

**We All Have Stories That Are Meaningful:  
Critical Civic Engagement in An Urban Classroom**

*Jon Schmidt*

*Loyola University Chicago*

**Abstract**

Critical civic engagement is a pedagogical framework that suggests a return of civic education to American schooling is not simply about providing civics for all students, but that civic education, particularly among marginalized urban high school students, must engage lived experiences, develop critical thought, and facilitate informed civic action. The author proposes that implementation of a critical civic engagement framework can lead to important outcomes in students' civic identity development. Using teacher interviews, classroom observations, and a student focus group in a diverse urban high school, this blended phenomenological/instrumental case study in an AP Government classroom examined how a teacher enacted and experienced critical civic engagement pedagogy and how her students experienced the learning process. The author found evidence that the teacher found renewal in her practice and, as students engaged in issues that are important to them and their families, critically examined political systems, and acted purposefully in collaboration with their peers, experienced growth in their sense of civic identity, purpose, and political efficacy.

*Keywords:* critical civic engagement, civic education, civic identity, urban education

**Introduction**

When an Illinois law maker was asked about pending legislation to mandate civic education for students, his response was jarring: "We don't already teach civics?" Civic education began to disappear from most schools in the 1970s (Litvinov, 2017). At the time schools were responding to political pressure to standardize education and emphasize math and language arts while sacrificing social studies (and to a lesser extent the natural sciences), early measures that anticipated No Child Left Behind and its catalogue of standardized assessments. In so doing, schools were neglecting their Jeffersonian responsibility to prepare all students for active participation in democracy and defend it from excessive ambition. Shortly after the

legislator's comment, Public Act 99-0434 was signed into law in 2015 mandating that all Illinois high school students take at least one course in civics. Public Act 099-0485 stipulated the pedagogical practices to be used in Illinois civics classrooms: Discussion of current and controversial issues, simulations, service-learning, and instruction about government systems and processes (Illinois General Assembly, 2020). The legislation signaled a renewed commitment in Illinois to provide all students access to interactive civic learning opportunities.

In 2003, Illinois, and in particular the City of Chicago, experienced a renaissance in civic education with critical impetus provided by a national congressional convening of state delegations in Washington, D.C. (Alliance for Representative Democracy, 2003). Each state delegation was tasked with re-energizing a moribund commitment to civic education among schools in their states. Emerging from the convening, the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition worked to rebuild the infrastructure of civic education in Illinois (#CivicsIsBack), which culminated in civic education legislation (Illinois Civics, 2021). Chicago Public Schools (CPS) by that point had already launched civic education across the district. Its curriculum and supportive infrastructure of professional development supports for teachers, access to community partners, and ongoing opportunities for collaboration led to early success (Schmidt & Price, 2020; Hayat & Kawashima-Ginbserg, 2020). Individual teachers across the state who at one time were the only instructors in the building teaching civic education now belonged to an emerging cohort of teachers who stepped forward to teach civic education.

I examined the classroom of one of these Chicago high school social studies teachers. Her teaching practices aligned with an emerging civic education pedagogical framework—*critical civic engagement*—that holds particular promise for students in urban high schools. The framework elements—engaging lived experience, developing critical thinking capacity, and facilitating informed civic action—together de-universalize civic education curriculum, recognize and engage the unique lived cultural, social, and political experiences of students, build critical capacity to challenge and even disrupt accepted social and political practices, and intentionally prepare students for social-justice oriented civic action in their communities and beyond (Schmidt, 2021).

This qualitative study blended a phenomenological orientation with an instrumental case study approach. It explored the experiences of a social studies teacher as she conceptualized, constructed, implemented, and reflected on the planning and implementation of an AP

Government course. It also explored the experiences of students in the class with a particular focus on civic identity development. Examining one classroom in depth allowed me to develop a nuanced understanding of how a teacher approaches and experiences instruction as well as the ways in which a Critical Civic Engagement (CCE) framework impacts classroom practice and experience. Carefully observing a pedagogical framework in action enabled me to draw conclusions about the efficacy and promise of CCE as practice. For this study, I attempted to answer two sets of questions:

1. How does a teacher in an urban school district enact critical civic engagement pedagogy?
  - a. How does a teacher experience and reflect on the planning and enactment of CCE pedagogy?
2. How do students experience CCE civic education instruction?
  - a. To what extent do students develop or achieve a sense of civic identity through their classroom experience?

## **Literature Review**

### **History of Civic Education**

American schools have historically played a critical role in educating for democracy. “From the earliest days of the Republic, schools accepted the obligation to participate in the building of a nation” (Boyer, 1990, p. 5). During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, citizenship education experienced a tumultuous history. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) provide a useful typology (personally responsible, participatory, and social justice oriented) that I engage here to discuss the various iterations of how citizens can engage with issues connected to civic education as it became a discreet curriculum during the 1900s.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, schools were expected to assimilate growing numbers of immigrants and urban workers towards ideas of love of country and the self-made man (Butts, 1989). During the progressive era that followed, however, students had access to participatory and reconstructionist forms of civic education pedagogy (Cogan, 1999; Counts, 2009; Kliebard, 2002). As the nation entered the Cold War, in the aftermath of World War II, social studies and civic education experienced a retreat from social activism as “the climate changed from one of questioning American political, social, and economic institutions...to one of emphasizing what’s right about our institutions” (Evans, 2004, p. 70). By the 1970s and 1980s and continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, schools succumbed to the pressure to focus on standards and neoliberal

economic priorities and consigned civic education supports to civic associations (Quigley, 1999). Several years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, civic education began to experience a renaissance in Chicago with practices that reflected progressive and reconstructionist philosophies.

### **Citizenship**

How we approach civic education is deeply related to questions of how we think about the citizen and the citizen's roles in society. Who is allowed to be a citizen, what are the socio-cultural dimensions and commitments of the citizen, and what role the citizen plays in our democratic society are germane questions for civic educators. A liberal assimilationist understanding of citizenship has been the norm in the United States. Citizens are expected to develop an affinity to the nation-state and exercise civil, political, and social rights due the citizen (Banks, 2008). This legal status of citizenship, however, has historically been restricted to certain groups. Moreover, when the new citizen has gained rights, a process of subtraction of culture, beliefs, and commitments may take place. Individuals, however, grow and develop in cultural settings with local identity affiliations both in the United States and as immigrants who bring customs, perspectives, languages, and relationships from their sending country. Membership in a specific race or cultural group is in part how identity is constructed and "a means by which people experience a sense of solidarity...with others in the wider world" Unfortunately, individuals who stand outside the narrow norms of the nation-state have often been regarded as "posing a threat to America's democratic experiment" (Banks, 2017, p. 69).

