'A Different Sameness': Exploring the Multifaceted Identities of Politics and Society Teachers in Ireland

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Declaration/Disclaimer

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Abstract

'A Different Sameness': Exploring the Multifaceted Identities of Politics and Society Teachers in Ireland Conor Reale

This doctoral thesis investigates the civic identity development of Politics and Society teachers in Ireland, exploring how these educators perceive and enact their roles as civic actors. Situated within the interpretivist paradigm, this research employs phenomenological analysis and the Listening Guide method to delve into the complex interplay between teachers' professional roles and their personal beliefs about citizenship and civic engagement.

The study addresses a significant gap in the literature by providing a nuanced understanding of teacher civic identity, particularly within the Irish educational context. Eighteen second level teachers from a variety of school types were interviewed. Some have been teaching Politics and Society since it was first introduced in 2016 while others only have one year's teaching experience in the area. Through in-depth interviews with Politics and Society teachers, the research identifies and analyses four key voices in the teachers' narratives: foundational, pedagogical, vulnerable, and reflective voices. These voices reveal the multifaceted nature of civic identity, encompassing cognitive, emotional, and embodied dimensions.

The findings highlight the diverse ways teachers conceptualise and enact their civic roles, influenced by their personal backgrounds, professional contexts, and interactions with students. The study underscores the importance of supporting teachers in their civic identity development through targeted professional development and reflective practice.

This thesis contributes to the field of civic education by introducing the Ériu VOICE Model, an innovative framework for analysing civic identity through the Listening Guide method. It offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers, emphasising the need for comprehensive support systems to foster teachers' civic engagement and efficacy. The research calls for continued exploration of teacher civic identity using longitudinal studies, a mixed methods approach, and collaborative inquiry to enhance our understanding and support of educators in their crucial role as civic educators.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Civic education is critical in contemporary democracies. It aims to cultivate engaged and informed citizens capable of effective participation in civic life (Crocetti et al., 2023, p.179). As societies grapple with challenges such as political polarisation, misinformation, and declining trust in institutions, the role of civic education in fostering democratic resilience has gained renewed attention (Levine and Kawashima-Ginsberg, 2017, p.3). Indeed, James (2024. p.1) contends that these and other forms of 'democratic backsliding' mean that we are thought to be living through a 'global age of democratic recession and regression'. Therefore within this context, teachers play a pivotal role as both implementers of civic education curricula and models of civic engagement for their students (White and Mistry, 2017, p.185). However, the civic identity development of teachers themselves remains an understudied aspect of this dynamic. This thesis seeks to address this gap by examining how teachers' own civic identities evolve throughout their careers and how these identities influence their approaches to teaching Politics and Society in Irish secondary schools. By exploring the intersection of professional identity, civic engagement, and pedagogical practice, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the potential of civic education in shaping democratic citizenship in the 21st century.

In recent decades, the concept of citizenship has gained increasing significance as societies strive to foster active and informed democratic participation among their members. In pursuit of a more equal and just society, citizens need to engage in their communities in ways that extend beyond what Westheimer and Kahne (2004, p.240)

deem to be personal responsibility, such as voting, paying taxes, and serving for jury duty. Westheimer (2022) recognises the challenges to social cohesion and democratic governance posed by an apathetic and mis or ill-informed population and highlights the need for young people to be exposed 'early on and throughout their educational pathways to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions consistent with democratic life' (p.42). An individual's civic identity, or sense of belonging and responsibility to a community can be developed in several ways. Kirshner (2007) for example highlights the work of youth activism groups in connecting to mainstream civic institutions. Atkins and Hart (2003) write about a different sense of belonging where the sense of community is defined by geographical proximity, with membership of that community entailing certain entitlements and responsibilities. Whatever ones understanding of civic identity, there is no doubt that it is constructed through experiences that are socially, historically and/or culturally situated and influences how one makes sense of what it means to be a citizen and a participant in the civic life of a democracy (Rubin, 2016, p.3). For Dewey (1916), the educational setting where the cultivation of democratic citizens is arguably the primary purpose, is a powerful context for the civic identity development of young people. At the heart of this endeavour is the role of educators, particularly in an Irish context, Politics and Society teachers, who play a pivotal role in shaping young minds and preparing them for active engagement, participation, and citizenship. Understanding the views and beliefs of these teachers regarding citizenship and the creation of a democratic self is of paramount importance in shaping educational policies and practices that align with the goals of a democratic society. The civic identity of the Politics and Society teachers therefore 'holds powerful implications for the preparation of today's young citizens' (Alviar-Martin, 2011, p.46). This research has several goals. Firstly, it will seek to investigate the range of perspectives and beliefs held by Politics and Society

teachers regarding citizenship and its relationship to the development of a democratic self. It will also seek to identify the factors, including personal, professional, and contextual, that influence teachers' views on citizenship and democracy. The work will also explore the potential gaps between teachers' beliefs and the theoretical underpinnings of citizenship education, as well as the implications of such discrepancies. It will also assess how teachers navigate the tensions around the creation and process of revealing a democratic self.

Despite the critical role that teachers play in shaping democratic values and civic engagement among students, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the development and evolution of teachers' own civic identities. While extensive research exists on civic education and student outcomes, much less attention has been paid to the personal and professional identities of teachers who deliver this vital aspect of education. Specifically, there is limited understanding of how teachers' civic identities are formed, how these identities influence their pedagogical practices, and how they navigate potential tensions between personal beliefs and the curricular demands of civic education. This gap is particularly pronounced in the context of Irish education, where the introduction of subjects like Politics and Society is relatively recent. This study aims to address these gaps by exploring the lived experiences of Politics and Society teachers in Ireland, focusing on how their civic identities are constructed, how these identities interact with their teaching practices, and how the broader school environment influences these dynamics. The following research questions are designed to investigate these key aspects in depth.

1.2 Research Questions

This study will seek to answer:

How do the lived experiences of Politics and Society teachers inform the construction and evolution of their civic identities?

What are the perceived challenges that Politics and Society teachers face when aligning their personal civic values with the theoretical frameworks of the Politics and Society curriculum?

In what ways do school cultures impact the negotiation and expression of civic identities among Politics and Society teachers?

The main goal in conducting this research is to give voice to an understanding of the nature of the experiences of a group of Irish second level Politics and Society teachers. The research design is such that it engages co-constructively with participants to enable them to contribute to their own ongoing and unfolding sense and personal awareness of civic identity. The first of the research questions aims to delve into the personal narratives and experiences of teachers to understand how these shape their sense of civic identity. It aligns with the interpretivist paradigm and interpretive phenomenology by focusing on the meaning-making processes of individuals, based on their lived experiences. The second question seeks to explore the potential conflicts or tensions between teachers' personal civic beliefs and the curriculum content they are required to deliver. It addresses the gap between theory and practice, providing insight into how teachers navigate and reconcile these differences. The third and final question investigates the influence of the broader school environment on teachers' civic identities. It considers how supportive and/or conflicting school cultures affect teachers' ability to maintain and express their civic

values within the educational setting, thereby contributing to a holistic understanding of the contextual factors involved in civic identity formation.

Research on teacher identity in Ireland does of course exist already and covers areas as diverse as identity in evolving technological contexts (Cassidy, 2020), development education (Jeffers and Quirke-Bolt, 2019), policy texts (Mooney Simmie, 2023, Barron, 2022) and social class (Keane et.al., 2020). Other research has focused on the challenges faced by teachers of Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) at Junior Cycle level (O'Brien, 2023; Butler, 2019; Bryan, 2020). This study however seeks to fill a gap that exists in the research base around civic education in Ireland, by illuminating how practicing teachers make sense of prior and current experiences in relation to the creation, maintenance and evolution of their civic identity.

Van Manen (1990, p.13) writes about phenomenological research being a 'poetising activity' in that it is an informed process of meaning-making or interpretation. Researchers as a result must seek to thematically elucidate, and through interpretation, engage in an active process of meaning-making, thereby producing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. An appropriate topic then for phenomenological inquiry is determined by 'questioning of the essential nature of lived experience, a certain way of being in the world' and exploring the concreteness (ontic) as well as the essential nature (ontological) of lived experience (van Manen, 1990, pp.39-40). When it comes to such research questions, Van Manen is more concerned with 'whatness' rather than 'thatness' (p.177). In other words, how existence unfolds rather than 'that it is' or 'what it is' (ibid).

1.3 Significance of the Study

While civic education has long been recognised as an essential component of a well-functioning democracy, it is also a complex and challenging issue that can be considered a wicked problem (Carcasson, 2016, p.44). Heggart (2020, p.281) writes that many democratic education programmes are passive and place an emphasis on content knowledge of governmental institutions and the mechanics of government, in place of more active engagement such as showing students how to engage with issues of injustice and democracy within their local communities. This is just one example of the wicked nature of civic education programmes. For teachers, democracy education is not and cannot be an 'agnostic pedagogy' (Sant et al., 2020, p.228). Their everyday practice is based on being able to elicit viewpoints, enable conflict and resist consensus, while at the same time acknowledging either explicitly or implicitly their own journey to this point. As Biesta (2020, p.96) writes, 'education for democracy raises awareness of ourselves and others, how we act in society, our freedom and the limits that our living together poses to our own freedom'. In this study, focusing explicitly on the on-going development of civic identity among a group of Irish Politics and Society teachers, the research intends to make a significant contribution by providing new insights into how educators' civic identities develop and how such personal developments inform professional teaching practices. This research will be used to inform teacher education and professional development programs, and to help schools create environments that support teachers' own civic development. It is worth stating that research in education to investigate teachers' civic identities is scarce and is still at a relatively embryonic stage, and that further work is warranted to understand how teachers civic identities develop and are expressed in the classroom (Denney, 2019, p.62).

This is especially true in Ireland where no study of this nature has so far been undertaken to completion.

