate can exacerbate existing inequalities. In Dutch schools, for example, Wanders, van der Veen, Dijkstra, and Maslowski (2019) found that differences in youths' societal involvement associated with parent education were more pronounced among those students who perceived their relationships with teachers to be the most positive.

An open classroom climate may be especially important in providing support for engaging with diverse perspectives in ways that lead to future engagement. Campbell (2007) found that the more racially and ethnically heterogeneous a classroom was, the less that students within the classroom saw themselves as future informed voters or active political participants. However, discussion in open classroom environments, particularly those fostering rich

intercultural dialogue that credits different experiences and recognizes positionality of participants may partially compensate for these effects. We are encouraged in this belief because Campbell (2007) also found that highly open classroom climates mitigated the lower levels of intended participation sometimes associated with students in racially diverse classrooms. Similarly, following the 2012 U.S. election, Kawashima-Ginsberg and Levine (2014) found that students from racially diverse schools who reported more frequent engagement with controversial issues in school showed higher political engagement than those who did not. This scattered set of findings suggest that this topic should be further investigated.

Student Experiences at the School Level

Students also perceive and shape the school environment beyond their classrooms in various ways. In his review of early research, Ehman (1980) recognized extracurricular activities as spaces in which peers could be brought together to encourage civic norms. One way in which extracurricular contexts encourage civic development is by providing space for young people to discuss personally salient social issues with peers. To connect to the earlier discussion of student voice, such activities provide dedicated spaces and structure to foster the types of discussion that may be recognized as an important part of school decision making by administrators.

Seider (2012) highlighted how some extracurricular discussion groups for young men and women provided space for discussion of issues particularly salient to their developing gender identities. These included discussion groups that were tied not only to social issues in the community, but also to issues in the school (e.g., disciplinary practices). Other activities have similarly used connections to students' social identities to create safe and engaging environments in which youth could discuss social issues. Extracurricular groups such as gay-straight alliances (GSAs), for example, can promote feelings of inclusion, encouraging engagement and activism,

and influencing the climate of schools as a whole. Mayo (2013b) and Lapointe (2017) argued that such groups can provide models for teachers wishing to incorporate the voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, or queer (LGBTQ) individuals into the curriculum, where they have typically been excluded (Thornton, 2003). Further, Mayo (2013a) argued that students and teachers involved in GSAs are able to take steps to foster a generally more inclusive school environment. A study of 33 GSAs by Poteat, Calzo, and Yoshikawa (2018) noted that higher levels of involvement in these organizations were related to higher civic engagement and advocacy among students.

Other extracurricular or co-curricular activities characterized by broader opportunities for peer interaction also potentially serve as an important bridge between learning within classrooms and the broader climate for civic reasoning within schools. Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, and Higgins-D'Allesandro (2013) highlighted service learning as one example of how teaching and learning activities connect to the larger climate of the school and have a role in promoting civic development. Specifically, service learning activities that take place in collaborative environments, where students are encouraged to interact and build upon each other's ideas, are thought to be particularly effective for developing civic competencies. While there is extensive literature on service learning, little of it explicitly ties to civic discourse skills, however.

To this point, there has been an implicit assumption that students' experiences of particular climates within a school have an impact on their civic engagement, often through shared opportunities for reasoning and discourse. However, in understanding individual variability in perceptions of climate, it is also possible that levels of actual civic engagement among youth within schools can have a bearing on the type of climate perceived, a reciprocal direction of causality similar to that suggested earlier. This possibility has been explored in a

series of studies in middle schools in the urban Southeastern United States. Individuals with higher levels of civic participation (reports of helping or leadership in the school or local community) reported stronger relationships in school, believed rules to be more consistent, and reported a more democratic school climate; they also reported lower degrees of bully victimization. This finding was also observed at the group level: Cohort-level average of civic participation was associated with a democratic climate (Karakos et al. 2016).

