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## Critical Citizenship Education Through Geography

Jung Eun Hong  
*University of West Georgia, jhong@westga.edu*

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# Critical Citizenship Education Through Geography

## **Abstract**

In a current globalized world, citizens are expected and encouraged to understand cultural diversity and respect individual differences. Furthermore, they are also expected to become responsible citizens for recognizing and actively participating in issues on social justice and human rights at local to global scales. That is, our diverse society demands “critical” citizens who are interested in public affairs, concerned about inequality and injustice, and motivated to change and improve our society. In response to an increased need for actively engaged and participating citizens in a today’s world, critical citizenship education has been suggested as a new framework for the existing citizenship education. Among several related subjects, geography education can play an important role in critical citizenship education. This paper first introduces the background of critical citizenship and critical citizenship education, and then it presents how geography education can contribute to forming critical citizens. At the end, this paper discusses ways to promote geography education for critical citizenship in the future.

## **Keywords**

critical citizenship, citizenship education, critical pedagogy, geography education

## 1 INTRODUCTION

We are currently living in a diverse society in which individuals have different identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and so on). To live together as harmonious citizens in a globalized and interconnected world, people are expected and encouraged to accept and respect individual differences and understand other people's ideas and experiences. Furthermore, supporting and promoting moral principles and shared values, such as equality and autonomy, is required for citizens in a global age (Johnson and Morris 2010). Therefore, citizens become responsible for recognizing and actively participating in issues on social justice and human rights at local to global scales. That is, our diverse society demands "critical" citizens who are interested in public affairs, concerned about inequality and injustice, and motivated to change and improve our society.

It is our responsibility to prepare young people to be effective, active, and responsible members of our global and interdependent community. To reach this goal, education can be a fundamental and effective tool, and public schools have this as their main duty and role (Stuteville and Johnson 2016; Westheimer and Kahne 2004). To prepare youth to be responsible citizens, many countries have offered citizenship education in the formal curriculum; however, it has focused more on civic knowledge (e.g., government structure and function, law, and political system) than civic engagement and has highlighted national issues more than global issues (Dejaeghere and Tudball 2007; Davies and Issitt 2005). Despite this, many countries are concerned about young people's lack of civic participation (Stuteville and Johnson 2016; Davies and Issitt 2005). Therefore, in response to an increased need for actively engaged and participating citizens in a today's world, the notion, perspective, and approaches of critical citizenship have been suggested as a new framework for the existing citizenship education.

Among several related subjects, geography has contributed greatly to citizenship education; geographical perspectives, knowledge, and skills are important when forming ideal citizens (Stoltman 1990). In the same way, geography education can play an important role in critical citizenship education as well. This paper will first introduce the background of critical citizenship and critical citizenship education. Then it will present how geography education can contribute to forming critical citizens in terms of four approaches of critical citizenship education (i.e., social problems, critical thinking, values clarification, and community involvement) with specific examples. At the end, this paper will discuss ways to promote geography education for critical citizenship in the future.

## 2 CRITICAL CITIZENSHIP

### 2.1 Critical Pedagogy

In critical citizenship, "critical" refers to more than the reasoning and discovering new knowledge involved in critical thinking (Johnson and Morris 2010); it implies political engagement and active participation (Veugelers 2011). Critical citizenship has been developed based on critical pedagogy, which directly originated from Paulo Freire's transformative pedagogy (Armitage 2013; Johnson and Morris 2010). Influenced by the

Marxist perspective, Freire educated peasants in Brazil so they could achieve personal autonomy and actively participate in the political process. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 2000), he describes a traditional teacher-student relationship as a banking model of education: a teacher must put information into the students, and the students passively receive and memorize the information. He insisted that this model of education oppressed students, who could not learn to think, inquire, and make their own decisions. To avoid this situation, he suggested problem-posing education, which is centered around a learning process in which the students construct knowledge through dialogue with the teacher. This learning process is called conscientization. Through critical conscientization, the students become active learners and members in their community who are aware of their situation and have the ability to deal with unfairness.

Many researchers have followed Freire's work and further developed critical pedagogy with various perspectives and theoretical traditions (DeLeon 2006). Although critical pedagogy contains diverse definitions and goals, its researchers commonly believe that education can be a means to empower people and to change society (DeLeon 2006; Apple 2004; Giroux 1988). Particularly, critical pedagogy emphasizes "bridging the gap between learning and everyday life, understanding the connection between power and knowledge, and extending democratic rights and identities by using the resources of history" (Giroux 2004: 34). In critical pedagogy, teachers play an important role in providing skills and knowledge for students to become active political actors who can fight against injustice and inequalities and ultimately promote social transformation (Giroux 2004).