1.4 Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework and Review of Relevant Literature

This chapter lays the theoretical foundation for the study by defining key concepts such as Democracy, the democratic person and civic identity. It introduces the Ériu VOICE Model, a conceptual framework specifically designed to explore civic identity within the Irish context. By drawing on the work of theorists such as Foucault, Bourdieu and Ricoeur, the model helps address the first research question by providing a lens through which the lived experiences of Politics and Society teachers can be examined. The chapter also reviews literature on teacher identity, focusing on how emotion, discourse, reflection, and agency shape what is termed the 'I-Position' of teacher identity, and thereby directly informing the investigation of tensions between personal civic beliefs and educational content: This, in essence, is our research question two. The final section discusses the evolution of teachers' civic identities from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) through to practice, setting the stage for understanding the influence of school culture on these identities thereby forming the basis for research question three.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

This chapter explains the methodological choices made in the study, with a focus on their relevance to the research questions. It begins by reiterating the significance of studying teacher civic identity in an Irish context, emphasising throughout the need for a phenomenological approach in order to capture the depth of teachers lived experiences, thereby addressing research question one. The chapter contrasts Grounded Theory with phenomenology, weighs the merits of both and ultimately

justifies interpretative phenomenology as the preferred and optimal method for the study, one which is well-suited to exploring the personal and professional tensions that teachers face thereby returning a methodological focus to research question two. Additionally, the combination of the phenomenological approach as described by van Manen (2016) , with voice-centered relational methods and analysis (also called the Listening Guide), allows for a nuanced investigation of how school cultures may impact civic identity; returning a focus to research question three. The detailed account of the Listening Guide method illustrates how the data collection and analysis is tailored to offer a broad ranging exploration of the complexity and multi-layered realities of teacher civic identity.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study as uncovered through the Voice-Centered method, specifically the Listening Guide. The analysis is structured around the different 'listenings' with each step revealing insights into the teachers' narratives about the conceptualisation of civic identity, addressing the first research question. The focus on 'I-Poems' and the identification of voices—foundational, pedagogical, vulnerable, and reflective—highlights the tensions between personal civic beliefs and professional roles, thereby directly responding to the second research question. The subsequent analysis of contrapuntal voices extends the operational model to incorporate a unique fifth step by re-engaging with participants in follow-through discussions to further explore how school culture influences the negotiation and expression of these identities; thereby addressing further the third research question.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter synthesises the findings from Chapter 4 and provides a comprehensive discussion that ties back to all three research questions. By reflecting on the researcher's own positionality and journey, the chapter contextualises the findings within the broader discourse on teacher identity. In a discussion of the different voices (foundational, pedagogical, vulnerable, and reflective), the chapter offers insights into how teachers' civic identities are constructed and evolve over time (research question one), how they manage conflicts between personal beliefs and professional expectations (research question two) and how school environments shape these processes (research question three). The chapter concludes with practical recommendations for teacher education programmes and suggestions for future research, thereby ensuring the study's findings contribute to both academic knowledge and practical application.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter examines the relevant literature that underpins the investigation of the three central research questions. First, how do Politics and Society teachers lived experiences shape the formation and development of their civic identities? Second, what challenges do these teachers encounter when reconciling their personal civic values with the theoretical frameworks embedded in the Politics and Society curriculum? Finally, how do institutional cultures influence the ways in which Politics and Society teachers negotiate and express their civic identities within the school environment?

Building upon the opening discourse presented in Chapter One, regarding the significance of civic education, there is a pressing need to reinforce civic education and democratic values within primary and post-primary educational institutions. This imperative is underscored by the urgent requirement to address the proliferation of nationalism, separatism, religious fundamentalism, and political polarisation. Consequently, educators are compelled to critically re-evaluate their personal beliefs and to reflect on how these convictions shape their pedagogical practices (DiGiacomo et al., 2021, p.264).

Additionally, this approach demands a re-evaluation of how civic education teachers engage with their own civic identity and associated knowledge, skills and dispositions. Despite the conceptualisation of civic identity, there remains a lack of understanding regarding how teachers develop and apply their own civic identities in formal contexts (Haduong et al., 2023, p.186). For many researchers 'the inner dynamics of teacher identity transformations remain a black box' (Henry, 2016, p.1).

This chapter commences with a critical examination of the semantic complexities inherent in key terminology within Democratic and citizenship discourse—terms that

are frequently deployed with presumed shared understanding, yet resist precise definition. Following this epistemological foundation, the discussion progresses to an analysis of established models of teacher civic identity, with particular emphasis on Clarkes ethico-political model, although other models will be discussed briefly as well.

Central to this chapter is the introduction and detailed examination of a conceptual framework, contextualised within the Irish educational landscape, which explores how the civic identity bricolage of educators in this study shapes their conceptualisation of citizenship, civic education, and democratic personhood. This framework elucidates the subsequent manifestation of civic identity in pedagogical practice.

The chapter then broadens its scope to engage with comprehensive theories of citizenship and civic belonging, before narrowing to a focused analysis of identity constructs. This theoretical foundation facilitates a nuanced examination of teacher identity formation and expression. The discussion encompasses extant research on teachers' civic orientations and their philosophical approaches to civic education, including an analytical review of taxonomic models into which civic education practitioners have been previously categorised.

This work identifies a significant lacuna in the existing literature: while the professional identity of subject specialists, particularly in STEM disciplines and core curriculum areas such as Mathematics and English, has been extensively researched, there remains a notable paucity of research within the Irish context examining teachers' civic, political, and other identities specifically within the curricular domain of Politics and Society.

2.1 Defining Key Terms

The following paragraphs will critically reconceptualise the similar but competing concepts which are prominent in any discussions on democracy and civic identity. This critical review is necessary for a number of reasons. Firstly, the world today is vastly different from a time when many dominant civic education concepts were originally developed. Issues such as globalisation, the ubiquitous presence of social media and the development of a myriad of technological advancements require a rethinking of what it means to be a citizen and how to participate civically in societies. It could be argued that traditional definitions and understandings may not adequately address these contemporary challenges. Also, the 'best' approach to civic education would arguably vary depending on specific social, political and/or historical contexts: It is difficult to conceive how a one-size-fits-all model could operate. By critically examining existing concepts, it is possible to develop a deeper understanding of civic education itself. We can ask questions about its purpose, its effectiveness and its limitations. Perhaps most importantly, we could question the implications of such matters for Politics and Society educators themselves and for their professional practice.

2.1.1 Democracy (re)defined.

For this study, it is worth slightly modifying the definitions provided by Przeworski (2024, p.5). Przeworski distinguishes between two aspects of democracy:

Democracy (with a capital D) as a method for managing conflicts within a society.

democracy (with a lowercase d) as the practical actions that reflect the values and ideals that citizens believe Democracy should protect.

In my usage, **Democracy** refers to the overarching system and method, while **democracy** represents the everyday practices that embody what citizens value and believe Democracy must uphold.

As a system, Democracy operates like an 'improvisational concert of competing sources of power in constant evolution' (Ignatieff, 2024, p.18). This concept of Democracy, rooted in ancient history, remains a vital area of scholarly research and societal relevance. The Greek concept of Democracy, known as ''dēmokratía' (from 'dēmos' meaning people and from 'kratos' meaning rule), was characterised by direct participation, whereby citizens had equal say in societal decision-making. Over centuries, this concept has evolved and now includes a variety of interpretations and applications across different political, social, and cultural contexts.

Reflecting on more modern definitions, the Council of Europe describes Democracy as a form of government where power is held by the people, either directly or through elected representatives. This definition, only formalised in the 1990s, has been part of key documents such as the European Convention on Human Rights (1950). In a paper delivered in 2002, Kofi Annan, former Secretary General of the United Nations, highlighted two core principles that give Democracy its moral authority and broad appeal. The first was that of individual autonomy, the principle that no one should be subject to rules that are imposed by others, allowing people to control their own lives. The second was equality, the idea that everyone should have the same opportunities to influence decisions that affect society.

There is also debate over the best approach to Democracy. According to Wahlstrom (2022, p.996), there are two main perspectives. The first is the aggregative approach This prioritises majority rule, where the collective will of the majority is the key factor in decision-making. It assumes that the majority will make the best decisions for the community. The second is the integrative approach which emphasises

minority rights and the importance of consensus. It argues that decision-making should incorporate all perspectives, ensuring that every member of society, including minorities, has an equal voice. This view considers society as a social construct that requires the integration of diverse values.

For instance, in Ireland, the government is elected through majority rule, but minority rights are protected by the Constitution and various laws. In the European Union, decisions often rely on consensus among member states, with minority rights safeguarded by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000). Regardless of the approach, it is clear that Democracy and its related practices, such as citizenship and participation, are facing unprecedented challenges, in a phenomenon known as Democratic backsliding. Little and Meng (2024, p.2) define this as a 'deterioration of qualities associated with democratic governance.' Growing socio-economic, ethnic and cultural divisions all contribute to a decline in the public's engagement with democracy, particularly among young people, who demonstrate increased apathy and lower participation rates (Bečević and Dahlstedt, 2022, p.376).

However, it is important to note that theoretical concepts of Democracy may not always align with how individuals experience and practice democracy in their daily lives. As this study will later demonstrate, the participants' personal experiences, or life-worlds, play a crucial role in shaping their identities as democratic citizens and their sense of civic responsibility. This leads us then to the question of what a democratic person might reasonably be?

Biesta describes a democratic person in terms of an individual who is part of a Democracy (2006). He shifts his focus to an internal, existential understanding of what it means to both be and become 'A democratic subject' (p.47). A democratic person, in Biesta's view, is not just an individual with certain knowledge or skills, but someone shaped by their educational experiences and by their engagement with

Democracy. Reconceptualising what it means to be a democratic person is needed to fully appreciate the voices which emerge in this study. To carry out this reconceptualisation, it is necessary to draw on the work of Hubert Hermans and his concept of 'dialogical democracy.'

2.1.2 Piecing Together a democratic Person.

Much like Democracy itself, definitions of a democratic person vary, depending very much on the historical era and on prevailing socio-cultural, economic and political conditions. Delving into the works of totemic scholars such as Kant, Arendt, and Dewey however, the diverse threads that contribute to the tapestry of a democratic person can be broken into two broad conceptions namely:

Individualistic conceptions, which emphasise the importance of individual rights, freedoms, and responsibilities (Immanuel Kant and Hannah Arendt) and

Social conceptions, which highlight the importance of collective action, civic engagement and social justice; ideas which draw primarily from the work of John Dewey.

These threads are inextricably intertwined, as a democratic person is both an individual with unique rights and responsibilities **and** a member of a larger community with shared values and aspirations. However, these works are theory and concept focused and very often neglect the subjective interpretations of individuals; which is where the work of Hubert Hermans gains relevance.

