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Civic Reasoning and Discourse

Pedagogical Practices and How Teachers Learn

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1 **PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AND HOW TEACHERS LEARN**

2
3 **Abstract**

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5 This paper examines the pedagogical and curricular practices that foster youth civic reasoning
6 and discourse in the context of K-12 schools, how students’ identities shape their engagement
7 with one another about controversial issues, and how educators should be supported so that they
8 can foster students’ civic reasoning and discourse. We identify many promising pedagogical and
9 curricular practices that support students’ civic reasoning and discourse, some of which have
10 strong research evidence behind them and some for which research support is emerging. We
11 highlight important ways that teachers and curricula can either support, engage, and sustain
12 students’ various social identities through these practices or privilege some students’ identities to
13 the exclusion of others, creating differential opportunities for the development of students’ civic
14 reasoning and discourse. Finally, we examine broad approaches that have shown success in
15 supporting educators’ learning and development, including some specific ways of fostering
16 educators’ ability to lead students’ engagement in civic discourse. Our paper builds on the
17 successful practices that research has identified to suggest further approaches that should be
18 explored that deepen our understanding of how to support all of the dimensions of students’ civic
19 reasoning and discourse, as well as how to ensure that all students have opportunities to develop
20 their civic reasoning and discourse capacities.

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26 The multiple crises that have unfolded in the year 2020—from the COVID-19 pandemic
27 to the killing of George Floyd and subsequent protests—have underscored the urgency of the
28 core civic question: what should we do? How should we balance the health of our global
29 community with economic needs? How should we redress the long history of violence and police
30 brutality against black Americans? These crises have further exposed existing fractures in society
31 and heightened the need to address longstanding questions: How should we address economic
32 inequality? How should we rectify the education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006)? What should we
33 do about climate change? The myriad complex and pressing questions we face call attention to
34 the importance of fostering civic reasoning in our diverse and interdependent society—a task that
35 schools can play a significant role in supporting. Pedagogical and curricular efforts must be
36 centered on developing citizens’ capacities to live in a diverse society, where citizenship offers
37 protections for the interests of all members of a given society (Banks, 2017; Howard, 2004).

38 In this paper, we consider what research suggests about how educators might best
39 cultivate young people’s civic reasoning and discourse in school settings. As Stitzlein (2020,
40 March) lays out in the opening chapter, learning to reason civically and engage in civic discourse
41 involves a wide range of knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions. Because “civic reasoning is
42 the reasoning we do about what we should do” in a pluralistic society (Stitzlein, 2020, March), it
43 includes many complex skills and dispositions, such as the willingness and ability to listen to
44 others, seriously consider new evidence and reasons, communicate effectively, give reasons for
45 one’s view, be fair-minded, share the discussion space, and seek fair and just solutions to
46 complex problems. Further, to reason civically relies on historical, political, and many other
47 forms of knowledge—as well as having the tools to inquire to gain additional knowledge or
48 evidence, and knowing how to discern the relative value of various evidence. Engaging in civic

49 discourse—discussion and deliberation—draws upon and facilitates civic reasoning. Identity is
50 also central to civic reasoning: *who* we are is central to *how* we reason. Importantly, although
51 deliberation in the public domain may begin from positions that prioritize individuals’ personal
52 well-being, democratic deliberation includes an expectation that people do not advocate positions
53 from pure self-interest; instead, they seek solutions that are attentive to the common good
54 (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). In this way, civic reasoning involves seeking solutions that
55 promote a fair and just society and rectify current injustices—although what constitutes a fair
56 and just society is itself an important matter for deliberation.

57 Given the complex range of capacities we aim to foster in young people, here we
58 examine the pedagogical and curricular practices involved in developing civic reasoning and
59 discourse in the context of K-12 schools. Specifically, our work explores three central questions:

- 60 • What pedagogical and curricular scaffolds are effective to help young people develop
61 civic reasoning and participate effectively in high quality discussion, deliberation, and
62 debate?
- 63 • How do students’ identities (racial, ethnic, political, etc.) influence how they experience
64 and learn to engage thoughtfully with others about critical controversial issues?
- 65 • How can we best prepare and support educators to provide high quality learning
66 opportunities so *all* students further develop their civic reasoning, discussion,
67 deliberation, and debate skills?

68 In what follows, we examine the research to date that sheds light on these questions. Our analysis
69 draws heavily on research conducted within the realm of social studies education, given the
70 field’s strong affiliation with civic education; however, we also point to scholarship from other

71 domains that inform these questions and illustrate how educators can foster civic reasoning and
72 discourse across the disciplines.

73 **Pedagogical and curricular scaffolds to support civic reasoning**

74 To ground these questions, we must first consider the broader goals toward which
75 pedagogical and curricular scaffolds are oriented and the aims of schooling in a pluralistic
76 democracy. An essential goal of school curriculum is to educate students so that they will
77 develop the knowledge, dispositions, attitudes, and skills needed to help create, sustain, and to
78 live in a diverse democracy, public spaces, and global community in which all groups can and
79 will participate with equal protection under the law. To that end, pedagogical and curricular
80 interventions in schools must be reflective of the diverse cultures, languages, and lived
81 experiences that students bring to the classroom (Howard, 2003, 2020), but further, civic
82 reasoning should seek solutions that promote and sustain a more just democratic society.
83 Moreover, effective curriculum must offer a comprehensive historical lens, and a more inclusive
84 accounting of history that acknowledges historic injustices in US history, such as those that have
85 led to marginalization of multiple groups (Brown & Brown, 2010). Finally, effective curricular
86 and pedagogical scaffolding must be centered on a quest for democratic, equitable citizenship—a
87 quest that is tied to the need to recognize, respect, and embrace people’s participation in multiple
88 cultural practices associated with race/ethnicity, language, social class, gender, sexual
89 orientation, and assumptions about ability.

90 There is good reason to think strategically about how to establish the classroom
91 conditions for civic reasoning and discourse since research illustrates that courses such as those
92 in government, democracy, law, history, or economics clearly support students’ civic learning
93 (Gould, Jamieson, Levine, McConnell, & Smith, 2011; Levine & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017).

94 In particular, classroom civic learning opportunities have a significant impact on students’
95 commitments to civic participation (Kahne & Sporte, 2008). In fact, Kahne and Sporte found that
96 classroom-based experiences had the most significant impact of those factors tested (e.g.,
97 extracurriculars) with predominantly low-income students of color when controlling for other
98 background experiences and demographics. This suggests that focusing on pedagogy and
99 curriculum in courses that offer civic learning opportunities may support those students who
100 have not always had a voice or felt empowered to participate in our democracy (Kahne & Sporte,
101 2008; Lo, 2017). But, what pedagogical and curricular scaffolds allow teachers to establish the
102 conditions for high-quality civics learning in the classroom?

103 **Curricular scaffolds**

104 In order to support the development of high quality civic reasoning and discourse in
105 youth, research points to a variety of curricular supports that may be generative. The research we
106 discuss below suggests that curricular scaffolds can support civic reasoning and discourse by
107 providing an inquiry orientation, identifying authentic controversies to investigate, and providing
108 models of how to leverage students’ lives, experiences, and knowledge to become a part of the
109 curriculum.

110 A key overarching approach across high-quality civics learning opportunities found in the
111 literature is an emphasis on the value of inquiry-oriented instruction focused on deeper learning.
112 However, across the curriculum, there is a persistent orientation to content knowledge as fixed
113 information, which implies the teacher’s role is to impart that information and the student’s role
114 is to memorize it. State standards and high-stakes assessments tend to reify this orientation. For
115 example, a comparison study conducted by the Education Commission of the States (n.d.)
116 showed that existing civics standards focus primarily on the historic origins of the Constitution

117 and its structures and functions. While having background knowledge is certainly important and
118 impacts how students think about civic issues (e.g., Shreiner, 2014), an emphasis on knowledge
119 alone can lead to imparting information without question, and distilling civics down to a series of
120 vocabulary terms along with rights and responsibilities of citizens. Further, emphasizing the
121 acquisition of fixed bodies of knowledge comes at the cost of supporting other aspects of civic
122 reasoning and discussion, deliberation, and debate: when information is fixed, there is typically
123 little to debate and diverse voices can be marginalized or silenced. Thus, if civic reasoning,
124 discussion, deliberation, and debate skills are not explicitly called for, teachers may not prioritize
125 them.

126 Research suggests, then, that one important way to support high quality civic reasoning
127 and discourse is through a re-orientation of curricular frameworks and state requirements. The
128 National Council for the Social Studies' C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013) demonstrates one effort to
129 increase opportunities for civic reasoning through the framework's foregrounding of inquiry as a
130 curricular anchor. The C3 Framework is intended to serve as a guide for states that are revising
131 their state standards and for practitioners creating curriculum, so that an inquiry orientation
132 becomes the norm of social studies and civic learning. The Inquiry Design Model (Swan, Lee, &
133 Grant, 2018) is another resource to guide teachers in developing inquiry-oriented curriculum.
134 Similarly, some states have begun to implement curricular requirements that mandate the
135 teaching of various elements of civic reasoning and discourse. The state of Illinois, for example,
136 recently passed legislation that requires high school students to take a semester of stand-alone
137 civics that includes not only instruction on government institutions but also current and
138 controversial issues discussions, service learning, and simulations of democratic processes (cf.,

139 Illinois General Assembly HB 4025, 2015). While these curricular changes offer promise,
140 research has not yet explored the extent to which these changes will impact teachers' practice.

141 In addition to foregrounding inquiry and featuring elements of civic reasoning and
142 discourse in curricular frameworks, because high quality civic reasoning and discourse rely upon
143 the participation of and inclusion of diverse citizens, the curriculum and perspectives that are
144 represented in civic education spaces should reflect our pluralistic democracy. This can happen
145 through making the formal school curriculum more inclusive and less White and Eurocentric,
146 selecting civic topics that highlight democratic complexity, and using youth themselves—their
147 knowledge and experience—as curriculum.

148 Indeed, it's not only knowledge of traditional civic education topics (e.g., political
149 institutions), but also knowledge of history and the framing of dominant narratives within
150 societies that shape youth's conception of their role and opportunities for civic participation (cf.,
151 Bellino, 2015, 2016; Busey & Walker, 2017; Ho, 2010; Santiago, 2017; Vickery, 2017). History
152 is replete with accounts of how the "other" has been excluded and marginalized in a pluralistic
153 and increasingly diverse society (Banks, 2017; Crocco & Davis, 2002; Marable, 2002; Parker,
154 2003; Santiago, 2019; Yosso, 2002). School curriculum cannot avoid difficult issues, stifle
155 diverse viewpoints, or prioritize the voices and histories of some, at the exclusion of others
156 (Tyson, 2003). For centuries, discrimination, exclusion, prejudice and injustice have been
157 challenged, protested against, and seen as a black eye in the nation's pursuit of becoming truly
158 democratic (cf., Marable, 2002). Because PreK-12 public schools are typically the most diverse
159 spaces youth frequent, these schools hold promise as settings to instill the appropriate
160 knowledge, skills, and dispositions for living in a diverse and inclusive democracy (Parker,
161 2010). As Banks (2008) wrote,

162 When universal citizenship is determined, defined, and implemented by groups with
163 power and when the interests of marginalized groups are not expressed or incorporated
164 into civic discussions, the interests of groups with power and influence will determine the
165 definitions of universal citizenship and the public interest (p. 131-2).