Cosmopolitanism as a citizenship concept offers a more expansive understanding of citizenship and the potential role of the citizen. Cosmopolitanism enables the citizen to transcend narrow allegiance to a nation-state, maintain and even deepen local, cultural, transnational, and global ties, and take into consideration deeper, more expansive commitments. The primary commitment of the cosmopolitan citizen is to humanity and the planet and is not restricted to the nation-state (Osler, 2011). These commitments are enacted when citizens feel a sense of belonging (Karst, 1989) and have purposeful opportunities to participate in social and political life toward the common good (Barber, 1998). Banks (2008) and Osler (2011) propose cosmopolitan citizenship that is inclusive of multicultural, differentiated, divergent, dynamic, and discursive understandings of identity that reflect lived experiences in and through diverse communities. Cosmopolitan citizenship encourages local, national, and global identity markers that form and shape civic belongingness and civic participation.

The urban immigrant teenager, for example, who identifies with her local community, home country, ethnicity, and considers herself to be American represents one archetype of the emerging citizen; one who comes with multiple, diverse, emerging, and dynamic identities able to live within and across complex networks and borders that shape and reinforce her sense of affiliation, belongingness, and participation. This citizen archetype has long been othered, excluded from a narrow and static sense of what it means to be American, but is, paradoxically, representative of precisely what it means to be American. Citizenship, therefore, as ontological becomingness rooted in contextualized experiences suggests *lived citizenship*, a useful concept to recalibrate our national ideas of what it means to receive and exercise our rights, affiliate, participate, and carry out our mutual obligations.

Salinas and Alarcon (2016) argued that schools have intentionally or by default advanced a more restrictive value system represented in a narrow, legal definition of citizenship: “Official school curriculum is an exclusively White, male, and propertied construct reflected not only in the beliefs and values of the founding fathers but in the very civic documents that proclaim the rights and privileges of democracy” (p. 69). Schools can, however, welcome the lived experiences and identities of a diverse student body into the experience of civic education and even use these experiences as a point of departure for critical, informed engagement, and interaction with American democracy.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study is an effort to understand the efficacy and promise of a critical civic engagement framework for civic education. It is guided and shaped by curricular theory that recognizes, honors, and engages students’ lived experiences (Emdin, 2016; Freire, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012), critical urban theory, which critiques the existing social order and imagines an emerging urban space (Brenner, 2008), and a post-structural theory of human agency, which suggests that humans can and do act untethered from cosmological or institutional frames that might inhibit creativity and innovation (Deleuze, 1990). Freire (1994) argued that authentic and empowering learning begins with and in the context of a student’s experience. Ladson-Billings’ (1995) culturally responsive pedagogy, extended by Paris’ (2012) culturally sustaining pedagogy, aligns with Emdin’s (2016) reality pedagogy framework. Each approach to learning asks teachers to first explore and understand the dynamic cultural experiences of students in their communities in order frame and shape curriculum. These scholars posit that

students bring to the classroom a rich set of experiences and resources that should not be discounted or subtracted but instead should be honored, shared, and engaged as curriculum and curricular resources. Together these approaches argue for the strengthening of dynamic cultural legacies to undergird more profound academic achievement. They argue as well for the de-universalization of curriculum. Emdin (2016) and Valenzuela (1999) are especially helpful in offering a critical analysis of the existing White, middle-class normed education system that is subtractive in nature and strips students of color of culture, language, and identity. Their arguments are especially compelling for the civics classroom where students might bring their lived experiences to bear on civic issues and discussions and grow into their sense of civic identity and active participation in democracy.

Critical urban theory insists “that another, more democratic, socially just and sustainable form of urbanization is possible, even if such possibilities are currently being suppressed through dominant institutional arrangements, practices, and ideologies” (Brenner, 2008, p. 198). Critical urban theory draws from 20<sup>th</sup> century traditions of critical theory that share four core elements: theorization, reflexivity, critique of instrumental reason, and emphasis on the disjuncture between the actual and the possible. Applied to the practice of civic education pedagogy, critical urban theory suggests a critique of existing systems as well as the possibility of action toward a renewal of urban realities that are more just and more responsive to the experiences of people and communities. Deleuze (1990) advances ideas about civic action that are immanent, entrepreneurial, rhizomatic, innovative, and collaborative beyond the normative institutional and corporate apparatus.

These ideas applied to civic education challenge us to move from knowledge acquisition to thought engagement (epistemology) and from being to becoming (ontology). Knowledge acquisition is representative here of forms, structures, and information that are provided to the student as reified, rationalized externalities—elements that refuse to acknowledge the presence and experience of young people. Critical thought and purposeful action, on the other hand, are representative of an emerging epistemology that is generative and created but refuses lodging in systems of duration and exclusivity. Informed civic action is representative of the possibilities of becoming as students begin to see the opportunity to shape their environment through action in opposition to being constantly shaped by their environment.

## Critical Civic Engagement

As civic education re-enters the educational and political discourse, we can acknowledge that civics for all is a noble and appropriate goal. However, not all civic education classrooms should look or feel the same. Critical civic engagement (CCE) is a culturally responsive pedagogical project that recalls progressive and reconstructionist strands of education that have been present in American history since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It places the students at the center, raises critical questions about society, encourages thoughtful action, and is responsive to Westheimer's (2015) existential question: *What kind of citizen?* First, CCE proposes to engage the lived experience of urban high school students. In this respect, it argues against efficiency, assimilationism, and universalist approaches to education. CCE proposes that teaching takes place in a unique context, and students come into learning spaces with a diverse range of experiences and perspectives.

### Figure 1.0.

*Elements of Critical Civic Engagement (CCE)*



Secondly, CCE seeks to develop critical thinking skills. It argues against a single and unified understanding of American history, government, and systems and assumes that how we understand history and shape government is still open for debate, discussion, and discernment. Instead, CCE presents opportunities for students to engage in critical inquiry to challenge current systems in order that they might be improved to better the human condition. Finally, CCE encourages thoughtful civic action by students. It argues against simply learning about or “contemplating” the nature of our society for use later in life. Instead, CCE encourages students to generate projects that transform society by asking challenging questions of society. CCE then is an instructional approach that seeks to educate social justice-oriented citizens.