According to Johnson and Morris (2010), there are four distinctive features in critical pedagogy: (1) ideology, (2) collective focus, (3) subjectivity, and (4) praxis. Critical pedagogues emphasize emancipation from oppression as a common ideology, which can serve as the foundation for various oppression theories (e.g., feminist, gender, race, class, and queer-based theories). For emancipation, collective focus on the dialogue between educators and students that promotes an equal relationship with love, humility, hope, and trust is important (Freire 2000). Collective dialogue helps students discover incorrectness or inaccuracy of their understandings of social issues, and this process also supports students to be effective and active citizens (Fisher 2008). In critical pedagogy, subjectivity is also a significant aspect because students should have feelings for and emotional connections to other people, which are essential elements of morality in our society (Gray 2002). As the most unique feature in critical pedagogy, praxis refers to an integration of reflection and action; both are needed to reach conscientization and to promote social change (Fischman and McLauren 2005; Freire 2000).

Researchers in citizenship education and critical pedagogy have identified ideal citizens in a globalized world and have suggested a framework and curriculum for citizenship education based on aspects of critical pedagogy, which has become important for critical citizenship education (Johnson and Morris 2010). That is, critical pedagogy's important features and concepts have been suggested as the primary education factors for critical citizenship (Usher et al. 1997). In contrast to traditional banking education, critical citizenship education curricula must help teachers and students discover and construct knowledge and understand the world together, which clearly describes aspects of critical pedagogy (Armitage 2013).

## **2.2 Critical Citizenship Education**

In response to an increased need for critical citizens in a today's world, critical citizenship education has been suggested as a new framework for the existing citizenship education (Banks 2008; Dejaeghere and Tudball 2007). Therefore, citizenship education's background, content, and approaches first need to be addressed to fully understand critical citizenship education and examine its relationship with geography education.

Regarding citizenship education, several countries have offered it as part of the formal curriculum to encourage youth to be responsible citizens (Kerr 1999). Those countries have adopted citizenship education as an independent subject (e.g., France and Singapore), as a subsection of an existing subject like social studies and social sciences (e.g., Australia and Canada), or as a cross-curricular theme (e.g., England) (Davies and Issitt 2005; Kerr 1999). Each country has developed its own content and approaches to citizenship education based on various historical, geographical, sociopolitical, and economic background and circumstances relevant to that particular country (Kerr 1999). For example, different historical traditions (e.g., Confucianism vs. liberal democracy), geographical location (e.g., a neighboring country: Canada and USA; South Korea and North Korea), social structures (e.g., ethnically homogeneous vs. heterogeneous), and political structures (e.g., central vs. federal governments) have a strong influence on developing citizenship education in each country (Kerr 1999).

Recently, due to globalization and diversification, many countries have faced several challenges: (1) large-scale immigration (e.g., refugees), (2) increasing concern for diversity (e.g., race, ethnicity, social class, religious belief, gender, and sexual orientation), (3) improvement in the status of women, and (4) the lack of civic knowledge, understanding, and engagement (i.e., democratic or civic deficit) (Davies and Issitt 2005; Kerr 1999). However, it seems that existing citizenship education in many countries has not paid much attention to these challenges. According to Davies and Issitt (2005), citizenship education textbooks used in England, Australia, and Ontario, Canada, covered mainly national issues and did not frequently mention broader, global issues. In addition, textbooks emphasized careful consideration of personal responsibility (e.g., personal finance, health, donation, and charities) but did not suggest active participation in the political process (Davies and Issitt 2005). Therefore, it is imperative to improve existing citizenship education by emphasizing the critical approach, which would help respond to these deficiencies effectively.

