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Abby Reisman, PhD

Assistant Professor

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Teacher Knowledge for the Disruption of Oppression in History Classrooms: Navigating Decision-Moments and Discretionary Spaces

Abby Reisman  
[areisman@upenn.edu](mailto:areisman@upenn.edu)

Dr. Abby Reisman is an Assistant Professor of Teacher Education in the Teaching, Learning, and Leadership Division. Prior to her arrival at Penn GSE, Dr. Reisman was a visiting professor at Teachers College-Columbia University, and a researcher at the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at UCLA. She received her Ph.D. from Stanford University, where she directed the “Reading Like a Historian” Project in San Francisco, the first extended history curriculum intervention in urban high schools. Dr. Reisman’s work has appeared in *Cognition and Instruction*, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *Teachers College Record*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, and *Teaching and Teacher Education*. Reisman began her career in education as a classroom teacher in a small, progressive high school in New York City. Her research centers on the secondary history classroom and the prospect of designing instruction around document-based inquiry and analysis. Her recent work focuses on teacher education and professional development experiences that prepare teachers to facilitate document-based discussions in history.

**Abstract:**

Historical content—especially content that is attuned to how historical narratives justify and reify existing power structures—is a necessary but insufficient ingredient in the design of history instruction that seeks to disrupt the persistence of oppression. My goal is to demonstrate that teacher knowledge does not exist, inert, in the teacher's mind, but rather manifests in the dynamic and interpersonal context of enactment, and therefore presents particular decision-moments that each teacher has to continuously navigate. This paper asks: What do teachers need to know and understand to present history in ways that disrupt the persistence of oppression? And, how do these domains of knowledge emerge in the form of instructional moves in the context of dynamic and responsive instruction? I attempt to illustrate the range of instructional decision-moments that teachers encounter in my study of 10<sup>th</sup> grade teachers in Philadelphia who were implementing a document-based history curriculum that my colleagues and I designed for the city's mandated African American history course.

## TEACHER KNOWLEDGE FOR THE DISRUPTION OF OPPRESSION IN HISTORY CLASSROOMS: NAVIGATING DECISION-MOMENTS AND DISCRETIONARY SPACES

In their personal statements, prospective teacher candidates often write that they wish to become social studies teachers in order to help students debunk dominant narratives. They typically recount a class in college in which they were introduced to a revisionist narrative that challenged the history they learned in high school. This new narrative awakened and empowered them to think critically about how stories are constructed in ways that mask the mechanisms of structural oppression. Without necessarily knowing it, these prospective teachers offer a vision of history instruction that centers content knowledge—both knowledge of dominant historical narratives that often simplify or mask complex forces that perpetuate injustice, and counter-narratives that challenge these myths. Collectively, their personal statements offer one possible, albeit incomplete, answer to the central question of the 2018-2019 TeachingWorks seminar series: **(How) does knowing content matter for disrupting the persistence of oppression?** We might formulate the answer as follows: *Knowing (historical) content matters for disrupting the persistence of oppression when it provides the basis for challenging dominant historical narratives that mask the mechanisms of structural oppression.*

Of course, teaching history in secondary classrooms in ways that disrupts the persistence of oppression is far more complex than this, as prospective teacher candidates quickly learn. For starters, teachers must attend to students' incoming ideas and respond as they construct and make sense of new ideas. As they make sense of history, students often draw upon rich and varied lived experiences that may represent contemporary instantiations or imperfect analogies for certain historical phenomena. Teachers must support students as they wrestle with the similarities and differences between past and present. Perhaps more importantly, if teachers wish for students to have the tools to formulate counter-narratives, they must reveal how historical knowledge is constructed. Teachers must make transparent how to consult and evaluate evidence in formulating a historical claim, and how to engage with a broader body of scholarship. In all of these cases, a teacher's historical content knowledge—even when it encompasses a deep grasp of relevant facts, an appreciation for enduring debates, a familiarity with the knowledge construction processes of the discipline, and an understanding of the continuity of racism and oppression—nonetheless emerges in the situated and unpredictable context of practice in the form of instructional moves.

In this paper I argue that content—especially content that is attuned to how historical narratives justify and reify existing power structures—is a necessary, but insufficient ingredient in the design of history instruction that seeks to disrupt the persistence of oppression. Because teaching is dynamic, fluid, and interpersonal, the question of how and when to introduce content is deeply contextualized and presents teachers with infinite decisions about how and when to engage in certain instructional moves. This paper therefore asks: *What do teachers need to know and understand to present history in ways that disrupt the persistence of oppression? And how do these domains of knowledge emerge in the context of dynamic and responsive instruction?* I situate my inquiry in a study of 10<sup>th</sup> grade teachers in Philadelphia who were implementing a document-based history curriculum that my colleagues and I designed for the city's mandated African American history course.

### PROJECT CONTEXT

On September 26, 2017 Philadelphia unveiled a monument to Octavius Catto (see Figure 1). Standing on the skirt of city hall, the statue is the city's first and only public statue of an African American. Octavius Catto taught in Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth, he recruited African Americans for the Union Army, he fought for suffrage and desegregation, and on election day in 1871, he was murdered. Five-thousand mourners lined Philadelphia's Broad Street for Catto's funeral procession, and he was eulogized from pulpits across the country (Biddle & Dubin, 2010). Cast in bronze and striding toward a ballot box, Catto's statue also highlights the dearth of curricular resources portraying the life experiences of free Black people in the 1800s.



Figure 1. Statue of Octavius Catto, *A Quest for Parity*, installed on the skirt of Philadelphia's City Hall on September 26, 2017.

My colleague, Lightning Jay, and I designed a unit of instruction centering the experiences of Philadelphia's free African American population to align with the city's mandated 10<sup>th</sup> grade African American History course (Jay, in preparation). Philadelphia's African American History course emerged during the Civil Rights Movement when students and parents organized to demand a course that would counter the prevailing Eurocentric history classes and provide a fuller portrait of the history of the city and country as a whole. In 2005, the course became a mandatory graduation requirement for all Philadelphia high school students. The first mandated African American history course in the country, it spans the era before the trans-Atlantic slave trade in Africa through Reconstruction in the United States with a particular emphasis on the experience of enslaved people.

As Sanders (2009) points out, teachers of African American history face a number of challenges. To master the content, teachers must be knowledgeable about African American life before 20<sup>th</sup> century. To translate this rich history to students—most of whom have yet to take the 11<sup>th</sup> grade American History survey—teachers must leverage accessible and engaging curricular resources. To satisfy the public expectations of the course, teachers are expected to give the material relevance that reaches across centuries (Toliver, 2014). In the face of this tall task, our intent was to develop academically rigorous, intellectually inspiring, and locally grounded lessons that teachers might choose to implement with their students.

### **Catto Curricular Unit**

The Catto curriculum is a three-week unit of instruction that culminates with students proposing and designing an installation that would accompany and augment the existing Catto memorial. The purpose of the final assignment is for students to identify facets of Catto's historical context that do not appear in the existing monument and consider whether these added components provide viewers with a better understanding of his legacy and contemporary relevance. Students ultimately present their proposals to a panel of teachers and community members. By tying the study of a historical figure to the design of an existing, contemporary monument, the unit also attempts to underscore the value, relevance, and potential uses of historical content.

To this end, the unit launches with an opening lesson on historical monuments. Students first watch a [video](#) about the recent controversy surrounding Confederate monuments, and then evaluate a series of new monuments in [Philadelphia](#) and [New York City](#) that respond to existing

historical landmarks in both cities. The lesson prompts students to consider the importance of monuments and why they are often contested.

Students then shift into an historical investigation of Catto and his life through a series of four document-based lessons (Jay, in preparation; Reisman, 2012; see Figure 2). The first and second lesson prompt students to consider Catto's historical context; the third and fourth lesson engage students with Catto's activism and his murder. Each of these lessons is structured around an open-ended central historical question (CHQ) that students must answer using documents from the lesson. Each lesson's documents are sequenced in such a way to offer students increasingly complex responses to the CHQ (see Figure 3).