### *Engage Lived Experience*

The dominant White, middle class value system of education in the United States has devalued and stripped the linguistic and cultural heritage and experience of students who do not come from or conform to that value system. Yet it is precisely these subtracted experiences that

arguably shape one's understanding of self and citizenship and create opportunities to belong and participate in civil society. A starting point for effective, authentic civic education then is engaging the experience of the students. Engaging student experiences is an explicit critique of the current educational enterprise—a banking system in which teachers deposit knowledge into students (Freire, 1994). Moll and Gonzalez (1994) argue instead that young people come to school with *funds of knowledge* that can be engaged and enacted in classroom practice. Cultural knowledge and skills can be accessed and connected to in-school learning opportunities as a form of co-construction of knowledge that bridges the gap between school and community (Paris, 2012). Inviting the lived experiences of students into civics classrooms acknowledges that lived citizenship, those daily actions and interactions that shape ways of thinking about civic participation, is valuable and formative in how we think about civic practices. In order to restore culturally embedded experience and meaning, effective civic education pedagogy must, therefore, reject universal curricular strategies and instead begin by engaging authentic student experiences (Emdin, 2016; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Freire, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Paris, 2012). *Lived civics* (Cohen et al., 2018), derived from lived experience and lived citizenship, offers a useful and important pedagogical lens that acknowledges the dynamic racial, cultural, and class identities of the students and confronts the malingering questions of racism, sexism, and classism. It reflects an approach to civic education that engages the experiences and funds of knowledge of young people as they navigate their oftentimes precarious worlds (Clay & Rubin, 2019).

### ***Develop Critical Thinking***

Critical thinking is crucial in helping students demythologize and make sense of their historical, social, and political environments: “Critical pedagogy helps us rethink the way we engage students and analyze forms of learning in non-dominant communities...” (Scorza et al., 2013, p. 17). Freire (1994) proposed the development of critical political consciousness (*conscientization*), which enables students to move from marginalization to critical reflection to social action, which change one's social circumstances. Similarly, Hipolito-Delgado and Zion (2015), Rubin (2007), Watts and colleagues (1999), and Watts and Flanagan (2007) argue for enabling students to both critique the existing social and political order and understand how they “make [meaning] of their daily experience with civic institutions and their agents among the cultural practices and structural inequalities that surround them” (Rubin, 2007, p. 450). Critical



consciousness, how individuals critically read and act to change social conditions, is a function of critical reflection and critical action. Critical reflection is to perform a critical analysis of structural oppression while critical action includes the perceived ability to change one's social and political circumstances (Diemer & Li, 2011).

Schools can be centers of critical inquiry and therefore empowerment for students (Bermudez, 2014; Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2015; Molina-Giron, 2016; Ramirez et al., 2016; Rubin, 2010; Scorza et al., 2013). Hipolito-Delgado and Zion (2015) propose *critical civic inquiry*, which is rooted in the psychological empowerment of marginalized students, to engage in critical social and political conversations, conduct action research, and develop and carry out action projects toward social change. Scorza et al. (2013) argue that critical thinking approaches enable students to connect to their histories, develop voice, and navigate social and political barriers. Ginwright (2011) further argues that the development of critical consciousness helps African American students face and confront racism and becomes a form of healing.

### ***Facilitate Informed Civic Action***

Informed civic action engages the experience, knowledge, curiosity, passion, skills, creativity, hope, and commitments of students (Boyte, 2003; Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Ginwright, 2011; Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2015; LeCompte & Blevins, 2015; Levinson, 2013; Watts & Flanagan, 2007). Teachers who facilitate civic action projects enable students to see themselves as civic actors and agents of their own destiny toward identifying and addressing injustices (Schultz & Oyler, 2006). Boyte (2003) proposed that educators pursue forms of civic action that place students at the center of the process, where *together* they identify issues of public concern, conduct research, and then develop action projects that address the problem substantively. Collective critical action emerges from feelings of powerlessness, surfaces the desire for change, and builds capacity for collective action, political knowledge and power, and ultimately, in its critique and action, challenges historic corporate power (Boyte, 2003). York and Kirshner (2015) also argue for a collective sense of civic action as collective systemic agency - a "constellation of practices that connect the interpersonal work of collective work with a systemic approach to thinking about and taking action" (p. 105). How adults position students as active collaborators toward positive change in schools is critical (York & Kirshner, 2015). If school and classrooms

do not regard all students as competent, capable of working collaboratively, and central to the school change process, students may not build a sense of civic agency.

### **Civic Identity**

Critical civic engagement as a pedagogical project can contribute to a healthy democracy, create greater equity, and acknowledge and honor diverse forms of civic participation. But it can also support a young person's identity development. Scholars suggest that identity forms as a process through unique and inherited characteristics, in particular contexts, and as a function of social interaction within those contexts (Berzonsky, 1992; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Erikson, 1968; Rogoff, 2003; Schachter & Ventura, 2008). Key questions such as "Who am I" and "What is my purpose" are germane to young people as they attempt to live into a strong sense of identity and avoid role confusion. Indeed, young people "who develop a clear sense of identity...are likely to experience greater well-being later in life" (Harrell-Levy et al., 2016 p. 99).

Crocetti, Erentaite, and Zukauskienė (2014) and Porter (2013) argue that civic participation and identity development are recursive, mutually supporting enterprises. Civic participation supports and informs identity development while identity development strengthens civic participation. Civic identity can be understood as a sense of connection to and participation in a civic community (Nasir & Kirshner, 2003) and a transcendence of self in order to contribute to a larger cause (Martinez et al., 2012). Civic identity development is therefore the process through which young people begin to see themselves in relationship to the public world.

Not all young people enjoy the process of (civic) identity development from similar vantage points. Urban youth of color may not have experienced support from social systems or perceive a capacity to impact those systems. Rubin (2010) argues in fact that the daily experiences of young people impact their emerging identities and that racial and economic inequities they encounter shape how they think of themselves. External social and institutional factors can impact a young person's search for identity development in negative ways. Race, gender, and culture as well as economic and citizenship status are all markers that can negatively impact identity development. Salinas and Alarcon (2016) argue that Latinx youth have never enjoyed the full rights of citizenship because their outward identity is marked by difference, while DeJaeghere and McCleary (2010) contend that Mexican immigrant youth experience ruptures in the process of civic identity development because of the ways in which their social identities are marked as marginal. Schools may consciously or unconsciously contribute to the

essentialization of BIPOC youth through assimilation and conformity rather than encouraging their own unique and dynamic perhaps hybrid sense of identity by acknowledging and engaging their unique experiences.