Particularly, as a country consisting of diverse immigrants and indigenous peoples, Australia especially needs critical citizens who can understand multiculturalism, respect ethnic and cultural diversity, and actively engage in various social issues (Dejaeghere and Tudball 2007). Under the name of "civics and citizenship education," citizenship education has been used in Australian classrooms as part of the Discovering Democracy program since 1997 (Dejaeghere and Tudball 2007). One year later, the Discovering Democracy professional development programs were launched to train teachers how to enhance students' active participation skills using materials developed by Discovering Democracy (Criddle et al. 2004). Teachers also learned and practiced an authentic learning approach by helping students understand global issues and perspectives using students' own experiences (Forsyth and Tudball 2002). Nevertheless, citizenship education in Australia has mainly emphasized the understanding and learning of civic knowledge to form young people into ideal citizens and put less weight on the active involvement in social and political issues (Dejaeghere and Tudball 2007). Dejaeghere and Tudball (2007) argue that Australia's citizenship education needs to be expanded and developed using the critical citizenship concept in order to address challenging

issues effectively and prepare young people to live in complex and fast-changing global societies.

Similarly to Australia, the United States is a representative multicultural, diverse society and is concerned about youths' lack of civic knowledge and engagement (Stuteville and Johnson 2016; Parker 2014). In the United States, unequally distributed classroom and school practices of citizenship education, which is called the gap in civic achievement, opportunity, or empowerment, has been an issue (Levinson 2012). Because such curricula are designed and determined by each local school district, their implementation cannot be standardized or equally offered throughout the country. Gould et al. (2011) reported that students of low socioeconomic status and students of color have relatively fewer opportunities for learning and practicing citizenship than other students. However, many non-governmental organizations (e.g., iCivics, Street Law, and the Center for Civic Education) have been actively involved in citizenship education to remedy this unfortunate situation, providing instructional materials, offering teacher training, and assisting in the development of curriculum standards (Parker 2014). Many ambitious educators have also implemented various discussion-oriented activities in the classroom (e.g., debating and discussing current events and issues related to students, decision making on problems in students' community or school, and participating in the simulated civic process) (Parker 2014; Levinson and Levine 2013; Gould et al. 2011; Bennett et al. 2009).

As information technology and social media have developed, a large number of young people have become able to more actively and enthusiastically participate in civic and political acts. In other words, the use of digital media allows youth to have more opportunities to partake in interactive and peer-based participatory politics (Kahne et al. 2016). The March for Our Lives movement is one example of a recent student-led demonstration in the United States. Following the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on February 14, 2018, students across the country united and demanded stricter gun-control legislation to end gun violence in schools and communities. The participating youth used social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube) to deliver and share information and encourage other people's participation (March for Our Lives 2018). More than 800 protests were held across the United States and around the world on March 24, 2018, and more than two million people joined the march in the United States, which made this march one of the largest youth protests in the United States since the Vietnam War (Newsweek 2018; The New York Times 2018; Vox 2018). This social movement is still ongoing; protesters are continuously persuading people to register to vote, join a local activism club, and sign petitions.

In the United States, critical citizenship education's concepts and approaches have been introduced and developed under various names (e.g., global education, education for democracy, and transformative citizenship education) (Banks 2008; Merryfield and Kasai 2004; Westheimer and Kahne 2004). Researchers in the United States have suggested three critical pedagogical approaches to the existing social studies curriculum to encourage students to be engaged and active participants in the community. First, teachers need to incorporate multiple perspectives and non-mainstream knowledge, developed and presented by people in different situations or marginalized people, into their lessons (Merryfield and Duty 2008; Merryfield and Kasai 2004). Students who learn diverse views and voices are more likely to understand others with conflicting opinions and different point of view. Second, implementing cross-cultural experiential learning (i.e., directly interacting with other cultures rather than watching or reading

related materials) would give students opportunities to recognize and reduce stereotypical and biased images of other cultures (Merryfield and Kasai 2004). Through authentic cultural learning, students would be able to understand and respect cultural diversity effectively. Third, the citizenship curriculum needs to focus on collective efforts for social change in addition to individual struggle (Westheimer and Kahne 2004). Collaborative action among students, teachers, and communities is required to address societal problems and to improve our society.

Banks (2008: 136) classified citizenship into the following four levels:

- Legal citizenship, the most superficial level of citizenship in the typology, applies to citizens who are legal members of the nation-state and have certain rights and obligations to the state but do not participate in the political system in any meaningful ways.
- Minimal citizenship applies to those who are legal citizens and vote in local and national elections for conventional and mainstream candidates and issues.
- Active citizenship involves action beyond voting to actualize existing laws and conventions. Active citizens may participate in protest demonstrations or make public speeches regarding conventional issues and reforms. The actions of active citizens are designed to support and maintain—but not to challenge—existing social and political structures.
- Transformative citizenship involves civic actions designed to actualize values and moral principles and ideals beyond those of existing laws and conventions. Transformative citizens take action to promote social justice even when their actions violate, challenge, or dismantle existing laws, conventions, or structures.