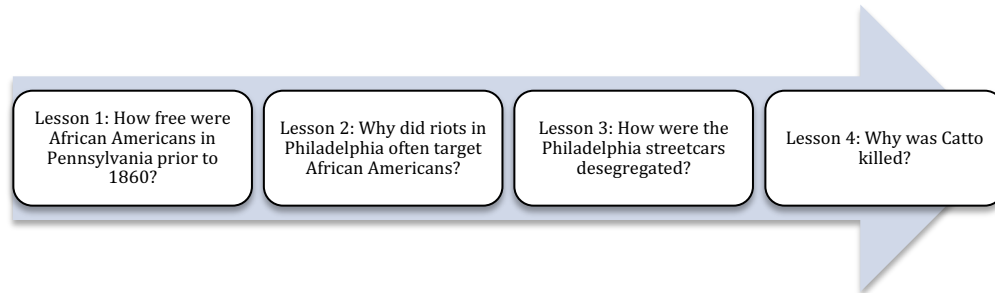


Figure 2. Sequence of document-based lessons in Catto curriculum.

Like all document-based lessons (Reisman, 2012), the Catto lessons are structured around a predictable activity sequence in which the teacher first establishes relevant contextual background knowledge that allows students to access the documents. The teacher then supports students in reading and interpreting the lesson's documents, using the skills of disciplinary reading (Wineburg, 1991; Monte-Sano, Felton, & De La Paz, 2014). A range of instructional scaffolds (e.g., graphic organizers, guiding questions) support student engagement with and analysis of the lesson's documents. Typically, documents are modified to be accessible to struggling readers (Reisman, 2012; Wineburg & Martin, 2009). Finally, the lessons are designed to encourage students to engage in whole-class discussion around the central historical question, using evidence from the documents to support their claims (see Reisman, 2015). Decisions about the design of the activities and the sequence of lessons and how they might support student learning and development of historical consciousness are discussed below.

### ***Learning theories underlying document-based lessons.***

In the past half century, educational research on teaching and learning has broadly converged around two learning theories. The first, constructivism, holds that people constantly attempt to make meaning of the world and their experiences (Bruner, 1960; Piaget, 1929). As a result, all people have pre-existing "schemas" or explanations for how things work. Opportunities to learn occur when people experience "disequilibrium," or an awareness that their pre-existing understanding of the world has been challenged. Learning happens when a person is able to accommodate new information or experiences in ways that shift, expand, or re-organize pre-existing schemas. The second learning theory, sociocultural learning theory, broadly holds that learning is social, and that individuals internalize increasingly complex understandings and practices by engaging with more knowledgeable others (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Vygotsky, 1986). Typically, these social interactions occur around shared "tools," which can include language or material artifacts. Learning happens as individuals use these tools to engage with others to create new understandings of the world.

The structure of document-based lessons is grounded in these two theories of learning: (1) Students arrive with preexisting understandings about what it means to know history, which are accounted for by curricular materials and the teacher; (2) the curricular materials create opportunities for "disequilibrium," when learners are forced to reconcile their previous understanding of the world with new information; (3) this reconciliation must happen through social interaction and discussion with others; (4) more knowledgeable others – classroom teachers—play an essential role in helping learners successfully reconcile new information and generate new understandings.

For example, Lesson 2, “Why did riots in Philadelphia often target African Americans?” (see Figure 3) and Lesson 4, “Why was Catto killed?”, illustrate the learning theories that undergird the document-based lesson. First, the documents are intentionally sequenced to create opportunities for disequilibrium. As students interrogate each of the sources in turn, they construct an increasingly complex answer to the central historical question: in the case of Lesson 2, African Americans were the frequent targets of race riots because Democratic politicians exacerbated racial and economic tensions between African Americans and new immigrants in an effort to hold onto power. Lesson 4 (Why was Catto killed?) presents a similar arc, moving students from a claim that Catto was killed because police lost control of some Irish roughs, to a complex, contextualized understanding that Catto was killed because Democratic politicians encouraged police to permit widespread racial violence in an effort to suppress the new Black (Republican) vote. In both of these cases, the goal is also to shift students’ understandings of racial violence from a non-racist to an anti-racist perspective (King & Chandler, 2016), or from an understanding that racial violence is the result of individual racists, to an understanding of racism as an intentional and hegemonic way of structuring society (Leondardo, 2009).

Second, and arguably more importantly, the *mechanism* by which students achieve this more sophisticated understanding is through classroom discourse with their classmates, facilitated by their (more knowledgeable) teacher (Reisman, 2015). The Framework for Disciplinary Discussions in History identifies four domains that constitute the teacher’s work in facilitating whole-class document-based discussion: engaging students as sense-makers, and orienting students to the text, to each other, and to the discipline (Reisman et al., 2018). These domains encapsulate a range of discrete “moves” that a teacher might employ—for example, “revoicing,” in which a teacher reformulates a student’s contribution to highlight their key claim, and “uptake,” in which a teacher incorporates a student’s comment into a subsequent question (Nystrand, 2006; O’Connor & Michaels, 1993). These domains reflect the complex, multi-faceted nature of document-based discussion facilitation in history.

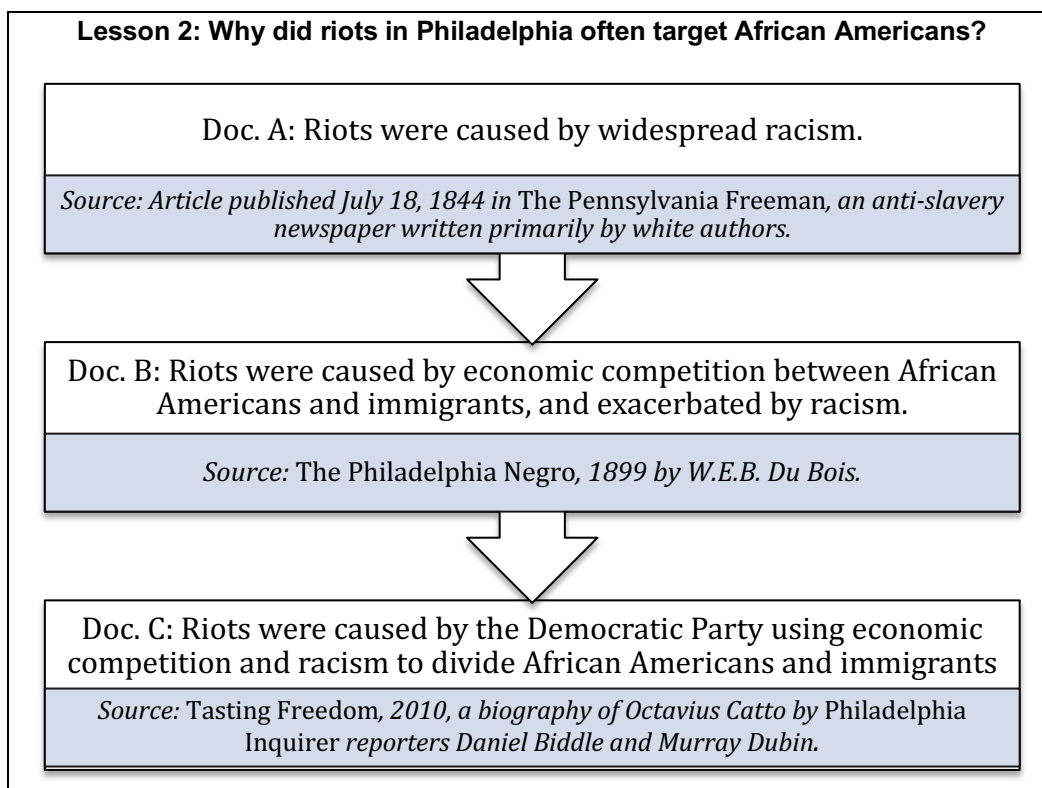


Figure 3. Sequence of document within Lesson 2: *Why did riots in Philadelphia often target African Americans?*



### ***Theory of historical consciousness.***

We also drew from theories of historical consciousness in developing the unit, lessons, and activities. Relying heavily on the work of Jörn Rüsen (1993) and Seixas (2016), we sought to engage students in disciplinary practices in ways that were rooted in and would ultimately shape their understanding of their present-day, lived experiences.

While each document-based lesson in the unit focuses on a specific historical question about the past, the unit as a whole begins and ends in the present. In this sense, it aligns with a model of historical consciousness proposed by German theorist Jörn Rüsen (1993, p.162). Rüsen depicts the relationship between the disciplinary work of inquiry and what he terms “life-practice” (see Figure 4). In this cycle, historical investigations begin with and are motivated by particular interests; these interests are filtered through dominant theories or preconceptions about the past or human behavior; historical questions are then investigated using the disciplinary rules of empirical research, and ultimately represented in writing or other media. Yet, the process ultimately functions to orient the individual or society in time. That is, we study the past to better understand ourselves.