Hermans (2001) is probably most well-known for his Dialogical Self Theory (DST). This theory provides a framework for understanding how individuals construct their identities through dialogue with themselves and others. Teachers' civic identities therefore are shaped by their personal narratives as well as through negotiations with others. Put another way, people's actions are realised in dialogue between the self

and the surrounding socio-political conditions (Männistö and Moate,2023, p.1030). Markova et al. (2022, p.255) suggest that even the 'silent dialogue of oneself with oneself needs language for reflective thinking'. Some examples of studies utilising the dialogical self-approach to teacher identity and teacher civic identity are highlighted in the following table.

	Mandt and Afdal 2022	Schmidt 2021	Obenchain et al, 2016
Interpretation of Teacher Identity	Relational and negotiated	Critical actors in civic learning	Complex and multifaceted
Understanding of Teacher Identity Formation	Negotiation of value experiences	Influenced by personal values and contexts	Lifelong process shaped by experiences
Inquiry Interest	Prospective mathematics teachers' identity construction	Veteran teachers' use of Critical Civic Education	High school teachers' civic identities
Purpose	Understanding of how teachers construct values	Impact of teachers approaches on students civic identity	Understanding of the civic dimension of teacher identity

Table 1: Examples of studies on teacher identity using Dialogical Self Theory

Hermans' approach offers significant insights for teacher identity research, particularly in understanding the democratic self. It presents identity as a rich, dynamic construct shaped by personal experiences, professional values, and social contexts, rather than a fixed or singular concept. As Hermans (2018, p.7) explains, 'position and the process of dialogue are deeply spatialized' which underscores the continuous construction and reconstruction of identity through interaction with others. In Society in the Self: A Theory of Identity in Democracy (2018), Hermans discusses three key positions within a democratic self: the personal (individual identity), the social (group membership), and the global (human identity). He emphasises that 'A democratic self requires the flexibility of moving up and down across these levels of inclusiveness and has to find its way in fields of tension between dialogue and social power' (p.51). This nuanced view of the democratic self forms a foundational element of this study's conceptual framework, explored in depth later in this chapter.

This introduction contextualises the research by addressing broader themes around Democracy and the democratic self. It underscores the necessity of understanding civic identity formation, especially in the role of teachers who shape the civic values of future generations. It paves the way for a detailed theoretical and empirical analysis. Defining key terms here—such as democracy and civic identity—ensures a clear framework for exploring models of civic identity and how these concepts manifest among teachers. Clarifying what constitutes a democratic person not only frames the discussion on democratic education but also informs the examination of educators as democratic figures. Similarly, the concept of civic identity, encompassing individuals' senses of belonging and responsibility within a community, is critical to understanding how teachers enact and interpret their roles as civic actors. This foundational understanding leads to an exploration of existing civic

identity models, allowing this research to analyse how teachers' civic identities are developed, challenged, and expressed within educational contexts.

2.2 Models of Teachers Civic Identity

Sfard and Prusak (2005) write that teacher identity is 'the product of shared storytelling' (p.14). These stories consist of 'making sense and reinterpretation of values and experiences' (Flores and Day, 2006, p.220). Instructional choices made by teachers are typically influenced by their own personal constructions of citizenship and citizenship education or in other words, by their sense of civic identity (DeJaeghere, 2008, p.358). Foucault (1997) argued that examining the influences that have shaped teacher values can be revealed through conducting 'a historical ontology of ourselves' (p. 318). However, while values are a central part of teachers' identity, they are also 'a source of tension as teachers are likely to feel pulled in competing directions' (Reeves, 2018, p.100).

Ball (2003) goes further by describing a 'schizophrenic splitting' of teacher identity where the authentic teaching self is in conflict with the inauthentic teaching self in order to be viewed within the institutional context as a 'good' teacher (p.221). However, as Carswell and Conway (2023) point out, recent years have seen the increased politicisation and regulation of the task of teaching and what it means to be a teacher. Zembylas and Chubbuck (2018) term this a liking for a 'preferred' version of teacher identity (p.79). Foucault (1977) referred to the conflict of truth in teacher identity as a 'general politics of truth' (p.131). O'Leary (2002) writes that the creation and recreation of our identities is 'neither an impossibility nor an indulgence, but an ethical imperative' (p.17). Inevitably it is also 'political work' (Clarke, 2009, p.189) In order to fully capture the complexities of teacher civic identity three pre-existing models of identity emerged as relevant but this review places particular emphasis on Clarke's Ethico-Political Model due to its unique

relevance to civic identity formation. While all three models offer valuable insights, Clarke's framework provides the most robust theoretical foundation for examining the specific intersection of teacher identity and civic engagement that this study explores.

2.2.1 Clarkes Ethico-Political Model

Clarke's Ethico-Political Model, grounded in Foucault's work, offers a comprehensive framework for analysing teacher identity through four elements: telos, ethical substance, authority sources, and self-practices. This model enables a nuanced exploration of how teachers' civic identities are formed and enacted. Clarke (2009) contends that if the 'commitment to identity is not just a metaphysical proposition' but is in fact a 'serious recognition' and that teachers work 'shapes and is shaped by the very mode of our being' (P.188), then understanding identity formation is therefore crucial (p.188).
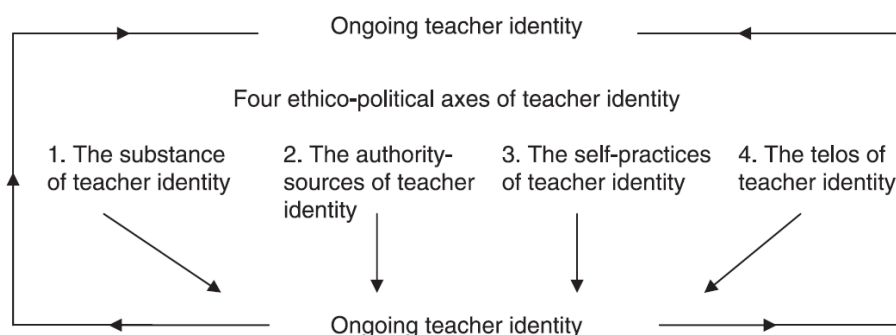
Figure 1 Clarkes Ethico-Political Model

The above framework (Fig 1) presents as a heuristic guide to enable teachers to reflect on their own identities. It allows Politics and Society teachers to 'reflect on the core aspects of their identity, the standards or criterion they follow to make judgment about their work, and their ultimate professional goals' (Jiang, 2022, p.10). But how do the axes relate to the formation of teacher's civic identity? A starting point may be to provide a description of each element, beginning with the telos or

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what Clarke (2009) calls the 'endpoint of our teaching selves, our goal or purpose as a teacher' (p.191).

In the context of teacher identity, telos refers to the overarching aims, values, and goals that a teacher may aspire to achieve in professional practice. It encompasses the fundamental principles and ideals that guide a teacher's actions, decisions and general approach to educational encounters. For Foucault (1985), telos represents 'a mode of being, characteristic of the ethical subject' (p.28). Miller et al. (2017, p.151) reference the 'broader socio-political values and expectations' that impact the subject (in this case, the individual teacher). Research on teacher civic identity using telos as a lens is scarce but it is frequently used in studies on language teachers' identity. Gu et al. (2022) argue that this is important because as teachers interact with their 'values, their own expectations, and experiences,' they reach a balance between self-formation and external forces of power (p.7). Therefore, it can reasonably be considered that telos 'directly influences identity work' (p.17). This influence extends into the second element of Clarke's model, the ethical substance of teacher identity.

The ethical substance of teacher identity can be distilled down to the difference between two concepts: self and the teaching self. Jiang (2022, p.3) refers to it as the aspects of the teacher self that an individual utilises to constitute their teaching self and this includes emotions, beliefs, values and ideals; all of which have developed over time to make up the present sense of civic identity that a teacher holds.

The third element of Clarke's model, authority-sources of teacher identity, relates to why teachers should cultivate 'certain attitudes, beliefs and values' (Clarke, 2009, p.191). Previous ethico-political analyses of teacher identity, conducted at the micro level, have identified the importance of teachers own political and civic value and concept systems.

The final element for consideration is the self-practice of teacher identity or what Foucault (1982) calls the 'verbalisation of thoughts' (p.48). A more telling description comes from Besley (2007, p.58) who calls these practices 'truth telling activities'. Self-practices are perhaps the most personal and reflective of the four elements (Carswell and Conway, 2023, p.8). The extensive examination of Clarke's model is warranted by its particular utility in analysing the civic dimensions of teacher identity. Unlike more general identity frameworks, Clarke's model explicitly addresses the political and ethical dimensions that are central to understanding how Politics and Society teachers develop and negotiate their civic identities. Furthermore, its grounding in Foucauldian theory provides valuable analytical tools for examining the power relations and institutional contexts that shape civic identity formation.

Clarke's ethico-political model of teacher identity (2009) provides a robust framework for comprehensively examining the trajectory of a teacher's civic and political identity. By offering a nuanced understanding of the intricate interplay between ethical and political dimensions, this model facilitates a holistic perspective that integrates the multi-faceted aspects of a teacher's identity within the broader societal context. This theoretical lens is particularly pertinent to this research due to its capacity to elucidate the complex dynamics underpinning the formation of a teacher's civic identity, thereby effectively capturing the intricate relationship between personal beliefs, socio-cultural influences and institutional affiliations.

In exploring the influences on a teacher's civic development, Clarke's model aligns effectively with the conceptual framework proposed by Biesta (2022) concerning socialisation and subjectification. By integrating these domains into the analysis, Clarke's model not only complements existing research but also extends prior models of identity work to encompass the realm of civic identity. Furthermore, the

integration of Gee's (2010) four perspectives on identity, those defined as affinity, discursive, institutional and personal, thereby enhances the model's depth and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between personal beliefs, cultural contexts, linguistic practices and institutional affiliations. Arguably, this contributes significantly to a paradigmatic perspective that enables research to investigate teacher's multifaceted identities.

Gee's notion of the personal perspective, which highlights the influence of personal attributes and experiences on self-perception, aligns with Clarke's model. This is notably the case with regard to an ethical dimension. This convergence underscores the significance of personal beliefs and values in shaping a teacher's ethical considerations and decision-making processes within the educational sphere. Similarly, the discursive perspective, which emphasises the impact of language and communication within different social contexts, resonates with Clarke's political dimension, underscoring how linguistic practices are shaped by broader political ideologies and power dynamics within the education system.

