

Pre-Planning Civic Action: An Analysis of Civic Leaders' Problem Solving Strategies

Jason Fitzgerald

Wagner College, New York City, New York

Abstract: This study explores the civic thinking heuristics that civic leaders use when pre-planning action. Across eight think-aloud protocols, findings suggest that three heuristics are employed. *Frame alignment* refers to the process of harmonizing personal beliefs and interests with the particulars of a civic action issue to find personal meaning in the work. Participants used (1) personal beliefs, (2) lived experiences, (3) their professional roles, and (4) their heritage to facilitate such framing. *Referencing* is the process of using past personal and historical civic action experiences as case studies for planning. *Contextualization* is the process of situating a civic issue within a community's political and cultural climate. These three heuristics are sense-making activities that could be taught to and used by students to make sense of civic issues and possible actions available to them. Implications include the need for increased focus on the historical dimensions and personal relevance of civic action.

Key words: civics, problem solving, civics heuristics, civic action

Introduction

The value of inquiry-based civics education has gained an increasing amount of recognition over the last decade, especially with the recent release of The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework in the U.S. (Croddy & Levine, 2014). This increased recognition largely began with Wineburg's (1991) descriptive heuristics of the cognitive processes historians use when engaging historical questions. This heuristics research spurred successful inquiry-based curricular work in history education (e.g., VanSledright, 2002; Seixas, 1996; Levesque, 2008) that serves as a foundation for the C3 Framework today. As they have done with such work on historical inquiry, teachers have increasingly involved students in authentic problem solving when teaching civics, enabling authentic political and social change in schools and communities across the country (e.g., Levine, 2007; The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011; Campbell, Levinson, & Hess, 2012).

Yet while this increased attention on civics education has highlighted a number of promising instructional practices (i.e., Deacon Crick et al., 2004), social studies teachers do not have the same kind of expert-based heuristics from which to organize their civics instruction as they do when they teach history. Little is known about the problem solving strategies that civic leaders employ when preparing for, engaging in, or reflecting on civic action. Such information would enable teachers to engage students in the cognitive apprenticeship of civic thinking. This study explores those problem solving strategies as they are used in one aspect of the large and complex process of civic action – pre-planning, through which civic leaders individually consider the possibility of taking action on an issue and explore their potential next steps toward such action.

Corresponding author email: jason.fitzgerald@wagner.edu

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Literature Review

For the past two decades, research (i.e., Pagnotti & Russell, 2015) has suggested that civics education in the United States inadequately meets the needs of sustainable democracy; the aspects of democratic life that Tocqueville (1835) praised in the 19th century are observed less frequently across the country today. Despite teachers' increased efforts to develop students' civic capacities, indicators of civic knowledge have remained stagnant; students' civic knowledge scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress continue to hover around 30 percent (NAEP, 2015). Furthermore, youth are continuing a negative trend set by their parents and grandparents, continuing to disengage from associational living (Putnam, 2000), thus limiting the social capital they are able to develop within their communities for the purposes of making political and social change (Kahne, Chi, & Middaugh, 2006; Zukin et al., 2006). Students' limited knowledge of the political system coupled with low capacities for building social capital raise concerns about the future health of our democracy (Pagnotti & Russell 2015).

While these data represent trends across all youth demographics, minority students tend to have even fewer opportunities for civic engagement than their white, middle class colleagues (Pope, Stolte, & Cohen, 2011; Fitzgerald & Andes, 2012; Marri, 2011). This disparity is known as the "civic engagement gap" (Levinson, 2012b). Thus, not only do students across the country have limited civic knowledge and skills but these limitations impact the largest growing demographic groups in the United States (Apple, forth-coming). Instructional approaches other than those found in traditional Civics courses are needed in order to stem the civic disengagement tide that threatens to disenfranchise youth from political and civic systems (Pagnotti & Russell, 2015) and minority youth from their more civically prepared peers (Levinson, 2012a).

Problem-based Learning

In response to these conditions, educators have turned to problem-based learning (PBL) as a way to engage students in "doing" civics. John Dewey (1916) argued that real-world problem solving is "the best way to engage [students']... intense, sustained interest and develop their capacities for reflective critical inquiry and collaborative practical action" (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007, p. 29). Thus, problem-based learning in civics education guides students through a "process of working toward the understanding or resolution of a problem" (Barrows & Tamblyn, 1980, p. 1). Through the PBL process, students are encouraged to develop their civic knowledge and skills while engaging authentic civic problems. The authenticity of the problems and the autonomy students have in engaging those problems fosters students' motivation towards civics and builds their civic capacities in ways that traditional, lecture-driven Civics course may not.

The literature on the use of problem-based civic learning practices suggests that teachers take one of two approaches to fostering such engagement: (1) in-class PBL (Gorski, 2009) and (2) action civics (Maker et al., 2015). In-class PBL often takes the form of simulations (e.g., Moore, Beshke, & Haeussler, 2014) or deliberations (e.g., Avery, Levy, & Simmons, 2013). Both strategies engage students in authentic problem solving as a class, developing their civic knowledge as well as their collaboration and critical thinking skills (Kahne, Chi, & Middaugh, 2006). Such in-class work enables teachers to explore topics and issues that may not directly impact students' local community or that may be too difficult to engage in real-time, laying a foundation of interactions that can be transferred to various civic problems that students may encounter in their own lives.

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More recently, action civics programs have been developed to provide a more community-based approach to PBL. Action civics programs enable students to take collective civic action to address issues within a context that promotes reflection and skills development (Bass, 2012; Pope, Stolte, & Cohen, 2011). While action civics programs differ with regards to how closely such learning is tied to a district's curriculum, who guides students through the action civics projects, and the type of civic engagement opportunities available to students (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), action civics programs generally employ a six-step process for engaging students in civic problems: (1) community analysis, (2) issue selection, (3) issue research, (4) planning for action, (5) taking action, and (6) reflection. Through these instrumental steps, students are able to practice engaging civic issues important to them in the context of their community while developing their civic capacities (Campbell, Levinson, & Hess, 2012).