Also on this topic, Geller et al. (2013) compared the associations of different forms of civic engagement to climate perceptions. Some associations were found in expected directions (e.g., higher degrees of personally-responsible civic behavior were positively associated with perceiving positive relationships, fair rules, and democratic climates). However, participating in leadership activities was associated with perceiving school rules as less consistent and fair. Geller et al. acknowledged that the participants in this third study were enrolled in schools in which young African-American men were disproportionately suspended, suggesting that youth were responding to present and critical issues of inequality witnessed in their school community. Involvement in youth participatory action research (YPAR) has similarly been found to be related to Black students' critical analyses of their schools (Hope, Skoog, & Jagers, 2015). These results illustrate that in some contexts the reasoning and discourse skills gained through meaningful, active involvement in supportive structures that centers the perspectives of youth and their communities, including but not limited to YPAR, youth organizing, and leadership opportunities, appears to be associated with students becoming more critical of injustice in their school environment (Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2007; Caraballo, Lozenski, Lyiscott, & Morrell, 2017; Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Mitra, Serriere, & Kirshner, 2014). These findings call to mind a variety of social movements over the past 50 to 60 years in which civically-

engaged youth took social action against unjust environments in their schools, including (though not limited to) walkouts sponsored by the Brown Berets in response to Chicano students' treatment in California schools in the 1960s, activities to support the lack of action in support of gay-straight alliances and LGBTQ students in Utah high schools in the 1990s, and (more recently) activities in response to the shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement (Cherif et al., 2019; Mansfield, Weston, & Halx, 2018; Wray-Lake & Abrams, 2020).

Limitations of Research on Students' Influence on Learning Environments

Opportunities exist to expand research into ways students perceive and shape learning environments and as important, to inform other areas of research, teacher preparation and policy. Much of the research presented here, particularly at the classroom level, relies on data from large-scale survey programs. These surveys may not be able to identify specific practices and conditions that serve to create learning environments for civic reasoning and discourse. While no survey can capture all the potentially relevant factors affecting the classroom and school climate, they help to generate hypotheses that could be further tested using more rigorous quantitative research designs such as randomized control trials (e.g., Barr et al., 2015) or within-subjects longitudinal designs. Realistically, however, such studies are difficult to conduct in schools and classrooms and can be difficult to appropriately contextualize.

Moreover, many of the studies cited here rely on categorical indicators of membership in demographic groups (e.g., by race or gender): an approach that has limited explanatory value for exploring young people's complex and intersecting identities (Freedman et al., 2016). Research examining a broad range of civic engagement outcomes and/or that considers features of learning environments as moderators of group differences adds some nuance; however, research using

complementary methodologies (particularly qualitative approaches like case study analysis) provides important insight into how individual youth construct their civic identities. Research on differences in how particular groups perceive classroom climates includes relatively few investigations involving characteristics such as immigrant status (for exceptions see Abu El-Haj, 2007 and follow-up studies) or being an English language learner.

Although studies of students' civic engagement and perceptions of the civics curriculum often carry implications for research on learning environments, extended exploration would be needed to make such connections explicit. For example, work by Rubin and colleagues (Rubin, 2007; Rubin, Hayes, & Benson, 2009) documented that many students in urban schools, with student bodies marginalized by both socioeconomic status and race, lack trust in school institutions. This is often due to lack of connections between their own lived experiences in their families and neighborhoods and what they experience at school (Speer, Peterson, Christens, & Reid, 2019), or to limited sense of safety or empowerment within schools, particularly when working with teachers or other adults affiliated with the school (Wray-Lake & Abrams, 2020). On one hand, negative experiences with educational authorities, including with inequitable and harsh disciplinary practices, have been shown to have long-term effects on political trust and participation later in life (Bruch & Soss, 2018). No-excuse classroom management approaches employed by some urban charter schools are posited, based on ethnographic analyses, to have similar effects on reproducing social inequalities by encouraging compliance-oriented rather than participatory-oriented approaches to civic life (Graham, 2019).

At the same time, Mirra and Garcia (2017) highlighted how a re-conceptualization of civic life toward actions for social justice lends itself to models of engagement foregrounding the voices of students from minoritized communities. Such an approach is often found when

researchers examine learning environments outside of the school context, including grassroots youth activism organizations (Kirshner, 2008; 2009) and digital spaces (Kahne et al., this volume). Indeed, when discussing how critical social capital can support civic development through the cultivation of collective efficacy, particularly for Black and Latinx youth, it is more likely to be community organizations rather than schools that are described as contexts in which this could be developed (Akom, 2003; Akom, Ginwright, & Cammarota, 2008; Ginwright, 2007; Sampson, Morenooff, & Earls, 1999). What is not always clear is how formal learning environments (which Mirra and Garcia, 2017, argue have historically perpetuated inequalities in civic learning) could be re-envisioned to provide climates offering fruitful spaces for such action and reflection.