166 Civics curriculum should incorporate the interests, viewpoints, and voices of all members of our
167 diverse society.

168 Further, to advance civic reasoning and discourse, research indicates that curriculum
169 must include the authentic controversies and contradictions that animate our democracy (Abu El-
170 Haj, 2007). In civic education, teachers are typically hesitant to discuss controversial issues in
171 the classroom (e.g., Hand & Levinson, 2012; Hess, 2009; Journell, 2011) and instead tend to
172 focus on the “facts:” the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the three branches of
173 government, or any concept on a laundry list of important, albeit sanitized, ideals of our
174 democratic values (Brown & Brown, 2011). The current, polarized political climate has made
175 teachers and administrators even more reticent about bringing up “sensitive” or “political” issues
176 in the classroom (Rogers et al., 2017), often avoiding them in an effort to stay neutral or non-
177 partisan (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo, & Rivera, 2009). This is particularly true when the
178 controversial issues focus on race and racial identity (e.g., Bolgatz, 2005; Sue, 2015; Walsh,
179 2008), or other “hard history” about racism, sexism, genocide, and oppression (Shuster, 2018)—
180 despite the fact that civic educators have been calling for engaging such issues for decades (cf.,
181 Hunt & Metcalf, 1968).

182 Although democratic ideals are important for students to learn (Parker & Lo, 2016)—
183 helping students develop high quality civic reasoning requires that teachers help students
184 examine such ideals in all their complexity (Lo, 2019). While some students may see the

185 principles laid out in the Constitution as foregone conclusions, other students’ life experiences
186 may cause them to view the Bill of Rights as a list of hypocrisies. As Cohen, Kahne, and
187 Marshall (2018) explain, race, ethnicity, and identity are significant influences on young
188 people’s daily experiences with civic life; for example, they note that, “youth of color often have
189 political knowledge regarding the unequal implementation of democracy that white youth do not
190 have or do not recognize” (p. 7). Yet existing civic education programming typically fails to
191 capitalize on the experiential, political knowledge that youth—especially those whose
192 experiences have typically been marginalized—bring to classrooms.

193 Thus, in order to support high quality civic reasoning and enable students to make sense
194 of their lived experiences in an inequitable system, the knowledge that young people themselves
195 bring to the civics classroom needs to be viewed as important curricular material. Teachers must
196 strike a balance between highlighting democratic ideals and acknowledging realities of lived
197 experiences (e.g., how do students deal with issues of police brutality when the Constitution says
198 that all people are created equal or that there is due process?), and curriculum should include
199 deep discussions about the conflicts that exist between democratic ideals and students’ lived
200 experiences. The proposed “Lived Civics” approach to civic education is one example of how
201 educators might bring race, ethnicity, and identity to the forefront and explicitly address how
202 power and oppression operate (Cohen, Kahne, and Marshall, 2018). Curricular approaches that
203 center youth experiences should position students to both critically examine sources of injustice
204 they experience and examine the history of resistance in their communities so that they gain an
205 understanding of the political pathways others have taken to push against structural injustices
206 and develop new policies and practices.

207 One example of a curriculum that centers youth knowledge is the action civics program
208 Project Soapbox in which youth choose a community issue of importance to them and then
209 develop and deliver a speech to their peers and community members, often drawing on and
210 incorporating personal experiences to build a case for action. Research among predominantly
211 youth of color demonstrated that students who participated in the curriculum reported increased
212 confidence in their rhetorical skills as well as greater empathy for others—dimensions of civic
213 reasoning that were shaped in part by the personal experiences that many students drew upon in
214 crafting and delivering their speeches (Andolina & Conklin, 2018; 2019).

215 **Pedagogical scaffolds**

216 Attention to the nature of the curriculum provides one avenue to support high quality
217 civic reasoning. But scaffolding students' civic reasoning skills and enabling them to participate
218 effectively in high quality discussion, deliberation, and debate also necessitates careful
219 consideration of the pedagogy that brings students into conversation with that curriculum. In
220 Experience and Education, Dewey (1938) argued that “all genuine education comes about
221 through experience” (p. 13). Discussion, deliberation and debate, much like democracy needs to
222 be experienced by students in order for them to internalize democratic values, ideas, and beliefs.
223 Four initiatives recommended by civic education experts (Gould, Jamieson, Levine, McConnell,
224 & Smith, 2011; Levine & Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017) work against the content-as-fixed-
225 information norm by presenting different instantiations of inquiry-oriented instruction focused on
226 deeper learning that enable students to experience civic reasoning and discourse: deliberation and
227 discussion of controversial issues, simulations, action civics, and news media literacy. Below we
228 highlight examples from each of these areas of work, along with additional pedagogical

229 approaches that demonstrate promise for supporting students' civic learning: scaffolded listening
230 and case studies.

231 **Deliberation and discussion.** Engaging young people in the deliberation and discussion
232 of public issues has gained traction as one important pedagogical approach for fostering their
233 civic learning. Open discussion of issues in society and classroom discussion, including the
234 discussion of controversial public issues, predict a wide range of valuable civic outcomes,
235 including increased political knowledge, efficacy, political interest, tolerance, trust, participation,
236 and expected and actual electoral participation (cf., Barton & Avery, 2016; Hess, 2009; Kahne,
237 Crow, & Lee, 2013). Hess and McAvoy's (2015) study of political discussions in high school
238 classrooms illustrated, for example, that participation in high quality political discussions led
239 students to place significant value on hearing the diverse perspectives of their peers, see
240 disagreement as a normal part of democratic life, and view political issues as more complex than
241 they had previously thought. Other studies have shown that students who engage in thoughtful
242 deliberations around race are more capable of understanding discrimination, prejudice, and
243 injustice (Milner, 2013; Nagda, Gurin, & Lopez, 2003; L. Parker, 1998); they tend to listen to
244 and learn from multiple perspectives (Hess, 2002); and, research suggests they are more likely to
245 become the kinds of leaders who are motivated and equipped to make institutional change
246 through battling racism and transforming racist institutions (Flynn, 2012; Howard, 2003; Nagda
247 et al., 2003). While much of this research has centered on social studies classrooms, research has
248 illustrated that this important civic learning can occur across the curriculum, such as through
249 students' engagement in analysis of literary texts that focus on civic issues (cf., Mirra, 2018) and
250 through structured student dialogue that alternates between verbal and written exchanges focused
251 on social issues (cf., Kuhn, 2019).

252 But teaching students to “effectively” participate in classroom deliberations, discussion,
253 and debate is complex, because participation requires appropriately using a collection of skills,
254 including self-regulation. A participant needs to make judgments about how to say something,
255 when to say something, and when it is best to say nothing. Classroom discussion also differs
256 from public discussion because, in the K-12 setting, it is a discussion among novices.
257 Consequently, a teacher needs to nurture the willingness to participate while also developing the
258 skills of good participation.

259 A robust body of research has demonstrated that controversy is a teaching tool that can be
260 used effectively to support students’ learning to discuss and deliberate political and public policy
261 issues (e.g., Hess, 2002, 2009a, 2009b; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Hess & Richardson, 2017/18).
262 Through study of successful teachers, Hess has identified key principles that support teaching of
263 controversial issues in the classroom. These include creating a classroom climate that welcomes
264 all students and their perspectives; explicitly teaching students *how* to participate effectively and
265 thoughtfully in discussions of controversial civic issues (e.g., how to ask clarifying questions,
266 how to use different kinds of evidence to support a claim); planning discussions carefully –
267 including identifying open (not settled) political or public policy issues without a single right
268 answer; providing students with opportunities to learn about the topic of discussion and with a
269 model for discussion to structure their work together; providing multiple opportunities for
270 discussion; and investigating issues that have meaning for students (2009a, 2009b, 2017/18). We
271 briefly explore some of these principles in greater detail below.

272 *Setting the classroom climate.* In *Talking to Strangers*, Danielle Allen (2004) notes the
273 important role that trust plays in a democracy. Attending to the classroom climate is necessary
274 for building the trust that students need for discussion to go well, and indeed the literature is

275 clear on the importance of discussion and open-classroom climate in civics classrooms (e.g.,
276 Berkowitz & Gibbs, 1983; Hess, 2009; Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2013; Levinson, Hand, & Amos,
277 2012; Torney-Purta, 2002). To that end, students should build relationships by learning each
278 other’s names, getting to know each other’s interests, laughing together, and becoming a learning
279 community. Laying this groundwork to create a classroom climate that welcomes all students,
280 including the multiple and conflicting views they may bring, is an often neglected but vital part
281 of preparing students for discussion.

282 *Planning for discussion.* Parker and Hess have made significant contributions to
283 understanding the kind of planning that is involved in supporting successful discussions of civic
284 issues. Parker’s (2003) work identifying generative texts and questions to discuss, and Parker’s
285 and Hess’s (2001) typology of different possible forms and purposes for classroom discussions
286 have supported novice and veteran teachers in planning for and leading effective discussions.

287 *Providing structure.* Parker and Hess (2001) argue that a helpful starting point is for
288 educators to teach “with” and “for” discussion. Teaching with discussion treats discussion as a
289 learning activity that helps students deepen their understanding of the content. Teaching for
290 discussion involves making the norms and skills related to discussion explicit. Importantly, it
291 treats discussion as a skill to be learned and improved upon (Hess, 2009; Parker & Hess, 2001).
292 Using structured discussion strategies such as those identified by Parker and Hess (2001) help
293 students to develop the skills associated with civic reasoning.

294 There is a growing body of discussion protocols that engage students in discussions,
295 which include: Socratic seminar, Structured Academic Controversy, fishbowls, pinwheels, town
296 hall meetings, and structured peer-to-peer, technology-mediated discourse (Brookfield &
297 Preskill, 2012; Gonzalez, 2015; Kuhn, 2018; 2019; Parker, 2003; Ritchhart, Church, & Morrison,

298 2011). Of these, Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) developed by educational
299 psychologists Johnson and Johnson (1993) is one protocol that has been frequently studied,
300 because it scaffolds students to engage in what the creators term “constructive controversy”
301 (Johnson & Johnson, 1979). In a SAC students move from low-risk paired discussion to a small
302 group discussion with assigned roles, to more free-form small group discussion, and last, to
303 whole-class discussion. Students work from common materials, know when and for how long
304 they will speak, and engage in argumentation. This protocol has been implemented widely across
305 the curriculum and across age levels, from science deliberations focused on energy and
306 environmental issues (cf., Johnson & Johnson, 1988) to social studies deliberations focused on
307 juvenile justice and fair trade (cf., Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013; 2014).

308 Johnson and Johnson (1993) studied SAC and found that the strategy improves students’
309 ability to engage in perspective taking, understood as being able to identify why others might
310 reason differently about an issue. More recently, Avery, Levy and Simmons (2014) studied
311 teachers using the SAC to investigate whether, post-participation, students reported improved
312 knowledge about the issue and whether they showed more ability to engage in perspective-taking
313 than a control group. Their findings show that when compared to control classes that did not
314 engage in SAC, participants scored significantly higher on a measure of perspective taking. This
315 measure asked students to list reasons for and against an issue that they had not discussed.¹ This
316 suggests that the skill modeled in the SAC had some transference when considering another
317 issue. Second, they found that in deliberation classes, there was less variation of opinion after
318 participating in the SAC, which suggests that the strategy may help people find common
319 ground.