Schools can provide opportunities for students to experience and develop a sense of civic identity. However, schools also represent an awesome power in society that can be exercised over students. They must resist the temptation to utilize that power to assimilate diverse youth toward a homogenized ideal. Instead, schools can create spaces where unique identities and diverse experiences are welcomed and honored, power structures are interrogated and engaged, and a commitment to skill building for democracy is centered.

### **Research Methods**

#### **Research Design**

I approached this qualitative study from a phenomenological perspective utilizing an instrumental case study analysis. “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). The task of a phenomenological study is to depict the essence of an experience or process (van Manen, 2017). A phenomenological study poses two key questions: What are the lived experiences of a group and what are the meanings, structures, and essence of the lived experience? (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological approach allowed me to examine the experiences of a teacher regarding her positionality and preparation for teaching as well as daily acts of instruction: What is the context teaching in which I am teaching and what am I trying to accomplish for and with my students in my acts of teaching?

I blended a phenomenological perspective with an instrumental case study approach in order to develop insight into the theory and efficacy of CCE: “In an instrumental case study, the case itself is secondary to understanding a particular phenomenon” (Grandy, 2010, p. 474). I hoped to examine and develop a better understanding of how a teacher in an urban context applied CCE and the extent to which students experienced growth in civic identity through those classroom experiences. My interviews with teachers and students were an opportunity to engage them in questions to think reflectively about the experience.

As teachers deliver civic education curriculum toward intended student outcomes, they come with a set of beliefs, values, biases, and experiences. They also teach in specific community and historical contexts whether acknowledged or unacknowledged. These internal

and external factors play an important role in how teachers approach civic education and, ultimately, impact how students experience civic education curriculum. However, these experiences may be lived through and not interpreted and understood. Likewise, students in a civic education course may experience the classroom as another in a series of classroom requirements that play out seven or eight times a day and hundreds of times over the course of a year and thousands of times over their academic careers. The intentional reflective nature of a phenomenological study enables a critical examination of experience as it encourages a return to the experience to derive meaning from it.

### ***Participants***

This study took place in Chicago, home to the third largest school district in the nation, with approximately 360,000 students. Chicago Public Schools is a school district of choice offering a range of school options: Selective enrollment, charter, military, alternative, and neighborhood public schools. Most schools in the district are, however, made up of a single race majority. Jackson High School (pseudonym) is situated within a school system of choice. Rising ninth graders are able to apply to attend selective enrollment schools or attend their assigned neighborhood school. Jackson is a hybrid neighborhood/selective school comprised of selective and neighborhood students, 98% students of color, and 94% free and reduced lunch eligible students. All interviews and observations took place in a naturalistic setting in an urban classroom setting with the teacher and students. Twelve of the students were female and seven were male, 14 were Latino/a and five African-American. Letters of consent to participate in the study were obtained from the teacher and parents, and letters of assent were obtained from students. Before each observation and the student focus group, I reviewed the voluntary nature of the study and its purpose and goals with participants.

Ms. Hunter (pseudonym) is a White, 21-year veteran of the public school system, having taught at four schools in the city. She currently teaches at a high school that attracts students from the local community and from across the city. She has been active for much of her career with local civic organizations that provide professional development opportunities for teachers. Ms. Hunter was one of four teachers selected through purposive sampling for an ongoing broader study. School district leaders were asked to identify civics teachers who they considered to be currently practicing elements of CCE in their courses. The recommended teachers were invited to confirm their use of CCE strategies and their interest in the study. Responding teachers were

then included in the broader study. Ms. Hunter is representative of a group of social studies teachers at half of the 100+ high schools in the district who have taught civics both pre- and post-civics mandate and accessed supports from the district as well as external civic organizations over the course of their careers.

### ***Data Collection***

I conducted three semi-structured interviews with Ms. Hunter, three classroom observations followed by short debrief interviews with the teacher, and facilitated one student focus group. I conducted interviews at three intervals during an instructional unit on elections during the second semester of the 2019-20 academic year. Seidman (2013) argues that three distinct, thematic interviews are central to the phenomenological study to get at the meaning of experience: “It allows both the interviewer and participant to explore the participant’s experience, place it in context, and reflect on its meaning” (Seidman, 2013, p. 20). Additionally, three interviews enabled a relationship and rapport to develop. The three-interview series began by establishing prior teacher experience, context for teaching and instructional plans, then moved to the concrete details of the instructional experience and use of CCE, and finally enabled the teacher to reflect on the meaning of the experience. By gathering data through the interview process and then observing classroom contexts unfold, I was able to develop a more nuanced understanding of how teacher-held views were manifest in pedagogical enactment. The classroom observations were also an effective tool to discern the nuances of the hidden curriculum in a school setting (Cotton et al., 2013).

I developed a classroom observation protocol (see Appendix A) to identify and describe uses of CCE elements. The tool was used to identify the ways the teacher identified and invited students’ experiences into the classroom and then built upon those experiences. Students were presented with opportunities for critical thought and provided specific tools to strengthen critical thinking. The civic action project required students to include evidence of authentic participation and leadership in its development—from planning and implementation through evaluation and reflection. Finally, I sought to glean an understanding of how the teacher enabled classroom participation, in particular how she sought to address power dynamics in the classroom, balanced her voice and the voice of students, and navigated the tensions between teacher presentation and student engagement. Classroom observations enabled me to experience and describe how the teacher facilitated CCE and how students reacted and responded to the lessons. They also

enabled me to compare student participation in the classroom and their articulation of experiences later in the focus groups. I looked for alignment or dissonance between the articulated thoughts of students and the classroom observations and probed during the focus group in places where dissonance was observed.

Finally, I conducted one hour-long student focus group with eight of the 19 students from the class. “Focus group interviews are designed to elicit perceptions, information, attitudes and ideas from a group in which each participant possesses experience with the phenomenon under study” (Kelly, 2003 p. 50). The students reflected on the shared civic learning experiences in response to questions about how they encountered CCE elements: Did you feel that your experiences were represented in this class? Did you feel that you were able to learn new information and critique it? To what extent was the civic action experience a meaningful experience for you? Their insights about their experiences in the classroom and their thoughts about their own civic identity development were examined. The focus group process enabled students to consider, reflect upon, and confirm or modify their own ideas about their experience. I audio recorded all teacher interviews and the student focus group and developed verbatim transcripts of the interviews.