What Are the Barriers that Educators Face in Establishing Learning Environments that Promote Civic Reasoning, Discourse, and Engagement?

Despite considerable evidence on the qualities of learning environments that promote civic reasoning and discourse, it is often a challenge to implement these features within actual school and classroom environments, with students who may have vastly different backgrounds in discussing political or social issues. In this section, we address these barriers at the school, classroom, and individual level. Many are directly related to the two major challenges identified earlier: contexts beyond the school and individual differences in students' characteristics and experience within and outside of school.

Within a school, an important factor is how the school responds to external pressures (for example, policy mandates from the district or the broader context of the community, including its political and/or partisan dimensions). School leaders adapt their behavior to the social context in which schooling takes place in ways that may influence the climate for civic discourse,

reasoning, and engagement among students. In some cases, such as mandates for testing that determine funding or school evaluations, there is little choice. Many schools, perceiving that raising test scores is the key to the evaluation of their school, restructure the school schedule to prepare for required tests. Most states do not have assessments of civic discourse and reasoning skills, preferring to focus on civic knowledge, if civics is tested at all (Brezicha & Mitra, 2019). Basic reading and computational skills are often emphasized at the expense of less-frequently tested conceptual skills and understandings necessary to make sense of political or social topics (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010).

Civic reasoning and discourse should not exclusively exist in social studies curriculums and classrooms. However, while opportunities for civic reasoning and discourse exist across the curriculum (Lee, Nasir, & Smirnov, this volume), many believe that there is a unique set of language and practice existing in the social studies that supports the development of civic reasoning and discourse skills. Thus, time in this subject is critical to helping students develop the core understandings needed to engage in civic-related problems outside of the social studies classroom, whether in other content areas or more broadly in their schools in communities (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018a). However, testing requirements and the pressure to boost math and reading scores, particularly in the elementary years, can often reduce the time available for civic reasoning and discourse by reducing the space for social studies (Fitchett, Heafner, & Lambert, 2014; Thomas, 2005). To compensate for reduced time, teachers often attempt to integrate social studies content with literacy instruction, but researchers studying such integration typically find that literacy becomes the primary goal and other content or skills development is incidental (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Brophy & Alleman, 2008). Within social studies courses themselves, concerns about preparing students for

system-wide tests can also reduce attention to discussions that can develop civic discourse and reasoning. Journell (2010), for example, studied six teachers in Chicago during the 2008 election. While all six felt it was important to discuss the election with students, several of the teachers reported a tension between their desire to incorporate this current event with pressure to prepare students for an examination required for graduation.

Social and political contexts can also influence school and classroom climate. Historically, educators in the United States have often been sanctioned for encouraging discourse about controversial issues or attempting to teach subjects perceived as beyond the comfort zones of administrators or community members (Zimmerman & Robertson, 2017). In the contemporary climate, some teachers fear that their discussions of controversial issues will invite criticism (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). As discussed earlier, the result is that many teachers commit to maintaining a neutral stance in the classroom, which can result in political opinions going unexamined, as Journell (2012) found in his study of six teachers during the 2008 election.

Often, societal forces without explicit connections to schooling result in alterations to the way schools function. One example is the increasing social and political polarization in the United States and elsewhere. In a relatively well-publicized incident, conservative parents objected to their students hearing a message from then president Barack Obama at the beginning of the 2009 school year even though the message was focused on encouraging students to work hard in school (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). In other cases, parents and community members may influence students' sense of the school as a welcoming place to learn. Macgillivray (2004), to give just one example, highlighted a school facing resistance from community members as it sought to include LGBTQ students in its non-discrimination policies.

A related concern is that school personnel may become uncomfortable with student expressions of political opinion and, in turn, may restrict opportunities for students to express and defend their opinions in the classroom. Levinson and Fay (2019) used vignettes to elicit reactions from education scholars, administrators, teachers, and students. There was considerable disagreement about how schools and teachers should respond to discussion of divisive political issues. Disagreements occurred, for example, on what constitutes appropriate student political expression in the classroom, or whether students should be allowed to express support for policies if their classmates would be negatively impacted by those policies. In such situations, it is understandable that many teachers restrict student opinion expression.

Many of the barriers to creating environments conducive to civic discourse and reasoning in schools stem from external factors. These shift over time, and researchers continually identify new barriers (or new manifestations of old barriers) to creating productive civic learning environments. In the current period of political polarization and shifting political norms, studying the interplay of these factors and school environments is particularly crucial.