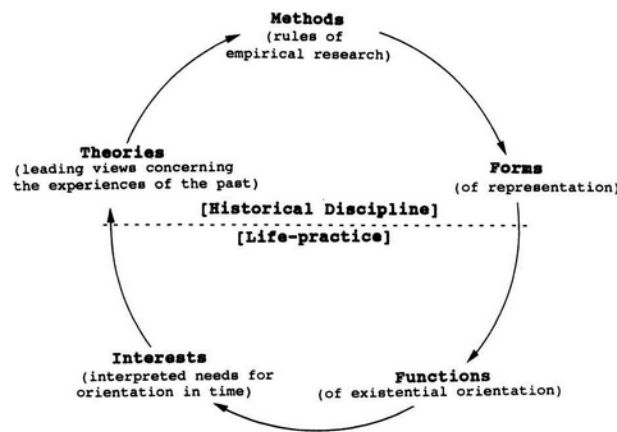


Figure 4. Jörn Rüsen's “disciplinary matrix” (1993, p.162)

Seixas (2016) adapted Rüsen's matrix to explicitly acknowledge the characteristics and functions of collective memory (see Figure 5). In this model, memory practices that are “deeply felt” exist “below the line” whereas the analytical work of historical inquiry remains “above the line.” Seixas argues for history education to be “located in the ‘purple’ bridge between historical practices and memorial beliefs, where skilled teachers have considerable autonomy to address the memorial cultures of the students in their classes and where community memories—perhaps even divided memories—are subjected to and enlarged by critical, historical scrutiny, feeding back into public memory” (para. 8).

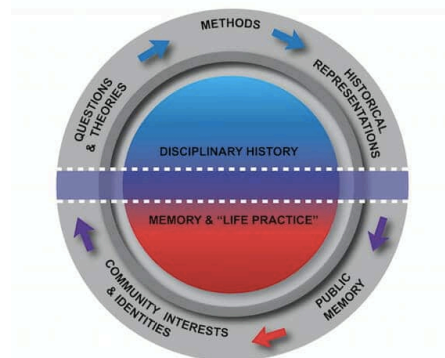


Figure 5. Seixas's (2016) “History/Memory” Matrix

The Catto curricular unit, as a whole, attempts to locate history education in the “purple bridge.” Although the individual lessons exist more squarely as “red” (e.g., the opening launch lesson on contemporary monuments) or “blue” (e.g., the document-based lessons), the unit as a whole attempts to take students through the cycle of disciplinary inquiry, locating the beginning and end point of their study in their local, lived experiences as residents of Philadelphia. In designing the unit, we appreciated that students were likely to be engaged by the contemporary controversies around monuments, and the invitation to re-design the Catto monument. At the same time, as Peter Lee suggested in his discussion of Rösen’s matrix, “history education must go above the line if students’ historical consciousness is to be adequately developed” (Lee, 2004, pp. 140). That is, disciplinary historical inquiry should offer students the opportunities to develop the tools and analytic frameworks with which to examine and understand their historical selves.

In the case of the Catto unit, going “above the line” meant engaging in a deep exploration of Catto’s historical context, and troubling many of the narratives and silences that surround 19<sup>th</sup> century African American history and Catto himself. First, although certain communities in Philadelphia have always known and learned about Catto, broadly speaking he remained an obscure historical figure until recently. In his recent public revival, initiated in part by the Catto Memorial Fund in 2004, Catto has been compared to [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), on account of his efforts to desegregate Philadelphia’s streetcars, and to [Jackie Robinson](#), on account of his efforts to organize an inter-racial baseball game between his African American team, the Pythians, and a White team. While these comparisons are useful, they simplify the complexity of Catto’s achievements and of the long and ongoing struggle for civil rights. In other words, the study of history should highlight both continuity *and change* (Seixas & Morton, 2013; Jay & Reisman, 2019). An appreciation for the specific conditions of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Philadelphia has the potential to deepen students’ understanding of Catto and his achievements. Moreover, by engaging “above the line” in disciplinary inquiry around Catto’s life and context, students will ultimately use this knowledge to inform their “life practices,” in particular, their understanding of contemporary narratives about African American history.

For example, a rich portrait of 19<sup>th</sup> century Philadelphia would address silences in the way African American history is portrayed and taught. The typical US curriculum says little about free Black life in antebellum America, yet Philadelphia had an active and vibrant free Black community in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The notion of an active, vibrant free Black community directly challenges the linear narrative presented in most history curricula, where the African American experience begins in slavery and ends with the Civil Rights movement and is largely relegated to the South, with the exception of the Harlem Renaissance. At the same time, Catto’s struggle for full equality and eventual murder also challenges the narrative of Philadelphia as a Quaker bastion of abolitionism and equality. Absent the rich historical context of 19<sup>th</sup> century Philadelphia, students who learn about Catto simply add a decontextualized hero to a carefully curated school-sanctioned pantheon (Wineburg & Monte-Sano, 2008). By locating Catto in his historical context “above the line,” students might begin to notice that the historical narratives they have been taught in the present, “below the line,” are incomplete. For students in Philadelphia, one such narrative has been the city’s proclaimed innocence of and distance from the nation’s history of slavery and racial violence.

### **RE-CONCEPTUALIZING RACIAL PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE (RPCK) IN TEACHER DECISION MOMENTS**

My discussion began with the claim that content knowledge was a necessary but insufficient ingredient in history instruction that seeks to disrupt the persistence of oppression. In the prior section, I added another essential ingredient: history curriculum that (1) opens historical questions to investigation; (2) engages students in the processes of disciplinary knowledge construction; and (3) engages students at the intersection of history and memory.

However, curriculum does not teach itself; as discussed above, the teacher plays a fundamental role in facilitating discourse that supports student learning. Lee Shulman introduced the term *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK) to capture the knowledge—a “special amalgam of content and pedagogy”—that teachers must possess to enact meaningful instruction about

content (Shulman, 1987, p. 8). Teachers' PCK guides their instructional reasoning and judgement. Researchers have undertaken the work of further specifying PCK across subject areas (Hill, Ball, & Schilling, 2008; Park & Oliver, 2008; Monte-Sano & Budano, 2013). More recently, social studies researchers have introduced the term *racial pedagogical content knowledge* (RPCK) as a critique of PCK informed by critical race theory (CRT). Core tenets of CRT include the recognition that racism is both a construct used to maintain existing power structures and a pervasive aspect of American life (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 1998). RPCK calls on teachers to hold and "a working *racial* knowledge of how race operates within social science, from CRT perspectives" (Chandler 2015, p. 5, Demoiny, 2018) alongside their content knowledge and PCK. Importantly, the CRT tenets that form the knowledge base of RPCK are considered to exist as both forms of knowledge but also as pedagogical tools. Chandler, Branscombe, and Hester (2015) describe this duality as both a *philosophical stance* ("the why") and a *pedagogical framework* ("the how") (p. 155).

This paper problematizes the existing conceptualization of RPCK in two ways. First, I posit that although the tenets of CRT are important components of RPCK they do not sufficiently capture the racial knowledge that a teacher must bring into the history classroom. Second, I suggest that existing conceptualizations of RPCK overlook the situated, enacted way that teacher knowledge emerges in the course of instruction in the form of instructional moves. I propose that whether and how a teacher chooses to enact an instructional move that introduces their racial knowledge constitutes an instructional "decision-moment," informed by their learning goals, the curricular materials at hand, the student's position in the class, timing, and myriad other contextual factors.