Both active and transformative citizens take action in common, but the difference is whether the actions are within existing (active citizens) or beyond (transformative citizens) lawful and conventional boundaries (Banks 2008). Westheimer and Kahne (2004) also categorized citizens into three types: (1) personally responsible citizens, (2) participatory citizens, and (3) justice-oriented citizens. Personally responsible citizens are similar to Banks (2008)'s minimal citizens, who obey laws and pay taxes. Participatory citizens can be matched with active citizens, and justice-oriented citizens are comparable to transformative citizens. Among these different citizenship levels and types, transformative citizenship (or justice-oriented citizens) is the most desirable and the ideal level in the United States today because they support and promote shared values, moral principles, and social justice at local to global scales, although other types of citizenship are also positive (Banks 2008; Westheimer and Kahne 2004).

These days, preparing students for an active civic life is one of the ultimate educational goals in the United States. As one example, recently published the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (the C3 Framework) by the National Council for the Social Studies (2013) aims at fostering active and responsible citizens through social studies education. The C3 Framework emphasizes identifying public issues; inquiring and addressing issues using disciplinary knowledge, skills, and related sources; communicating with other people; and taking informed action (National Council for the Social Studies 2013). Through this process, students learn how to apply social studies knowledge for active civic engagement. This

type of guided experiential civic and political learning opportunities helps students become engaged, democratic, responsible citizens (Levinson and Levine 2013). However, it seems that public education in the United States still puts more stress on and devotes more time to teaching factual information about laws, government structure, and system rather than civic engagement and understanding cultural diversity (Stuteville and Johnson 2016). Not only educators but other stakeholders as well, such as each state's Department of Education, school districts, and education policy makers, have to work together to support students in their becoming critical (a.k.a. transformative or justice-oriented) citizens.

### 3 GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

As a multidisciplinary study of a humanity, science, and art, geography is concerned with the human and physical world and interested in people's lives individually and as members of a local community, nation-state, and globalized world (Lambert and Machon 2001). Geographic literacy is one of the required skills to live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which is helpful for "enhancing economic competitiveness, preserving quality of life, sustaining the environment, and ensuring national security" (Heffron and Downs 2012: 7). Geography provides essential knowledge and skills for people's daily lives (e.g., understanding the weather forecast and issues in other countries) and important for their entire lifetime (Heffron and Downs 2012). In other words, geographical perspectives, content knowledge, and skills that students learn in geography classrooms have been important and necessary for them on their journey to become citizens (Heffron and Downs 2012). Students would be able to make informed decision and solve personal or community related issues using geographic reasoning and information they learned and developed in geography classroom. Particularly, the National Geography Standards, *Geography for Life*, clearly states the preparation of an informed citizenry as a goal for geography education through "factual knowledge, mental maps and tools, and ways of thinking" (Heffron and Downs 2012: 7).

The Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA) (as cited in Stoltman 1990) also mentioned that one of the important roles of geography education was promoting citizens. Specifically, AGTA (as cited in Stoltman 1990: 23) stated that "geography education helps students to analyze the social and environmental implications of political decisions; evaluate alternative forms of social action; and encourage others to participate with you to conserve the environment and redress social injustice." The advisory group on citizenship in the United Kingdom also reported that there are apparent overlaps of content and pedagogy between geography education and citizenship education (e.g., geographic inquiry process, fieldwork, and human-environment interaction) (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 1998). Namely, geography has been a crucial discipline for citizens, and geography education cannot be considered apart from citizenship education.

Furthermore, geography education helps young people become global citizens because students can obtain global perspectives through geography education (Stoltman 1990). While learning geography, students can acquire geographic knowledge both in their own and the interconnected world community, which helps them understand and analyze issues with local, national, and global perspectives. In fact, a perspective is formed by the knowledge, attitudes, objectives, skills, and values people have and develop, and it often influences the way people live, think about, and take actions in the



world (Stoltman 1990). Learning geography—that is, understanding both environmental and sociocultural systems of the world—has been helpful for students to develop a geographic perspective on the world, and students with geographic knowledge and understanding are able to think and act globally as global citizens. Therefore, geography education is necessary to promote intelligent and responsible citizens in the world.