Suggestions for Further Research

In the process of conducting this review, we have found substantial literature that either directly or implicitly describes and investigates high quality learning environments as contexts where students can engage in civic discourse leading to a range of potentially beneficial outcomes. There are many ways for researchers to extend this work, attending both to individual development and variation in experience and to broader contexts. A general principle is that civic discourse is both an essential component of the process of civic education, and a facilitator of individual outcomes that span social and political reasoning, knowledge, and behavior. It is also

deeply contextualized by factors at the school, community and family levels. In concluding we make some specific recommendations.

Research Directions that Address Changing Social and Cultural Contexts

Acknowledge the need for research that adapts to changing political and social landscapes in which discourse takes place. At the dawn of the third decade of the 21st Century, the norms of civic discourse are in flux. Students and teachers have few models of respectful disagreement and productive civic discourse from beyond the classroom. Researchers cannot ignore the current political context of discourse, both nationally and locally. A normative conversation about the value of different forms of civic reasoning, such as that described by Westheimer and Kahne, (2004) in an age of widening political and social divides may be essential. For example, the civic reasoning and discourses that promote consensus or compromise are different from those intended to combat entrenched injustice.

Increase research focused on the interplay between the school and the community. Torney-Purta, Amadeo, and Andolina (2010) noted that research that considers only in-school or out-of-school factors ignores overlap in individuals' membership in numerous communities. In this vein, research on learning environments should not ignore the opportunities and challenges provided in the community surrounding the school. While other papers in this project describe the broader context of civic learning, and how such contexts are mediated by proximal settings including families, peers, and schools (Rubin, Abu El-Haj, & Bellino, this volume), we focus here on recommendations for research addressing explicit areas of overlap between school and other contexts. Service learning, to provide one example, is thought to support the development of youth civic dispositions (particularly in light of social inequality) because youth have an opportunity to have contact with individuals whose perspectives vary from their own (Flanagan,

2014). Activities designed to foster youth empowerment, including leadership and grassroots organizations for youth social action, are potentially a very valuable context (Mitra, Serriere, & Kirshner, 2014; Kirshner, 2009), and additional research on the interaction of empowerment with the formal learning environment is warranted (see Speer et al., 2019).

In particular, up-to-date empirical documentation (e.g., Macgillivray, 2004) is needed to specify the various mechanisms through which community contexts shape the willingness to discuss issues within the learning environment. For example, there is fear of community pushback on the part of some teachers wishing to discuss controversial issues (McAvoy & Hess, 2013). In depth examination of such events can help educators and researchers understand the frequency and ramifications of instances of community pressure that may cause teachers and schools to alter curriculum, policy, or activities. Tools that use network analysis techniques to better understand community contexts (e.g., Paluck, Shepherd, & Aronow, 2016) hold particular promise in this regard. Collaboration with scholars who study school and community policy should also be encouraged. As social environments are prone to change, continued research on the interaction between the community and the school environments is necessary.

Conduct research on environments beyond traditional, in-person classes. While digital civic literacy is covered more fully in other sections of this report (Kahne et al., this volume), new technologies have created new educational spaces for civic discourse and reasoning, including forums for digital interaction/discussion and websites (and programs) such as iCivics that scaffold civic thinking. Despite increased interest in these digital spaces, their impact on civic discourse, reasoning, and engagement remains relatively understudied. In particular, researchers should more fully explore the interactions that these online or simulated educational environments promote, and how these interactions compare to and connect with

1178 those in face-to-face contexts (Larson, 2003). As digital environments are increasingly prevalent
1179 in youth civic discourse and engagement, research on these climates is becoming particularly
1180 important (Middaugh, Bowyer, & Kahne, 2017).

1181 Further, more research designed to study civic skill development within extracurricular or
1182 co-curricular environments that link instruction within the school with engagement in
1183 community contexts is warranted. This could expand on work on conventional service-learning
1184 contexts in ways that are familiar to educators (e.g., Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005). It also needs to
1185 be updated to consider more empowerment-oriented approaches to such involvement. In doing
1186 so, special attention should be paid to the context of these environments and how students are
1187 likely to engage with the individuals with whom they meet in the communities outside school.
1188 Further, the role of students themselves in creating and taking leadership in these opportunities
1189 should be at the forefront.