### **Domains of Knowledge for RPCK**

In considering the knowledge that teachers must bring to the curriculum in order to engage students in such discursive experiences that serve to disrupt the persistence of oppression, I highlighted three domains of teacher racial knowledge that I viewed as central to the enactment of the Catto unit in particular, and racialized history in general: (a) knowledge of one's racialized self; (b) knowledge of relevant history; and (c) knowledge of core problems and questions. By *knowledge of one's racialized self*, I refer to the ways that teachers identify racially as well as their understanding of how their identity informs their relationship with students and their enactment of racialized history curriculum. I suspect that the extent to which teachers have explored and reflected upon their own racial identity also has direct implications for their openness to teaching racialized content (Milner, 2006). By *knowledge of relevant history*, I refer in part to what has typically been considered subject matter knowledge (SMK), and includes the specific historical context under investigation—in this case, namely, the experiences of free Black Philadelphians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But here I would also include familiarity with the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and its role in the teaching of history (Chandler, 2015; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano, 1997). In particular, teachers with *knowledge of relevant history* recognize the role of history in the construction and perpetuation of racism and understand that revisionist histories and counter-narratives that center the experiences of people of color can work to challenge dominant representations and hegemonic structures, and that attention must be paid to the diversity and intersectionality of the experiences of people of color (Solórzano, & Yosso, 2002). By *knowledge of core problems and questions*, I refer to a teacher's familiarity with enduring issues and questions that continually arise in history. When teaching with document-based lessons, these enduring issues often constitute the *historical problem space* (Reisman, 2015) created by a particular set of documents. The historical problem space represents the cognitively—and often emotionally—puzzling terrain where one strains to grasp the strangeness of the past, while simultaneously resisting the inevitable pull to render it familiar. A teacher who has *knowledge of core problems and questions* would be primed to detect tensions between the lesson's documents and use these to generate interpretive debate between students.

### **Instructional Decision-Moments**

Although scholars have produced extensive scholarship devoted to specifying PCK, fewer have engaged in the work of specifying the types of decision moments that teachers

encounter in the course of instruction. Lampert (1985) framed teachers as “dilemma managers,” arguing that instructional dilemmas necessarily precluded fully satisfying resolutions. Much more recently, Ball (2018) argued that instructional moments contain infinite “discretionary spaces” in which a teacher must choose among a set of discursive options, each of which has implications for student learning and social positioning. An emphasis on reasoning through dilemmas appears in certain teacher education pedagogies, for example, the use of cases (e.g., Richert, 2012) and rehearsals that focus on candidates’ decision-making (e.g., Lampert et al, 2013). Across these examples, PCK appears not as a knowledge that a teacher somehow carries, intact, into a classroom, but rather as something that is enacted in practice and highly situated.

The construct of an instructional “decision-moment” has much in common with Lampert’s “dilemmas” and Ball’s “discretionary spaces,” namely in its focus on teacher judgment and reasoning. I prefer “decision-moment” to “dilemma” because the latter encompasses a much broader category of phenomena, including lesson planning, that can occur both inside and outside live instruction, whereas my interests here lie in the specific, in-the-moment, often spontaneous decisions to enact particular instructional moves. In that sense, my proposed “decision-moments” occur within the “discretionary spaces” that Ball describes and can be understood to be a type of discretionary space in which the teacher chooses whether and how to share their racial knowledge via a particular instructional move. My core argument is that teachers must make complex decisions about how and whether to engage in certain instructional moves that make apparent their racial knowledge in any given moment of instruction.

### **Instructional Moves**

One could argue that teaching is comprised of an infinite number of instructional moves--anticipatory, reactive, procedural, arbitrary. Although the profession lacks a “technical vocabulary” to name these (Grossman & McDonald, 2008, p. 186), a growing literature has begun the work of specifying practice, especially in the field of classroom discourse. For example, Beck and McKeown (2006) provide a taxonomy of moves for discussion, including *marking* (calling attention to certain ideas), *turning back to students and to text* (directing students to text or to each other), *annotating* (adding information), *revoicing* (restating student ideas), *recapping* (summarizing), and *modeling* (demonstrating expert thinking with text). In this paper, we focus on three instructional moves that seem most related to whether and how a teacher shares the three domains of racial knowledge that we specify above: (a) disclosing (one’s political views); (b) stabilizing the content (Reisman, 2015); (c) exposing the discussion structure (Reisman et al, 2019). We believe that any moment in which a teacher decides to enact one of these moves constitutes a decision-moment. Each of these moves is discussed in further detail below.

### **Participants and Sources of Data**

Data from this project came from a larger study on the project-based learning (PBL) across subject areas. Participating history teachers primarily taught in Philadelphia and needed a shared project-based curricular unit to participate in the larger study. My colleague and I were enlisted to design a project-based unit and we elected to do so around the city’s recent erection of the Catto memorial (Jay, in preparation).

This paper focuses on two of the teachers in the study, Eve and Janeen<sup>1</sup>, who both taught 10<sup>th</sup> grade African American history at W.E.B. DuBois High School. The school is a high performing magnet school with 95% minority enrollment, 73% of which identifies as African American. We observed and videotaped both teachers’ instruction of the Catto lessons for two years in a row and conducted interviews before and after their implementation of the curriculum. Eve was a first-year teacher when the study began, and she identifies as Asian American. Janeen identifies as African American and she entered her 18th year teaching when the study began. We selected Eve and Janeen for close study because they taught at the same school, allowing us to “control” for school context as we examined the myriad other factors that shaped their instructional decisions.

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<sup>1</sup> Teacher names and school name are pseudonyms.

## RESULTS

In the sections below, I argue that both teachers demonstrated in their interviews that they possessed the proposed domains of racial knowledge needed to disrupt the persistence of oppression in history classrooms; yet, I also demonstrate that how and whether these forms of knowledge entered the classroom depended on the teachers' choices in instructional decision-moments. My goal is to demonstrate that teacher knowledge does not exist, inert, in the teacher's mind, but rather manifests in the context of enactment in the form of instructional moves, as a result of myriad decision-moments that the teacher has to continuously navigate. Below, I identify some of the decision-moments and instructional moves that mediated how and whether each domain of knowledge entered the classroom.

### Knowledge of a Racialized Self

Both teachers indicated that they possessed a developed awareness of their racialized selves and how they might be perceived by students, especially in the context of a course devoted to African American history. As Asian American and African American teachers, respectively, Eve and Janeen were conscious that simply by virtue of their race, they were positioned in certain ways (e.g., inside/outside; knowledgeable/ unknowledgeable) relative to the content of the lessons, the discussions of politics, or students' lived experiences. How and whether they chose to affirm or resist these assumptions and reveal their personal views was the source of constant decision-making.

#### *Eve*

Eve believed that her racial identity meant that she needed to earn students' trust. Speaking about her experience as a first-year teacher, Eve recounted:

It was definitely tricky in the beginning of the year, for me as an Asian American teacher teaching African American [history] was definitely hard at first and the students rightfully had a lot of pushback towards me. But I think through developing relationships with them and them learning to trust me and them knowing my views on issues even if I can't say them, helped them feel more comfortable to share what was going on for them in terms of race in the classroom.

In the post-interview that same year, Eve again tied her identity to her ambiguous status in a majority-Black school and highlighted her need to gain students' trust. Again, she connected this trust to students knowing that she shares their political views "even if [she] can't say them."

I'm not [White] and maybe students are more comfortable talking about racism and their experiences because of that? I'm not sure. Being Asian American in a predominantly Black school is an interesting position because students know I'm not White but it's like I'm in this ambiguous area because I'm not White or Black. But students know my politics because of how I teach and I think they trust me because of that.

Eve worked from an assumption that teachers should refrain from disclosing their political views, a commonly held position in social studies instruction (Bullough, Gitlin, & Goldstein, 1984; Elliot, 1973) which has faced more recent scrutiny (e.g., Journell, 2016). Yet, she admitted that she made decisions that revealed her views in order to earn students' trust.

At the start of her second year of teaching, Eve introduced a new activity: asking students to write racial auto-biographies—narratives about their personal experiences with race since their childhood. She described the assignment as "risky" but also "rewarding." She explained that she started by sharing her own racial autobiography, which was "very vulnerable and scary but I think made students feel more comfortable to share theirs." The new activity not only reflected Eve's knowledge of her racialized self, but also her belief that communicating to students the racialized nature of her own lived experiences was essential for establishing a foundation of trust. In each of these cases we see Eve's heightened awareness of her racialized self and how this knowledge

manifested in discrete instructional decisions, for example, whether or not to disclose her political views or make herself vulnerable by sharing personal information.

We observed Eve navigating this terrain in the context of the Catto unit. For example, after students watched the video on Confederate monuments in the launch lesson in the first year of implementation, Eve asked students to articulate the arguments that were presented in favor and against maintaining Confederate statues. After articulating the various perspectives, a student asked, “who chooses who gets to put the statue up?” Eve responded, “usually the City Council, the local government, if it’s on public property.” The following exchange ensued:

S1: So they don’t have these arguments?

Eve: They do.

S1: So why are [the statues] there?

Eve: The people who are the local government in the places where they’re keeping up the statutes, they think it’s right.

S1: So they’re White. I mean, racist.

Eve: That could be your judgement of them. But they believe that it’s right.

S2: They could be Black, too. It’s just an opinion.