Moreover, the institutional perspective, as elucidated by Gee, correspond with the institutional identity axis in Clarke's model. This convergence accentuates the importance of understanding the roles and responsibilities associated with institutional belonging, particularly in the context of schools. Such alignment underscores the significant influence of institutional contexts on a teacher's ethical decision-making processes, ultimately shaped by broader political structures and policies.

The application of Clarke's model in analysing teacher civic identity not only provides a structured framework for comprehensive analysis but also enables a critical exploration of the intricate intersectionality between ethical considerations and political factors. Woolhouse's (2022) metaphor of a tapestry, illustrating the

interwoven threads of a teacher's life experiences and influences, aptly captures the dynamic and evolving nature of the civic self within the context of this model. Additionally, Carswell and Conway (2023, p.1217) emphasise the depth and methodological utility of the model, particularly with the varied patterns across and within its axes.

The fact that there are so many models of identity reveals the difficulty in capturing the full breadth and depth of teacher identity in general and civic identity in particular. This may lead to an oversimplification of the intricacies inherent in the task and it may not fully capture the multi-faceted nature of civic identity which can contain aspects as nebulous as personal responsibility, justice orientation and participation practices (Di Giacomo et al., 2021, p.262). The necessity of integrating this concept with complementary research to elucidate a comprehensive understanding of civic identity is both crucial and inherently challenging. The phenomenological alignment, one could argue, will invariably fall short of perfection. Consequently, an alternative conceptual framework for apprehending teachers' civic identity may offer greater flexibility and nuance in its application.

2.2.2 Mockler and the Domains of Teacher Identity

Hall (2011, p.1) has written about the 'discursive explosion' surrounding the concept of identity and its growing use as an analytic lens when researching teachers personal and professional lives, emotions, and praxis. Assuming a link between an individual teacher's biographical history and the development of their social and personal identity, the political could be considered 'a constitutive characteristic of their history' (Ruin, 2019, p.807). Therefore, adapting the work of Muñoz and Balmaceda (2022) leads to the realisation that the 'ontogenetic development of political and civic thinking includes the intersection between the subject, and an individual's personal and social identity' (p.454). This process uses narratives as cultural tools,

but also involves the personal use that individuals make of these cultural tools to situate their political and civic identity (Albornoz and Sebastián, 2022, p.245).
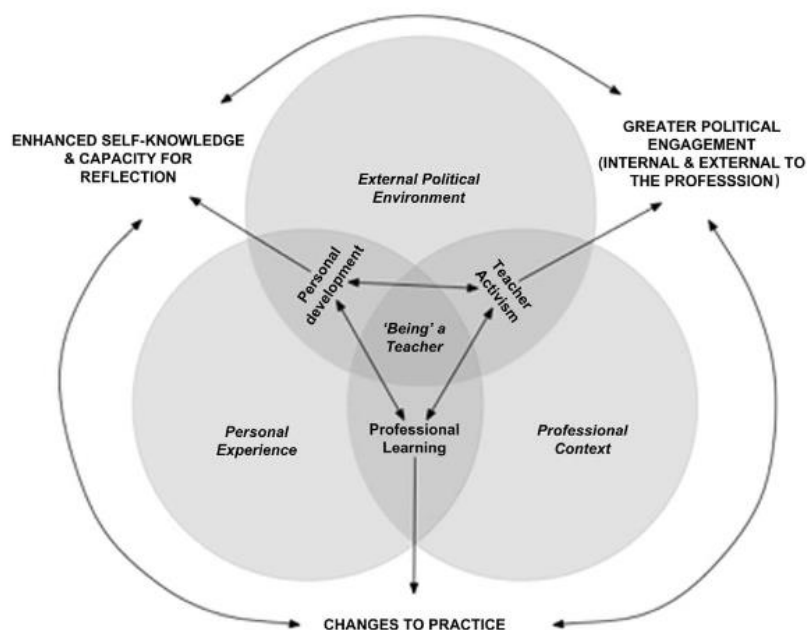
Figure 2: Mocklers Model of the Domains of Teacher Identity

Despite its complexity, Mockler's model of teacher professional identity is a valuable framework for research on teacher civic identity. It provides a holistic understanding of teacher identity that takes into account the multiple and intersecting factors that shape teachers' civic identities. Additionally, Mockler's model emphasises the practical and political dimensions of teacher identity, which is particularly relevant for research on teacher civic identity. It is also a 'political tool' (Mockler, 2011, p.518). The latter point is particularly relevant because as Looney et al. (2018) point out, political and structural changes in education continue to reframe and change how teachers are understood and how they understand themselves. Mockler further says that teacher professional identity is constantly formed and reformed over a career and that it is 'mediated by a complex interplay of personal, professional and political dimensions (p.518). Therefore, if civic identity is seen as a macro unit of analysis it will 'only be understood through an examination of micro

level factors such as commitment, socio-cultural references and positionality'
(Bruner, 1995, p.165). The final model of teacher identity is the Reconceptualised
Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity.

2.2.3 Reconceptualised Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (R-MMDI)

Abes, Jones and McEwen developed the Reconceptualised Model of Multiple
Dimensions of Identity (R-MMDI) in 2007 in an attempt to account for social
identity, socio-political conditions and contextual influences and to explore how
these influences pass through a meaning making filter in order to produce stronger
self-understanding.

Self-Perceptions of Multiple Identity Dimensions, such as race, social class, sexual orientation, gender, religion

Meaning-Making Filter Depending on complexity, contextual influences pass through to different degrees

Contextual Influences, such as peers, family, norms, stereotypes, sociopolitical conditions
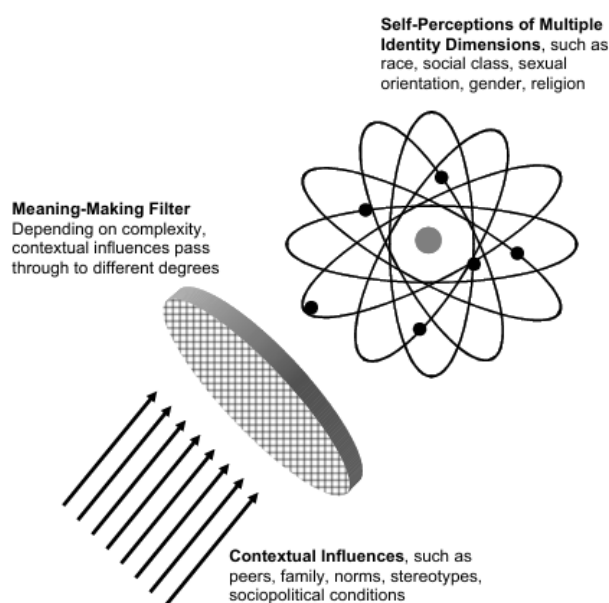
Figure 3: Reconceptualised Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (R-MMDI)
Abes, Jones and McEwen.

The exploration of various models of teachers civic identity as described in the
preceding paragraphs provides a detailed understanding of how educators' civic
selves are constructed and influenced by personal, professional and contextual
factors. These models serve as analytical tools that reveal the dynamic interplay

between individual identity and broader social forces. However, to fully appreciate the implications of these models, it is necessary to broaden our scope and consider how they interact with evolving conceptions of citizenship. As these models illustrate, teachers' civic identities are not formed in a vacuum; they are shaped by prevailing definitions of what it means to be a citizen and a democratic participant. Therefore, reconceptualising citizenship becomes imperative. By critically examining traditional and emerging notions of citizenship, we can better understand the contextual pressures and opportunities that influence teachers' civic identity formation. This broader perspective not only enhances our understanding of the models themselves but also challenges and refines our definitions of citizenship, ensuring they remain relevant in a rapidly changing social and political landscape. While Mockler's Domains of Teacher Identity and the Reconceptualised Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (R-MMDI) offer valuable complementary perspectives, they serve primarily to supplement and enrich the foundational analysis enabled by Clarke's framework. Mockler's model provides important insights into the professional dimensions of teacher identity formation, particularly highlighting the interplay between personal, professional, and political spheres. However, it does not offer the same depth of analysis regarding the specific civic and ethical dimensions that are central to this study's research questions.

Similarly, while the R-MMDI presents a sophisticated approach to understanding multiple identity dimensions, its broader scope makes it less directly applicable to the specific examination of civic identity formation among Politics and Society teachers. Nevertheless, its meaning-making filter concept provides valuable supplementary insights when used in conjunction with Clarke's more focused framework. The deliberate emphasis on Clarke's model in this review reflects its superior alignment with the study's research objectives and its unique capacity to illuminate the specific

dynamics of civic identity formation among Politics and Society teachers. While

Mockler's model and the R-MMDI offer valuable complementary perspectives,

Clarke's framework provides the most comprehensive and theoretically robust

foundation for addressing this study's central research questions.

However, while all the models described in this study so far acknowledge contextual

influences such as peers, socio-political conditions and norms, it may be necessary to

identify and incorporate additional contextual factors that are particularly relevant to

Politics and Society teachers in Ireland. Such factors might include the island's

unique political history, an appreciation of current socio-political issues, an

understanding of educational policies, and an awareness of cultural norms. All such

factors arguably, should be reflected in any model or conceptual framework. In the

fieldwork dimension of this research and particularly through the interviewing

process, a particular focus was maintained on the depth and breadth of the Irish

Politics and Society teacher's civic identity and how a uniquely Irish interpretation

could not only benefit this study but others in the future also. Therefore, through

engagement with the literature, by identifying an obvious opportunity for new

knowledge making and importantly, by conceptualising a phenomenological

approach to an area of uniquely personal enquiry, a new framework was devised for

this research encounter; one which is titled 'The Ériu VOICE Model'.