1190 **Research that Foregrounds Attempts to Understand the Individual Student's Experience**

1191 **Consider how multiple developmental contexts interact.** Ehman (1980) was prescient
1192 in commenting about the importance of extracurricular activities for cultivating the peer
1193 relationships that can support civic learning (a focus that continues until today), and more recent
1194 research has considered peer interactions in the context of small groups within classroom settings
1195 (e.g., Kuhn, 2015). Research on informal civic learning environments also points to peer
1196 relationships in and of themselves (alongside other groups such as families) as an important
1197 context for developing skills related to civic reasoning and discourse (Richardson, 2003;
1198 Wilkenfeld & Torney-Purta, 2012). These interactions take place both in face-to-face and online
1199 contexts. If students attend school (and specific classes) with a particular group of peers, there is

also likely to be overlap between peer networks and experiences in formal learning environments.

McDevitt and Kiousis (2007) developed a model to conceptualize how peers and parents each influence the associations between classroom discussions and later civic outcomes; they posited that peer groups are especially important contexts for cultivating capacities for protesting and non-conventional forms of participation, whereas more conventional forms of participation were more often cultivated through parents. Researchers could more fully consider how the informal peer context and specific features of formal educational learning environments relate to each other, particularly as they create (or constrain) supportive climates for civic learning and discourse. For example, Morine-Dershimer (2006) has noted the need for researchers to more fully explore student dynamics and discourse as it takes place in small group work, and recent work by Green et al. (2020) highlights the potential of micro-ethnographic discourse analysis to aid in such exploration by providing a framework for theoretically-grounded inquiry into complex learning processes. From another methodological vantage point, social network analysis may be useful in assessing how peer networks interface with the more formal organization of students existing within schools. This approach has been used to study aspects of young people's civic development from other vantage points, but it has not been adequately integrated into methodologies for studying school or classroom climate.

Further examine developing reasoning and discourse skills as processes through which a supportive school/classroom climate shapes civic outcomes. By drawing on a variety of literature from different disciplines, we have laid out evidence that the climate of a learning environment shapes opportunities for dialogue, which in turn has the potential to influence attitudes or lead to civic action. We also have highlighted literature that examines how teachers

and peers construct opportunities for argumentation and dialogue within formal learning environments, and ways in which these opportunities support civic reasoning and discourse skills. At present, however, it is implied that the broader climate of classrooms and schools shapes reasoning and discourse skills (which in turn prepares youth for further civic action). There are very few studies that explicitly follow this pathway of linking an open climate to civic action through increased civic reasoning skills, however. Research that directly tests links between climate and discourse skills is needed to assess whether the cognitive and social processes that are thought to be encouraged within an open discussion climate are indeed being developed in a way that equips students for participation in and outside school. An increased use of randomized controlled trials (advocated by Campbell, 2019) is one approach to strengthening research in this area. However, there are also important caveats in this area related to appropriate generalizations across social contexts that should be further developed through qualitative and mixed-methods work. Taken together, the resulting knowledge base could strengthen the theory of change that could inform practical interventions in this area.

Also important is increased attention to the relationship between thinking and discourse as related to action. Throughout this paper we have made reference to discourse, reason, and action as three mutually-enforcing pillars of civic development. Reviewing the large literature on how thinking and reasoning develop in the second decade of life and beyond exceeds the scope of this paper. However such development, which is substantial albeit variable across individuals, is crucial to consider when linking discourse to action. Thinking is implicit in discourse, and discourse may provide a particularly effective path to its development (Kuhn, 2019; Michaels et al., 2008; Olson, 2016). Moreover, thinking is essential to civic action; without well-reasoned

conviction to give them purpose, civic actions are unlikely to be sustained (Malin, Ballard, & Damon, 2015).

Connect research on reasoning and discourse skill development to research in the field of social-emotional learning. Finally, the foregrounding of reasoning and discourse processes placed emphasis on a primarily cognitive approach to understanding the developmental underpinnings of civic action. However, in keeping with the acknowledgement that human learning integrates perceptual and affective components along with cognitive factors (Lee, Nasir, & Smirnov, this volume; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018a), we have also summarized clear evidence that the socio-emotional components of civic action cannot be overlooked. Particularly important are feelings of belonging and safety that are encouraged through positive, open school and classroom climates. Looking at the issue in this way, there is an opportunity for increased theoretical and practical connection between programs in civic engagement and in socio-emotional learning (SEL). Jones, McGarrah, and Kahn (in press) recently outlined a framework for understanding socio-emotional learning in practice that highlights the ways in which cognitive, social, and emotional skills develop through supportive relationships. They highlight particular SEL initiatives developed from work in school districts to foster positive school climates. These initiatives were developed through close research-practice partnerships and in ways that were responsive and grounded in meaningful theories of change. While Jones et al. (in press) discuss SEL's roots in prevention science--a framework not traditionally tied to civic-related outcomes--the two traditions overlap extensively (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002; Cohen et al., 2010; Kia-Keating, Dowdy, Morgan, & Noam, 2011; Wentzel, 2015). This overlap in traditions has considerable

potential for considering the role of school and classroom climate as related to civic outcomes in nuanced ways (Andolina & Conklin, 2019).