¹ Johnson and Johnson (1993) looked at changes in perspective taking on the issue discussed.

320 Hess and McAvoy (2015) also observed that these sorts of structures have an equalizing
321 effect on discussion; the structures force those who talk too much to hold back and make space
322 for those who hesitate to share to get into the conversation. Structures also reinforce the norms of
323 discussion, often providing students with language (e.g., sentence starters) that models how to
324 disagree.

325 Similarly, Kuhn and colleagues have studied a form of structured, peer-to-peer discourse
326 that alternates between verbal and written exchanges (Kuhn, 2018; 2019; Kuhn et al., 2013;
327 Kuhn et al., 2016b). Paired students verbally discuss a social issue with each other, engage
328 electronically in writing with successive pairs with opposing views, participate in a whole class
329 debate, and finally craft a written argumentative essay in the form of a newspaper op-ed. Studies
330 of this curriculum have demonstrated that students learn to uphold norms of discourse as
331 participants in this community of practice and develop both argumentative writing skills and
332 dialogic skills (Kuhn, 2018; 2019; Kuhn et al., 2013; Kuhn et al., 2016b).

333 **Simulations.** Simulations and role-plays have a long history in the social studies
334 (Baranowski & Weir, 2010; Druckman & Ebner, 2008; Shaftel & Shaftel, 1967), and are another
335 set of pedagogical tools that teachers have used to advance students' civic learning. One program
336 of research focuses on augmenting the Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. Government and Politics
337 course by integrating five political simulations. These simulations support in-depth learning and
338 balance the typical emphasis on breadth and factual recall in such a course. The simulations
339 included Supreme Court hearings or Town Hall meetings and involve students playing roles that
340 are "truthful" in reflecting reality, yet simplified (Parker et al., 2018, p.256). Across a range of
341 studies, Parker and his team (2011, 2013, 2016, 2018) have found that including simulations in
342 the course supported students in learning "21st century skills" and engaging meaningfully with

343 the content when students also read texts with support during the simulations. At the same time,
344 students in these studies did as well or better than their peers in traditional AP Government
345 courses on the AP exam.

346 Role-plays and simulations have also shown potential to engage students and defuse
347 some of the controversies that may arise in discussions. Findings from a past research study
348 suggest that assigning roles offers a low-stakes entry point for students to engage with
349 contentious issues (Lo, 2015). In a sense, the role acts as a *portal to plurality*—a gateway into
350 the issues around definitions of “the good life” in a pluralistic liberal democracy. The stakes are
351 low because everyone in the class is assigned a role, and students have the opportunity to try on
352 an opinion behind the safety of their roles without needing to “out” their own opinions about the
353 issue. Importantly, not all topics are worthy of role-play, especially if the roles are derogatory,
354 inauthentic, or portray a skewed sense of history that may induce trauma.² At the same time, this
355 low-entry into discussing controversial issues may help students practice civil dialogue and civic
356 reasoning, while learning to see multiple perspectives.

357 **Action civics.** Action civics has emerged more recently as another approach to
358 supporting students’ civic reasoning and identity development, and a growing consensus of
359 research links action civics curricula and practices to positive outcomes. Action civics practices
360 are grounded in the theory that when youth voice and expertise are valued, and young people
361 have authentic opportunities for expression, engagement, and reflection, then powerful civic
362 learning can occur, thereby narrowing the civic empowerment gap and strengthening our
363 democracy (ie., Gingold, 2013; National Action Civics Collaborative, 2010; Warren, 2019). In

² See <https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2014/tonguetied> for warnings against using role-play to teach about slavery

364 action civics, students identify authentic issues of importance to them and their communities and
365 are provided with guidance, skill instruction, and opportunities that enable them to “do civics and
366 *behave as citizens*” (Levinson, 2012, p. 32).

367 An emerging body of studies focused on various action civics programs establish a link
368 between action civics curricula and a host of promising outcomes, including civic skills such as
369 public speaking. Case studies of a range of action civics programs have demonstrated positive
370 outcomes associated with key action civics components such as an emphasis on student voice,
371 and the creation of open classrooms where students discuss and debate current events (Battistoni,
372 2004; Berman, 2004; Blevins, LeCompte, & Wells, 2016; Feldman et al., 2007; Kahne, Chi &
373 Middaugh, 2006; LeCompte & Blevins, 2015; Syvertsen et al., 2009; Walling, 2007). More
374 recently, Andolina and Conklin’s (2018; 2019) study of the action civics public speaking
375 curriculum Project Soapbox identified several factors that shaped students’ greater confidence in
376 their public speaking skills and increased valuing of listening to their peers’ experiences with
377 action civics: these included student interest in the topic under investigation, opportunities for
378 students to practice (in this case, speeches), classroom climate, and scaffolding and resources
379 embedded in curriculum materials.

380 In redesigning the U.S. history course to focus on civic education, Rubin (2012)
381 identified five key pedagogical practices, one of which was action civics. In further investigating
382 youth participatory action research, a form of action civics, Rubin and her colleagues (2017)
383 explore key challenges in integrating the goals of action, authenticity, and youth empowerment
384 inherent in action civics within the realities of classroom life that is typically shaped by adults,
385 extrinsically motivated, and content focused. These challenges include preserving authenticity,
386 managing conflicting goals, and navigating tensions around authority. Rubin and colleagues

387 (2010) have also found that connecting students’ lives and experiences to the topics under study
388 is centrally important to successful civic learning in different contexts, yet challenging to do
389 well.

390 **News media literacy.** A relatively new area of research has already shown the challenges
391 students face in careful reading and assessment of online material (Kahne & Bowyer, 2017;
392 McGrew et al., 2017, 2018). This work has made it abundantly clear that people of all ages need
393 to become more media savvy and discriminating when they read materials online. In one study in
394 a university setting, two 75-minute lessons focused on a few heuristics for evaluating the
395 credibility of online materials were sufficient to improve university students’ assessment of
396 online content (McGrew et al., 2019). In another study conducted in a high school setting, eight
397 lessons focused on explicit instruction in digital fact-checking strategies supported 11th grade
398 students in significantly improving their assessment of online material (McGrew, 2020).³

399 **Listening, transactive discussion, and empathy.** While the exchange of ideas through
400 both speaking and listening in political classroom discussions is vital, as noted earlier, civic
401 reasoning involves the ability to listen to others, marking listening as an essential component of
402 civic reasoning and discourse that should be cultivated. Democratic theorists as well as experts
403 on social-emotional development have argued that interpersonal practices such as attentive
404 listening—particularly to those different from ourselves—engenders empathy, allows for
405 vulnerability, builds relationships, and develops a sense of connection among individuals—
406 democratic orientations that lead, in turn, to broader outcomes, such as building trust and
407 bridging political rifts (Allen, 2004; Cramer & Toff, 2017; Levine 2013; Weissberg et al., 2015).

³ These lessons are available for free online at sheg.stanford.edu.

408 According to Parker (2010), listening is crucial for discussion, and it is particularly important to
409 cultivate the skills for listening across difference since, “Equitable and trustworthy conjoint
410 living is not only a matter of being heard but also of hearing others” (p. 2827).

411 There is some research that suggests avenues for the cultivation of listening for civic
412 purposes, both empirically and theoretically. Hess and McAvoy’s (2015) study, for example,
413 illustrated that high quality political discussions developed high school students’ beliefs in the
414 importance of listening to many sides before developing a position and the recognition that
415 hearing different perspectives helped them clarify their own views. Meanwhile, Andolina and
416 Conklin’s (2018; 2019) study of Project Soapbox in English and Social Studies classrooms found
417 that features of the curriculum—the expectation that all students deliver their speeches in front of
418 each other and the recommendation that teachers establish an authentic, highly supportive
419 audience—facilitated students’ careful listening to one another. Listening to one another, in turn,
420 led students to feel greater connection to their peers, gain a deeper understanding of their peers’
421 experiences, and develop an enhanced appreciation for perspectives other than their own.

422 One proposal for fostering listening comes from Nucci’s (2016) suggestion to revitalize
423 Berkowitz and Gibbs’s (1983) seminal work on transactive discussion and combine it with
424 Laden’s (2014) notion of responsive engagement. Transactive discussion is “reasoning that
425 operates on the reasoning of another” (p. 402), where individual transacts are moments when
426 individuals engage with the reasoning of their discussion partner (Berkowitz & Gibbs, 1983).
427 Representational transacts involve the listener simply restating or representing the speaker’s
428 reasoning, and operational transacts involve the listener operating on or transforming the
429 speaker’s reasoning. Transactive discussion is similar to Laden’s (2014) notion of responsive
430 engagement, in which individuals genuinely consider the ideas and thoughts of their discussion

431 partners. Whereas Laden considers responsive engagement an active form of social reasoning,
432 Berkowitz and Gibbs see transacts as moments when individuals learn to develop ideas through
433 reasoning. Both contend that genuine listening and reasoning with other ideas are important for
434 the development of new ways of thinking.

435 Mirra (2018) suggests pathways to cultivating “critical civic empathy”—a form of
436 empathy that acknowledges the role of power and privilege in shaping our interpretation of
437 others’ experiences, is public in nature, and leads to a form of empathy anchored by “mutual
438 humanization” (p.10). She showcases teachers who use stories and literary analysis to foster
439 critical civic empathy, schools that employ debate grounded in humanization to foster students’
440 recognition of multiple perspectives, and educators who engage students in youth participatory
441 action research to cultivate agency and empathy.

442 **Case studies.** Finally, normative case studies (NCS) are a structured way for students to
443 engage in the kind of civic discourse and deliberation that can help support civic reasoning and
444 build understanding of pluralism. NCS are “richly described, realistic accounts of complex
445 ethical dilemmas that arise within practice or policy contexts, in which protagonists must decide
446 among courses of action, none of which is self-evident as the right one to take” (Levinson & Fay,
447 2016, pp. 5–6). By presenting genuine, open-ended dilemmas that have no clear, correct answers
448 (Thacher, 2006), NCS prompt students and teachers to jump into purposeful discussion that
449 embraces complexity and nuance, multiple perspectives, and even about issues that they may
450 otherwise feel embarrassed or incompetent to talk about (Levinson, 2015).

451 Across all of these civic education practices, there is a common theme of active
452 engagement in inquiry and investigation and a focus on deeper learning while explicitly
453 supporting the development of knowledge and skills. The research we have reviewed suggests

454 that by integrating these pedagogical practices and supports, teachers and students may engage in
455 productive discussions, dialogue, analysis, and listening in the classroom and support students’
456 civic reasoning.

457 **Lessons from Research in Other Areas of Social Studies Education**

458 Inasmuch as classroom work on civic reasoning involves inquiry into complex issues that
459 have a range of plausible responses, evaluating and learning from complex texts, and discussion
460 or deliberation, lessons learned from work on historical reasoning and social studies education
461 more broadly may be useful. Fred Newmann’s (1990) work remains a touchstone for specifying
462 aspects of social studies instruction that create the space for students to engage in authentic
463 intellectual work; arguably, civic reasoning and discussion, deliberation, and debate constitute
464 authentic intellectual work in social studies education. Newmann (1990, 1993) highlights the
465 importance of the degree of higher order thinking, depth of knowledge, connection to world,
466 substantive conversation, and social support for student achievement in classrooms where
467 authentic intellectual work is supported.