Teachers using either PBL approach to civics instruction construct a condition by which students can develop civic agency (Garcia et al., 2015). When students are active participants in the process of reading and responding to civically related texts and situations, their perceptions of their own civic agency increase. Not only is such a perception of agency critical for students' sustained civic engagement (The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, 2011) but it has also been shown to reduce the civic engagement gap (Beaumont, 2011), making the PBL approach an important tool for increasing students' current and future civic action efficacy.

Cognitive Apprenticeship

In order effectively to guide students' engagement in authentic civic problems, teachers need to have a foundation in civic ways of knowing. Since the "cognitive revolution," in which behaviorism was largely supplanted by psychological theories based on describing complex mental processes, educational researchers (e.g., Pressley, 1979; Gagne, 1985) have worked to establish meta-cognitive distinctions between disciplines, leading to the analyses of disciplinary ways of knowing, thinking, and doing (Carter, 2007). These distinctions have given rise to the practice of cognitive apprenticeship, both "an instrumental model that teachers use to organize the learning environment and an approach to learning that helps students see the processes involved in complex learning activities" (Monte-Sano, De La Paz, & Felton, 2014, p. 15). Central to this approach of modeling disciplinary practices is a teacher's understanding of how "experts" problem solve. Without a clear sense of the ways in which experts approach disciplinary problems, the apprenticeship may be flawed or incomplete.

Studies of expert's problem solving strategies began with well-structured problems in mathematics and the sciences (e.g., Schoenfeld, 2013; Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1981). More recently, studies have begun exploring how experts approach ill-structured problems, those that involve the integration of multiple disciplines, and/or incomplete or inaccurate information, or necessitate the synthesis of ideas across time and space (Voss & Post, 1988). Think aloud protocols have been used to explore how physicians (Schoenfeld, 2010) and historians (Wineburg, 2001), for example, engage such problems, developing heuristics by which future physicians and historians, respectively, can learn to think in expert ways. To date, little research suggests how "experts" think civically, possibly because civics is a broad field as opposed to a discipline and civic expertise is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, such

information about how civic leaders¹ think would assist teachers in guiding their students in “doing civics.”

Both in-class PBL and action civics enable teachers to guide students through “ways of doing” civics, which benefits from an understanding of “ways of thinking civically”; thinking well helps people do well (Moustakas, 1990). Engaging in civic activities (e.g., deliberation) and action requires a specific type of problem solving “that focuses on gathering information from sources, a way of doing similar to [historical research] but performed in the context of solving practical problems in the field” (Carter, 2007, p. 405). “Doing civics” requires individuals to research issues while simultaneously engaging in cooperative thinking and action (Saltmarsh, 2008). Civic thinking, then, requires a different type of thinking than it might take to engage in historical thinking, where individuals engage information from across time and space (Wineburg, 2001) but do not necessarily have to manage competing perspectives and agendas in real-time.

This distinction between history and civics is important, especially if teachers are to teach content areas in constructivist, PBL ways, as some social studies teachers do. Just as Wineburg’s (1991) heuristics enabled teachers to apprentice students in historical thinking, so too could heuristics specific to civics education foster better apprenticeship of civic action. To be sure, since both civics and history rely heavily on gathering information from sources, there may be some overlap in the heuristics used in both academic spheres; given the differences between the two types of research, however, the same heuristics might not always be useful.

While teachers work to develop students’ civic capacities through problem-based learning strategies, little is known about how civic leaders problem solve. In order to apprentice students in civic thinking, the expertise of civic leaders needs to be drawn out, illuminating strategies that they use when engaging civic issues. It is particularly important to understand how civic leaders initially approach novel civic issues because, as other work in problem solving has noted (i.e., Schoenfeld, 2010), those initial approaches often guide an individual’s course of action. This study explored the problem solving strategies that civic leaders use when initially considering a civic issue, identifying key strategies that they use to frame future action.

Methods

Participants

From an initial pool of twenty-five potential participants, four civic leaders (three men and one woman) from a New York City neighborhood agreed to participate in this study. Local college administrators, faculty, and students who partner with the community on civic projects had initially recommended all twenty-five participants for their commitments to community unity and civic expertise. Those recommended participants were each screened to determine the extent of both their

¹ Previous studies of experts’ thinking have been able to rely on graduate degree attainment to define “expert;” in these studies, terminal degrees denote expertise. In civics, however, no such credentialing exists. Thus, I use the term “civic leaders” as a synonymous term to “expert.” The criteria used for defining “civic leader” is explained in the Methods section.

political and civic activism; engagement in both political and civic activities demonstrates an ability to approach civic issues with varied tactics and has been used by previous researchers to discriminate between types of activists (e.g., Zukin et al., 2006). After screening, five participants were selected; four agreed to participate. See Appendix A for participant details.

In addition to their political and civic engagement, these individuals were selected from the larger pool because of (1) their longevity within the community and (2) the number of times they were recommended by members of the college-affiliated selection group. Not only did each of these participants garner at least seventy-five percent of the selection committee members' recommendations for this study but, together, they also represent nearly a century of commitment to the community. Ranging from ten to thirty-two years of service, these individuals have strong connections and commitment to the community; they have honed their skills as civic leaders in a large, diverse metropolitan area.

Materials

Study materials included a semi-structured interview protocol that gathered background data on all participants (Appendix B), as well as two civic issues scenarios that were not current issues within the participants' local community (Appendices C and D). These scenarios were intended to elicit the participants' thinking as they engaged in pre-planning. Each participant reviewed the same two hypothetical scenarios in addition to associated online newspaper articles meant to provide context for the participants regarding the civic issue discussed within each scenario.

The first scenario (Appendix C) asked participants to imagine that a hydraulic fracturing company was interested in creating jobs in town by extracting gas using the controversial fracturing technique. To help participants unfamiliar with the various arguments around this issue, three print copies of online articles were offered to the participants so that they could contextualize the debate. The first article provided a brief overview of the issue, the second was in favor of hydraulic fracturing, and the third presented arguments against the practice. The same procedure was used for the second scenario regarding a history curriculum revision (Appendix D). Again, printed copies of three online articles were given to participants. The first article outlined the debate, the second article supported the revisions, and the third article claimed that the revisions were not in keeping with current historical scholarship.