2.2.4 The Ériu VOICE Model: A Conceptual Framework for Exploring Civic Identity with Irish Politics and Society Teachers

Stets and Burke (2014) write that identity can be both contained and influenced by

social structures ranging from those on a large scale (macro), to an intermediate scale

(meso) and/or those on a proximate scale (micro). They also cite some examples of

the characteristics of each structure. Macro level structures provide persons with a

social identity through which they can identify with others based on the sharing of

both the social location and the meanings associated with a given stratification characteristic. They can also be identified by others as having various rights, responsibilities and access to resources. Examples of such structures could be considered as race/ethnicity, class, gender and socio-economic status. Meso level structures act to provide persons with social relationships directly related to a specific role identity. The enactment of the role identity supports their participation within these structures. Examples of such structures may be considered as neighbourhoods, associations, and organisations. The authors argue that structures at this level are significant for the emergence of particular kinds of self-identities. Finally micro level structures are more localised and include engagements within families and schools. Participation within these structures is important for the enactment of the role identity.

Juutilainen et al. (2024, p.180) write that when Politics and Society teachers enter the classroom, they already have pre-existing beliefs about their identity so they do not necessarily begin their teacher identity negotiations from 'an empty space'. Instead, they have developed internalised and normative preconceptions of what it means to be a teacher. Furthermore all occupational identities are shaped by a combination of 'personal biographies, multi-layered social contexts, and the nature of the occupation itself' (Hong et al., 2024, p.1) The Politics and Society teachers however present a unique example of these definitions in that their internal identity constructs are being challenged and shaped on an increasing basis by external social forces and that such influences may arguably create personal and professional tensions. In many ways, how the Politics and Society teachers construct their civic identity can be represented through the work of Lévi-Strauss (1962), and particularly his concept of 'Bricolage.' Originating in the world of high art, this concept was originally defined as 'the skill of using whatever items are at hand and recombining them to create a miscellaneous

collection of found objects' (Kini-Singh, 2022, p. 50). For this research however, the bricolage of civic identity is especially relevant because the person involved 'always puts something of himself into it' (Lévi-Strauss, 1968, p. 21). It is a process of continual reconstruction from the same materials and experiences of everyday life that make it unique to each individual (Kini-Singh, 2023). Therefore in constructing the conceptual framework for this research, it was felt necessary to capture all the processes and influences involved in civic identity formation. Accordingly, it was decided to use the following concepts.

1. Habitus (Bourdieu, 1977): This concept from Pierre Bourdieu's theory refers to a system of dispositions, values and practices acquired through an individual's social background and experiences. These dispositions shape how teachers perceive and interact with the world; including their approaches to civic education and to their own civic identity.

2. Doxa (Bourdieu, 1986): Closely linked to Habitus, Doxa refers to the taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions within a social group. In this case, the research places particular importance on the unspoken civic values and norms within the teaching profession that influence teachers' understanding of their civic role.

3. Frames (Goffman, 1974): Erving Goffman's concept of frames describes how individuals interpret situations based on their existing knowledge and experiences. Lorino et.al. (2017) argue that the framing perspective 'focuses on the ongoing, mutual process of meaning-making and ordering of social situations' (p.35). Teachers in this study for example use frames related to citizenship, class, and social justice to make sense of their civic responsibilities.

4. Narrative Identity (Ricoeur, 1975): This theory posits that individuals construct their identity through the stories they tell about themselves and about their

experiences. Teachers might develop narratives about their role in shaping responsible citizens, and significantly, these contributes richly to their civic identity.

5. Discursive Formation (Foucault, 1961): Michel Foucault's concept refers to the ways that language and social practices create meaning and shape how we see the world. Teachers operate within a specific discourse about education and citizenship and this undeniably influences their understanding of their own civic role.

Each of the elements are mutually co-constructed within the phenomenological narrative and in turn, they better inform an understanding of civic identity. This is refining of a sense of civic identity is incomplete however without the inclusion of a sense of the democratic self, as described by Hermans previously. These 'selves' cannot be separated from the bricolage and are not fixed or static in relation to the part they play in an overall sense of the civic self. At different times, individually, as a pair or with all three together, they may move closer to or further away from what an individual considers their civic identity to be. This freedom to move within the meaning-making of the bricolage is reflected in the figure below by a schematic of broken arrows. How such a conceptual framework may be further investigated, particularly within the uniqueness of an Irish setting, requires deliberation.
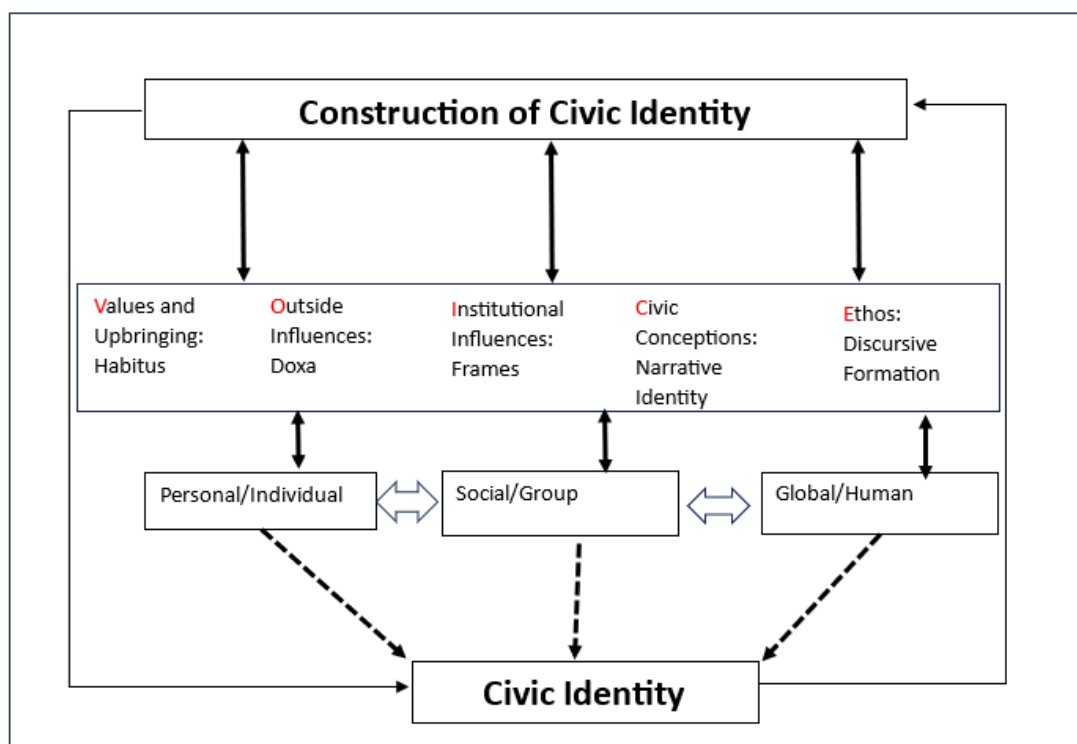
Figure 4: Ériu Conceptual Model of Teacher Civic Identity

Ériu Model of Civic Identity

Ériu is the name given to the legendary Irish goddess of sovereignty; thereby signalling that such a newly devised model is uniquely intended for an Irish social dimension. Each letter in 'Ériu' represents elements that, while globally applicable, capture uniquely Irish dimensions of civic identity. The first element of the model, 'Values and Upbringing,' draws heavily on Bourdieu's concept of Habitus. This element explores how an individual's early life experiences and social environment shape their underlying values and predispositions towards civic engagement.

V: Values and Upbringing (Habitus) This element represents how a teacher's core values, instilled through family and upbringing, shape their civic identity. Bourdieu (1990) refers to these values as providing 'conductorless orchestration' (p.58). This includes the influence of Irish cultural values, traditions, and historical narratives on teachers' perceptions of citizenship and civic engagement. Bottero (2010, p.13)

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interprets this as 'operating within the rules of the game,' but she also argues that this knowledge alone is insufficient to explain shared dispositions and practices and that negotiation and interpretation are required in coordinating any activity. While 'Values and Upbringing' serves as the internal compass guiding civic identity, it is continually shaped and sometimes challenged by 'Outside Influences.' These external forces reflect the dynamic interaction between personal values and the broader societal context in which they exist.

O: Outside Influences (Doxa) This element stands for the specific political and social climate of Ireland that shapes a teacher's civic identity. Factors here could range from curricular documents to broader socio-economic topics such as immigration and globalisation. All these factors play a role in shaping teachers' understanding of citizenship and their role in promoting democratic values. Lyke (2017, p.170) describes this as 'a political space of competing discourses,' where notions of what is 'right' (orthodoxy) coexist with concepts of the 'other' (heterodoxy). As we move from external societal pressures, the model shifts focus to 'Institutional Influences,' where the structured environment of schools and professional settings plays a pivotal role in further defining and refining a teacher's civic identity.

I: Institutional Influences (Frames)

This element explores how school culture and professional interactions influence a teacher's civic identity. In the Irish context, this may involve the school ethos, increasing managerialism, or the changing role of Civic, Social, and Political Education (CSPE) in the Junior Cycle.

Huning (2022) argues that schools play an important role as institutions educating young people about democratic principles and that they serve as niches for the

development of civic engagement. However Skillington (2023, p.290) argues that schools and teachers are increasingly subject to the 'gaze of absent, anonymous, and evermore transnationally dispersed' infrastructure. This highlights the impact of institutional frameworks on shaping civic identity. Beyond institutional frameworks however, 'Civic Conceptions' come into play, highlighting how personal and collective narratives about citizenship and democracy are internalised by teachers, thereby shaping their conception of what it means to be a democratic citizen.

C: Civic Conceptions (Narrative Identity)

This element incorporates conceptions of citizenship and beliefs about what it means to be a democratic person. It represents how a teacher's understanding of citizenship, civic duty, and democratic values shapes their civic identity. In other words, their sense of civic identity is 'validated by reference to normative and hegemonic ideal types of identity' (Venn, 2020, p.39). This involves reflecting on personal narratives and societal expectations regarding civic engagement. Teachers' conceptions of citizenship are often influenced by both historical contexts and contemporary societal shifts, resulting in a dynamic and evolving understanding of what it means to participate actively in a democratic society. Furthermore, this identity is often rooted in an awareness of the broader implications of citizenship beyond the classroom, where global and local issues intersect, prompting teachers to reconsider how they define active citizenship in an interconnected world.

E: Ethos (Discursive Formation)

Finally, the model culminates in 'Ethos,' where the beliefs about the purpose of civic education, informed by both personal narratives and societal discourses, crystallise into the guiding principles that shape teachers identities and practices within the civic space. This element examines what teachers believe is the purpose of civic education

and how these beliefs shape their identity and practice. Together with civic conceptions, this involves exploring teachers' interpretations of citizenship, democracy, and civic engagement within the context of Irish history, culture and values.