Expanding and Developing Research Infrastructure

Beyond the specific and substantive recommendations provided, we also note a few general recommendations for encouraging the collecting and sharing of relevant data in further research. The first acknowledges that many of the findings presented in this paper are based on research from the IEA civics studies. From the vantage of understanding the U.S. context in particular, this presents a limitation, as the United States has not participated in these studies since CIVED in 1999. A recommendation for further research in this area, therefore, is to resume participation in IEA's civics and citizenship education studies. This could be accomplished through full national participation or through involvement via state-level benchmarking, which takes place using the same instruments but later than the main testing. Through such involvement, the United States would gain up-to-date information about students' opportunities to benefit from civic discourse and from an atmosphere of mutual respect in their schools, which could assist in identifying ways to improve educational programs to encourage civic participation. The next International Civics and Citizenship Education Study, slated for 2022, will include many of the same psychometrically-rigorous measures of civic participation and attitudes in classrooms and schools used previously (including those relating to class and school climate) while also considering new or updated measures to assess current issues and challenges (IEA, 2020).

A second suggestion recognizes that infrastructures to support data sharing, whether from international surveys or from studies specific to a particular country or region, would also help foster further research. For example, CivicLEADS, funded by the Spencer Foundation and

housed at the University of Michigan's Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (Regents of the University of Michigan, 2020), has become a repository for information on studies in this area, including those conducted using qualitative or geospatial methodologies as well as survey-based studies. Available resources include more than 20 datasets with accompanying instruments, codebooks, and bibliographies of published research. With expanded funding, this could become a source for enhancing networks and collaborations between researchers to foster and develop new projects, either using archived datasets or encouraging new data collections specifically addressing topics raised here. Furthermore, CivicLEADS or another source could provide a bulletin board or even an early warning system about threats to open discourse and suggestions from teachers about how to deal with them.

Implications for Teachers and Administrators

Given the associations between democratic school and classroom climates and the development of student civic reasoning and discourse, educators should be encouraged to promote such environments in their particular contexts (and should have the backing and support of administrators). These efforts, however, must be carefully contextualized in light of the political and social climate of the community that surrounds the school. Based on the literature reviewed above, we offer several recommendations for educators toward building classrooms conducive to the development of civic reasoning and discourse:

Encourage Climates that are Conducive to Civic Discourse Consistently Across the School

Democratic discourse thrives in schools where faculty, administrators, and staff are conscious of it and emphasize it. Although discussions of social and political issues commonly take place in social studies classes (and are thus the focus of much of the research literature), there are ample opportunities to engage in civic discourse and reasoning in other school subjects.

Engaging with civic issues from a scientific perspective (such as Citizen Science approaches) or a literary perspective can emphasize to students that civic discourse takes place in a variety of contexts and illustrate the transferability of discursive skills.

While classroom pedagogy and climate are important, educators can make the development of civic discourse and reasoning a priority in school governance and policies, extra-curricular activities, and other elements of the school. This must be contextualized within the communities surrounding the schools. The aim is that students should see civic discourse and reasoning modeled across multiple school contexts and, in turn, have many opportunities to engage themselves. If a given school emphasizes civic reasoning, discourse, and engagement as part of the "ethos" of the school (Campbell, 2006), classroom activities and climates, and extracurricular opportunities, it sends the message that such skills and dispositions are valuable foundations for civic life. Further, students should be encouraged to suggest new activities that promote these aims, particularly in the realm of using digital technologies.

Ensure that Teachers are Prepared and Supported

Teachers who engage (or want to engage) students with political and social issues are often concerned that they will become targets of ire from parents or community members, or even students who have objections to the content or format of class discussions. If the school values civic discourse and reasoning, there should be procedures and plans for dealing with challenges. Often students who have become engaged because of innovative programs are the best defenders of those programs. Further, as much as possible, incorporation of civic reasoning and discourse skills in school mission statements and policies can lay the groundwork for responses to criticism. Relatedly, when there are strong networks of educators and administrators

committed to engaging students in civic reasoning and discourse, the school can better respond to unforeseen pressures.