These scenarios were selected for two reasons. First, both issues relate to recurring arguments in the United States. While hydraulic fracturing is a new process, arguments regarding industry's ability to create jobs and the government's role in protecting public health have a long history. Similarly, questions about the role of patriotism in national historical narratives are ones that countries around the world grapple with, including the United States.

These scenarios were also selected because they related to participants' areas of expertise. Since two of the participants were in the field of education and two were in the field of healthcare, the study design enabled an exploration of any differences between the ways in which participants would engage the scenario in their field and the one outside their field. In this way, the study was able to discriminate between subject-specific civic problem solving strategies (those strategies participants used only while pre-planning civic action within their field of expertise) and more generalized civic problem solving strategies (those that were common across all participants and scenarios), identifying

which heuristics might be common amongst all civic leaders, not just those with particular content expertise.

Procedure

Each participant individually engaged in two activities outlined below during privately audio-recorded meetings with the principal investigator.

Semi-structured interview. Participants were asked to explain their work and the ways in which they were active in their community, providing background data on their professional and personal lives. These data were used to contextualize their responses to the think aloud exercises. It also had the added benefit of providing a space for participants to speak freely and comfortably before being asked to process the two scenarios.

Scenario think alouds. After the semi-structured interview, participants were told that they would think aloud about two scenarios related to civic issues. They then practiced thinking aloud by engaging in a three-digit multiplication exercise, per Anders Ericsson and Herbert Simon's (1993) work. Then, each participant was given the hydraulic fracturing scenario and associated articles. The interviewer read the scenario aloud and asked the participant if he/she had any questions. Each participant was then asked what position he/she would take on this issue and to think aloud about how he/she would plan to take action on the issue. After thinking aloud about the hydraulic fracturing scenario, an identical think aloud protocol was used for the history curriculum revision scenario and associated readings.

Data Analysis

After each interview, audio-recordings were transcribed and texts were parsed by proposition (Kintsch, 1998). Protocol analysis then followed a strategy similar to that described by Wineburg (1991), where macroscopic coding was conducted to identify heuristics that were promising for the purposes of problem-based civic learning instruction. Prior to protocol analysis, two randomly selected think alouds were inductively analyzed, enabling the identification of possible categories of heuristics. Then, these categories were then tested against the remaining un-coded protocols. These categories were then refined, added, and deleted; only those that were present in all eight protocols were kept.

In this way, heuristics that were both (1) important to the civic leaders, per discussions of content and skills while thinking aloud and (2) learnable by students who could apply such strategies to their own civic problem solving (Bereiter & Bird, 1985) were identified. Three heuristics were identified through this process: (1) frame alignment, (2) referencing, and (3) contextualization.

Findings

Three heuristics were identified from analysis of the eight think aloud protocols: (1) *frame alignment*, the process of harmonizing personal beliefs and interests with the particulars of a civic action issue, finding personal meaning in the work, (2) *referencing*, the process of using past personal and historical civic action experiences as case studies for planning, and (3) *contextualization*, the process of situating a civic issue within a community's political and cultural climate. To be sure, these heuristics are sense-making activities that civic leaders employ when planning civic action and could be taught to and used

by students to make sense of a civic issue and the landscape of actions available to them. They do not, by themselves, help to develop successful civic action plans.

Heuristic 1: Frame Alignment

Research suggests that civically inclined individuals align their personal beliefs, values, and orientations with those of any social movement organization they want to join. This process is called *frame alignment* (Snow et al., 1986). Although this term was not explored in the above literature review, it names a process that emerged organically from the data analysis. Here, frame alignment describes a process by which participants harmonized their personal beliefs and interests with the particulars of a civic action issue, finding personal meaning in the work.

While David Snow and his colleagues (1986) use the process of frame alignment to explain the harmonization of individuals' orientations to the orientations of organizations, this study's findings extend that process, describing the ways in which civic leaders attempt to harmonize their own beliefs, values, and orientations to the topics/ideas represented in the hypothetical scenarios. To be sure, the civic leaders in this study did not necessarily find the study's hypothetical examples relevant to their immediate work; this relevance (or lack thereof) was by design, as explained above. However, regardless of whether or not the scenarios were of civic interest to the participants, each participant averaged 3.75 instances of frame alignment across both protocols. Eight instances of frame alignment were used when considering the hydraulic fracturing scenario and seven instances were used when considering the history curriculum scenario.

All four participants created framings of the issue during their history curriculum scenario planning; two participants also personally framed the hydraulic fracturing scenario issue. Participants' framings included references to their heritage (e.g., "I mean because I am of Spanish heritage..." (P4, T2, Line 8), their professional roles (e.g., "I mean for as the Principal of..." (P3, T2, Line 23), their lived experiences (e.g., "We, [my wife and I], happen to live a couple of houses off the Staten Island Expressway and to see all those trees torn down was terrible" (P2, T1, Lines 34-35), and personal beliefs (e.g., "I mean, my own opinion is that history is what happened in the past" (P1, T2 Line 12). These subcategories of frame alignment illustrate an array of ways that participants considered these scenario issues important in and connected to their own lives, framing their planning.

Personal beliefs. Of the two scenarios, the history curriculum scenario elicited the most participant belief statements (3 of 4 instances). Two of those three instances came from P1's and P2's think aloud protocols; P1 and P2 were both professionally focused on healthcare. These two participants' protocols began by thinking aloud about the question, "What is history?" To this question, they both came to similar conclusions, that history was "the truth" and "what happened" (see Appendix E, Table 1 for protocol samples; bold text was added for emphasis). In these instances, both participants framed the scenario via their belief that history represents the truth. Issues that involve others deviating from a truthful, objective, factual history, then, must be addressed in order to teach students "what happened."

Similarly P4 provides a belief statement in relation to the hydraulic fracturing scenario. Like P1 and P2 above, the hydraulic fracturing scenario was outside of P4's professional expertise, education. To frame the issue, P4 situated hydraulic fracturing in relation to his personal beliefs about environmentalism,

I'm very, like personally, I'm very environmentally conscience person and I'm just in awe of all of the pollution we have around us and especially in poor communities. And we're, for whatever reason, people don't stand up and fight off whatever issues are happening in terms of our environment. (T1, Lines 13-20)

Here, P4 explicitly demonstrated the link he intends to make between his personal belief that environmental issues are important, especially those focused on pollution, and his belief that people should take action to prevent pollution in their communities. Thus, like P1 and P2 above, P4's belief statement demonstrates a frame alignment that encourages his own action. In additional, P4's comments suggest that such beliefs should spur others with similar beliefs to act as well.