Eve: So I think you know what my political beliefs are. I’m going to withhold my personal beliefs now but if you think about what we’ve been learning about and how I usually frame things, you can probably guess my beliefs.

Although several students spontaneously shared their arguments for why the Confederate monuments should be removed, it is important to note that Eve never explicitly invited students to share their views on whether or not Confederate statues should be taken down. Instead she prompted them to identify the arguments articulated in the video and then discuss what the controversy suggested about the importance of monuments. The two arguments articulated in the video for maintaining the statues were that (1) they force us to remember and face our troubled history and (2) they preserve Southern heritage. The student in the exchange above cut through these arguments to state what she believed to be the underlying motive: racism. This moment appeared to unsettle Eve. But instead of turning the comment into a question to the class—e.g., do others agree that those who support the monuments are racist? – and opening the interpretation up for discussion, Eve framed the claim as the student’s “judgment” and then intimated that she agreed with the student. We see this as a decision-moment in which Eve elected to close rather than open the topic to discussion. Because we did not ask Eve about this particular moment, we can only infer about her motivation, but it appeared that Eve’s need for students to perceive her as sympathetic with their interpretation of the world trumped her need to open the topic to discussion.

### *Janeen*

Janeen encountered similar decision moments as Eve in which she had to choose whether or not to reveal her personal views or open objectionable claims up to discussion. As an African American teacher, Janeen described herself as comfortable engaging students in discussions about race because “I’ve done and continue to do the work of questioning my own identity politics.” However, because she shared a racial identity with many of her students, she actively positioned herself as responsible for challenging their assumptions and broadening their perspectives. For example, she explicitly challenged her African American students to think about racism and discrimination more broadly:

One of the things I tell them in September “you don’t get an A for being Black in this class.” When we talk about things like racism and discrimination, I challenge my African American students to do a little bit better. Just because you have been victims of oppression doesn’t necessarily mean you haven’t turned around and oppressed anybody else. So, on the one hand, while it is explicitly a class about African American history, I’ve tried to make it as inclusive a class as it could be in connecting the struggles of African Americans to the struggles of other marginalized groups. And I’m pretty upfront with kids.

I say to them – you get so upset when things happen to African Americans but you [use racist or homophobic language] . . .

Also, unlike Eve, she actively resisted sharing her political perspectives, though her decision was also filtered through an awareness of her identity:

I'm also very conscious and very careful about appearing to choose a side and privileging one narrative over another. There are some things I don't share. I don't share my political leanings with the class explicitly. I don't share my religious affiliations. And they'll ask me but I tell them, "I have a privileged voice in this situation because of my experience and my job is to encourage you to question and not promote any one way of thinking". . . I don't think it's appropriate, particularly in the history class. We have to be careful as educators that we're not overly influencing our students. They should have choices.

In fact, Janeen shared an anecdote from earlier in the year that illustrated her willingness to engage views with which she fundamentally disagreed.

In one of my other classes a student wrote an essay about how White privilege wasn't real. And as opposed to me saying "White privilege is real! Are you crazy?" I was like "Okay let's talk about it. Let's have this conversation about why you think in 2018 that White privilege isn't real. Tell me where your facts are. You need to cite your sources." . . . I thought it was good for some of my students of color to see that everyone is not going to agree with what you believe but in order to facilitate dialogue you have to approach it from a place of seeking to understand versus a place where you can defend. Because I personally believe that White privilege is real, yes I do, but as a teacher in that moment I have to address it in a very different way.

What became clear in her explanation was that her decision to engage the student on this topic was rooted not only in commonly held assumptions about teacher disclosure *but also* in her belief that as a Black woman she should model for her students of color how to engage with other viewpoints.

In the launch lesson on Confederate monuments in Year 1, we observed Janeen effectively withhold her views from students and pose a number of open questions for discussion.

Janeen: Let's just take the temperature of the room. How many people believe that Confederate statues should be taken down? [hands raise] Who is willing to defend their position?

S1: I feel like the Confederate statues that are up aren't really there for people to just look at and say 'oh yeah that happened.' It's more there for people to glorify them. . . and their views were immoral.

Janeen: Okay yes. [to S2] Do you agree or disagree?

[S2 discusses how monuments influence people]

Janeen: Let's just think about it. You all just said you didn't know much about Philadelphia history. Let's say you're an average student in an average city, do monuments influence how you understand history?

S3: ... When I think of a statue I think the statue is honoring someone or paying respects. And if you're honoring a Confederate leader that goes against everything that America stands for. Because we stand for liberty and freedom and these people didn't believe in those things. So how can you honor someone who goes against these things?

Janeen: Is anyone in the room willing to argue that we should keep Confederate statues? Why is it important to also have those statues exist?

S4: How else are we going to recognize the bad parts of history? . . .

S5: You can repurpose it and tell the actual truth of the history. . . It's about how you teach someone about this history.

Janeen: So you're saying it's the responsibility of interested parties to explain what it means?

S5: Yes.

Janeen: When you say 'the actual truth,' is there any one actual truth? Can there be more than one version of actual truth?

S5: Yes, in perspective, yes.

Janeen: I don't have a right or wrong answer. There are people who will draw a line in the sand and say, 'look, slavery was evil – it doesn't matter what perspective you're looking at.' Where there are others who say it served an economic, cultural, and political purpose—we need to acknowledge it in this country. It's not up to me to decide.

S6: There was another lady in the video who said to keep the statues because they remind people what not to do.

Janeen: So like a cautionary tale? [S6 nods]. Okay, I think that's important, too. It's important to have examples of what not to do. Again, I don't know. I mean, I have my own personal position but it's not that important. What's important is that you understand how these monuments exist in public space.

In contrast to Eve's facilitation, Janeen genuinely opened the topic of Confederate monuments to discussion, eliciting different viewpoints and pushing student thinking. In other words, they navigated the same decision moment differently. Although she claimed to have her "own personal opinion," it seemed unlikely that students left knowing where she stood on the matter. More significantly, she prompted them to engage in a number of complex questions about history and memory that extended beyond the question of whether or not the monuments should come down (e.g., do monuments influence how you understand history? Is there more than one actual truth?). As will be illustrated below, Janeen did not always choose to open topics up to discussion nor did she always hide her personal views so well; her decision to do so in this moment was likely shaped by a constellation of factors that led her to conclude that it was valuable, *in this moment*, to leave the question of Confederate Monuments unresolved.

In comparing Eve's and Janeen's facilitation, it is important to underscore that many other factors likely account for their differences, not least of which is their teaching experience. As a novice teacher, Eve was likely more concerned with winning students' approval than Janeen, whose age and experience positioned her quite differently. Nonetheless, two important points emerge from the above examples. First, both teachers possessed knowledge of their own racial identity and an awareness that it mediated their experiences with students; moreover, their instructional decisions were informed by that awareness. Second, as I will demonstrate below, these differences illustrated above do not seem to be a matter of discussion facilitation skill or style, because both teachers operated quite differently when enacting the historical lessons. Rather, it appears that discussions of contemporary controversies are more likely to prompt decision-moments in which teachers have to decide to share their political views or withhold them.

### **Knowledge of Relevant History**

In addition to having knowledge of their racialized selves, both teachers had knowledge of the relevant history of Catto's life, from the social and political context of 19<sup>th</sup> century Philadelphia to the broader social and political circumstances that would have contributed to his falling into relative obscurity until 2017. Yet, knowledge of relevant history, like knowledge of one's racialized self, emerges in decision-moments, especially in the context of discussion facilitation. As I have written elsewhere (Reisman 2015), a teacher's decision to correct students—or even to interrupt a discussion in order to clarify a historical inaccuracy, a move I call *stabilizing the content*—is particularly fraught in social studies classrooms, where students' contributions to discussion are often framed as "opinions" and where student engagement is paramount. As I discuss below, neither teacher *stabilized the content* often, but both teachers made decisions to do so at some moments but not at others. My analysis suggests although each teacher stabilized the content in different ways, they were both more likely to do so in historical lessons than in lessons that dealt with contemporary controversies.