Professional organizations can also play a role in supporting teachers as they create spaces for civic reasoning and discourse. In addition to providing resources and strategies for teachers as they strive for open classrooms and schools, organizations such as the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) or the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), through public statements and policy advocacy, and the development of standards can serve as a counterweight to public discourses that may stifle open discussion of controversial issues. As Hahn (1998; 2010) notes, NCSS has served a similar role in previously contentious political times through issuing statements in support of open discussion of ideas.

Model Civic Discourse and Reasoning for Students and Create Spaces for Students to Practice These Skills

Because educators have considerable power to shape student thinking, they should be conscious about how they model civic behaviors. Open discussion of current events and controversial issues, with the allowance of multiple, reasonable viewpoints models the value of civic thinking to students. Avoidance of controversy and opinion expression, on the other hand, sends the message that such issues and skills are not important to citizens. In turn, teacher educators should challenge future teachers to consider dilemmas of practice that exist around such discussions and help develop professional judgement about how to facilitate productive discussions appropriate to the needs and concerns of different developmental levels, student populations, communities, and contexts (Pace, 2019).

Provide Opportunities for Collaboration in Class

Collaborative learning environments in which students talk about political and social issues allow students to develop discursive skills (Kuhn, 2015; Kuhn, Feliciano, & Kostikina, 2019). The social interaction inherent in collaborative learning or group discussion helps build these skills for later civic participation (Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015). Educators should be intentional about structuring these activities: e.g., which students collaborate with each other in class. Diverse groups often present opportunities for students to engage with a range of ideas and often result in rich discussions (Goldberg, 2013; Stoddard & Chen, 2016).

Engage in Organization and Advocacy

Teachers and administrators intending to engage in any or all the above may find themselves constrained by local, state, or even national policies. For example, restrictions on funding availability or mandates for testing can shift the focus to easily-measured rote learning and dis-incentivize more robust civic reasoning and discourse. While educators certainly should exercise the power and influence they have in their local communities to create environments that promote civic reasoning and discourse, they must also strive to voice their concerns in statehouses. Professional organizations and teachers unions can also serve to amplify teacher's voices at the state and national level.

Conclusion

Developing students' civic reasoning and discourse skills for future civic engagement is a challenging and complicated objective, particularly in light of supporting future civic engagement. The success of curriculum and pedagogy designed to fulfill this objective is inextricably linked to the environment in which activities takes place (Hahn, 1996). In this paper, we have examined the various tools used to assess the climates of learning environments within classrooms. In addition, we have focused on factors that shape students' experiences in

classrooms and schools as a whole. If a student has had an opportunity over time to be a member of a learning community that is open to group participation and also where individual students' views and varied backgrounds are respected, that usually means that student has had the experience of high-quality civic discourse. This participation in turn has likely contributed to the student's own skill, confidence, and disposition to participate, with the many present and potential benefits we have noted. If we deconstruct the constructs of school and classroom climate, some of their characteristics might be better understood. We might then be able to understand how to encourage changes in policies and educational practices, with the potential to orient educators toward the new realities of school-aged populations, who are being prepared to be the new population of voters, parents, work associates. friends, and community participants.

Classroom and school climates are never totally predictable: They depend on a variety of factors and are not easy to change, especially in the short-term. Consistent policies and practices on the part of teachers and administrators promoting the inclusion of current issues on a regular basis, or support for school-wide values and behaviors that promote student agency and voice, can gradually build learning environments suitable for civic reasoning and discourse. A range of international and national research studies have useful information for teachers and administrators about some factors influencing climates at school. Most teachers recognize variation in classroom and school climates. We believe it is possible and useful to describe and assess climate as an organizational feature of formal learning environments. In particular we have focused on respect for the unique contributions for students from all backgrounds, students' perceptions of openness to their contributions, and assistance to students in providing the spaces and guidance necessarily to hone their ideas. Of particular importance is teachers' awareness of the everyday out of school contexts in which students live and the factors that encourage or

inhibit their civic reasoning and discourse. These can all be useful in providing educators with some ideas about actions to take to further the goals of civic reasoning, discourse and engagement.

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