468 Research that has focused on other kinds of authentic intellectual work in social studies
469 such as historical thinking with sources, constructing and critiquing arguments, discussion of
470 complex questions and texts, and conveying arguments in writing, has found several design
471 principles as key to scaffolding students’ and teachers’ work toward these ends in classrooms
472 (Monte-Sano, Hughes, & Thomson, 2019). These include providing space for students to connect
473 to the topic and extend background knowledge (Epstein, 2000; Goldberg, 2013; Reisman, 2012),
474 along with opening up space for deliberation and interpretation through investigation of
475 compelling or central questions with multiple plausible responses or controversy and offering or
476 seeking out multiple perspectives in the sources under investigation (Monte-Sano, 2008, 2011;

477 Monte-Sano & Allen, 2019; Reisman, 2012). Further design principles support literacy
478 development in the context of historical inquiry – including reading complex texts, listening,
479 speaking, writing (De La Paz et al., 2017; Fitzgerald & Palincsar 2019; Monte-Sano, 2008) and
480 supporting analytical or disciplinary thinking/reasoning about evidence and claims – their own
481 and those of others (De La Paz et al., 2017; Fitzgerald & Palincsar 2019; Monte-Sano, 2008;
482 Reisman, 2012). Finally, cultivating discussion, deliberation, and discourse about texts that is
483 welcoming to broad range of students (Applebee et al., 2003; Nystrand et al., 1998; Reisman et
484 al., 2017) and designing assignments to support students’ reasoning and provide a real-world
485 purpose and audience for student work products, connecting past with present where possible
486 (Goldman, Snow, & Vaughn, 2016; Newmann, 1990; Monte-Sano & Allen, 2019; Monte-Sano
487 & De La Paz, 2012; Monte-Sano, Hughes, & Thomson, 2019) are key principles for scaffolding
488 teachers’ and students work. These principles may apply when working toward the goal of
489 supporting students’ civic reasoning, though we are not aware of research that has tested these
490 relationships.

491 **Key Findings and Recommendations**

492 Looking across the curricular and pedagogical scaffolds that are effective to help young
493 people develop civic reasoning and participate effectively in high quality civic discourse, we
494 have considerable research that points to promising practices, both at broad and finer-grained
495 levels. With regard to pedagogical practices, we have developed considerable evidence that
496 engaging young people in various forms of deliberation and discussion of public issues provides
497 valuable experience with civic discourse and involves many important aspects of civic reasoning,
498 including critical thinking, listening, and valuing multiple perspectives. And, this research gives
499 us guidance on key principles and practices for successful teaching of controversial issues, such

500 as creating a welcoming classroom community climate, explicitly teaching students central skills
501 for participating in discussion, planning discussions carefully, identifying generative issues for
502 students to discuss, and providing various discussion models.

503 Meanwhile, we have smaller sets of studies that provide cases of promising practices,
504 many of which warrant further exploration. Specific forms of political simulations have been
505 shown to foster important skills as well as political knowledge, while research on other forms of
506 role-play and simulation suggests these pedagogies have the potential to offer engaging
507 opportunities for students to engage with the multiple perspectives of contentious issues in low
508 stakes ways, provided that the content of the simulations is selected judiciously. Action civics
509 programs and pedagogies, too, have demonstrated ways of creating open classroom climates,
510 fostering students' public speaking skills and sense of voice, and creating opportunities to listen
511 carefully to others' experiences. Recent work focused on online materials has highlighted the
512 need for students to learn how to reason carefully and discern truth of online information and has
513 suggested some forms of explicit instruction that allow students to gauge the veracity of online
514 materials. Other work points to ways to support careful listening and empathy, while case studies
515 are another promising pedagogy for helping students build understandings of pluralism and
516 practice discussion that engages complexity and multiple perspectives. Finally, work in other
517 areas of social studies education is suggestive of ways to support many civic competencies
518 among students.

519 While this work has demonstrated some important ways to foster various elements of
520 civic reasoning and discourse, there are many areas that warrant further exploration. For
521 example, there is a need for more research to look at the effects of various models of discussion
522 and the impact of different discussion models on important aspects of civic reasoning. We also

546 While the evidence above points to various curricular and pedagogical scaffolds that
547 support the development of young people’s civic reasoning and enable them to participate
548 effectively in high quality discussion, deliberation, and debate, as we have suggested above,
549 young people do not enter the civic realm as blank slates. Identity has always had a significant
550 influence on the manner in which people make meaning of their lives, realities, histories, and
551 day-to-day experiences (Nasir, 2011) and are vital when it comes to students, their learning, and
552 their experiences in schools and society. School curriculum and practices can help to celebrate,
553 affirm, enhance, and build the identities of students (cf., Banks et al., 2005; Gay, 2000; Ladson-
554 Billings, 1994; 2014), or conversely, can make students feel as if their identities are unimportant,
555 inferior or non-existent. The complexity of racial, gender, cultural, political, and language
556 identities bears greater importance in a multicultural society (Flenbaugh, 2011). To that end,
557 schools can and should play a central role in creating brave spaces that allow multiple
558 perspectives, diverse opinions, and controversial issues to be discussed and unpacked in a
559 thoughtful, respectful and civil manner (Hess, 2009). Thus, students’ identities matter; especially
560 in a politically charged climate where issues such as immigration, homophobia/transphobia,
561 police brutality, racial discrimination, gender inequities, and economic exclusion continue to
562 plague millions of individuals. In the section that follows, we explore how students’ identities
563 (racial, ethnic, political, etc.) influence how they experience and learn to engage thoughtfully
564 with others about critical controversial issues.

565 According to Banks (2017), students are more likely to develop a shared and connected
566 commitment to, and identification with a national identity and culture only when they believe
567 that they are a meaningful part of the nation: it acknowledges, reflects, and values their history,
568 culture and them as individuals. Students who have a strong sense of self, in which their

569 identities are developed, are more likely to find positive ways to contribute to their communities
570 and society. Therefore, school curriculum can reinforce age old ideologies of pathology,
571 indifference, and exclusion, or seek to be a transformative agent that sees the contributions of all
572 Americans. This means that the curriculum but must do more than merely include diverse
573 representations and identities, but must also teach how members of marginalized groups have
574 resisted oppression and exclusion. Indeed, we cannot get to true problem solving that supports
575 the common good if everyone’s perspective is not represented, in part because we have an
576 incomplete understanding of the problems our society faces.

577 **Identity interacts with history and curriculum to shape civic learning**

578 The development of diverse identities matters because students’ understandings about the
579 self, both the public and private, and the important layers of their lives, are profoundly shaped by
580 their families, homes, schools, and communities. Learning theory tells us that students’
581 identities, knowledge, and experiences are important bridges to extend their learning (e.g.,
582 Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Nasir et al., 2014; National Academies Press, 2018). The existence
583 of master narratives and the impact of those narratives on the experiences of students’ of color in
584 history classrooms has been well-documented (Brown & Brown, 2010; Epstein, 2000, 2010),
585 although youth development is complex, context sensitive, and youth sources of coping are often
586 underexamined (Spencer, 2008). Woodson (2016) explored the impact of such master narratives
587 on Black youths’ civic agency among nine low-income youth in a mid-sized Midwestern city
588 participating in a work readiness program and identified with a behavioral or mental health
589 diagnosis; Woodson found the emphasis on risk and dehumanizing values, and the de-emphasis
590 of historical agency and collective agency undermined Black youths’ sense of civic agency.
591 Woodson (2016) has called for a dismantling of the master narrative and the establishment of a

592 critical and race centered narrative that highlights both the diversity of civic activists who have
593 engaged in racial struggle and the multiple forms of civic activism that that are possible.

594 Meanwhile, in post-war Guatemala, Bellino (2016) found that the different ways in which
595 curriculum presented information about historical injustice shaped youth’s civic identity in the
596 present. Bellino documented the ways in which this phenomenon played out differently within
597 two communities – indigenous and rural compared with urban and elite – in ways that reflected
598 the identities of students and adults in those communities and resulted in different conceptions of
599 citizenship. Hence, talking to students, hearing their realities, listening to their social, political
600 and cultural concerns will be vital to the manner in which the nation continues to create a more
601 inclusive and diverse notion of civic discourse centered on students’ identity and agency
602 (Woodson, 2016).

603 Thus, much of the disconnect that occurs between home, school and the community, is a
604 result of the manner in which the cultural realities that students experience in home and
605 community are not consistent with what is taught and valued at school (Howard, 2020)—a
606 disconnect that students from varied cultural, religious, political, etc. backgrounds may
607 experience depending upon the particular schools they attend. As a result, conflicting values,
608 beliefs, and behavior that are taught by the school challenges the very idea of how students
609 respond to the fundamental question of “Who am I”? This question becomes particularly salient
610 during adolescence, when youth identity is often coalescing. Many US schools continue to be
611 centered on core values that do not reflect the racial, cultural, and linguistic realities of many of
612 today’s students. Indeed, across time, the role and function of school has struggled to keep up
613 with the country’s ever-changing demographic realities. Thus, the idea of whose narrative will
614 shape civic education remains.

615 The “hard history” about racism, sexism, genocide, and oppression is generally absent
616 from the curriculum (Shuster, 2018). Given the false representation of history such omissions
617 convey, teachers’ general unpreparedness in discussing these issues is damaging to all students
618 but can be particularly detrimental to students of color (Brown & Brown, 2010; Brown &
619 Brown, 2011; Combs, 2016; Lo, 2019). Some call it implicit bias (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006),
620 but Bonilla-Silva (2012) uses the phrase “racial grammar” to describe rhetorical moves that
621 “[structure] cognition, vision, and even feelings on all sorts of racial matters” (p. 173). He
622 suggests racial grammar “[normalizes] the standards of white supremacy as *the* standards for all
623 sorts of everyday transactions rendering domination almost invisible” (p. 174). According to this
624 view, racial grammar has the potential to shape and distort how students see themselves and one
625 another. At the same time, Spencer (2008) highlights youths’ agency in making meaning of their
626 lives and the importance of attending to youths’ coping strategies in the face of adversity.
627 Considering the complex and context sensitive nature of youth development (Spencer, 2008), in
628 order for students to fully engage in all of their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a
629 democracy, teachers may need to help them recognize and debunk the racial grammar that exists
630 within the civics narrative while also building upon youths’ existing sources of coping and
631 resilience.

632 Finally, a great deal of work in history education highlights the intersections of youth
633 identity and their learning of history as well, but does not connect these ideas specifically to civic
634 learning (e.g., Bordonaro, 2016; Epstein, 2010; Goldberg, 2013; Porat, 2004; Schweber & Irwin,
635 2003). Additionally, students engage with history in substantive and meaningful ways outside of
636 the classroom, but do not always see the place for such engagement inside the classroom
637 (Rosenzweig, 2000). Connecting the study of history and civics more explicitly could offer

638 students opportunities to orient themselves in the world more fully through investigation into the
639 past and present, enabling students to understand present challenges more completely, therefore
640 positioning students to be better equipped to address current issues.