Discussions may encompass national identity, multiculturalism, human rights and the role of civil society organisations in promoting democratic participation. Foucault suggests that such discussions and discourses construct not only what but also who can speak legitimately, and when and where, regarding civic identity (Ball, 2016, p.81). Furthermore, through discourse, 'conflicts, interests, and the dynamics of power are reframed, shaping the relationships between the state, institutions, and individuals' (Healey, 2024, p.3).

Conclusion

The Ériu model integrates Hermans' three positions of the democratic self (personal, social and global), emphasising the fluid nature of these selves. Such elements are not fixed and may be more or less dominant at different times in an individual's life or career. This model not only highlights the complexity of civic identity but also underscores its distinctly Irish dimensions, reflecting the interplay between local heritage and broader democratic ideals.

As will be shown later in this work, it emerged through fieldwork data analysis that, either knowingly or unknowingly, the participants illustrated these conceptions of the democratic self. Ultimately as research participants, they declared phenomenologically a sense of their civic identity and how they perceived this at the time when the research was being carried out. Civic identity and the construction thereof is not static. It is a continuous and lifelong process of formation and

reformation; one that is captured by the outer arrows on the framework described in the Ériu model.

This design for a conceptual framework combines the theoretical aspects of the previous three models as discussed along with reimagined representations of citizenship concepts, democratic persons, and civic education in a contemporary era with an Irish dimension. Presented together, they are intended to inform and develop an understanding of, in a uniquely contextualised manner, the civic identities of the teachers in this study. Another addition to this model is the recognition that the multiple dimensions of civic identity both influence and are influenced, to varying strengths, by the meaning making filter. In the language of systems, it can truly be described as 'complex', as opposed to a straightforward and predictable 'simplex' system. There is also a recognition that as civic identity continues to both be reformed and bring about reforms, that there is an associated impact on the enactment of identity in the classroom. As one participant explained in the findings in a later chapter, their civic identity can be viewed from before and after they started teaching the subject. Given that the school subject was introduced into the Irish secondary school curriculum reasonably recently in 2016, no previous research has attempted to capture or explore the malleability, or not, of teacher's civic identity prior to this. By applying a newly designed enquiry framework to such a task, it may be possible to record and understand the myriad of actors' voices that exist within the arena and that emerge through the research process to enable new findings for knowledge-making.

This section therefore has offered an exploration of the concept of democracy, by examining its definitions, dimensions and by considering the significance of democracy within the realm of civic education. It discusses various theoretical perspectives on democracy and emphasises its role as a fundamental value in

democratic societies and its implications for education systems. The section also examines how democratic principles are embedded in educational policies and practices, thereby highlighting the challenges and opportunities in fostering democratic citizenship among students. Building on our interpretation of democracy therefore, the following section explores the intricate concept of civic identity and examines how it may be defined and developed within individuals; particularly in the context of democratic education and educators.

2.3 Reimagining Citizenship and what it means to be a Citizen

The concepts of 'citizen' and 'good citizenship' are fundamental to democracy and societal structure, yet remain complex and contested. Questions such as 'What does it mean to be a citizen?' and 'What constitutes a good citizen?' reveal the nuanced debates surrounding rights, responsibilities, and the evolving notion of citizenship. This section reviews key literature on citizenship, focusing on how these ideas might be reconceptualised for 21st-century Irish education. Drawing on a broad range of scholarship, this review aims to establish a comprehensive understanding of these issues. Citizenship is a contested concept shaped by geographic, historical, societal, and ideological perspectives. In Ancient Greece, a citizen's legal right to participate in governance was both a privilege and a duty. Today, Barrett and Zani (2015, p.5) expand 'citizen' to include all individuals impacted by and engaged with civic processes, while Stokke (2017, p.194) identifies four dimensions of citizenship:

Citizenship as Legal Status: Granted by the state, it establishes a contractual relationship involving both rights (civil, political, social) and responsibilities.

Rights: Aimed at protecting individual security, privacy, and freedom, allowing justice, legal representation, and freedom of conscience.

Membership: Typically national and assumed to be stable and homogeneous.

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Participation: Often represented by voting, volunteering, and other civic duties.

Despite this framework, citizenship is increasingly complex, shaped by hybrid systems of acquisition like dual citizenship and naturalisation. International migration has further challenged traditional notions, prompting critiques that emphasise the need for a focus on civic responsibility and collective well-being over exclusive membership (Vaughan, 2018). Stewart (1995) contends that citizenship should be an inclusive political activity where equals address collective concerns, leading to a discussion on 'good' citizenship's role in democratic support. The concept of citizenship has evolved from abstract, normative frameworks to empirical analyses of civic attitudes and behaviours, mirroring contemporary society's growing complexity. Three key developments characterise modern citizenship theory. The first is that of Citizen Archetypes as described by Westheimer and Kahne (2004). This involves differentiating citizens as personally responsible (focused on knowledge), participatory (valuing theoretical and diversity awareness), or justice-oriented (social action-driven). The second development is the idea of birthright lottery (Shachar, 2009). This challenges traditional frameworks by highlighting inequities based on birth circumstances, leading to the concept of stratified citizenship, where rights and participation levels vary. Finally there is the prevalence of denationalised and transnational models where emerging ideas around post-national citizenship question the relevance of geographically bounded citizenship in an interconnected global society.

These developments highlight the fluid and context-dependent nature of 'good citizenship' especially relevant in understanding civic identity formation amid political and democratic shifts. However they also reveal underlying tensions not just between perspectives on citizenship but where citizenship should be pitched i.e. at an individual, national or transnational level.

Era/Approach	Key Concepts	Primary Focus	Theoretical Framework
Traditional Model	Legal status, National membership, Political participation	Nation-state paradigm	State-centric citizenship bound by geographical borders
Westheimer and Kahne's Typology	Personally responsible citizen Participatory citizen Justice-oriented citizen	Individual civic engagement	Tripartite model of civic participation
Contemporary Perspectives	Birthright lottery (Shachar) Stratified citizenship Denationalised membership	Rights and Inequalities	Post-national, transnational frameworks
Emergent Understanding	Environmental citizenship Cultural rights Global consciousness	Interconnected global society	Rights based, globally orientated citizenship
Tensions and Challenges	Individual vs. group rights Universal vs. particular National vs. transnational	Competing Conceptual Frameworks	Dynamic, context-dependent citizenship

Table 2: Summary of Concepts, Challenges, and Implications of Citizenship

2.4 Theories of Identity

The intricate relationship between identity formation broadly and teacher identity and civic identity formation in particular necessitates a multifaceted theoretical framework that acknowledges both the complexity of personal identity construction and the broader sociopolitical contexts within which it occurs. This chapter adopts a comprehensive approach to examining these interconnected dimensions, beginning with fundamental questions about the nature of identity itself before progressing to more specific considerations of teacher and civic identities. By establishing a broad theoretical base before narrowing to specific applications, the discussion illuminates how general theories of identity inform and interact with professional identity formation in educational contexts. This approach allows for a nuanced examination of how teachers' civic identities emerge from the intersection of personal beliefs, professional roles, and institutional contexts.

Petriglieri et al. (2019) maintain that theories of identity are important in scholarly work because they make individual's inner and social worlds intelligible and manageable. Jung (1916) posits that identity is a means by which we render our lives meaningful. A key challenge as identified by Patterson et al. (2022) is defining the concept of identity itself as

'*The array of ontological and epistemological assumptions reflects an enormous breadth that spans conceptions of identity along dimensions such as personal to collective, stable to fluid, singular to multiplicitous, discovered to constructed, conscious to unconscious, epigenetic to discursive*' (p.191).

2.4.1 Theoretical Perspectives on Identity: Essentialist, Developmental and Socially Constructed

The essentialist view of identity sees it as static, measurable, and linear. Another view of identity is in developmental psychology and is predicated on the work of Erikson throughout the 1960s and 1970s. 1996 saw the advent of Brewer and Gardner's theory of levels of identity while the self-respect model of identity was developed by Simon in 2004. However, this research will look at the more socially based theories of identity, given the inherently social nature of teaching. Constructivism views identity as dynamic and formed within an intricate web of social relations (Pishghadam et al., 2022, p.3). Social identity theory, as described by Tajfel and Turner (1979), is predicated on an individual's knowledge that they belong to a certain social group. There is generally some emotional and value significance to their of membership of this group. A socio-cultural view of identity is very firmly rooted in the work of Vygotsky which emphasises the role of mediating tools. These including language, among others signifiers, and are involved in shaping human action and in linking with the cultural, historical, and institutional contexts in which it is situated (Solari and Martín, 2022). For Zembylas (2003), the notion of identity is 'located in the interaction between an individual and culture' (p.218). He further goes on to say that 'identity can be seen as the sum of an individual's personal attributes associated with performative actions and mediated by a multitude of factors' such as relationships, careers and most importantly for this study, ideology (p.220). Building on the centrality of interaction and discourse in constructing identity, it is useful to examine the interplay between narrative and identity by looking at discursive and dialogic approaches. Inherent qualities can manifest and change throughout developmental stages, as individuals grow and adapt. These developmental stages and processes are often shaped by the social

contexts and constructions in which individuals find themselves, influencing their

personal growth and identity. Additionally, social constructions themselves may be

influenced by, or interact with, these inherent qualities, creating a dynamic interplay

between the individual and their environment. Over time, development typically

involves a continuous interaction between inherent qualities and social constructions,

each influencing and shaping the other. Figure 5 summarises these ideas.
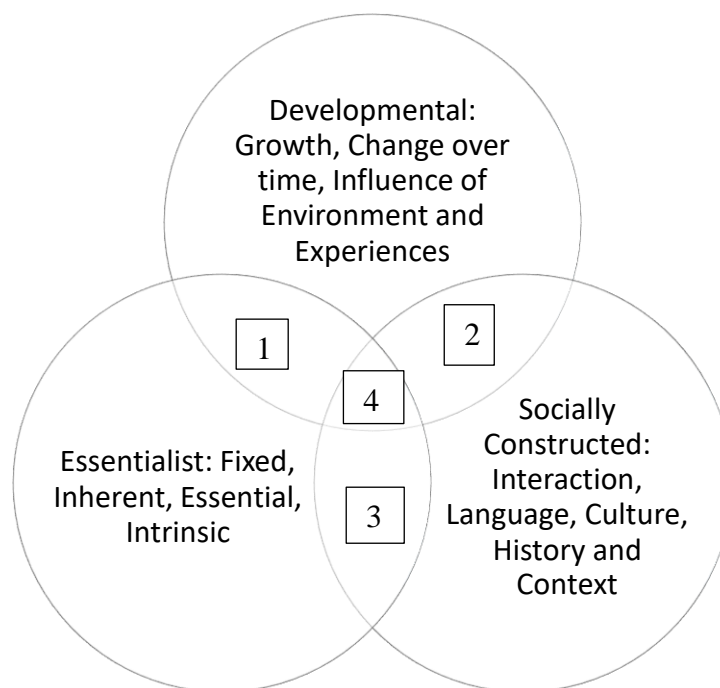
Figure 5: Summary of theories of identity