### ***Data Analysis***

I reviewed classroom observation notes and a total of 38 pages of transcribed interviews. Due to the school closing because of the Covid-19 virus, student participants were unable to review the transcriptions. However, Ms. Hunter was able to review her interview transcripts to ensure validity. Open and subsequently axial coding were used to generate themes to inform and shape the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Following two initial readings of the interview transcripts, I used an open coding process to develop discrete codes for the teacher and student data. I moved back and forth between specific ideas and topics to more general themes through this process, ultimately arriving at a set of broad themes that formed the basis of my data. Once consistent codes were in place, I used axial coding to generate connections among and across the codes. Several categories were subsequently merged into established codes or dropped. I then began the process of analyzing my data in order to derive both broad meaning from the classroom experience and identify specific examples or experiences that reflected and illuminated the learning process. This process ultimately led to identifying findings included below.

Engaging three forms of data (teacher interview, classroom observation, and student focus group) enabled me to triangulate data in order to develop a fuller understanding of how a process of critical civic engagement can be effectively detailed, understood, communicated, and extended. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explain that triangulation “is a powerful strategy for increasing the credibility or internal validity of...research” (p. 245). For example, in teacher interviews, I inquired about student experiences in the civics classroom and the extent to which the teacher believed she led students toward desired outcomes. During focus group sessions with students, I asked participants to reflect on the meaning they derived from classroom experiences and how those experiences contributed to an emerging sense of civic identity development.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

As a White, middle class male in a school district context where 90% of the students are of color, I approached the interviews, observations, and data analysis with an awareness of my race, privilege, and potential biases. Milner (2007) contends that researchers have not always approached research in communities in color in ways that find their experiences to be *normal*, *acceptable*, or *valid*. The White experience is the norm against which all others are compared and measured. As a former employee of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) having served as the District Manager for service-learning from 2002-2014, I coordinated initial efforts ten years ago to develop civic education curriculum for CPS teachers. While observing in the classroom, my task was to mitigate the power dynamic that existed by trying to be as unobtrusive in the classroom as possible, deflecting any attention from myself, making my comments brief, and assuring the voluntary nature of the study. Similarly, my interactions with the teacher were on her “turf” in a public space (classroom and school library), conducted immediately following a classroom learning experience, and facilitated during several visits.

### **Findings**

As a researcher, I was drawn to Ms. Hunter’s classroom because of her experience in social studies and civic education as a practitioner and leader at her school and district, as well as her enactment of critical civic engagement elements. My interviews with Ms. Hunter, along with observations of her classroom and student focus group data, enabled me to see elements of CCE in action and understand the role they played in her classroom during a unit on electoral politics. I identified four themes that emerged in my analysis of data. The first two themes—social justice orientation and student-centered instruction—informed Ms. Hunter’s approach to teaching civics

and undergirded her utilization of CCE. The second pair of themes reflect the direction and intended impact of her instruction—skill-building and critical hope. In each section, I provide insights from and about students that align with these themes. I conclude this section by considering student civic identity development through these civic learning experiences.

### **Social Justice Orientation**

Ms. Hunter articulated a clear social justice orientation, and her practice indicated a commitment to building social justice-oriented citizens. Westheimer (2015) identified social justice-oriented citizens as those who ask hard questions, critically assess social, political, and economic structures, and work to address social injustices. Ms. Hunter was enacting a reconstructionist approach to learning by encouraging students to consider, critique, and act on inequities that manifest in governmental and political systems and processes. She provided ample opportunities for students to learn about, understand, and critique problems with American electoral politics and then engage directly in the electoral process. For example, during my classroom observation, Ms. Hunter asked students to analyze data about the discrepancy between an electoral college and popular vote victory. She also provided data and asked students to analyze demographic differences in voter participation. Her students saw how residents in low-income communities are less likely to participate in elections. She then asked students to develop an action project that engaged them in the electoral system. Students had opportunities to volunteer with local political campaigns and travel to and participate in primaries as well as organize an election assembly for peers. Ms. Hunter expected collective action (Boyte, 2003) among her students: “My big hope is always that they want to design an event or like really make sure that they have a big impact, even though that’s a lot of work for me...” Ms. Hunter believes there is power in community, that the issues and concerns of others should be taken into consideration, and working with others to build solutions is more authentic and powerful. Students needed some support to understand the value of this kind of work: “We might need to work on our collaboration more, but I was actually excited about their energy. They were excited to reach out.” Her approach to civic action reflected an awareness of the value of working together to identify social and political problems and advance solutions and the skills that collective action can develop among students.

Students expressed enthusiasm about developing critical thinking skills. They reported opportunities to assess and better understand their own context through historical analysis of



systems and practices and evaluation of the current state of affairs. Kina stated: “History is usually just the past...[here] we learn to take what is wrong and merge it into what’s happening now and how we can fix it.” History can be presented as a chronological march through the centuries leaving students short of their own context and with a diminished sense of their own efficacy in the national story. However, students in Ms. Hunter’s class examined the U.S. electoral process not just as a way to understand an historic system, but also how they are reflected in it, might interrogate it, participate in it, and even work toward substantive changes in the future. Cheryl said: “It really allows me to see how it’s not ideal to the society and the negative impacts of having a system that oppresses minorities.”

### **Student-Centered Instruction**

Schools have often been among the least democratic places in American society. Sleeter (2015) argued that schools are still mired in a “factory model of schooling...[where] children are products” (p. 111). The factory model of education is inequitable, standardized, and compliance-driven (Sleeter, 2015) and lacks opportunities for students to be and feel centered in the educational process. Teachers can also, according to Ms. Hunter, “be controlling people...and you have to coax them to let go.” Ms. Hunter has worked to make schools and her own classrooms more democratic and student-centered places where student representation, voice, and choice are a daily part of both classroom instruction and school culture: “My main pedagogy is student choice. I think that it’s important to always start with issues or what matters to fight cynicism...It’s actually super messy and not linear.” Ms. Hunter is articulating a perspective here that engages students’ lived experiences; her students were asked to name issues that matter to them in order to engage their passions. And she is confirming that the process of student-centered learning toward civic action can be unwieldy. As students identify issues of importance to them, any number of variables can support or hinder progress in an action project. The action projects themselves are dynamic, negotiated, contingent upon a variety of factors, and can have uncertain time frames. It is not easy to anticipate with precision the skills or insights that students will learn in this process; however, student learning in this environment is authentic, dynamic, and deep.