## Eve

Eve demonstrated adequate knowledge of relevant history, though she appeared more familiar with general patterns of African American history than with Philadelphia-specific developments. She had a broad commitment to helping students see and understand the historical antecedents of contemporary injustice because, in her view, “history shows us that the world is not random or unintentional, but it has been created in specific ways for specific reason.” Though she doesn’t explicitly identify the ‘specific reasons’ that have shaped the world, we might infer from this comment that she refers to a core tenet of Critical Race Theory: namely, that race is a construct used to maintain existing power structures. Eve was placed in an African-American history course during her student teaching year, for which she wrote a lesson about the free African American population in 19<sup>th</sup> century Philadelphia, and she seemed generally comfortable discussing the main themes and topics of the African American curriculum. She was familiar with many of the social tensions that were raised in the Riots lesson (see Figure 3), for example tensions in Philadelphia between Irish immigrants and nativists, between Irish immigrants and African Americans, and between newly arrived fugitives and more established African Americans. When asked in the debrief interview in Year 2 what she hoped students learned from the lesson, she explained: “I think it’s useful for them to learn about different historical dynamics of African Americans in Philadelphia, and the different variations of how race has existed in this city, with the immigrants and nativism.”

Given her knowledge of relevant content, Eve was faced with several decision-moments in which she had to choose whether or not to stabilize the content for students. She did so with some consistency in the history lessons, offering gentle corrections in the face of historical inaccuracies. For example, in the lesson on Catto’s murder, a student argued that Catto was killed primarily for racial (rather than political) reasons and claimed that a White abolitionist would not have been targeted for voting Republican. Eve corrected this assumption without undermining the student’s main claim:

S1: I feel as though if it was a European with those political views, he wouldn’t be discriminated against for his political views.

Eve: So like if he was a White abolitionist or something?

S1: Yeah, if he was a White abolitionist they’d look at him and say ‘oh he’s probably Democratic,’ they wouldn’t assume he was a Republican. So if he goes to vote nobody’s going to bat an eye, but if it’s a Black man everyone is going to assume he’s a Republican.

Eve: Okay. I would say at that time being an abolitionist or siding with a radical cause at that time, it wouldn’t be *safe*, but yeah, it’s obviously different if you yourself are what people are trying to keep from voting.

She also stabilized the content in the Riots lesson, when a student misinterpreted a document by W.E.B. Dubois. Students were discussing whether or not Dubois harbored elitist views toward fugitive slaves, and a student argued that he did favor elites:

S1: He says “if the new freedman” –is he talking about himself?

Eve: So he’s talking about people who were formerly enslaved and then they were free.

S1: Yeah, so he says “If the new freedmen had been given peace and quiet and enough work to develop sensible leaders, history would have been different.” So I think he’s referring to people like him and to people—because he got his PhD from Harvard—I think he’s saying people like him deserve . . .

Eve: So I don’t think he would consider himself with a group of new freedmen. He was born free, he was an intellectual, he was wealthy. He’s talking about the newly freed slaves who had just come into Philly and would be uneducated and untrained.

Although such moments were infrequent, they were unambiguous. Eve chose to stabilize the content when students made claims that were historically inaccurate.

By contrast, in the launch lesson, Eve seemed more hesitant to stabilize the content. In the discussion around Confederate monuments, one student wondered out loud about how White

students feel learning about slavery. Eve responded and a complex series of claims emerged about race:

Eve: Well that's a really interesting question. I guess some people feel. . . Well I guess the first thing I think is not all white people had ancestors who were slave-masters. You know, maybe their families came here after that. So it's not necessarily. . .

SS (some laughter): No! Nah! They still. . .

Eve: So why is your reaction no, no no?

S1: Everyone originates from . . . Somewhere down the line. .

S2: Somebody. . .

Eve: Let's say people, like their parents or their grandparents are from Ireland. . .

S3: Where are their great-great parents from?

Eve: from Ireland!

S1: But we're just talking about just White people. Like Whites from the South it's always going to trace back to someone in their family was a slave-owner. Just like us, like my dad's side came from Alabama, and I'm pretty sure that we had some slaves in my family. And plus my last name is like a White last name.

Eve: We learned about names, yeah.

S1: It probably came from a slave-owner. Somewhere down the line. It had to.

Eve: So I think that's a good question and I feel like that's a big conversation about race and White privilege and what it feels like to be White at this school maybe in African American history classes.

When debriefing this moment in the interview, Eve referred to her ambiguous status as an Asian American teacher, unable to speak from the perspective of a White person who could "speak to being allies and not being offended by recognizing that White privilege is real." In other words, she saw the moment as one that had to be addressed from a place of experience and noted that she could not speak to how it felt to be White and learn about slavery. On the other hand, students made historical claims about both White and Black people that were not accurate, and Eve left these unchallenged. Because we did not ask Eve to explain her decision to *not* stabilize the content in this moment, we can only speculate about her motivation. One possibility is that she was more likely to stabilize the content when students' inaccurate comments touched directly on the learning goal of the lesson – e.g., W.E.B. Dubois's biography or the treatment of white abolitionists. By contrast, the entire thrust of this final exchange lay outside of the lesson's goals. At the same time, it is worth considering that Eve interpreted the students' claims as being grounded in their broader experience—their perception that everyone who is White has some connection to slavery. This interpretation led Eve to link the comment to White privilege rather than focus on the correcting the specific historical claims. Put differently, Eve did not presume to have more accurate knowledge than her students in this moment; in fact, she acutely felt her *lack* of authority to challenge students' understanding.

### *Janeen*

Janeen's knowledge of relevant history extended beyond Eve's and demonstrated a deep familiarity both with the complex chronology of civil rights, nationally, and with Philadelphia's local African American history. In the pre-interview in Year 1, she explained how students had learned about African American civil rights in the 1800s under the Jacksonian Era, a period often associated with the expansion of democracy, and "we talked about how African Americans actually lost the right to vote in certain places, including Philadelphia. So, we had this place where you had a pretty strong, vocal group of African Americans, some that had even achieved wealth, like James Forten, and you have people like that losing their rights and a rolling back of rights. And how they were vocal opponents during this era." Janeen's nuanced and complex understanding of 19<sup>th</sup> century Philadelphia allowed her (and by her account, her students) to comprehend the larger take-away of the riots lesson. For example, she said "we had done a lot with the Democratic and Republican Parties and how the Republicans were the party of Lincoln and the abolitionists, so seeing that a lot of the Irish were being recruited by the Democratic

Party, it also helped them get that piece of it, that I think they wouldn't have seen beyond the economic competition for jobs."

Like Eve, Janeen still had to face decision-moments about when and how to stabilize the content if students made inaccurate comments. In most cases, Janeen chose to supply additional information in instances where students struggled to respond. For example, in the following exchange as students began reading the W.E.B. DuBois document in the Riots lesson in Year 1, Janeen asked about the author. The source note on the document read: *The Philadelphia Negro, 1899 by W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois was one of the most famous African American intellectuals of his day. He was one of the first African Americans to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University, he co-founded the NAACP, and he wrote extensively about race and racism.*

Janeen: What do we know about Du Bois?

S1: He's a successful African American.

Janeen: He's a successful African American. Was he ever enslaved? Who remembers?

S1: I don't know.

S2: No?

Janeen: No. He never was. He was actually very well educated. Where did he go to school?

S3: Harvard.

Janeen: He went to Harvard to get his PhD. And one of the things that he wrote was a book called the *Philadelphia Negro*, which was a study of African Americans in Philadelphia. Remember we read parts of the *Souls of Black Folk*? And he talks about the experiences of African Americans? Okay. So knowing what we know about Du Bois and when this text is written, what do you think he's going to say about mob violence?

In this instance, Janeen stabilized the content in order to position students to respond to a higher-level question in which they predicted Du Bois's perspective on mob violence. She could have chosen to spend more time prodding students to recall prior information that they had presumably learned about Du Bois, but she chose instead to supply that information. That decision meant that her knowledge about Du Bois entered the classroom and was presumably available to students as they made predictions about his perspective.

The other way that Janeen stabilized the content was by providing an analysis of the text when students flailed. This happened in the Streetcars lesson in Year 1 when students struggled to recognize the key contribution of Document B in answering the central historical question: How were Philadelphia streetcars segregated? The lesson's documents highlighted a range of tactics that contributed to desegregation: petitions, legal challenges, direct action, and ultimately, legislation. Whereas Document A, an 1866 Urban League resolution penned by Catto, urged "white fellow-citizens" to "prove their Christianity" and voice their opposition to segregation, Document B, an excerpt from a 1987 book, *Roots of Violence in Black Philadelphia*, highlighted the deliberate actions taken to foment public indignation against segregation. Document B opened with the line: "The tactics were simple. Women, sometimes pregnant, mingled with white crowds, climbed into streetcars, and had to be ejected. Clergymen in collars did the same." Further down, the document continued: "In the key case, an old woman testified to injuries received when the driver and two other passengers threw her out on her way home from doing church work with wounded soldiers." Janeen finished reading the text with 2 minutes left to the class, and wanted students to grasp the new factor introduced in Document B so that they could answer the guiding questions for homework. She asked students:

Janeen: How does this text corroborate what we read in Document A? Does it back up Document A? Yes or no? What's similar?