641 **Learning opportunities that embrace and build on students’ identities and experiences**

642 Rubin and her colleagues (2007, 2009) report how youth from different racial and
643 socioeconomic backgrounds have widely divergent daily civic experiences which shape how
644 they engage with and make sense of classroom-based civic learning opportunities. Based on her
645 research, Rubin argues for connecting in and out-of-school civic experiences so that schools can
646 support students in becoming active citizens. Similarly, in postwar Guatemala, Bellino (2015)
647 found that two schools with historically oppressed indigenous groups used their students’ daily
648 experience with oppression as a way into studying civic issues and that students in those contexts
649 weigh the costs and benefits of political participation as they consider their role. In an elementary
650 setting focused on a class project, the degree to which two students saw their own knowledge
651 and experiences as relevant and were well positioned by the teacher in their interactions,
652 impacted their learning and sense of efficacy in “making a difference” (Mayes, Mitra, &
653 Serriere, 2016). Still, others argue that youth may participate more actively than adults perceive,
654 but not in ways recognized by adults (e.g., Wood, 2015), particularly if those students have been
655 marginalized in school or society.

656 Based on her research with diverse youth in urban contexts, Rubin (2010) suggests four
657 overarching design principles to support students’ civic identity development in the context of
658 social studies courses – in this case, the principles were tested successfully in U.S. history
659 courses. According to Rubin (2010), civic education should “build upon students’ own
660 experiences with civic life, including daily experiences with civic institutions,” “provide

661 opportunities for students to consider and discuss key controversies in civic life,” and “build
662 students’ skills of discussion, analysis, critique, and research” (p. 144). Further, “civic education
663 should build students’ knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as citizens in a way that
664 connects directly to their own concerns” (p. 145). Clay and Rubin (2019) develop these ideas
665 further in defining *critically relevant civics* as an approach to civic learning rooted in the
666 resources that students carry with them to school, grounding civic learning in the identities and
667 experiences of students—a similar approach to the Lived Civics approach described earlier
668 (Cohen, Kahne, & Marshall, 2018).

669 **Differential access to high quality civic learning opportunities**

670 Students’ identities matter not only in relation to their experiences with curriculum but
671 also in terms of their access to high quality civic learning—as well as their opportunities to be
672 heard when high quality civic learning opportunities are made available. In a large-scale study of
673 civic learning opportunities in high school, White students, students going to college, and
674 students who attended higher SES high schools had more high quality civic learning
675 opportunities available to them than students of color and students in lower SES schools—a
676 consequential “civic opportunity gap” (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008).

677 Even when high quality civic learning opportunities do exist—such as opportunities to
678 engage in discussion and deliberation of public issues—students engage in these opportunities
679 from unequal social locations. In *Talking to Strangers*, Allen (2004) has this to say about the
680 challenge of discussing public policy issues in an unjust society:

681 Debates over these issues (unemployment, welfare, taxes, affirmative action...) are
682 politically divisive not only because they are substantively difficult but also because they

683 give citizens superb opportunities to reveal what their fellow citizens are worth to them.
684 (p. 96)

685 Allen (2004) and other political theorists have critiqued deliberative democratic theory for its
686 initial lack of attention to how speakers are differently heard within a deliberative forum
687 (Sanders, 1997; Young, 2002). This research draws attention to the fact that the perspectives of
688 minoritized communities can be easily dismissed by a majority that finds their needs
689 inconvenient and/or threatening to their privileged positions. As a result, the expectation of
690 “reasonableness” can become a tool for exclusion. As Allen’s (2004) quote reveals, these
691 discussions also make the most vulnerable people in society the subject of discussion, at times
692 positioning them as a problem to be solved and in other instances questioning the legitimacy of
693 their identities. Both of these problems appear when teachers bring political issues into the
694 classroom.

695 **The problem of who is heard.** When public policy issues come into the classroom,
696 educators need to be aware of the ways in which social inequalities related to class, race,
697 ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, ability, and language may affect who speaks and how they are
698 heard. As one example, Hess and McAvoy (2015) describe the ways in which discussions in one
699 teacher’s non-tracked classroom were affected by race and class. A white, male student who
700 came from a two-professor household, had been accepted to an Ivy League college, had spent a
701 semester in Washington D.C. as a Congressional page (p. 165), and dominated discussions. In
702 contrast, another student in Mr. Kushner’s class was the daughter of immigrant parents from
703 Southeast Asia, and rarely spoke in discussions because:

704 ...[other students] use a lot of hard words that, I mean, like when I talk, I like to use just
705 simple words. But since they talk really professional, I don't want to, you know, talk to
706 them. (p.175)

707 Despite the teacher's efforts to create a classroom in which students felt comfortable with one
708 another, the confidence and privilege of some students resulted in the silencing of others.
709 Experiences such as these may deepen a sense of civic estrangement (Tillet, 2012) in students of
710 color, who can feel as if the system works against them, even as they recognize their supposed
711 membership within the system. This same study found that English Language Learners and
712 students from lower SES backgrounds were significantly more likely to report that they hesitated
713 to speak because they worried they would be judged by their peers.

714 Students may also hesitate to speak because they hold minority views. Beck (2019)
715 provides an in-depth discourse analysis of how one student, Jake, experienced a unit of study on
716 same sex marriage. Jake, the only African American student in the class, was the one student
717 who reported in a pre and post survey that he was opposed to marriage equality, because it went
718 against the moral teachings of his church. In an analysis of Jake's participation in class, daily
719 reflections, final paper, and interview, Beck describes the ways in which Jake adopted a liberal
720 anti-same sex marriage stance (based on a reading he had been assigned, written by a lesbian
721 activist) and avoided making his religious beliefs explicit to the class. In the end, he is publicly
722 supportive of marriage equality to his classmates, but in his final written reflection he said he
723 was against legalizing same sex marriage. Beck notes that part of Jake's classroom behavior
724 could be a response to holding the minority view in a class that was otherwise unanimously in
725 favor of same sex marriage. Jake never exposed his true beliefs to his classmates and this seems
726 to preserve his sense of belonging with his peers. Others have found that students may not

727 express their true beliefs, if they hold a minority view or worry about peer reaction (Hess &
728 McAvoy, 2015; Hess & Posselt, 2002; Journell, 2012).

729 **The problem of what gets said.** The other major concern related to identity and political
730 discussions is the issue of fairness in the classroom. “Is it fair,” many educators wonder, “to
731 discuss an issue like same sex marriage (or transgender rights, or affirmative action or
732 immigration) if the discussion is going to be sensitive to students who are already vulnerable in
733 society?” The primary worry is that minoritized students will have to listen to (and possibly
734 respond to) their classmates’ ignorant comments about them. One study on microaggressions in
735 college classrooms showed that students of color often experienced white students rejecting their
736 experiences, subtly questioning their intelligence, and associating people of color with
737 criminality (Sue, Lin, Torino, Capodilupo & Rivera, 2009). This same study found that students
738 of color also reported frustration with instructors who did not hear the insults or know how to
739 respond when they did hear them. Research on high school discussions has found similar
740 problems (Beck, 2013; Hess & McAvoy, 2015).

741 The relationship between fairness and discussions of controversial issues related to social
742 justice involves many ethical questions and is an area still in need of research. Teachers need to
743 think carefully about how they frame issues for discussion, how they will structure the talk, and
744 whether they have prepared students with enough context for the discussion. An affirmative
745 action discussion, for example, cannot be fair or worthwhile, if students do not understand the
746 history of racism and public schooling (past and present) as well as the complexities of policy
747 implications, such as how affirmative action in college admissions privileges African American
748 students from middle class backgrounds while students from low income backgrounds remain
749 persistently underrepresented regardless of race/ ethnicity.

750 Finally, considering deliberation and issues of social justice, the microaggression
751 problem identified in the research shows that privileged students often don't know how to listen
752 to minority views--particularly ones that make them uncomfortable. Intercultural dialogue is a
753 different sort of democratic discussion most often associated with social justice education,
754 because the aim is to create awareness about how people experience social exclusion/inclusion
755 and power differences based on their identities (Kaplowitz & Griffin, 2019). While there is
756 differential impact on particular populations of students when others fail to listen to minority
757 views, the difficulty of listening to minority views pervades many classrooms and warrants
758 attention across contexts: a white student in an ethnic studies class, for example, may feel
759 reluctant to express beliefs that may not be shared by peers in the class. The tools and skills
760 associated with dialogue may be essential precursors to effectively engaging in policy
761 discussions.

762 **Key Findings and Recommendations**

763 Looking across what we know about how students' identities influence how they
764 experience and learn to engage thoughtfully with each other about critical controversial issues,
765 research points to the importance of students seeing their identities represented in curriculum and
766 learning how all members of the nation have participated civically in the past and the forms of
767 civic engagement that are possible. Some research in this area also offers cautions that master
768 narratives and the ways curricula present information about historic injustices can shape youths'
769 sense of agency and identity in important ways, sometimes diminishing youths' sense of civic
770 agency—particularly if the curricular emphasis is on youth risk rather than agency and resilience.
771 Research in this area also highlights the general absence of hard history in the curriculum and
772 some teachers' problematic participation in the use of a racial grammar.

773 While evidence points to many ways students’ identities are not valued in classroom
774 spaces, researchers have also highlighted curricular and pedagogical tools that center youth
775 knowledge and identities and allow young people—particularly youth of color—to see
776 themselves and be seen as valued and capable civic participants. There are some existing
777 practices that have shown how schools can support students’ civic identity development by
778 building upon students’ identities and civic experiences, although we need more research in this
779 area that documents the impact of such approaches on students’ civic reasoning. Some research
780 has identified ways in which students’ social identities and positioning shape their participation
781 in deliberation, often reinforcing existing social hierarchies and enabling dominant perspectives
782 to dominate classroom discourse. We need to have more work that explores the relationships
783 between inequities and civic reasoning, examining questions such as: how do inequalities create
784 challenges for civic reasoning? Can civic reasoning help to address inequalities? If so, how?
785 Under what conditions? Research in this area would also benefit from studies that take up the
786 complexity of students’ multiple, intersecting identities and opportunities to engage in civic
787 reasoning and discourse in varying contexts, given the dynamic, context-sensitive nature of
788 youth development (Spencer, 2008). Similarly, the field would benefit from more research that
789 explores children’s agency and the ways in which youth actively resist and make sense of the
790 civic messages that surround them (cf., Corsaro, 2020). We also need research that examines
791 how teachers can authentically and equitably engage all voices in the classroom and find ways to
792 disrupt existing social hierarchies. Some of this work may need to happen through the
793 preparation of educators, the topic which we turn to next.

794 **Preparing and supporting educators to provide high quality civic learning opportunities**

795 Given that providing high quality civic learning opportunities often rests in the hands of
796 educators, we now turn to research that illuminates how we can best prepare and support
797 educators to facilitate this learning. Although legislated civics requirements have gained
798 momentum across the country and provide one leverage point for shaping civic learning
799 practices, social studies teachers have not always been given support to teach these new
800 requirements (Shapiro & Brown, 2018). Support is sometimes provided by school districts, but
801 often the resources come from non-profit organizations (e.g., Facing History and Ourselves,
802 Mikva Challenge, Teaching Tolerance, etc.), which are not equally distributed across the
803 country. Thus, teachers are not always equipped to engage students in civic reasoning, high
804 quality discussion, deliberation, or debate. In the section below, we outline research on what we
805 know about the substantive aspects of equipping teachers with these capabilities, closing by
806 highlighting the necessary policies and funding that must accompany these supports.