1.   Inherent qualities can manifest change over developmental stages

2.   Developmental stages and processes can be shaped by social contexts

and constructions

3.   Social constructions may be influenced by or interact with inherent

qualities

4.   Development may involve inherent qualities influenced by and

interacting with social constructions over time

2.4.2 Identity in Context: Interaction and Discourse

Drawing on the work of Zemblyas (2003), the use of post structural and postmodern devices may prove useful as not only do they focus on cultural and discursive dimensions of experience, but they also 'create spaces for individuals to construct strategies of power and resistance' (p.223). A post structural definition of identity may therefore be characterised by 'multiple presentations of self which are (re) constructed across social contexts and demonstrated through actions and emotions: it is multifaceted, dynamic, a site of struggle, and shaped by power relations between the individual and others' (Kayi-Aydar, 2015, p.138).

A further advantage of a post structural conceptualisation is that it helps researchers avoid 'being seduced' by a desire to create interesting and concise narratives bound by the limitations of themes and patterns in research (O'Keeffe and Skerritt, 2021, p.182). Central to this understanding is the recognition that identities are not fixed, stable or innate. Rather, they are instead contingent upon social, cultural and historical contexts. In this sense, the centrality of interaction and discourse emerges as fundamental processes in the continual shaping and reshaping of identity. Through social interactions in school, in classrooms or in the community, for example, individuals engage in a complex web of power relations, language practices and discursive formations, which not only shape their self-perceptions but also influence how they are perceived by others. Furthermore, discourse is understood as a socially constructed system of meaning-making and it plays a crucial role in this process by not only reflecting but also actively constructing and perpetuating various subject positions and identity categories. Thus, within the post-structuralist paradigm, the construction of identity is fundamentally an ongoing, relational, and discursive process that is contingent upon the interplay of power dynamics, linguistic practices and social interactions. Building on these theoretical perspectives, the review of the

literature now moves to focus on how identity theories specifically inform our understanding of teacher identity.

2.5 Teacher Identity

By developing a 'teacher' identity, educators can understand 'how to be, how to act, and how to understand their work as teachers' (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009, p.178). As a concept, teacher identity has been the subject of much research in recent years from investigations of initial teacher education (Nawab, 2023, Wong, 2023) to exploring practicing teachers' identities in areas such as maths and science (Ambusaidi and Alhosni, 2023), or in English (Gan and Lam, 2023), in PE (Caldeborg et al.,2023) and in SEN (Rusu and Saied 2023). Research on teacher identity during the Covid 19 pandemic has also been undertaken (Arias-Carballal and González-Calvo 2023). Using identity, especially professional identity, as a lens through which we might come to understand more about how teachers learn, work and develop as individuals is not new. Beauchamp et al. (2017) write that interest in teacher identity and in the development of this identity has much of its origin in research on teachers' practical knowledge in the late 1980s. Since then, interest in teacher identity has grown rapidly. Arising out of a paradigm shift which evolved in the 1970s and 1980s, a different view of the teacher emerged, that of teachers as knowers and thinkers, practitioners with whom research could generate ideas grounded in practice, rather than theories generated solely in university or college settings (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999).

Friesen and Besley (2013) have characterised the research on teacher identity as emanating from 'a wide range of theoretical perspectives' and exhibiting 'a tendency toward disconnected qualitative studies' (p.24). Of particular note for this research are two descriptions of teacher identity: The Akkerman and Meijer 'Multiple I' theory is discussed later in this section, but to begin, it is worth noting the value of

the Zembylas and Chubbuck model (2015) which is illustrated in Figure 6. These identity theories are different from those discussed in Chapter One and prove useful in the task of attempting to understand the complexities of teacher identity in particular. In the Zembylas and Chubbuck model, the authors write that there are four key aspects of teacher identity. These aspects are emotion, narrative and discourse, reflection and agency and structure.

Figure 6: Components of Teacher Identity: Zembylas and Chubbuck (2015)
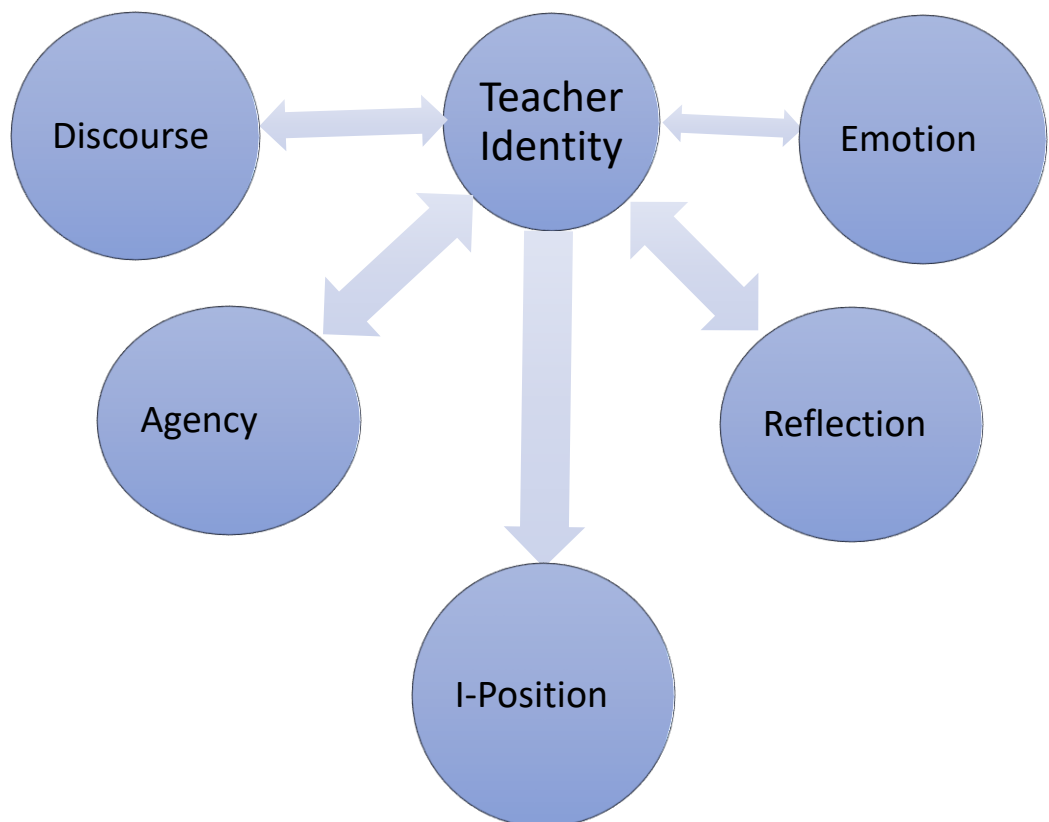
2.5.1 Emotion and Teacher Identity

For Beijaard and Meijer (2017), teacher identity is a 'multifaceted construct that intertwines personal and professional dimensions, shaping both who educators are and how they approach their roles in the classroom' (p.177). This intersection of

personal and professional factors continually evolves within the broader socio-political context of educational environments (Zembylas and Chubbuck, 2015). Marschall (2022) highlights the emotional underpinnings of identity, distinguishing between 'actual identity', representing the current state of affairs, and 'designated identity', which portrays expected roles and behaviours.

In the realm of citizenship education, teachers face the challenge of navigating between these two facets of identity, particularly concerning emotional risk-taking. The extent to which teachers reveal their authentic selves in classroom discussions on contentious issues, as opposed to adopting a more detached instructional approach, is a pivotal consideration (Erss, 2018). This internal conflict between personal identity and professional expectations underscores the complexity of pedagogical decision-making (Morgan, 2016).

Aoki (2004) frames this tension as a dichotomy between the planned curriculum, one dictated by external standards, and the lived curriculum, one informed by teachers' individual experiences and backgrounds. Oolbekkink-Marchard (2017, p.38) further explores teachers perceptions of their professional space, highlighting the subjective nature of this conceptualisation and its influence on instructional practice. Within this dynamic interplay, teachers inhabit what Aoki (2004) describes as the 'zone of between,' one in which they negotiate the space between actual and designated identities (p.161).

For Erlich and Gindi (2018, p.59), teacher identity encompasses a sense of belonging and professional identification, one that is continually shaped by social interactions and contextual factors. This social dimension of identity underscores the importance of discourse and narrative in understanding teacher identity formation. As educators navigate the complexities of their roles, they engage in ongoing processes of

reflection, negotiation and meaning making within the evolving landscape of educational practice.

2.5.2 Discourse, narrative and teacher identity

Cohen (2010) describes discourse as the communication among teachers, and posits that it plays 'a dual role in identity formation, both constituting identity and being constituted by it' (p.474). Similarly, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) emphasise that discursive identity formation is not merely social but 'dialogically relational, involving interactions with students, colleagues, and management, all embedded within power dynamics' (p.315).

Hannah Arendt's seminal work, 'The Human Condition,' delineates the dichotomy between Vita Activa and Vita Contemplativa (Arendt, 1998, pp.7-8). The former pertains to engagement with the public realm through labour, work and action, while the latter encompasses philosophical contemplation, and reflects upon the personal and actual aspects of identity. Arendt underscores the significance of action as the means through which individuals disclose themselves to others, engaging in spontaneous speech and dialogue to shape the shared political sphere (Varden, 2021). This continuous action, or 'natality,' represents the potential for new ideas and movements. It encapsulates the essence of education by fostering unforeseen beginnings (Lilja, 2018, p.546).