Lived experiences. Another way that participants framed these scenarios was through their own lived experiences. P2 engaged in lived experience framing while responding to the hydraulic fracturing scenario and P4 did the same while thinking aloud about the history curriculum scenario. In both cases, participants framed the issues by connecting the given issue to something in their lives that they do not want to happen again. For example, P2, when talking about why it would be important for him to publicly address hydraulic fracturing, referenced the civic inaction that led to the expansion of a local highway, "We happen to live a couple of houses off the [highway] and to see all those trees torn down was terrible. My wife aches with that" (P2, T1, Lines 34-36).

Similarly, P4 referenced an experience that happened in his home country of Chile, while talking about the potential impact of inaction on the history curriculum scenario: "I have my own experience against in Chile and how the CIA and the American Government were helping the government then, helping to destabilize the country and you know..." (P4, T2, Lines 45-48), suggesting that the ways we talk about (or do not talk) about various groups impacts our ability to have a stable democracy.

In both cases, the lived experiences of the participants served as a frame for the topics represented in the hypothetical scenarios. While others also experienced the events they referenced, the importance the participants ascribed to civic inaction in both cases provided a personal call to action, framing the issues within their own perceptions of their personal experiences.

Professional role. For P3, his professional role as a public school principal shaped his framing of the history curriculum issue. P3 was able to draw upon his specific role in a given, contemporary context to focus on the impact that it would have on his students; "Well, I mean for as the Principal of [a school], I've gotta deal with [this]... because that's going to impact the, my Muslim kids here. That's going to have a horrible impact on their self-esteem, their understanding of history" (P3, T2, Lines 82-86). Here, P3 drew a causal connection between his role and the scenario's impact; because he is a principal, he will address the situation to fulfill his professional duty. His framing of this issue, then, comes in part from P3's perception of what his professional duties are.

Professional roles also played a part in the framings that the healthcare participants created when engaging the hydraulic fracturing scenario. Both P1 and P2 framed the hydraulic fracturing issue in terms of the potential impact of "fracking" on the overall health of the community. P1 found this to be an important issue because of (1) the potential for hydraulic fracturing to cause earthquakes ["I heard... NPR did a whole story about this talking about people in Pennsylvania having earthquakes over this sh*t! Haven't they learned anything from this?"(T1, 109-113)] and (2) the government's lack of response to cleaning up industrial disasters ["There was the whole paint factory here that leaked lead into the soil. We have kids playing in parks where there is lead" (T1, 125-129)]. Through this

framing, P1 was able to frame the issue via hydraulic fracturing's potentially harmful impact on the community, especially disadvantaged communities.

Although P2 stated that he might support hydraulic fracturing in the community, he found importance in this issue related to the drinking water, not potential environmental health disasters: "I know how dependent New York is on uh, on water supply coming from the Catskills and the reservoirs up there and um how New York water is considered like great drinking water. And I'm happy with that and we're water drinkers at home" (T1, Lines 14-17). To P2, this issue is important to the community because New Yorkers enjoy the quality of their water. Any impact on the water, he later suggested, would harm the health of the community and would be something that the government should regulate against.

The education participants also framed in a less direct way the hydraulic fracturing issue as related to their professional roles. While P3 and P4 also echoed the importance of environmental health, they focused much of their community framing on the fiscal impact of such a proposal on the community. For example, P3 talked about concerns that such industry and any potential environmental impact would "impact the house prices in the area" (T1, Line 56). On a similar note, P4 talked about the importance of jobs in the community, balanced with the need to protect the environment: "Unfortunately a lot of times we're faced with this dilemma of supporting economic growth or jobs but at the expense of the other part, the pollution and all of that" (T1, Lines 43-44). In both cases, these participants focused on financial concerns that environmental damage creates, impacting their own abilities to continue their education work.

With regards to the importance of both environmental health and fiscal concerns, all four participants framed the issue in ways that directly relate to their own civic work. P1 and P2 both work in the healthcare sector; contaminated soil and poor drinking water would certainly hurt the health of the people they are trying to help. Similarly, P3 and P4 both work in education; the income of a community impacts the amount of tax-supported revenue that they can use to support their programs. Thus, although the participants certainly made meaning of these issues in relation to the health and welfare of the community, they also positioned their stances on these issues in terms of their professional role within the community.

Heritage. Only one participant, P4, used heritage to frame a scenario. Regarding the history curriculum scenario, P4 stated,

I mean because I am of Spanish heritage but I think that any type of ethnic studies and already American History is so has overlooked so much any type of a contribution made by any type of immigrants that have come... but you know, again in Texas and other states, even here in Staten Island you know, we are sometimes... A lot of decisions are made by a certain group of people that will affect a large group of people and not everybody's perspective are being taken into consideration. (T2, Lines 3-11 & 93-96)

Here, heritage is used as a merging point between personal belief and lived experiences. It is because of his heritage that P4 believes that diverse ideas should be included in history curricula. However, it is also because of his observations of the privileged perspectives some history curricula promote that he has such beliefs. To be sure, this statement suggests that his heritage ("...because I am of Spanish heritage") provides a lens for both belief and for lived experience perceptions (Johnson 2005), enabling him to make personal significance of this issue.

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Summary. The above examples suggest that civic leaders use frame alignment to position themselves in relation to the issue. This is especially true for issues that are less easily addressed through political practices (e.g., petitioning, testifying, etc.). For example, P4 said of the history curriculum scenario:

Um, it's a tough one, tougher than the other one [the hydraulic fracturing scenario] really, because I think it... there are so many you're dealing with religion, you're dealing with church and state, it's not as cut and dry. You're dealing with kids that are going to be influenced by this curriculum and the role of education to convey this (T2, Lines 33-40).

Despite differences in the hypothetical scenarios, framings were found throughout the protocols. Through this process of frame alignment, participants were able to use personal beliefs, experiences, professional roles, and heritage to connect with the hypothetical civic issues.