S1: It explains the violence.

Janeen: It explains the violence. What else?

S2: Document A was more these resolved statements but this one gives examples of some of those resolves.

Janeen: It gives examples. What else?

S3: In Document A it told Christians to prove their religion and here it tells the men to “prove their manhood.”

Janeen: Now notice that it starts with “the tactics were simple.” Does it make it sound like women and children intentionally rode streetcars to challenge the law? [Silence]. This is what the first paragraph implies. That as a part of desegregation efforts, you had women, sometimes pregnant, who would try to ride knowing they would be thrown off.

S4: So is it all African Americans that can’t ride the streetcar or was it women?

Janeen: That’s a good question. Who makes a better case in terms of being a victim? [Silence]. Think about it. Think about the woman they used for their case. This is an old woman who was returning from working with wounded soldiers. She might as well have had a basket of puppies with her. So Document B adds another level because the implication in Document B is that some of these actions were strategic.

Although this example could be seen as modeling textual analysis and interpretation, I consider it a form of stabilizing the content because it occurred *in response to* students being unable to engage in the analysis themselves. Again, we can only infer Janeen’s motivation because we did not ask her about this particular moment. However, it seems reasonable to imagine that she wanted students to understand the strategic nature of the desegregation efforts before the bell rang. Had she had more time, perhaps she would have allowed more time for student interpretation, or perhaps she would have had students answer the guiding questions in writing and the strategic aspect of these efforts would have emerged in the debrief, or perhaps she would have stabilized the content in exactly the same way. We cannot say what Janeen might have done had there been more than 2 minutes left to class. What is clear is that Janeen’s decision to stabilize the content in this moment introduced new and deeply relevant information about the struggle for equity in this country.

Like Eve, we observed Janeen’s hesitation to stabilize the content around contemporary issues. In the Year 2 launch lesson, one student offered a historically inaccurate justification for maintaining the Confederate monuments and although Janeen *clarified* his claim, she did not directly challenge its evidentiary basis:

S1: I’m going to play the other side of the coin. I don’t think they built [the Confederate monuments] in the Jim Crow era because [they] symbolize White Supremacy. I think the South literally could not afford to build such a structure after the economic downturn they had after the war. Like, they lost, they couldn’t afford to put up monuments. By the time they were able to economically finance structures, it just happened to be around the Jim Crow era time. It doesn’t mean they’re necessarily linked.

Janeen: So you think if they had the money right after the war they would have established the monuments right after the war. And they were just waiting until they were economical viable enough to have Confederate statues?

S1: I’m sure the government was like, ‘we can’t afford to celebrate that,’ we have to stop people from starving and such things.

Janeen: But once people are done starving, is this still a reasonable expense? Let’s think about what it means to put up statues in public places of specific figures.

The student’s claim here is factually wrong if only because Reconstruction governments established in the South immediately following the Civil War were largely Republican and would not have desired to erect monuments to Confederate leaders. In other words, that fact that the erection of statues coincided with the re-entrenchment of Democratic power in the South was more than coincidence. Janeen most certainly knew that history but chose not to stabilize the content in this moment. Instead she shifted the discussion to a more philosophical question of the meaning of public monuments. Because we did not ask Janeen about this particular moment, we can only infer as to her motivation. Given the direction in which she steered the discussion, it would be reasonable to infer that she wanted to focus students’ attention on the broader

justifications and reasons behind erecting the monuments, rather than potential reasons that they might not have been immediately erected. In this example, then, we see that whether or not Janeen decided to stabilize the content was often linked to her larger learning goals.

### Knowledge of Core Problems and Questions

The final domain concerns teachers' knowledge of the core problems and questions that animate the lessons in the curriculum and the study of African American history more broadly. Not surprisingly, knowledge of core problems and questions is closely related to knowledge of relevant history, and both teachers demonstrated evidence of such knowledge to varying degrees, as will be discussed below. More importantly, we see once again that such knowledge presented teachers with decisions-moments in the course of enactment about when and how to frame and introduce broader debates.

#### Eve

Eve sought and valued opportunities to engage students in discourse around core issues and problem in both contemporary and historical lessons. Although she sometimes struggled to sustain open discourse when discussions became overtly political, as we discussed above, this was less often the case in historical discussions. Indeed, in historical discussions Eve went to some great lengths to frame debatable questions or *expose the discussion structure* (Reisman et al, 2019)—a facilitation move in which the teacher helps students track and align themselves with the various perspectives presented in the discussion.

Eve often identified core tensions in students' comments and used those to launch whole-class discussion *before students had engaged with the documents*. For example, in the Riots lesson (Figure 3) in Year 2, one student offered a complex answer to the Central Historical Question after reading Document A about why riots targeted African Americans. Eve identified two different strands in his answer and used these to elicit further comment.

S1: They didn't want [African Americans] to be integrated in society because they're different, and they just feared their [social and political] progression.

Eve: So those are two different reasons: they didn't like them because they're different and two, they didn't like them because they feared their progression. Are you? . . . What about the rest of you, do you agree with one of those reasons more than the other?

In this moment, we can actually hear Eve make the decision to use an "uptake" move, in which a teacher incorporates a student's comment into a subsequent question (Nystrand, 2006), a move that effectively *orients students to each other* (Reisman et al, 2018), or signal to the whole class that multiple legitimate interpretations can coexist and that complex interpretations require collective construction. Research indicates that such moves are exceptionally rare, and that most classroom discourse is characterized by Initiation-Response-Evaluation patterns (I-R-E) (Cazden, 2001; Mehan, 1979). Moreover, we see Eve decide to frame the discussion around a particular tension that echoes across the lessons in the Catto unit: were African Americans targeted for racial or economic reasons? As students weighed in, Eve continued to use these two interpretive poles to frame the discussion. For example,

Eve: So Matt said two different reasons and Sara's agreeing with the 'fearing African Americans' progression.' Are there other people who agree with that side or you feel like you side more with the first side Matt listed which had to do with people treating African Americans different because they were a different race?

As Eve continued to hold these two sides up for discussion, a few students began to articulate a combined answer to the central historical question of why riots targeted African Americans in 19<sup>th</sup> century Philadelphia:

S: In the society, there's a finite amount of power. When one group that doesn't have a lot of power gains power, they sort of take power from the majority group. And I think that at this time, they recognized that and they didn't want a group that they believed to be lower than them to take power away from them. So they took steps to make sure they stayed at the bottom.

In his answer, the student began to unpack the power dynamics that underlie racial violence, an understanding that constitutes a profound structural analysis. At the same time, the discussion stayed at an abstract level; student neither referred to the actual historical context of 19<sup>th</sup> century Philadelphia nor to Document A during this segment of the discussion. Eve then prompted students to read Documents B and C, and when students had done so, the discussion continued along the original lines, with students arguing *either* that African Americans were targeted because they were (racially) different *or* because whites resented Black progress and economic achievement. In other words, Eve's decision to frame the discussion along these lines had an enduring impact on how students understood the problem space but, despite Eve's prompting, students continued to resist using Documents B and C to support their answer. Instead, they referred to texts and resources from previous lessons. Seconds before the bell rang, one student finally used the text to raise a new argument:

S: [Document] C says that a lot of the conflict was manufactured to drive a wedge between the immigrants and the black people.

Eve: So where did you come up with that idea? Where do you see that in the text?

S: In C where it talks about the Democratic party reaching out to the White people.

Eve: So it was politics too. How do you—

Bell rings.

We see in these exchanges that Eve had to make a number of fine-grained, in-the-moment instructional moves to facilitate discourse in ways that allowed students to develop complex historical arguments that ultimately challenged dominant narratives. Each of these moves constituted instructional decision-moments and all of these decisions had implications for how students understood the core tension of the lesson, and the extent to which they grounded their claims in textual evidence and the particular historical context.