As a veteran teacher, Ms. Hunter regards teaching that engages student experience and moves toward civic action as an act of facilitation where students occupy the learning space with their identities intact: “It’s like an additional resources because I don’t have to figure it

out....Students are experts on teaching and learning....Getting their opinions and letting them choose, and finding ways for them to have some ownership makes everything that I do so much easier!” In facilitative learning, it is critical to place students at the center of the learning experience. During my first classroom observation, I noticed how the classroom architecture and physical positioning of the teacher in the classroom indicated that some of the power structures of the traditional classrooms were not present. Students entered the classroom, and many participated in the classroom, as if they had equal ownership in the space. Facilitation in a student-centered environment, she argued, generates a greater sense of engagement, participation, voice, and choice. Ms. Hunter constructed the classroom space in a way that situated her with her students. Chairs were placed in two u-shapes, and Ms. Hunter often took a seat with the students during discussions or activities in order to shorten the distance between teacher and students. She actively encouraged students to share their own stories, frequently opened the classroom to a facilitated discussion format, and enabled students to identify, develop, and enact their civic action project, even when she experienced trepidation about turning the project over to the students.

Facilitation in a student-centered environment is also dynamic, which Ms. Hunter recognized and valued. Experience and voice emerged in this environment. Ms. Hunter prepped students for this kind of a pedagogical space as they approached the elections unit project: “My role is to support your vision. I’m not trying to get you to do anything. I’m not using your work as window dressing for my objectives.” She positioned both herself and her students in ways that created both opportunity and accountability for the students and affirmed student voice and choice. Collaborative student work led to an all-school voter education assembly designed, organized, and facilitated by the students. The path to the final product was at times uncertain. Ms. Hunter found herself negotiating relationships between and among students as she attempted to support all students with equity. At one point the classroom experienced a “break-down” as relationships frayed through the process. Ms. Hunter used a restorative justice<sup>1</sup> peace circle to repair relationships. The response to challenging classroom dynamics is important here. She did not seek to clamp down or revert to a more directed instructional approach, instead she engaged

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<sup>1</sup> A classroom management practice that relies on restoring relationships as opposed to punitive measures

a proven restorative justice strategy. Along the way, students had the opportunity to develop important relationship skills.

Ms. Hunter's facilitative and student-centered approach to the unit demonstrates evidence of CCE framework practices. Throughout the unit, Ms. Hunter sought to engage students' the lived experiences: What issues did they care about and how did those passions relate to their own experiences in communities? How have their experiences impacted people they care about, including themselves? She also enabled story-telling in her classroom. "People should share stories and that story sharing is another way of building community and so setting up norms so that students can share their stories safely and let their stories go unchallenged or just put them out there is maybe the best example of that." While it was clear that Ms. Hunter worked to situate the action project in a way that reflected students interests and experiences and attempted to draw on students' stories and experiences to inform the discussions in class, engaging lived experience is a work in progress. Ultimately, Ms. Hunter enabled the lived experiences of students to permeate the classroom in ways that contributed to a deeper sense of civic purpose and identity.

Ms. Hunter also provided multiple opportunities to develop students' critical thinking skills. Students generated and analyzed their own and external data. Students learned about, critiqued, and sought solutions to a problematic electoral process within a political system. Kina suggested that the goal in the classroom was to show young people how they can rebuild the republic: "She asks us to go back to the question how good, how flawed, what could be better." Ms. Hunter provided multiple opportunities for informed civic action. Students were encouraged to participate in local electoral campaigns, travel to and participate in presidential primaries, and ultimately generate and run their own election project. Enabling students to develop and practice critical thinking in the classroom as a way to inform and develop a civic action project reflects important skills of the citizen in a democracy. It is never sufficient to be able to identify and describe the systems and process of government; there need to be opportunities in a democracy to responsibly critique and challenge what exists and then work to improve democratic systems.

### **Skill Development**

Ms. Hunter hoped to balance the academic demands of an advanced placement course with the opportunities that a participatory civic experience presented. One important goal was to equip students for the rigors of university education where they would encounter different

backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives and be expected to form and articulate their own ideas and political positions. She also wanted students to be equipped for democracy as critical thinkers, organizers, leaders, and reflective practitioners: “There are so many skills that get embedded in students designing their own project. They have to engage in goal setting; they’re going to have to contact other people....Students just continuously said, ‘I can’t believe you just let us do this. You let us just like run the class!’” Taking responsibility for the successful completion of the civic action project enabled students to develop skills necessary for critical participation.

One example of CCE skill development was a voter education assembly. This project was the key civic action component of the unit and emphasized collaboration among students. Using data from student-created surveys, the group brainstormed ways in which they could help to bridge the electoral information gap for peers. Data gathered by the students (n=137) indicated that though 95% of respondents were eligible to vote, only 33% reported that they planned to vote, and 11% said they would not vote. Student respondents provided rationale for not voting including uncertainty about the registration process, immigration status, and lack of information about the candidates.

The data were an important source of information to begin thinking about a student action project. Brainstormed ideas included helping fellow students register, creating an educational campaign about the candidates, providing a training session for all eligible voters, and hosting an assembly for fellow students to provide information about the election, issues, and candidates. Ultimately, the students reached consensus to host a voter education assembly at the school. As students deliberated, Ms. Hunter encouraged them to be courageous: “When you put yourself out there, you will get pushback. But the loudest voices tend to be the most negative. People who are quiet may very well be interested in what you have to say.” The final voter education assembly was attended by more than 400 students at the school and participation was robust.

Ms. Hunter reflected on the leadership opportunities for students in the project: “The more I step back, the more they’ll step up. I step in to provide information but let them run the show...[Facilitating student projects is the] least stress I’ve experienced as a teacher [but] you have to be a more senior teacher to be comfortable with risk-taking and even ‘chaos’.” Students saw it as building useful skills for their future. Maria stated that “the assembly opened my eyes to see how much youth want to be involved. It was student-led and helped me to gain leadership,

cooperative skills, and encouraged me.” Kina reported that “we can take this with us to college and beyond; we can have goals, create a project, get others involved.” By requiring a student-led project as part of the unit, she positioned students to gain valuable project development and management skills in civic spaces including conducting research, developing ideas, collaborating with peers, organizing resources, building public relationships, and facilitating large scale events.