Heuristic 2: Referencing

In addition to frame alignment, participants also employed the strategy of *referencing*, the process of using past civic actions as case studies for planning. The past civic actions that they drew upon focused both on those actions that each participant had been involved in and civic actions that others had taken throughout the history of similar issues. There were almost no differences in the ways that participants engaged in the process of referencing in either scenario, either across different domains (i.e., healthcare or education) or in reference to who conducted the action being referenced (i.e., if the participant personally engaged in the civic action being referenced or someone else did). As Table 1 illustrates, participants referenced past civic actions in almost equal amounts.

Table 1: Instances of Referencing Within Domains Across Scenarios

		Participants in Healthcare		Participants in Education	
Hydraulic Fracturing Scenario		Total = 3		Total = 3	
		Participant Involved	Other(s) Involved	Participant Involved	Other(s) Involved
		2	1	1	2
History Curriculum Scenario		Total = 3		Total = 4	
		Participant Involved	Other(s) Involved	Participant Involved	Other(s) Involved
		3	0	2	2

The number of instances of referencing between healthcare and education specialists appears to be similar; there is almost an equal number of participant references involving civic actions that they previously undertook as there are references to past civic actions that other undertook. Of the thirteen instances, eleven (85%) were about local civic actions. For example, P1 referenced her public testimony about the (in)famous *Rainbow Curriculum* when thinking aloud about the history curriculum scenario, and P3 referenced the political pressure on New York City officials when violence

against minority groups exploded in their local neighborhoods. Whether referencing their personal actions or the actions of others, participants often spoke of past local examples while thinking aloud about how they might plan action in response to these hypothetically local scenarios.

P4 was the only participant to engage in non-local referencing, using one internationally focused reference and one U.S. national reference. For example, while speaking about the hydraulic fracturing scenario, he explained that Chileans were engaged in debates about the role that thermal energy and dams might play in its infrastructure:

There's a huge controversy there right now about it. I mean, it's a huge public opposition; over 70% of the country actually opposes the building of any other type of pollution, and more and more people are pushing not only the government but the politicians to be creative and to invest in an alternative ways [sic] of energy. (T1, Lines 29-36)

He goes on to suggest that Chileans must continue to put political pressure on individual politicians and the government as a whole. This is a current reference that speaks to a broader issue of global environmental activism rather than local civic action.

The most distinct differences in the ways that participants referenced were in their orientations towards action. While engaging the hydraulic fracturing scenario, all four participants oriented themselves toward political pressure examples. P1 called for contacting the Environmental Protection Agency and P2 spoke of using the "City Council Day" model to apply political pressure for change. P3 argued that civic leaders must "fuel the fire" so that politicians feel like they are forced to respond to issues, as they did when violence erupted on a local city street. Similarly, P4 argued that informed voting is a form of empowerment that enables citizens to shape political decisions. No matter their professional field, all of the participants engaged in referencing that oriented their actions towards political solutions when thinking aloud about the hydraulic fracturing scenario.

On the other hand, participants' referencing suggested more mixed orientations towards action while speaking about the history curriculum scenario. While P3 spoke about the power of voting to change educational policy, the other three participants took a more social-civic approach to the issue. These latter participants focused on initiating "diverse dialogue." P1, P2, and P4 all referenced times when they (or in P3's case, the Dreamers) met with multiple, diverse groups of people to rally support for their position. These three participants referenced civic action that is not nearly as politically engaged as the action they referenced in the hydraulic fracturing scenario (Appendix E, Table 2). Rather, all three discussed the need to meet with multiple groups of diverse people, even if the civic purpose of such action is slightly different.

Use of these specific examples is not to say that P3 did not recommend actions that involved diverse groups of people or to suggest that these civic leaders did not suggest coalition building and deliberation regarding the hydraulic fracturing scenario. Instead, they serve to illustrate the ways in which the process of referencing frames the issues for civic leaders. To be sure, referencing accounted for nearly forty percent of the participants' total think aloud propositions, suggesting that these references were an important part of their civic thinking and planning processes.

Heuristic 3: Contextualization

When civic leaders *contextualize*, they situate a civic issue within a community’s political and cultural climate. In other words, contextualization occurs when participants (1) explore the underlying arguments of an issue, (2) situate a civic issue within a given political climate (e.g., considering the influence of and reactions from party politics and/or specific elected officials), or (3) situate a civic issue within a given cultural climate (e.g., considering the influence of social characteristics like religion and race (Johnson, 2005) on how to address a particular issue). To be sure, these three components overlap; race, for example, can be a very contentious political issue, influencing political platforms as well as an underlying argument for some other issues (e.g., the achievement gap in schools). Thus, it is instructive to explore the ways that civic leaders contextualize civic issues, identifying the ways that they position their contextualization within the above components.

Across the four participants, contextualization occurred via analyses of the issues’ arguments and the political climate in which they are situated, related directly to their home community. As the total number of instances presented in Table 2 illustrates, participants evenly used both components to contextualize the hydraulic fracturing and history curriculum scenarios, regardless of their professional field of focus. A deeper analysis of these findings, however, reveals important differences in the ways that the participants (a) identified arguments within the two civic issues and (b) spoke about civic action with regards to the their political climate analyses.

Table 2: Instances of Contextualization Forms Across Scenarios

	Arguments		Political Climate Analysis
Hydraulic Fracturing Scenario	Total = 4		Total = 4
	Dyadic Positions	Beliefs	
	4	0	
History Curriculum Scenario	Total =4		Total = 4
	Dyadic Positions	Beliefs	
	0	4	

Concepts and beliefs. As Table 2 illustrates, there is a clear division between the types of arguments that participants identified within the two civic issue scenarios. While thinking aloud about the hydraulic fracturing scenario, participants explored dyadic positions. For example, after reading the scenario prompt and exploring the provided newspaper articles, P1 said, “I mean, this is really about the tension between the immediate economy and long-term impact on, you know, the environment, the Earth, our health” (T1, Lines 103-106), explicitly defining the argumentative parameters of the scenario as between job creation and long-term impact on health. Throughout the rest of her think

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aloud, she would again reference the economy twice and the impact of industry on the environment and public health three times, even citing the continued impact of a now-closed lead paint factory on the community's soil. P4 made an almost identical argument.