807 On an individual level, teachers’ goals and dispositions, knowledge and understandings,
808 and ability to enact instructional practices shape students’ opportunities to learn (e.g., Hansen,
809 Levesque, Valant, & Quintero, 2018), suggesting domains for supporting and preparing
810 educators. We begin with an overview of these ideas before considering how we can best prepare
811 and support educators to develop the knowledge and skills needed to support students’ civic
812 learning.

813 **Teacher goals, visions, and values**

814 Teachers’ goals for teaching their particular subject matter likely have a role in shaping
815 students’ classroom experiences. For example, many social studies educators view their work as
816 grounded in four major disciplinary areas with the overarching goal of preparing citizens (NCSS,
817 2013). Teachers typically have a range of goals for teaching their subject matter, and may

818 reserve the most challenging goals for students in more advanced classes (Raudenbush, Rowan,
819 & Cheong, 1993). In addition, standardized, high-stakes assessments *may* influence teachers’
820 goal setting; therefore, the focus of these assessments can shape students’ learning experiences
821 (e.g., Grant, 2001; Kelly, Meuwissen, & VanSledright, 2007). *If* civic reasoning, discussion,
822 deliberation, and debate are core goals for teachers, how teachers conceive of citizenship, for
823 example, can shape students’ opportunities to learn in the classroom (e.g., Ladson-Billings,
824 2004).

825 Just as Hess (2009) found that skilled teachers of controversial public issues discussions
826 carefully linked their purposes and practices, teachers aiming to support the development of
827 students’ civic reasoning should have both a vision and a set of practices that are consistent with
828 democratic ideals such as justice, equality, and human rights (Joshee & Lamp; Thomas, 2017;
829 Law, 2017). Reaching such goals has become increasingly challenging in the face of extreme
830 political polarization, yet though the challenge is greater, the task is more important today than in
831 recent memory.

832 Thus, teachers should also value engaging students across worldviews and lived
833 experiences. Within a diverse and increasingly stratified society, students in the cultural
834 mainstream as well as those on the margins of society must be informed of the realities of the
835 “others” and must be introduced to tools, strategies, and disposition to understand, discuss, and
836 ultimately address realities different from their own. In an era where unprecedented mass
837 migration continues to shape the global landscape (Suarez Orozco, 2019) students’ ability to
838 understand circumstances and challenges drastically different than their own, will play an
839 important role in addressing complex global problems such as climate change, worldwide
840 hunger, poverty, xenophobia and racism. Further, teachers who successfully engage students in

841 discussions about racism are more likely to become educational reform leaders (Buehler, 2013)
842 and social justice leaders who promote an antiracist stance (Ford, 2017). These embody the
843 deliberative and civic skills that we hope young people can engage with in schools. Thus,
844 teachers must prioritize having students learn about the range of human experience.

845 **Knowledge of the social context of civic reasoning and discourse**

846 In addition to their purposes, there are many important bodies of knowledge and
847 understandings that teachers should possess. Given their role within the broader social and
848 political context, educators who engage students in civic reasoning and discourse should have a
849 deep understanding of the broader context in which their instruction is embedded and how
850 contextual factors such as structural inequality, patterns of human migration, and inter/intra-
851 national conflict may interact with their efforts at building students' civic capabilities (see Rubin,
852 Abu El-Haj, & Bellino, this volume, for further discussion).

853 **Teachers' identities, self-awareness, and racial literacy**

854 Another vital aspect of teacher understanding is a teacher's awareness of her own
855 sociocultural identity and how that identity may shape her interactions in the broader world and
856 in the classroom. Recent work in teacher education has called for centering the subjectivities of
857 both teachers and students, to consider how these subjectivities shape classroom interactions (cf.,
858 Daniels & Varghese, 2020). Just as students' identities shape their engagement with civic
859 reasoning and discourse, so, too, do teachers' identities shape the instruction that unfolds around
860 civic reasoning and discourse. Thus, the preparation of educators for facilitating civic reasoning
861 must attend to teachers' various subjectivities as well as teachers' racial literacy –the ability to
862 discern and ask critical questions about the contemporary role of race in institutional structures
863 and practices and the recognition that, despite being a social construction, this construction has

864 tangible and deep impacts on student experiences and outcomes in education (e.g., Flynn,
865 Worden, & Rolón-Dow, 2018).

866 **Knowledge and understanding of and orientation toward students**

867 In addition to these sets of consciousness, teachers' knowledge and understanding of
868 students shapes students' opportunities to learn civic reasoning and deliberation. Teachers'
869 awareness of students' funds of knowledge, including the resources and experiences students
870 bring to the classroom, can shape the learning opportunities they provide (Moll, Amanti, Neff &
871 Gonzalez, 1992). And, as illustrated in earlier sections of this paper, of particular importance in
872 social studies is teachers' understandings of how students identify with the historical or social
873 issues being studied and how students might experience the representations and silences
874 embedded in curriculum materials or texts (e.g., Epstein, 2010; Woodson, 2015; 2016;
875 VanSledright, 1998). Rubin and colleagues (2016) found that integrating youth participatory
876 action research into teacher education coursework effectively supported novice teachers in
877 understanding their students better and responding to their students productively in instruction,
878 while Andolina and Conklin (2019) found that some teachers used the Project Soapbox
879 curriculum to learn about their students and guide their curriculum.

880 **Knowledge of and orientations toward civic content**

881 Another central element for consideration in the preparation and support of educators is
882 their understanding of civic knowledge, including knowledge of important silences in
883 curriculum, given that teachers' knowledge and understandings of social studies has direct
884 implications for students' learning and classroom experiences (e.g., Fitchett & Heafner, 2017).
885 This includes teachers' orientation to social studies as knowledge that is constructed and
886 interpreted through inquiry (e.g., Monte-Sano, 2012) and therefore continuously recreated,

887 critiqued, recycled, and shared (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2001). With regard to teaching
888 controversial issues through discussion, in particular, teachers must understand what constitutes
889 a discussion (and what discussion is *not* – e.g., recitation, lecture with periodic questions) and
890 what constitutes a controversial issue (e.g., topics that are not settled nor have one right answer)
891 (Hess, 2009b).

892 Teachers' understanding should also include a broad framework that recognizes the ways
893 in which racial oppression and systemic inequalities have shaped American history, our current
894 society, and the civic curriculum and practices that are most typical in American schools (cf.,
895 Brown & Brown, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Thus, in a subject like social studies, content
896 area knowledge also includes an awareness of dominant narratives embedded in textbooks and
897 other instructional materials (e.g., Patterson & Shuttelworth, 2019) that can reify Whiteness and
898 privilege dominant groups' histories while marginalizing, trivializing, or making invisible the
899 role that oppressed groups have played in history (cf., Brown & Brown, 2011; 2015; Picower,
900 2009). While some teachers and students may feel uncomfortable with expanding the narrative to
901 include accounts that expose the unequal access to core U.S. values, such as freedom, justice,
902 fairness, and equal protection under the law, it is important to uncover the histories, stories, and
903 experiences that have been told by countless people on the political margins about their struggle
904 for and political organization for equal citizenship in the U.S. Teachers need to be able to
905 choose curriculum that includes the perspectives and influences of diverse groups as well as
906 curriculum that represents the particular students and cultural contexts in which they teach (cf.,
907 Banks et al., 2005). This might involve, for example, teachers engaging students in examining
908 the complexity of culture and identity through learning about how some indigenous cultures
909 conceptualize gender and sexuality (Sheppard & Mayo, 2013), having students read literary texts

910 authored by and centered on people with diverse gender, ethnicity, cultural statuses to explore
911 social, cultural, and political tensions (cf., Mirra, 2018), or having students examine the impact
912 of a local coal power plant on neighborhood pollution (cf., Morales-Doyle, 2017).

913 **Knowledge of pedagogy**

914 Teachers also need knowledge of pedagogy, how students may think about the content,
915 and how to connect the content and the student in meaningful ways through instruction (Ball,
916 Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013; Shulman, 1986). Being able to connect
917 content and students requires teachers' racial literacy (e.g., Flynn, Worden, & Rolón-Dow,
918 2018), understanding of culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2001;
919 2014), and racial pedagogical content knowledge (Chandler, 2015; King & Chandler, 2016)—
920 "teachers' racial knowledge and how it influences content and pedagogical choices" (King &
921 Chandler, 2016, p. 6).

922 Also involved in teachers' knowledge of pedagogy is their need for language to describe
923 particular pedagogical practices. Grossman and McDonald (2008) revisit Lortie's (1975)
924 argument that teaching needs to develop a "common technical vocabulary" that will allow both
925 novice and experienced teachers to talk about common practices (p. 123), asserting that without
926 such a framework for teaching, research on teacher education cannot progress toward improving
927 practice. Classroom discussion and deliberation is one common practice in need of a vocabulary.

928 Teachers must also have the inclination and skills associated with teaching—and not
929 avoiding—challenging or difficult topics. A number of scholars have offered important insights
930 on how best to address controversial issues, discussion, and debate in school curriculum (Hess,
931 2005, 2008, 2009, 2015; Hess & McAvoy, 2015; Ho, McAvoy, Hess, & Gibbs, 2017; Journell,
932 2016; McAvoy). Inherent in these important works have been reframing school curriculum using

933 an approach that is concept and issues-based, centered on high quality public talk, and a
934 pedagogical stance that challenges the traditional narrative of U.S. history, and respects multiple
935 viewpoints. As a result, concepts such as fairness, equality, meritocracy, and justice are
936 reinterpreted and understood in a more critical lens.

937 **Knowledge of how to enact instructional practices**

938 Closely tied to teachers' knowledge of pedagogy—and linked to all of their other
939 understandings—is teachers' knowledge of how to enact instructional practices. That is, teachers
940 must not only know and understand; they must be able to enact instructional practices that
941 support student learning (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Fogo, 2014; Grossman, Hammerness, &
942 McDonald, 2009). Instructional practices range from eliciting, listening to, and responding to
943 students' thinking to working with families in support of students to setting up and managing
944 small groups to facilitating classroom discussions (e.g., Conklin, 2019; Davis & Boerst, 2014;
945 Fogo, 2014; TeachingWorks Resource Library). One instructional practice that is central to
946 supporting civic reasoning is discussion facilitation. The specification of different structures and
947 purposes for classroom discussion, how to select texts and questions for discussion, and how to
948 identify controversial issues are all part of the instructional practice of discussion facilitation that
949 must be learned (Hess, 2002, 2009; Parker, 2003; Parker & Hess, 2001). Reisman and colleagues
950 specify particular instructional moves new teachers enact within discussions of history content
951 (2018; 2019).⁴

952 Attention to and ability to enact instructional practices in ways that support *all* students'
953 learning is deeply rooted in teachers' knowledge and understandings articulated above (e.g.,

⁴ Although there have been important critiques of PBTE (e.g., Philip et al., 2018), a focus on instructional practice with new teachers does not necessarily sacrifice a focus on justice (e.g., Conklin, 2019; Kavanagh, 2016, 2018; Kavanagh & Danielson, 2019).