### **Civic Education as Critical Hope**

Duncan-Andrade (2009) argued that teaching in historically marginalized communities must be grounded in critical hope. Critical hope recognizes that students face enduring hardships due to their systemic social, political and economic marginalization, that students have material and psycho-social needs that need to be addressed, and that students have the capacity and means to address these historic inequalities. Ms. Hunter’s personal feelings reflected cynicism about the country and its capacity to live out its ideals. “Our politics have crumbled, and our civic discourse has fallen apart.” She was discouraged by the condition of American politics and her own cynicism about the current state of the country. She found, however, that engaging students in civic learning was an opportunity to fight feelings of cynicism. Ms. Hunter believed that her task was to balance cynicism with hope for her students and for herself: “One of my most important pedagogical strategies is actually like passionate engagement...I don’t think students are asked to imagine enough.” Indeed, her approach sought to move students from disempowerment to agency: “Learning should be empowering; students can have an impact....[This approach] keeps me invigorated as a veteran teacher.” Ms. Hunter found resolve and restoration in students identifying and acting on issues that were meaningful to them.

Similarly, students were energized by the opportunity to put their developing awareness and critical thinking skills into action. Marie shared how the experience helped to move her and other students from awareness to action: “In our voter engagement project...we learned that youth usually don’t vote; I want to change that because we’re the ones who are living with the consequences.” Students also appeared motivated to get other young people involved in the work of elections. Through their participation, they had already begun to see an impact beyond themselves as they encouraged other students and community members to vote.

It is important to note that in the eyes of the students this class was markedly different from most other courses they had experienced during their K-12 journey and that it represented a sense of urgency lacking in many classrooms. Muhammad (2020) identifies urgent pedagogies as

ones that “harness positive energy to push through weariness...teach in ways that move beyond sanctioned norms...listen to students of color even when you don’t agree or understanding [and]...decenter self as teacher” (p. 56). Here, students felt a deeply personal connection to the course. James named the urgency of civic participation: “I don’t go into other classes with the same mindset as if I’m going to live or die the next day!” Students named in various ways the importance of what they have learned, done, and experienced throughout the course, most of which had a direct relationship to themselves, their families, and their communities. The unit project represented an opportunity to weave their lived experiences into the project and encourage their peers to find their own voice and presence in the political system as they built strong civic skills. Cristina said it this way: “We all have stories that are meaningful...we’re driven by our own personal experiences, and we tied that to voting.” Cheryl said: “My parents were never into politics, and the class allowed me to grow in that perspective.” Marie agreed: “I was also raised in a household where politics wasn’t something we talked about or were aware of but...this class is about something that is going to affect you no matter what.” As students were prompted to navigate the current U.S. electoral system and how they might both critique it and participate in it, they uncovered moments of discovery and clarity about the system and how it, often negatively, impacts family, community members, and ultimately themselves. This emerging understanding of the system and their capacity to act toward including more peers, family members, and community residents in the process appeared to move students toward Duncan-Andrade’s notion of critical hope (2009); they recognized the shortcomings and inequities of the system even as they found opportunities to create greater inclusion and participation in the system. Similarly, Ms. Hunter shared feelings of hopefulness and rejuvenation through the learning and action process.

### **Civic Identity Development**

A critical objective of the CCE pedagogical framework is to develop or further build a student’s sense of civic identity. Did this experience contribute to an emergent or deepened sense of civic identity and purpose among students? Marie reported that analyzing data about her community raised her awareness: “We...saw that Hispanics usually tend to have a lower voter turnout than other ethnicities; for me, it was like a wake-up call...sometimes we don’t realize it, but when you look at the effects of not voting and having a stigma that your vote doesn’t count...[it] changes the whole system of voting if you have that perception.” Cynthia

acknowledged greater clarity of purpose: “It helped me understand why I am doing this and why it matters in the world...The class helped me navigate what I want in the future and that’s important to me.” Increased political efficacy was identified by Michelle: “I already knew I wanted to be a voice for those who don’t have one...in this class it’s grown much stronger...I could be a voice for so many different things.” James noted: “I want to be a voice for those who are voiceless or are ill-informed about what’s going on around them. This pushed me to get involved with different organizations.” Students also articulated an emerging sense of voice for themselves. Finally, students identified stronger skills in key civic areas: critical analysis, negotiation and compromise, and leadership. Taken together, these five elements—awareness, sense of purpose, efficacy, democratic participation skills, and voice—represent important elements of a young person’s civic identity. Civic identity develops and grows when a young person recognizes social issues they are passionate about, want to engage in, and transcend their own self-interest and ultimately connect them to a community that transcends their own individual interests. They become part of a public dialogue and opportunity to create change. In short, students develop a growing sense of political efficacy and a desire to use their voice.

### **Discussion**

This study examined the experiences of a teacher and her students in an AP Government course in order to better understand the meaning respondents drew from their experience and the efficacy of CCE practices. The CCE framework is rooted in scholarship of culturally-situated pedagogies, critical pedagogy, and critical urban theory, and research into the practice and value of informed and collective civic action. Freire’s concept of *conscientization* provides a compelling framework for how students are invited to bring their lived experiences, critically examine the historical and institutional systems that have shaped them, and then work towards social change. This study confirms extant research, which suggests that students benefit from these experiences in building civic skills and dispositions as well as developing a sense of civic identity. The study extends the research by examining the experiences of a teacher and how she was challenged to deepen her pedagogical practices and was rejuvenated in her profession. I examined how one teacher approached a social studies course from a philosophical and pedagogical perspective, and how she enacted the curriculum using CCE elements. I also examined how students experienced and drew meaning from the experience, with a particular focus on the extent to which their sense of civic identity and purpose developed during the

experience. Based on my findings, I drew the following conclusions regarding the potential impact of CCE on American democracy, urban high school students, and educators.