While P1 and P4 were explicit about the dyadic positions they saw within the scenario, P2 only explicitly referenced one position, implying a second. For example, he said,

On one hand, I'd like to be trusting that it's as safe as described, so it provides a great alternative to being dependent on fossil fuel or that at least the type of fossil fuel that's also polluting our environment and where we American's are the primary contributor to that type of pollution effecting global warming. (T1, Lines 44-48)

Here, P2 argues an opposite view from P1 and P4; rather than cite "environmental hazards" as one position, he argues that "good government regulation" is a position within this argument. However, he also sees another side to the issue, as indicated by the phrase "On the one hand." While he never explicitly stated "the other hand" side of his argument, his think aloud suggests that he is also concerned about the potential of environmental destruction. P3 did not make any dyadic arguments in this scenario, instead contextualizing via a political climate analysis.

Despite the participants' heavy use of dyadic positions in thinking aloud about the hydraulic fracturing scenario, none of the participants explored dyadic positions when considering the history curriculum scenario. The participants instead focused on the beliefs that people in the community might have about the role of history and on general questions about the role of history and education within the community. These belief statements were unlike those discussed in *Frame Alignment*, when participants attempted to find personal meaning in an issue. Rather, these belief statements were focused on the ways that others' beliefs might influence the possibility of action on this issue.

For example, both P1 and P3 agreed that the history curriculum scenario was "tougher" to address than the hydraulic fracturing scenario. P1 succinctly argued,

I mean the hydro-fracking [sic] is easier because it's new... And people are still like don't have all the information so they're less likely to hold onto you know beliefs that they have. Because if they have beliefs it's...they're fairly new and they're not imbedded in their.... Something like this is much harder because it is so embedded in people's psyches... their beliefs are around this kind of stuff. (T2, Lines 103-113)

P3 concurred, adding that such a debate around history education is one that "you'll be able to argue forever" (T2, Line 69), whereas managing the hydraulic fracturing scenario is "a lot more clear cut" (T2, Line 74) because the information is better defined. Put another way, P3 suggested that "the fracking issue" is simply a matter of "they can either make the water safe or not" (T2, Line 75), whereas the history curriculum scenario requires answers to questions like, "What's the role of education really with kids? Are we teaching them to think for themselves and develop their own critical thinking and opinions or are we trying to skew those opinions with less than objective information?" (T2, Lines 78-81). These are questions to which none of the participants could answer for the community, driving a need to meet with diverse groups of people to discuss the issue at length, as explained in their referencing above.

Political climate analysis. When participants contextualized by analyzing the political climate, there was not a clearly defined difference in their responses per the two scenarios. Rather, participants'

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political climate analysis answered two questions, (1) “Which political party is in power and where are they likely to stand on the issue?” and (2) “Which stakeholders have power to sway the political process?” There was recognition between the participants that the local community is predominantly Republican in its voting and beliefs; comparing the community to Republican-leaning Texas, where the history curriculum scenario played out in real life, P1 said, “Thank God [that the New York City Board of Education would have to revise the curriculum] because [we] could definitively do something like this” (T2, Lines 73-75). Similarly, P2 thought that local politicians would be in favor of hydraulic fracturing, given the Republican Party position on such energy issues.

More representative of participants’ statements, though, was the way that they critically evaluated the potential for people outside of the community to influence the debate. Especially in reference to the hydraulic fracturing scenario, participants were concerned with the influence that Exxon Mobile might have on the types of information the community read about the topic and the way that politics “trumps the public” (P2, T1, Line 106). While sourcing of the texts and a critical questioning of the validity of sources, participants were worried that the community and politicians would get misinformation about the issue. P3 went so far as to worry that big energy companies might create false advertizing fronts to assuage public fears about hydraulic fracturing:

So you know this one, Exxon’s, easy to realize but you know they could put something out on their you know Joe Bob’s Environmental Company and make it look like you know this is completely reliable so I really think part of it is getting a group of people who are really smart who will call a spade a spade. (T1, Lines 124-128)

Thus, the political climate analysis that these participants undertook was not just about the role that politicians may or may not play within civic action but about the ways in which the issues stakeholders might use (and misuse) information to direct conversations within the community.

Discussion and Implications

As civics education instruction changes from the lecture-based traditional civics class to a more problem-based learning (PBL) model, it is important for teachers not only to know how to “do” civics but to do it in authentic ways. Engaging in civic action, whether that be through dialogue with diverse groups of people, organizing local individuals for a community cause, or coordinating with multiple organizations to address systemic political and social issues, is a complex endeavor that requires skill and a way of thinking. If civic action were as easy as just following a procedure (e.g., identifying an issue, researching the problem, and creating a plan to address it), civic action might happen more frequently.

In addition to the vast amount of work that civic action requires, it also requires a mode of thinking about issues in relation to the self and to the community. Civic action does not happen in a vacuum. In order for teachers to apprentice students in this process, they need both to understand and to be able to teach the problem solving strategies that civic leaders use when engaging a problem, just like teachers do when apprenticing students in historical inquiry (e.g., Wineburg, 2001; Seixas, 1996; Levesque, 2008). Thus, this study explored the problem solving strategies four civic leaders used while engaging two hypothetical scenarios, identifying the heuristics they used when pre-planning civic action.

Findings drawn from the data suggest that civic leaders engage three heuristics during this pre-planning phase: (1) frame alignment, (2) referencing, and (3) contextualization. While these findings

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are not necessarily novel, they are not unimportant to the process of thinking civically. For example, historians engage in the process of contextualization like these participants did (Wineburg, 1991) but the specifics of the process are different. Whereas historians contextualize by “situating a [historical] document in a concrete temporal and spatial context” (p. 77), the participants in this study situated civic issues with the cultural and economic contexts of their community, engaging in a broader process as a whole. Thus, while some of the terms used to describe these civic thinking heuristics may be similar to other disciplinary thinking processes, the enactment of the heuristic processes are specific to civic thinking.

From these data, three important questions arise. First, why was there a difference between the types of frame alignment participants engaged in per their areas of specialty (e.g., education or healthcare)? In some ways, the data suggest that participants engaged in alignment based on their personal beliefs when they were considering the scenario that was outside of their field and they engaged in professional role alignment when they were considering scenarios inside their field. However, P2 and P4 used alternate frames as well, countering this trend.