Although several researchers emphasized geography education's important role and large contribution to citizenship education in the 1980s and 1990s, it seems that not many studies identifying, discussing, and/or investigating the significance of geography education for citizenship education have been published since then (Schmidt 2011; Williams 2001). Additionally, geography education's significant role in citizenship education has been reduced due to the increasing status and priority of environmental education in many countries (Williams 2001). As geography education has played an important role in citizenship education, it can make a great contribution to critical citizenship education as well. More active involvement and participation of geography education researchers in critical citizenship education would be recommended. In the next section, the author suggests how geography education can make a valuable contribution to critical citizenship education by expanding previously addressed approaches of geography education for citizenship.

#### **4 GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION FOR CRITICAL CITIZENSHIP**

According to Newmann (1977), there are eight, somewhat overlapping, approaches to citizenship education: (1) academic disciplines, (2) law-related education, (3) social problems, (4) critical thinking, (5) values clarification, (6) moral development, (7) community involvement, and (8) institutional school reform. Except institutional school reform, the remaining seven approaches are closely connected with contents and skills in geography education (Stoltman 1990). In this section, the author chose to focus on four of the eight approaches—social problems, critical thinking, values clarification, and community involvement—that are more highlighted in critical citizenship education and will present how geography education can contribute to forming critical citizens in terms of these four approaches with detailed examples.

Being aware of various social problems (e.g., racism, drugs, homeless, pollution, and unemployment) in the local, national, or global community is one of the crucial elements in critical citizenship education. Using geographic perspectives, content knowledge, and skills, students can understand causes, process, and expected outcomes of these social issues and create solutions for them. For instance, learning about migration—movement of human populations—in geography lessons would give students an opportunity to understand several related social issues (e.g., refugee, segregation, and xenophobia) (Jones 2001). Students can learn about factors leading to migration and its consequences in terms of socio-spatial patterns and then think about the accompanying problems in a local, national, or global community. Without a comprehensive understanding of migration, social exclusion cannot be reduced. Geography learning is one of the basic requirements for recognizing, understanding, and coping with this kind of matter.

In addition, understanding cultural diversity is closely related to geography education (Park 2011). Specifically, one of the six essential elements in the National Geography Standards<sup>1</sup>—places and regions—can help students understand human diversity and different groups of people's cultural differences and similarities. Due to

increasing immigration, many countries' demographics have been changing rapidly. Societal diversity can be linked to social issues like hate crimes, and we often hear news about tensions and conflicts between immigrants and locals in several countries in terms of education, employment, religion, housing, among other issues. In geography classrooms, students learn and understand the diversity of people's beliefs, values, world views, and lifestyle by identifying and analyzing the cultural characteristics of different places and regions (Park 2008). Through this learning process, students can cultivate sympathetic, reasonable, and unbiased attitudes and perspectives towards other cultures (Park 2011). It would benefit young people to interact with other ethnic, racial, or national groups peacefully as critical citizens in a globalized world.

Critical thinking is also an important approach in critical citizenship education, and its skills are indispensable to becoming responsible and critical citizens (Johnson and Morris 2010). Citizens with critical thinking skills are capable of making independent decisions by evaluating related knowledge and information (Stoltman 1990). In geography education, students can develop critical thinking skills through the following five geographic skills: (1) asking geographic questions, (2) acquiring geographic information, (3) organizing geographic information, (4) analyzing geographic information, and (5) answering geographic questions (Heffron and Downs 2012). These five skills lead students to the geographic inquiry process, which can be the foundation for developing students' critical thinking skills. In addition, as stated earlier, the C3 Framework for social studies state standards in the United States also emphasizes a similar inquiry process to develop critical thinking (National Council for the Social Studies 2013). It shows that such an inquiry process can lead students to "take constructive, independent, and collaborative action," which is "a purposeful, informed, and reflective experience" (National Council for the Social Studies 2013: 62).

In addition to critical thinking, learning geography is useful for understanding values and value-laden issues, which are important in critical citizenship (Slater 2001; Stoltman 1990). Geography is not a neutral subject; rather, it is subjective and personal because it deals with personal experience, sense of place, and perception of environment (Slater 2001). Specifically, examples of the values in geography are care for the environment; human rights; respect for other cultures; justice (social/political/economic); appropriateness to a culture/society; preserving landscape quality; use/misuse/sustainability; absence of exploitation; empathy for cultures and environments; and responsibility towards the environment (as cited in Slater 2001: 53). Although these examples were not published recently, they are still important values in today's society and their concepts should be significantly considered and sought in critical citizenship education.