954 Conklin, 2019; Hess, 2009a/b; Kavanagh & Danielson, 2019; Kavanagh et al., 2019). For
955 example, to be able to facilitate a discussion of the DACA program, teachers rely on different
956 forms of knowledge (e.g., how their students might identify with DACA and personal
957 experiences or knowledge students would bring to this discussion; knowledge of what DACA is -
958 its history, reasons for it, arguments for and against it - as well as knowledge of how the U.S.
959 government is structured, Executive Actions, and checks and balances; knowledge of different
960 pedagogical approaches to setting up a discussion of a controversial issue) *and* the ability to
961 facilitate a discussion and implement discussion moves that welcome and value students' ideas
962 and multiple voices, that acts on awareness of authority and positioning across participants, that
963 positions students to listen to each other and build on or challenge each other's ideas, that uses
964 content and disciplinary understandings as resources. In facilitating productive discussions,
965 teachers think about and conceive of using content as a space for inquiry and interpretation as
966 well as know how to facilitate a discussion with a diverse group of students in a classroom space.
967 To do this complex work, teachers need opportunities to learn about their students, about the
968 content, and about pedagogy so that they have the understandings and the skills to enact this
969 work in the classroom (e.g., what is civic reasoning, what can I do to enact civic reasoning in the
970 real world, what civic reasoning resources and knowledge do students bring with them to the
971 classroom, how do students develop civic reasoning over time, what instructional moves support
972 students' civic reasoning and participation in discussion).

973 **Preparing and supporting educators**

974 The discussion above highlights the knowledge and abilities that research suggests
975 teachers should have in order to support students' civic reasoning. The final question for this

976 paper, then, is, how do we prepare and support educators to do this important work? How do we
977 cultivate teachers' capacities?

978 Teacher learning involves acquiring, modifying, or fine-tuning skills, knowledge and
979 thinking, and sociocultural and situated understandings (e.g., of norms, identities, roles and tools
980 in educational contexts – see Russ, Sherin, & Sherin, 2016). In professional development (PD)
981 opportunities, the teacher, the school, and the learning activities interact in different ways to
982 influence teacher learning (Opfer & Pedder, 2011).

983 **Cultivating socio-political awareness.** Research in teacher education has highlighted
984 some promising approaches to foster teachers' awareness of their socio-political contexts. For
985 example, teacher education programs have deliberately structured program coursework and
986 experiences to help teacher candidates gain a complex understanding of many overlapping layers
987 of policy, geographic, and local district, school, and socio-cultural contexts (cf., Matsko &
988 Hammerness, 2014; Williamson, Apedoe, & Thomas, 2016). Other approaches have focused on
989 creating opportunities for novice teachers to form genuine relationships to learn with and from
990 local communities (e.g., Guillen & Zeichner, 2018; Lee, 2018).

991 **Broad approaches.** Research grounded in preservice teacher education has found
992 particular pedagogies that are useful in supporting teacher learning, particularly conceptual tools
993 and practical tools (Grossman et al., 1999; 2000). Conceptual tools include “principles,
994 frameworks, and ideas about teaching, learning, and English language arts that teachers use as
995 heuristics to guide their instructional decisions (Grossman, et al., 2000, pp. 633-634). Ideas about
996 what constitutes discussion or controversy might be examples of conceptual tools for civic
997 learning (e.g., Hess, 2009 a/b, 2015, 2017/18). Practical tools include strategies, practices, or
998 resources that can be used directly and immediately in teaching (Grossman et al., 1999, p. 14).

999 Examples of practical tools to support teaching civic reasoning might include structures for
1000 different discussions that are clearly laid out and tied to articulated purposes (e.g., Parker &
1001 Hess, 2001), along with approaches to critically examining texts, constructing and examining
1002 arguments, applying knowledge to new problems, and developing knowledge of text structures.

1003 In teaching the instructional practices, a pedagogical approach of representing,
1004 decomposing, and approximating the target strategy or practice can support teachers in using
1005 practical tools in their classrooms (Grossman et al., 2009). Representations of a practice involves
1006 using examples of expert teaching and making hidden components that contribute to expertise
1007 visible. Decompositions involve identifying the work that is central to expert practice so that
1008 teachers can see and learn the practice. Approximations of practice include simulations of
1009 different aspects of teaching so that teachers can rehearse, gather feedback, reflect, and continue
1010 to improve. These pedagogies support teachers in learning the particular work and thinking
1011 involved in teaching (Grossman, Hammerness, & McDonald, 2009).

1012 Another promising approach to teacher learning involves focusing on student work and
1013 thinking (e.g., Little, 2004). In studies across math, science, and social studies, researchers have
1014 found that attention to student thinking via analysis of students' written work or talk via video
1015 has created opportunities for teachers to develop their understandings of content, students, and
1016 pedagogy (Kazemi & Franke, 2004; Monte-Sano et al., 2017; van Es & Sherin, 2008; Wilson,
1017 2009; Windschitl, Thompson, & Braaten, 2011).

1018 In terms of structuring teacher learning opportunities, researchers have identified five
1019 features of effective PD, including a focus on deepening teachers content knowledge; active
1020 learning opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful analysis of teaching and learning
1021 (e.g., review student work, teach and receive feedback); coherence of PD with teachers' goals

1022 and expectations of teachers; sustained duration (including contact hours and span of time); and
1023 collective participation of groups teachers from the same school, department, or grade level
1024 (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2008; Yoon et al., 2007). The National Academy’s Teacher
1025 Quality White Paper (Wilson, 2009) recommends that policy makers abide these five features of
1026 effective PD and provide access to high-quality PD. The White Paper specifies courses or
1027 programs of 40 hours over 12 months (or more) are most effective (p.6). Archibald et al. (2011)
1028 agreed with these five features of effective PD and added teacher buy-in and time for PD
1029 embedded into the school day as core features of effective PD that policymakers should keep in
1030 mind. In subsequent work, Desimone and Garet (2015) shared new insights, specifically that
1031 improving teachers’ content knowledge and inquiry-oriented instruction is harder than changing
1032 procedural classroom behaviors, that teachers vary in response to the same PD, that PD is more
1033 successful when it is explicitly linked to classroom lessons, that PD research and implementation
1034 must address contexts where there is high student and teacher mobility, and that leadership plays
1035 a key role in supporting and encouraging teachers to implement ideas and strategies they learn in
1036 PD.

1037 Different types and models of professional development reflect a range of purposes. As
1038 Kennedy (2006) explains, PD that is focused on transmission is less likely to increase teachers’
1039 professional autonomy and expertise whereas transformative PD is more likely to increase
1040 teachers’ professional autonomy. Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2017) found that
1041 transformative PD is more often found in high-performing countries and involves practices such
1042 as scheduling time for collaboration regularly in the school day, collective planning and
1043 assessment, including teacher research as part of the regular work load, and including teachers as
1044 leaders in professional development. Perhaps similarly, Desimone et al. (2002) argue that

1045 reform-oriented PD (e.g., coaching, mentoring, study group or network) tends to include more of
1046 the features of effective PD than traditional PD (e.g., workshop, conference).

1047 **Specific models.** Within civic reasoning, discussion, and deliberation, Hess’s
1048 professional development work integrates many of the ideas raised (e.g., Hess, 2009b): explicit
1049 instruction in conceptual tools such as discussion and controversial issues, offering practical
1050 tools such as models for discussion, giving teachers opportunities to develop as adult learners by
1051 experiencing discussions of controversial issues, offering materials to support instruction, and
1052 support for teachers as they learn to do the work of discussion facilitation in classrooms.

1053 **Learning to lead discussions.** Parker and Hess (2001) explained how having pre-service
1054 teachers experience a good discussion using a Structured Academic Controversy model was not
1055 enough for them to know how to use it, nor were they able to identify how the structure was
1056 modeling important features of a good discussion. This led Parker and Hess (2001) to articulate
1057 the distinction between “teaching with discussion” and “teaching for discussion.” Teaching for
1058 discussion happens when teachers make explicit the skills and norms of good classroom
1059 discussion. This is an important starting point for helping future teachers to understand the
1060 features of discussion. Parker and Hess (2001) also contribute a typology of three types of
1061 discussions: deliberation, seminar, and conversation. Making these (and other) distinctions clear,
1062 helps teachers to understand how each has a different purpose/aim, lends itself to a different type
1063 of question, and each requires a different set of materials.

1064 Such explicit instruction about the purpose of different types of discussion is an
1065 important first step toward providing teachers with the language and skills needed to engage
1066 students in discussion, but research shows that teachers who want to use discussion often
1067 struggle with designing and facilitating discussion. There are a number of complex skills that

1068 teachers need to develop in order to lead a *good* discussion. Being able to identify these skills
1069 and the micro moves that teachers make to deepen learning within discussions are necessary for
1070 supporting novice teachers.

1071 Learning to prepare open ended questions is one important skill. Hess (2009) helps
1072 teachers move toward this understanding by distinguishing between a “topic” (an event, place, or
1073 process) and an “issue” (a question of public policy) (p. 40). A further distinction can be drawn
1074 between an open issue and a closed or settled issue (Hess, 2009; Hess & McAvoy, 2015).
1075 Ideally, teachers should aim for discussions about open questions. Kohlmeier and Saye (2019)
1076 identify the difficulty teachers have with identifying discussable questions in a study of four
1077 teachers learning to lead seminars. Even after collectively designing the discussion about the
1078 constitutional question of flag burning, two of the four teachers struggled to ask open ended
1079 questions that lead to real engagement with the text and the issue (they were also the two with
1080 the least amount of experience with seminar). In these two cases, the open question about
1081 whether flag burning is protected speech did not lead to genuine discussion, because the teachers
1082 did not know how to ask questions that invited argumentation. Their over-reliance on factual
1083 questions in a recitation style is a well-documented problem within the field (Nystrand, et. al.,
1084 2003; Reisman, 2015; Reisman, et. al. 2018). Helping teachers to name and recognize this as *not*
1085 discussion is important for developing the skills for discussion. Another discussion move that
1086 could be explicitly taught includes Nystrand, Gamoran, and Carbonaro’s (1998) use of the term
1087 “uptake” to describe moments in which a student’s comment is incorporated into a follow up
1088 question by the teacher.

1089 Additionally, in leading controversial issues discussions, teachers must learn to navigate
1090 incredibly complex decision-making that is sensitive to the contexts in which they teach. Pace’s

1091 (2019) cross-national examination of teacher educators who work in polarized settings to prepare
1092 novice teachers to lead controversial issues discussions offers important insights and raises
1093 crucial questions about how to help novice teachers navigate the risky territory they may be
1094 embarking upon. In societies that are culturally, religiously, and socio-politically divided,
1095 teachers must learn to weigh questions such as whether to avoid the “risk of inflammatory
1096 speech” and/or “allow more extreme voices to be heard” (Pace, 2019, p. 255). Much more
1097 research is needed to get at the range of complex skills that teachers need to lead discussions.