It is possible that distinctions between the participants’ framings were not driven by the participants’ specialty area but rather by the type of scenario. As P1 explained above, the hydraulic fracturing scenario was easier to manage than the history curriculum, partly because the history curriculum scenario had to do with people’s beliefs about the nature of history. This explanation, though, does not account for P3 and P4 not using personal beliefs to frame their thinking; if this finding was driven by the scenario, all the participants would be expected to use the same type of framing.

However, if the participants’ area of specialty was the driving factor in the type of framing used, P3 and P4 would be expected to use the personal belief framing to engage the hydraulic fracturing scenario, since they were both in the field of education. Instead, P3 used the professional role framing when considering both scenarios, and P4 used heritage framing when considering the hydraulic fracturing scenario. Thus, neither the participants’ areas of specialty nor the scenario wholly account for the distinctions.

Instead, it seems that a confluence of specialty knowledge/interest, the specifics of the issue, and the background of the participant all play a role in the type of frame alignment a civic leader uses. The ways that civic leaders frame issues are an amalgam of what they know, the arguments within the issue, and their own orientation towards the world, highlighting the roles and values most important to each individual. For example, P3 is a liberal educator. While he had strong beliefs about the hydraulic fracturing scenario, he framed his response by his professional role, since that role outweighed other considerations regarding that particular issue. Similar individual responses can be seen in other participants’ framings.

When teachers have students consider specific civic issues, it is important for them to guide students through the frames by which they might individually align with different types of issues. Differences in framing can be used as a benefit for the whole class because they expose the multi-faceted nature of civic issues; civic issues do not impact only one group or any one group in any one way. Such diversity enables teachers to apprentice students in developing nuanced arguments for engaging civic issues, and broadening the possible ways that students can engage in civic action, including who to build coalitions with, which frame to use with which political leader, and how to attract wide-ranging media attention to an issue.

A second question these data raise is “Why did the participants mostly reference local actions?” Eighty-five percent of participants’ references were to local civic actions. To be sure, these participants have a wide range of experiences nationally and internationally, as illustrated in the other fifteen percent of their references. Yet, the vast majority of their references were to historic and current *local* actions.

One might argue that this tendency towards referencing local civic actions is driven by Tip O’Neill’s quip, “All politics in local.” However, the large proportion of local references may also be related to the other heuristics. The heavy use of professional role framing as well as of political climate analysis indicate that their civic thinking was situated firmly at the intersection of their work and the lives of the individuals they served. Local referencing enabled the participants to select past and current civic actions that (1) had bearing on the hypothetical scenarios and (2) predicted the possible strategies that could be used with the realities of the community and its political structure.

While national historical examples may provide some reference for students to situate local civic issues, these findings suggest that students need to know about past and present civic actions within their communities as well. Indeed, it is these local examples that situate civic leaders’ thinking more than national and international examples. Such work requires teachers to understand a community’s history as well as the work that is already being done, guiding students to think about the relationship between those civic issues and the ones they would like to engage.

Yet a third question might be why participants contextualized the hydraulic fracturing scenario in terms of a dyadic cost/benefit argument and the history curriculum scenario in terms of beliefs. Here, the distinction seems to lie within the nature of the scenario. While participants could have contextualized the hydraulic fracturing scenario in terms of what it means to take care of the environment (much like they framed the history curriculum scenario in terms of what is history), they instead focused on the economics of the issue. The hydraulic fracturing scenario presented an issue that clearly carried physical risks and rewards for the community; hydraulic fracturing could create jobs, boosting the community’s economy, but it could also endanger the environment, polluting the community’s drinking water. Such scenarios elicit discussions of cost/benefit analysis, which, as these data suggest, alters the context of civic action. Issues such as the one that the history curriculum scenario presented do not have physical risks and rewards. Instead, such issues touch upon people’s cultural beliefs and are contextualized in ways that are similar to the personal belief framing.

For teachers, this finding suggests that different types of civic issues may be more appropriate for use in some content areas over others. For example, issues like the one found in the history curriculum scenario may be useful for students in a humanities class to consider, fostering text-based and Socratic Seminar discussions as well as student campaigns to persuade others using disciplinary communication skills. On the other hand, issues that involve physical risks and rewards might be best used in social science and physical science classes, where students can investigate such issues, bringing hard evidence to bear on possible solutions/decisions and future civic action.

While these findings provide a base from which teachers can begin engaging students in civic thinking practices, the scale and scope of this work is just a beginning. Further research is needed to verify and clarify these findings. Using these findings as a priori codes, further research might include a larger sample size across varying geographic, political, and cultural contexts. Additional studies might also consider engaging civic leaders in thinking aloud while consuming news in real time, exploring the ways in which civic leaders think in context to their work and real events. In addition to exploring the

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ways that civic leaders problem solve at other stages of the civic action process, such data would support a more nuanced understanding of how civic leaders think.

Conclusion

As in-class problem-based learning and action civics are increasingly used to develop students' citizenship capacities, teachers are taking on the role of cognitive apprentice to their students' civic thinking. In order to apprentice students in ways to think civically, teachers need to know the ways in which civic leaders think. The pre-planning heuristics of (1) frame alignment, (2) referencing, and (3) contextualization provide problem solving strategies for teachers to employ as they apprentice their students in the ways that civic leaders think, guiding both the issues that they might select with their students and the knowledge that they might need to think civically. These findings suggest a need to explore further civic leaders' pre-planning thinking across larger sample sizes, and a need to explore civic leaders' thinking as they actively plan, engage in, and reflect upon civic action. With such findings, research can better support teachers' efforts to engage their students in problem-based civic learning.

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Appendix A

Participant Details

Participant	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Field of Work	# of years in service to community	Political Engagement Criteria ²	Civic Engagement Criteria ³
1	Female	White	Healthcare	32	1, 4	b, d
2	Male	White	Healthcare	28	1, 3	b, d
3	Male	White	Education	16	1, 3	b, d
4	Male	Hispanic	Education	11	1, 2	b, d

² The following codes represent the types of political activities each participant indicated he/she engaged in at the time of the study. Each was only asked to select two of the items from the list: (1) “always” voting, (2) volunteering for a political organization or a candidate, (3) trying to persuade someone how to vote, (4) displaying a button, bumper sticker, or sign on behalf of a candidate, (5) contributing money to a party or candidate in the past 12 month (Zukin et al. 2006, 64).