### *Janeen*

Janeen also had a deep understanding of the core problems and tensions underlying the Catto materials. In particular, she demonstrated a rich grasp of the thematic continuities that characterize the African American experience. For example, in her first interview in Year 1, she drew connections between segregation and contemporary policing of Black bodies: "I always think about African Americans in public spaces and what's acceptable and unacceptable for African Americans. Beyond connecting it to [desegregation of Philadelphia's streetcars], the Starbucks incident is something that ties in," referring to a recent incident that drew national news in which two African American men were arrested for sitting in a Starbucks. We also saw in the examples presented above that Janeen invited discourse about contemporary problems and effectively steered students to the underlying enduring questions.

Janeen also had a strong grasp of the core *historical* problems, though she was less likely to prompt student discussion and argumentation around these tensions, opting instead to support student reading comprehension during class, and have students reconcile the competing tensions in writing for homework. In the few instances when she did attempt to elicit student discourse around the core tensions in the lesson, she tried to frame these around the actual texts and specific history in the lesson. These discussion prompts, then, were far more challenging than the abstract dichotomies that Eve posed to students because they *followed* close examination of text. For example, the following exchange occurred after students read Document B in the Riots lesson, and after Janeen ensured that students comprehended the actual text. She began by summarizing Du Bois's argument:

Janeen: So [the Irish immigrants] were able to harness negative attitudes towards African Americans, along with some other economic strategies, to beat [African Americans] out. Now, what does this text imply? . . . Let's say there wasn't a whole lot of immigration at the same time African Americans were migrating North, do you think DuBois would have said the same thing would have happened? If there wasn't this competition all at the same time. [Pause]. Is it just a function of race? [long pause] Yes or no?

Ss: (Mumbling)

Janeen: I'm hearing no, maybe? Yes. No? Not sure.

S: It's a hard question.

Janeen: Well do you get the sense from reading this that if less people were migrating at the same time, there would be less competition for jobs?

S: yes?

Janeen: So is it just a function of racial discrimination that African Americans aren't having the same kinds of opportunities. Is it just race? Or is that a factor in a bigger picture? Maybe? No? It's okay you can come up with your own answer. Who thinks it's just race? Race is always going to be the defining factor? [some students raise hands]. Who think it's race and something else? [No hands raise]. Who thinks it's just economics, just the money? [2 hands raise].

[Janeen transitions to guiding questions].

If we compare Eve and Janeen's facilitation, we see that Eve benefitted from laying the grounds of the discussion *prior* to students reading the second document: several students weighed in on whether violence against African Americans resulted from racial hatred (difference) or fear of Black progression (economic competition). In this sense, she effectively shared her knowledge of this enduring issue. However, we do not have evidence from her facilitation that students engaged deeply with the documents. Janeen, by contrast, established student comprehension, but then struggled to help students step back and engage in the core problem of the lesson. Both teachers understood the core problem of the lesson but the decisions they made around enactment informed the extent to which students could participate in the discussion.

## DISCUSSION

Knowing content does matter. In this paper I attempted to expand existing conceptualizations of RPK in history by identifying three domains of teacher racial knowledge—knowledge of one's racialized self, knowledge of relevant history, and knowledge of core problems and questions—that are essential for history instruction that strives to disrupt the persistence of injustice and to dismantle historical narratives that mask the mechanisms of structural oppression. However, teacher content knowledge is not enough. We must also consider the dynamic, interactive nature of classroom instruction. Learning happens through classroom discourse, and in the case of history, teachers use discourse to acknowledge and respond to students' ideas, create opportunities for them to construct new understandings of the past, and engage them in the epistemological practices that characterize the discipline. These new understandings of the past necessarily inform students' understanding of the present. What I attempted to demonstrate in the examples presented above is that even when implementing curricular resources that attend to the processes of student learning, teachers must make myriad fine-grained, in-the-moment decisions that inform when and how content enters and operates in the classroom.

Although both Eve and Janeen—a novice and a veteran teacher—demonstrated that they possessed each of these forms of knowledge, the ways in which their respective knowledge worked its way into instruction was deeply situated in the content of a given lesson, in their personal needs, and in their perception of students' needs. Moreover, these forms of knowledge entered the classroom via instructional moves—disclosing one's political views, stabilizing the content, or exposing the discussion structure (around a core problem). In any given moment, a constellation of factors informed whether or not a teacher would enact one of these moves and thereby share their knowledge. Therefore, in response to the TeachingWorks series question: how and whether content matters for disrupting the persistence of oppression depends on how

and whether a teacher is equipped to navigate these decision moments consciously, with an understanding of the stakes and consequences.

Several points are worth problematizing in this proposed formulation, namely, *that teacher content knowledge enters the classroom in decision-moments about whether or not to enact certain instructional moves*. First, I worry that my formulation risks presenting knowledge as a set of discrete, concrete items that reside in the teachers' heads. Although I begin my formulation with what Eve and Janeen already know and understand about race and history at the start of our study, I believe their understandings are also deeply situated in their own lived experiences, the result of language and interactions and structures that they've encountered. The question tackled in this paper is how teachers communicate their own knowledge and understandings to students. Second, in specifying three domains of racial knowledge, I by no means intend to suggest that I have presented a comprehensive framework for RPCK. These three domains emerged from my analysis of these two teachers' responses to our interview prompts, and should be understood as mere *examples* of how we might broaden and further specify historical content and racial knowledge. Third, in presenting a new term, 'decision-moment', to capture teacher reasoning, I want to underscore that these decisions may or may not be made consciously. In fact, I suspect in most cases they are *not* made consciously. However, the possibility that teachers might be made more conscious of these moments has implications for teacher education. Fourth, in conceptualizing a decision-moment as a choice about whether or not to enact a certain move, I risk distorting and narrowing the sheer range of options available to teachers in any moment. I agree with Ball (2018) that a teacher has a nearly infinite set of ways to respond within a given discretionary space. My point here is that each of these options can be conceptualized as an instructional move that a teacher may or may not choose to enact. I chose to highlight the three moves featured above simply because they seemed most likely to result in a teacher directly communicating their racial knowledge. Which brings me to my fifth point: the outcomes of these instructional moves, as presented in the above examples, once again risk presenting knowledge as discrete items that a teacher presents to students, for example, when choosing to stabilize the content. It is essential to note that in each of the cases, the knowledge presented was then *used as a resource* by students as they engaged in the construction of their own richer, historical understandings.

Almost everything I've said to this point likely applies to all subject areas. Yet, I wish to highlight how this formulation has particular implications for the teaching and learning of history. First, as an interpretive discipline that rests on incontrovertible facts, the teacher walks a fine line in presenting some claims as indisputable and others as open for discussion. Meaningful discussion in history rests on accurate facts, and as I have written elsewhere (Reisman, 2015) social studies teachers are often loathe to correct student inaccuracies for fear of squelching discourse. I believe such hesitation comes at the expense of student learning. However, rich historical understanding is more than a recitation of accurate facts, and how a teacher supports students in leveraging certain facts to construct more complex interpretations is the result of fine-grained discursive moves that serve to invite collective analysis of core questions. The requisite teacher knowledge to do so is both substantive—as in the *knowledge of core problems* discussed above—and epistemological. Both Eve and Janeen entered the project with an appreciation for nature of historical knowledge and its construction that informed their facilitation of student discourse around historical topics. Indeed, perhaps one of the most interesting findings to emerge from the above analysis is that teachers appeared to engage differently with students when teaching the contemporary versus historical lessons. Both teachers, for example, were more likely to let historically inaccurate claims slide in contemporary discussions than in historical discussions. Whether this pattern holds across teachers and topics is worthy of further investigation, but if so, it raises important questions about how social studies teachers are prepared to integrate history into discussions of contemporary issues.

All of these analyses have implications for teacher education. In addition to developing teachers' content knowledge and their capacity to design curriculum that engages students in enduring historical questions and problems, we must help novice teachers identify and navigate the complex decision-moments that constitute the work of teaching. Simply having the desire to disrupt dominant narratives in the history classroom is not enough. Neither is using a curriculum or primary sources that are meant to give voice to marginalized and forgotten historical figures,



groups, events and movements. Novice history teachers need to have in-depth knowledge of content, of their own racial identity, and of their students and communities if they are to truly navigate the countless decision moments that they will encounter in trying to promote equity and justice in their classrooms. At the same time, teacher education programs and teacher professional development should aid all teachers in carefully considering and reflecting on how the choices they make in such situations influence students disciplinary understanding of history, the integration of content with their life practice, and create or stifle opportunities for equity in the classroom through student discourse and engagement in the creation of knowledge.

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