1098 Some recent work on leading open discussion in the history classroom demonstrates
1099 where future research on facilitating controversial issues discussions could go. These studies also
1100 illustrate the type of explicit instruction about discussion that is often lacking in teacher
1101 education programs. In a set of papers on preparing teachers to engage students in text-based
1102 discussions in the history classroom, Reisman, et. al. (2018), Reisman et. al. (2019) and
1103 Kavanagh, et. al. (2019) develop a framework for facilitating historical discussions, consisting of
1104 four practices: “(a) engaging K-12 students as sense-makers, (b) orienting K-12 students to each
1105 other, (c) orienting K-12 students to texts as sources of historical knowledge and evidentiary
1106 warrants, and (d) orienting K-12 students to the interpretive practices of the discipline” (p. 280).
1107 The first two parts of this framework help form the concept of discussion as a “collective
1108 inquiry” and not recitation (Bridges, 1988). The second two give purpose to the discussion,
1109 which in this case is deepening disciplinary knowledge (Kavanagh & Rainey, 2017). These
1110 researchers were studying a particular type of discussion, the purposes of which is “to build
1111 collective knowledge and allow students to practice listening, speaking, and engaging in
1112 historical interpretation” (279). This is a discussion that would fall under Parker and Hess’s
1113 (2001) label of a whole-class “seminar.”

1114 Reisman and colleagues (2018) found that novice teachers faced some common struggles
1115 when learning to facilitate. First, some candidates had trouble “engaging students as sense-
1116 makers” because they were not asking open, interpretive questions during discussion and instead
1117 resorted to asking recall questions (p. 284). Second, without open ended questions, students do
1118 not have opportunities to build upon each other’s ideas. Finally, novices had difficulty staying in
1119 what Reisman (2015) labels the “historical problem space.” In other words, they were not able to
1120 raise the discussion to historical interpretation and argumentation. The researchers conclude by
1121 noting that the candidates did not receive explicit instruction on how to facilitate this higher level
1122 of discussion, because much of the methods courses in this study focused on planning and
1123 enacting lessons that used discussion. They hypothesize that more explicit instruction about
1124 facilitation moves that “are tied to disciplinary questions, concepts, and skills” may help develop
1125 this skill in novice teachers (p. 290). A later study shows that students became more proficient
1126 when they entered their field placements and had additional support for facilitating discussion
1127 (Reisman et. al., 2019).

1128 The research related to teacher education and learning to facilitate discussion shows that
1129 this is one of the most difficult skills for novice teachers to develop. It looks as if teachers can
1130 become competent in executing particular discussion strategies (SAC, fishbowls, etc.), but they
1131 often struggle to move from the activity to a larger discussion that allows for true argumentation.
1132 In part, this is because discussion requires improvisation--the teacher needs to be ready to
1133 respond to (or help students to respond to each other) an idea in a way that deepens the speaker’s
1134 thinking and moves the discussion along for other students.

1135 The research highlighted here focuses primarily on disciplinary reasoning and text-based
1136 discussions in the social studies classroom. There is more work to be done to investigate

1137 strategies that help students develop arguments (and not merely give reasons) within political
1138 discussions. More research on the effects of various discussion strategies (beyond seminar and
1139 SAC) would be helpful. Further, it would be generative to explore how to develop argumentation
1140 skills in teachers. Part of good facilitation requires the teacher to get inside the arguments that
1141 students are giving and, on-the-fly, respond with a question that might provide a counterpoint,
1142 new piece of evidence, or identify a logical error. This requires some high-level thinking on the
1143 part of the teacher and research could help the field learn how to develop these skills.

1144 Outside of civic learning-focused PD, promising PD models (e.g., the National Writing
1145 Project, lesson study, and Learning Labs) that bring teachers together in community around
1146 content, students, and instructional practice may offer ideas that could be applied to supporting
1147 civic learning outcomes. The National Writing Project has been one of the most successful
1148 teacher networks by fostering communities of educators coming together to develop as writers
1149 and as teachers of writing and ongoing learning together (Lieberman & Wood, 2002; Darling-
1150 Hammond et al., 2009).

1151 Lesson study is another powerful tool for fostering teachers' collaboration and learning.
1152 Originating in Japan and having been adapted in U.S. contexts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009;
1153 Fernandez, 2002; Lieberman, 2009), lesson study includes teams of teachers collaborating on
1154 lesson planning, teaching and observing the lessons, reflecting together on the lessons' strengths
1155 and areas for improvement, and revising and teaching the lesson again. In the U.S. one of the
1156 major benefits has been creating communities of practice and inviting others into one's
1157 classroom, thus changing professional norms of teaching (Lieberman, 2009). Lesson study has
1158 been used successfully to support and transform practice across content areas, including, for

1159 example, to scaffold teachers’ increased use of authentic pedagogy with social issues over time
1160 (Kohlmeier et al., 2020).

1161 Another PD model, Learning Labs, is also embedded in the school day and involve teams
1162 of teachers working to plan, enact, and reflect on teaching as they investigate aspects of teaching;
1163 however, Learning Labs do not focus on ideal or perfected lessons enacted by one teacher
1164 (Kazemi et al., 2018). Instead, Learning Labs involve teachers working together to enact a lesson
1165 as co-teachers by providing teachers with the opportunity to learn about some focal content
1166 together and then integrate it into a lesson that they immediately try out in a classroom with
1167 students. Learning Labs are structured around a “learning cycle” framework for teacher learning
1168 (McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013; see Teacher Education by Design at the University of
1169 Washington, tedd.org)⁵ in which teachers focus on a new area of learning – this may be content
1170 knowledge, student thinking or new understandings about students, or an instructional practice –
1171 prepare to enact that new learning or integrate it into a lesson, co-teach that new learning in a
1172 live, supported environment with colleagues participating in the PD, and analyze data gathered
1173 from the co-teaching of that new learning in preparation for teaching it again (e.g., examine
1174 video recording, samples of student work). Learning Labs challenge traditional norms of
1175 teaching in the U.S. by offering tools and structures to encourage teachers to talk and think
1176 together about practice and students in each other’s classrooms (e.g., “Teacher Time Outs”) and
1177 to integrate new learning into classroom practice (Gibbons et al., 2017). Learning Labs
1178 originated in elementary mathematics and extended to science at the University of Washington
1179 (Thompson, 2017). Monte-Sano and colleagues are in the process of developing a model of

⁵ The Learning Cycle framework for teacher learning is also a core component of practice-based teacher education (PBTE – see above), which foregrounds learning instructional practices (or, learning to do the work of teaching) in preservice teacher education while may simultaneously focusing on equity, content, and students.

1180 Learning Labs for middle school social studies teachers learning to teach inquiry and argument
1181 writing with sources through their Teaching Reasoning and Inquiry Project in Social Studies
1182 (TRIPSS), a Teachers as Learners project.

1183 **Contextual factors as supports and barriers.** In addition to the design of learning
1184 experiences for teachers, particular contextual factors likely support or impede teachers' focus on
1185 civic reasoning and discussion, deliberation, and debate. Access to high-quality curriculum
1186 materials created by professionals with deep content and pedagogical knowledge appears to
1187 support more expert instructional practice in social studies (e.g., Andolina & Conklin, 2019;
1188 Hess, 2009b; Reisman & Fogo, 2016). Standards that emphasize factual information and
1189 assessments that reinforce memorization of that information may work against teachers or at
1190 least create barriers for providing meaningful civic learning opportunities (Grant, 2001; Hess,
1191 2009; Kelly et al., 2010), although such frameworks do not *have* to prevent teachers from doing
1192 this work (e.g., Parker et al., 2018).

1193 **Key Findings and Recommendations**

1194 If we consider what we know about how to best prepare and support educators to help all
1195 students develop their civic reasoning and discourse capacities, we have a strong research base
1196 that outlines various domains for supporting educators. These domains include helping teachers
1197 gain an understanding of the social and political contexts in which they do their work, gain
1198 awareness of their subjectivities and own racial identity, develop goals and values that are
1199 consistent with civic reasoning and democratic ideals, and develop orientations toward students
1200 that help educators see the civic resources and experiences students bring. Additionally,
1201 supporting educators involves attending to their orientations toward and knowledge of social
1202 studies content, helping them develop an awareness of dominant narratives and curricular

1203 silences, fostering their knowledge of pedagogy that supports civic reasoning and knowledge,
1204 and providing practice with enacting such instruction.

1205 Research points to some suggested approaches for how to cultivate teachers’ capacities,
1206 including providing educators with conceptual and practical tools, offering opportunities to
1207 engage in specific practices, focusing on student work and thinking, and engaging in high quality
1208 professional development. We have gained important insights, for example, into how to support
1209 teachers in engaging in and leading deliberations and discussions of public controversial issues.
1210 There are also promising professional development models such as “Learning Labs” and lesson
1211 study that offer forms that professional development could take.

1212 While there is important research that has been done on helping educators learn to
1213 facilitate controversial issues discussions and other forms of discussion, preparing educators to
1214 cultivate students’ civic reasoning is an area in need of much further research. We need
1215 considerably more attention to the specific practices that support teachers in becoming skilled in
1216 implementing the complex practices that facilitate students’ civic reasoning. We need more
1217 research that examines how to help teachers engage students who occupy unequal social
1218 positions with one another so that all students have opportunities to listen, speak, and be heard—
1219 and such research likely needs to address how teachers are prepared to examine their own social
1220 locations and subjectivities. Similarly, we need research that examines how teachers can be
1221 supported to foster students’ empathy, their willingness to listen to others, and their examination
1222 of democratic values. It would also be fruitful for scholars to explore teachers’ own roles as civic
1223 actors and agents of change—how they engage in their own civic reasoning, model these
1224 practices with students, and use their agency to navigate the systems within which they do their
1225 work.

1226 Further, in order to foster civic reasoning and discourse among all young people, scholars
1227 need to devote more attention to supporting teachers in what it means to do this work across
1228 varied grade levels and contexts. Much of the research in this area focuses on secondary teachers
1229 and teachers working in urban and suburban U.S. schools. As such, we would benefit from
1230 research that explores the support of teachers who are fostering civic reasoning in a range of
1231 contexts, such as in rural areas and across varying cultural, political, and national contexts (cf.,
1232 Hahn, 2015; Pace, 2019). Further, we need more scholarship that illuminates how to support
1233 elementary teachers aiming to engage younger children in consideration of and deliberation over
1234 how we live justly together.

1235 In addition to the research that is needed in these areas, teachers also need access to high
1236 quality curricular resources—which requires financial support—as well as substantial
1237 investments in time, funding, and district support to allow them to learn and practice new skills.
1238 In order for teachers to be able to engage in collaborative learning and planning, they need
1239 dedicated time available to participate in this work regularly, across time. Further, school
1240 districts and states should attend to where and how such learning can occur, through in-person,
1241 building and district-level collaboration, as well as through the burgeoning opportunities made
1242 possible through online and virtual reality professional development. Indeed, the COVID-19
1243 crisis has highlighted new possibilities for online learning to connect civic educators in their
1244 collaboration and growth. Thus, districts must create policies and structures that enable such
1245 professional development to take place, along with the substantial funding that makes such
1246 activity possible. These policies, structures, and funding, in turn, require policy action and
1247 advocacy at local, state, and federal levels.

1248

Conclusion

1249 Taken together, the body of research we have examined in this paper provides
1250 considerable evidence for practices that support the development of young people’s civic
1251 reasoning while also pointing toward a rich terrain that warrants further exploration. Supporting
1252 the practices we know to be generative and conducting additional research to deepen this work
1253 will require substantial investments—of time, advocacy, curricular resources, and financial
1254 support. Yet perhaps like no other time in recent history, our democracy depends on continuing,
1255 expanding, and funding this vital work.

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