³ The following codes represent the types of civic activities each participant indicated he/she engaged in at the time of the study. Each was only asked to select two of the items from the list: (a) regularly volunteering for an organization other than a candidate or political party, (b) working with others to solve a community problem in the past year, (c) raising money for charity, through a run/walk or any other means in the past year, (d) actively participating in a group or association (Zukin et al. 2006, 63).

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your interests.
2. In what ways, if any, are you involved in your community?
3. Tell me about a time when you got involved/interested in a community issue. What made you interested? What did you do? What was the result?
4. How do you define *community*? Is it a place or a set of interests?
5. Where do you get your information about community issues?
6. Who is most active in this community? Why did you select him/her?
7. What issues are most important to this community right now?
8. What assets are present in this community right now?

Appendix C

Hydraulic Fracturing Scenario

As the early morning sun rises, you look out your kitchen window at the wildlife preserve and see the color of the leaves changing. You've lived in Dimock all your life and have grown to love the place. Your neighbors are pleasant and you had a great childhood. Unfortunately, there aren't a lot of job opportunities here. About 13% of the community lives in poverty and the median income is only \$35,000. Most people can't afford to leave the community, even if they wanted to.

As you sit, thinking about your town and watching the ducks on the pond, you hear the woman on the news talking about "fracking." She explains that fracking is short for "hydraulic fracturing." That is when energy companies drill down into the ground and force water and other chemicals into the shale below to release natural gas. These companies can then sell this gas to customers for energy.

Energy companies say that this type of energy extraction will help our country to reduce its dependence on foreign oil because we can get it right from our own ground. They also say that it will help local economies because they will pay landowners for the rights to drill on their land. If they find that they can get gas out of the ground on that land, the companies will pay the landowners even more money.

Some people say that this is a dangerous way to get energy, though. Some have reported that the chemicals used during fracking have contaminated their water, making it dangerous to drink. There are even YouTube videos of people being able to light their drinking water on fire because of the gas that has leaked into it when the fracking occurred. In addition, some worry about the by-products of fracking; something has to be done with all of the chemical water used during the process.

As the news report finishes, the woman on the television says that a major energy company would like to begin fracking in Dimock.

Appendix D

History Curriculum Scenario

It seems like the State Board of Education is always looking at ways to revise the curriculum. As you open the morning paper, this year doesn't seem to be any different. The school board just announced that they will be revising the history curriculum this time, looking specifically at what is being taught in United States and World History. You've always liked history so you are interested to see what they want to revise. Isn't history what happened in the past? What is there to revise? As you look more closely at the newspaper article, you read that the former head of the school board and one of the proponents of the review has said, "History has already been skewed. Academia is skewed too far to the left." He proposes changes that include, but are not limited to, removing a discussion about Thomas Jefferson being interested in the Enlightenment because it did not show that the Founding Fathers were true Christians, and deleting a discussion about the famous Hispanic Archbishop Romero's fight for equal rights related to the United States' intervention in El Salvador.

A lot of your neighbors agree that United States history should teach students about how great America is and how it was founded on Christian beliefs. Others, specifically college and university historians, are arguing against these changes. They say that the changes skew history and hide the problems and issues that our country has had in the past. They say that the changes will teach students a false history.

A school board meeting has been scheduled so that community members might respond to the proposed changes.

Appendix E

Excerpts from the Original Data Set

Table 1: Personal Beliefs about History from P1 and P2

	What is history?
P1	“Ok, so, I mean, my own opinion is that history is what happened in the past and it, it doesn’t have a purpose other than to be instructive in terms of the actual events that transpired, including the good, the bad, and the ugly, and that the most, the best perspective on history and the best learning experience we can get from history is to actually hear about everything.... But, the fact is, if you don’t teach the truth, and the truth is what transpired, and it’s not left or right or center, it’s.... it’s what happened and you shouldn’t be selectively choosing what goes into a history curriculum based on your political beliefs” (T2, Lines 11-15 & 24-28).
P2	“Well, I happen to believe that the truth... we should always try to teach the true or to feel comfortable to speak the truth and truth is very subjective, of course. We all have our own version of what the truth is. But I don’t think we should be afraid to look as objectively as possible at history. So, again, history was written by the victors, by the people who had control over what would be written. And acknowledging or viewing what would be more accurate history shouldn’t diminish how we feel about ourselves but make us more aware and less likely to repeat, to simply discriminate or be harmful to other groups. We need to be... to find truth so I would be at that meeting saying, “You know, we shouldn’t be afraid of discussing those other perspectives and looking at history in different ways and be ready to discuss it not or not to necessarily totally discount the Founding Fathers and where... the fact that the country was founded on Christian beliefs as these make reference to that but some of those Christian beliefs came from people who were not necessarily of faith; they had a general Christian-centered type of faith” (T2, Lines 11-34).

Table 2: Referencing Dialogue with Diverse Groups

Participant	Text
P1	“I tried my best to do everything I could do... I met with the community... I met with community groups, I tried to explain that it’s a public health issue, you know, it’s not promoting drug use.... I just hung in there and I persevered and we kept trying to go around them this way and go around them that way” (T2, Lines 270-275 & 300-303).
P2	“Anyway, so Interfaith Groups should also discuss this, I think like Interfaith Councils, Council Churches, and communities, I think because they have people of different faiths and are more likely to be more open minded on this issue. And that becomes a good venue because if you’re a priest who has regular interactions with a minister and with a rabbi and an imam, then you’re more likely to have a different reaction to this” (T2, Lines 116-123).
P4	“I mean, we’re very engaged in... we’re part of The Education Collaborative of the New York Immigration Coalition, so we work on many issues from getting information to parents in their language, not only Spanish but the top languages accepted by the Department of Education, but also talking to parents, talking to students look’n at basically what is proposed and that’s when you start getting people’s reaction and that’s when you decide [what to do].” (T2, Lines 100-109).