### **Impact on American Democracy**

At a time in our nation's history when many students of color may not feel a sense of political efficacy, and many White citizens do not understand or embrace the core ideas of democracy and instead seem to lean towards authoritarianism (Edwards, 2020), it is more important than ever to generate civics frameworks and aligned practice that focus on building skills, habits, and dispositions that enable young people to participate in civic spaces in critical ways. It is dangerous to ignore our own lived experiences, to follow a leader uncritically, and to remain ignorant of existing or emerging civic tools. Unreflective, uncritical, and performative participation that simply parrots the words and ideas of populist leaders, creates a vacuous body politic that can easily shift to authoritarianism. Critical civic engagement practices can build effective citizenship skills among students, which include the ability to think critically, act thoughtfully toward the common good, and hold leaders and systems accountable. But as importantly, CCE practices can support the development of a young person's sense of civic identity. A democracy needs skilled citizens prepared to uphold and strengthen democracy, and it needs citizens who have a deep sense of commitment to participate that is reflective of core democratic values.

### **Impact on Urban High School Students**

There is evidence that the classroom experience launched or strengthened student civic identity among participants. Rubin (2006) developed a model of student civic identity that ranges from complacent and discouraged to aware and empowered. Educators should strive for high levels of awareness and efficacy. Too many students experience complacency borne out of discouragement based on their in-school and out-of-school experiences. Furthermore, a student may be aware, but if they have not experienced success in civic life, they are more likely to feel a low sense of efficacy even with a high level of awareness (Rubin, 2006). Based on classroom observations and the focus group interview, students in Ms. Hunter's class appear to have developed an emerging and/or deepening sense of awareness and efficacy, important elements of civic identity.



### **Impact On a High School Social Studies Teacher**

Westheimer (2015) posed the question: What kind of citizen? Ms. Hunter was clearly interested in developing social justice-oriented citizens. Part of that commitment was reflected in how she created and sustained a student-centered, democratic space where students could explore critical issues of concern to them and their communities. She hoped to build civic capacities among her students that equipped them to challenge the status quo of our political systems, and she facilitated this learning process in a student-centered environment. Ms. Hunter reported that doing this work in this way required a letting go of control that teachers typically like to have in the classroom. The authentic work and dynamic environment were both invigorating and challenging for Ms. Hunter, and it represented for a veteran teacher a way that she could release control to advance student learning: “Once you unleash the power of student voice, everything is easier.”

Beyond equipping students for democratic participation, Ms. Hunter was generating for her students and for herself a sense of critical hope. Both students and the teacher came to the classroom with an underlying sense of cynicism of the current state of politics in America and their ability to have an impact. Ms. Hunter, however, reported that she was rejuvenated as a teacher through the work. She was inspired by what her students were able to accomplish at a critical moment in our nation’s history.

### **Limitations**

This study sought to describe and unpack how a teacher uses, and her students experience, elements of an emerging pedagogical framework for civic education in urban contexts. The experiences here represent one veteran teacher in one of her classrooms. While the results of the practices are promising as interpreted from both the teacher’s perspective and those of her students when considering meaningful classroom and authentic political engagement as well as growth and development in civic identity development, there is not sufficient sample size for statistical measurement or generalization. A second limitation is amount of time I was able to spend in the classroom conducting observations. The insights that I have gathered here represent a good beginning to understanding how a teacher enacts and students experience elements of CCE; however, a broader study with more sites and more time spent in schools would be helpful in confirming or calling into question some of the conclusions provided in my article.

### Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the CCE framework is an approach that can help students develop a deeper sense of civic purpose and identity, equip them to see and understand history and our current context from an informed and critical perspective, and build skills in the art of democratic political participation that understands the importance of representation, negotiation, compromise, and informed action. We all have stories that are meaningful and deserve to be represented in political life in America. But stories and narratives too narrowly or falsely construed cannot drive engagement. There must also be critical commitment to the common good. At a time when the nation has perhaps never before been so deeply polarized and the political climate so deeply toxic, asking schools to engage the lived experiences of our students and develop their critical thinking skills toward informed civic action is essential for the health and sustainability of our democracy. Even if we have lately been prone to seek safety in our political tribes, Bregman (2019) argues that humans can rise and indeed have experience rising above tribal politics. However, humans need support to get there. Schools can, if they so choose, be new centers of civic and democratic life wherein students' experiences are welcomed and engaged, taught how to think critically and reflectively, and have opportunities practice civic life, and in so doing dream together a transformed society...and take the first steps.

Schools can and should re-assert themselves as key actors in the process of building American democracy by preparing their students for the rigors of democratic participation. In addition to building important civic knowledge, skills, habits, and dispositions, this pedagogical framework engagement can support students as they negotiate identity questions in general and civic identity in particular toward achieving clarity around civic purpose and intent. Civic identity development among students is, I have argued here, critical both to the health of the nation and to the health of our students. If we want students to be able to state with confidence what they care about, how they want to engage, and how they connect their interests to broader social and political questions and communities, and I think we do, the task lies before us. Taking on this challenge in this way is good for our students and good for the country. The historically and existentially trenchant question of "how might I live?" ultimately begs the question of how we might live together. Today, more than ever, having our students deeply engaging these questions is not just good practice; it is necessary practice (Ochoa-Becker, 1996; Teitelbaum, 2011).

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### Author Biography

Jon Schmidt (Ed.D.) is Assistant Clinical Faculty in the School of Education at Loyola University Chicago. He teaches, coordinates university school partnership initiatives, and develops strategies and conducts research in civic education, race equity, and community schools. Schmidt worked in youth leadership and civic engagement in schools and community organizations for 20 years before joining Loyola in 2014.



## Appendix A

## Observation Protocol – Pedagogical Approaches

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students: \_\_\_\_\_ Student Demographics: (Gender/Race)

Classroom Practice	Presence Consistent, Sometimes, Infrequently, Never	Description	Field Notes
<p><b><u>Lived experience</u></b></p> <p><i>Identifies, invites, engages student experiences</i></p> <p><i>Builds upon student experiences</i></p> <p><i>Establishes relevance between student experience and course content</i></p>			
<p><b><u>Critical Thinking</u></b></p> <p><i>Encourages reflective, analytical thinking</i></p> <p><i>Challenges students to establish evidence and logic toward sound arguments</i></p> <p><i>Invites students to question assumptions and evaluate logic</i></p> <p><i>Encourages students to question existing systems and beliefs</i></p>			
<p><b><u>Civic Action</u></b></p> <p><i>Discusses modes of civic participation</i></p>			

<p><i>Plans for civic participation</i>  <i>Solicits student input in project planning</i>  <i>Engages students in civic action</i></p>			
<p><b><u>Classroom Participation</u></b>                  Balance between teacher presentation and individual student seat work student participation including discussion, group work, projects, student-initiated work and presentations</p>			