Community involvement is one of the central pedagogies in critical citizenship education (Saltmarsh 1996). Civic engagement cannot be separated from the community because its activities are within the community (Bringle et al. 2009). Community engagement allows students to become active contributors and participants of their community beyond observing passively (Mohan 1995). Through community involvement, students can apply disciplinary knowledge for real-world issues; in other words, it can be a great learning opportunity to connect theory and practice (Saltmarsh 1996). Students would also be able to develop their skills, responsibilities as citizens, civic values, and ultimately, a sense of civic community (Mohan 1995). For successful students' community involvement, students and the community need to be close, equal, and integral partners (Bringle et al. 2009). As field studies are important in geography, geography education is very applicable to community involvement (Stoltman 1990).

Such activities would help students develop a sense of local identity, which is made up of “a sense of the distinctiveness of a particular place; a sense of identification of that place; and a sense of belonging to a community with shared purposes” (Morgan 2001: 90-91).

In geography education, various forms of community involvement can be implemented. Students can collect and analyze field data on diverse issues in their community (e.g., location of pollution sources, traffic patterns, locations of emergency or homeless shelters, and crime hot spots) and present the findings in a map or report and discuss with local government agencies, non-profit organizations, or other related community leaders (Stoltman 1990). Nowadays, as technology advances, students can make maps using geographic information system (GIS) technology and share their maps easily with other people. As a part of citizen-science programs, community mapping with GIS technology has been a useful and effective way for students to engage in their own community as active citizens (Sinha et al. 2017; Mitchell and Elwood 2012; Santo 2010).

Currently, one of the globally shared goals is making a socially, economically, ecologically, and culturally sustainable world (Huckle 2001). In 2015, more than 150 world leaders decided to adopt 17 Sustainable Development Goals as the agenda for sustainable development by 2030 (United Nations General Assembly 2015). These 17 goals include no poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; life below water; life on land; peace, justice, and strong institutions; partnerships for the goals (United Nations General Assembly 2015). The United Nations has suggested to embed these goals into educational curriculums to promote young people as citizens who advocate for global sustainability (United Nations 2018). As evidenced by the information presented in this paper, most goals are closely linked to geographic perspectives, knowledge, and skills, which students can learn and develop in geography classrooms. Using these four approaches, geography education can help students prepare to be active, responsible, engaged, and critical citizens.

## 5 CONCLUSION

This paper presented the significant role geography education can play in critical citizenship and how students can develop the essential competencies of critical citizenship through geography learning. Definitely, “geographically literate citizens know what is occurring, where it is occurring, and why it is occurring” (Stoltman 1990: 87). However, this paper does not insist that geography is the only subject that promotes critical citizens. Other subjects are obviously needed to cover the areas where geography education is not relevant. Rather, this paper encourages and even promotes geography education researchers’ interest in and attention to critical citizenship education. Their research activities and findings are fundamentally necessary to promote geography education for critical citizenship. Specifically, there is a need for more research on the development of useful and practical resources for geography teachers to use in class (Butt 2001). Since today’s young people communicate mostly with digital media, they effectively learn civic values and knowledge through interactive, peer-based, project-based learning opportunities through media (Bennett et al. 2009). Therefore, researchers

and professionals need to develop classroom activities and practices to make suitable for our youth's learning styles. Furthermore, teachers are important for successfully preparing students to be critical citizens (Han 2011; Lambert and Machon 2001). Therefore, there should be more training and professional development opportunities for both pre-service and in-service teachers (Kennedy 2005). Pre-service and in-service teachers need to develop their pedagogical knowledge and practice effective pedagogical strategies (e.g., debate, decision making, role play, and problem solving) (Biddulph 2001). Additionally, more opportunities for teachers to have cross-cultural experiences would be helpful for them to give students the opportunity to learn about cultural diversity. To make our students critical citizens through geography education, all of us, including researchers, professionals, and teachers, need to work together effectively. It is time to encourage our students to see the world through the geographic lens and to prepare them to be actively engaged citizens in today's world.

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#### Notes

1. The National Geography Standards consist of 18 Standards, which clustered into six Essential Elements (i.e., the world in spatial terms, places and regions, physical systems, human systems, environment and society, and the uses of geography) (Heffron and Downs 2012).