In Arendt's view, educators face a challenging task of safeguarding students from the public sphere of politics until they are adequately prepared through education. This poses a dilemma for Politics and Society teachers, as their private contemplative life, where their views on citizenship reside, inevitably collides with the public world of the school, governed by curricular frameworks and students own contemplative

processes. Action, as part of the teacher's Vita Activa, reveals a self that may be concealed even from the actor, emerging fully in the narrative of their actions. Thus, understanding each teacher's journey to their current role entails delving into the narratives behind their professional trajectories and the extent to which they authentically engage with the classroom or school environment.

Another important aspect of Arendt's work which is relevant to this research is her concept of 'natality'. She suggests that teachers undergo multiple moments of newness in their careers, rooted in ontological action and necessitating plurality in interactions (Arendt, 1958, p. 247). Recognising the role played by others in shaping a teacher's journey provides valuable insight into their evolving identities.

2.5.3 Reflection and teacher identity

Reflection is the third aspect of teacher identity formation and is a 'strategic instrument' in identity formation (Protassova et al., 2021, p.68). Research has shown that reflection can have a positive impact on teacher identity formation, as well as on student learning. For example, a study by Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) found that teachers who engaged in regular reflection were more likely to develop a strong and positive teacher identity. Additionally, a study by Zeichner (2003) found that teachers who reflected on their teaching practices were more likely to adopt innovative teaching methods and to create student-centred learning environments. One of the more interesting ways of conceptualising the impact on identity, brought about by reflection on practice, is Korthagen's (2004) 'onion' model. Here, the more intangible elements of identity, such as beliefs, are found at the heart of teaching and these have a significant impact on more tangible elements or onion layers, such as the environment; in terms of class, students, and school. In other words, the 'internal aspects of identity most open to political and power influences can dictate external

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practices to a significant extent' (Zembylas and Chubbuck, 2018, p.187). The internal-external dialogue is also reflected in a final aspect of teacher identity, to be considered below, namely agency and structure.

2.5.4 Agency, structure, and teacher identity

Agency is generally perceived as the internal capacity to achieve one's goals while structure represents the more external influences which influence the achievement of agency. Both are complex and multifaceted constructs that are influenced by a variety of factors, including personal experiences, professional training and the social, cultural, and political contexts in which teachers find themselves. Schepens et al. (2009) would summarise this as the debate between being born a teacher and becoming a teacher. Avoiding such a dichotomy as far back as 1950, one writer posited that 'teachers are born-and made' (Seagoe, 1950, p.74). This stance also places the personal agency of an individual teacher in reciprocal interaction with political structures (Zembylas and Chubbuck, 2018). Such structures require attention in the existing literature on schools as civic institutions and one is drawn to question how to reconcile differing and often discordant political forces.

Trevino et al. (2021) write that schools are 'at the crux of the political socialisation process, a process through which political norms and desirable behaviours for a political system are transmitted between generations' (p.68). However, in Western liberal discourse there are two dominant and competing philosophies about the type of political socialisation that should take place in schools. The first is the minimal or thin approach to civic education. Wahrman and Hartaf (2021) argue that a minimal philosophy works to instil strong tolerance toward centrifugal forces in society, the private sphere, and heterogeneity which is rooted in the work of John Locke. Thick citizenship, on the other hand, places much more emphasis on 'activist and participatory approaches and a robust public sphere and civil society' (Heggart and

Flowers, 2019, p.359). The philosophies of Dewey (experiential), Freire
(Conscientised) and the Frankfurt School (Emancipatory) as well as the classic Greek
and Roman understandings of Republicanism underpin this philosophy. Each
approach represents a different vision of a society and the choice between them is
inherently political. However an important point is made by Cohen (2010, p.10) that
'incoherence' or 'a great bad' can occur between curriculum descriptors of
enhancing voice and participation among all students for example and then teachers
who may talk to students about these values while insisting on their own conception
of citizenship. This is described by Torney-Purta et al. (1999) who write that 'schools
may teach democracy while themselves being undemocratic organisations that
habituate undemocratic practices' (p.498). What Hüning (2022, p.2217) describes a
'we-ness' or 'we-mentality' may differ because the curriculum as intended by
official agencies may differ from the curriculum as implemented by teachers. This
research will require teachers to ask fundamental questions about their own freedom
and control in the classroom and these questions may give rise to complicated
answers. Ultimately the Zembylas and Chubbuck model of teacher identity and its
constituent parts results in the formation of a unique I- Position.

2.5.5 I-Positions and Teacher Identity

Teachers' identity has been defined by Badia and Liesa (2022) as 'a dynamic system
in the landscape of the mind' (p.78). In their dialogical approach to conceptualising
teacher identity Akkerman and Meijer (2013) argue that the conceptualisation of
identity needs to be elaborated to 'develop an understanding of the self as composed
of multiple I-positions' (P.311). This is a composite term. The use of position refers
to a 'real institutional function that can be performed by teachers in the context of a
particular institution at a given time and place' (Badia and Liesa, 2022, p.79). In
other words, they consist of the different roles and perspectives a teacher adopts in

relation to students, colleagues and curriculum. It also refers to the dynamic and complex nature of how teachers construct and negotiate their sense of self in these contexts and interactions. Searle (2010) elaborates on the idea of 'status functions', those which are understood by the teacher personally but also by members of the school community.

The 'I' element is the teacher's own subjective stance, how they see, feel and experience the world around them. Badia et al. (2020) write that 'this subjectivity is marked by specific conceptual categories such as the teacher's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, agency, ownership and sense-making processes' (p.869). Each I is unique to that individual and it plays a significant role in their positionality on different issues; especially in relation to their own civic and political identity.

According to Assen et al. (2018) teacher identity as expressed through multiple I-Positions is held together in the 'unity of the self' and 'maintained over time through self-dialogue' (p.138). Individuals can claim a multiplicity of dynamic, quasi-autonomous and interrelated I-Positions and 'it is such complexity that generates society' (Meijers and Hermans, 2018, p.182). As a subjective space of negotiation, individuals can understand, explain and create meaning through interacting with themselves, with significant others and with the world (Linell, 2010). Biesta (2020) writes that 'freedom to act or not act' is at the heart of subjectification and is fundamentally an existential matter (p.93). Freedom according to Schwarz-Franco (2021) can exist as an actual reality in the classroom (the teacher is free) and as an ideal condition for optimal teaching (the ought). In constructing their identity as an educator, individual teachers process, internalise and make sense of not just their own values, beliefs, and experiences but also their social interactions and institutional expectations and demands.

Pishghadam et al. (2022) make the point that research on teacher identity has evolved from a 'core, inner, fixed, linear construct to a dynamic, multifaceted, context-dependent, dialogical, and intrinsically related phenomenon' (p.5). Works such as that by Solari and Ortega (2022) which suggest that teacher identity is polyphonic and is inhabited by multiple voices with different origins. Such levels of generality chime with the I-Position approach. Polyphonic teacher identity is notable as a concept that refers to the multiple and sometimes conflicting voices that teachers use to construct their professional selves. It recognises that teachers are not monolithic or static, but rather dynamic and complex agents who navigate different contexts, roles and expectations. Teachers listen to voices from the past to inform current practice and thought. The assumption of a polyphonic teacher identity involves paying 'special attention to the intersection of a teacher's profession with his or her gender, race, professional background' (Solari and Ortega, 2022, p.630). By exploring and embracing their polyphony, teachers can develop a more nuanced and authentic understanding of who they are and what they do as educators. Understanding teacher identity provides a crucial backdrop for examining how teachers develop and enact their civic identities in the context of civic education.

2.6 Civic Education and Teachers Civic Identity

Despite near-universal consensus on democracy's desirability (Belavi et al., 2017, p.139), contemporary democratic systems face unprecedented challenges. Governments respond through educational initiatives aimed at strengthening democratic competencies (Barrett, 2020; Sant et al., 2021), with research confirming the correlation between comprehensive democratic education and enhanced student competencies (Malazonia et al., 2023; Mickovska-Raleva, 2019). However, teachers implicit democratic conceptions remain understudied (Alscher et al., 2022, p.1889). Cohen (2018, p.4) identifies four distinct civic education paradigms. The liberal

approach to citizenship education emphasises individual agency and democratic participation competencies, while the diversity perspective focuses on social constructs and power dynamics. The critical approach views education as a vehicle for social justice through intellectual empowerment, and the republican perspective explores collective identity and social cohesion through Rousseau's 'general will'.

Biesta (2020, p.91) frames educations democratic purpose through three dimensions: qualification (knowledge acquisition), socialisation (cultural orientation), and subjectification (autonomous agency development). However, this framework operates within complex institutional contexts where schools may paradoxically teach democracy while embodying undemocratic practices (Torney-Purta et al., 1999, p.42).

Contemporary challenges include navigating the 'political imaginary' (Browne and Diehl, 2019, p.393) and what Biesta (2019, p.549) terms the 'learnification' of democratic education. The tension between neoliberal governance measures and authentic democratic practice remains particularly salient. Biesta and Lawy (2006, p.73) argue that while schools cannot produce democratic individuals, they can provide spaces for critical reflection on democratic action's conditions.

Teacher civic identity formation, rooted in personal experiences and shaped by class, race, and gender (Mockler, 2011, p.4), significantly influences pedagogical practices. Understanding how 'teacher ideologies are produced, negotiated and modified' (Magill and Shanks, 2020, p.153) becomes crucial for comprehending civic education's implementation. This understanding must begin with examining formative experiences during initial teacher education, while acknowledging the dynamic nature of civic identity development.

2.6.1 Pre-Service Teachers Civic Identity

Scott et al. (2022) argue a tacit assumption that the act of teaching is merely the mastery and measurement of predetermined, de-contextualised discrete skills and that these assumptions, by their reductionist and technocratic nature, reduce citizenship and citizenship education to a series of technical skills. Instead, as Nolan and Tupper (2019) argue, Pre-Service Teachers' (PST) attention focuses on noticing and critiquing wider modes of domination, those that operate within schools and systems of education.

Through an extensive review of literature on initial teacher education and the development of citizenship beliefs among pre-service teachers, five central themes have emerged. These themes encompass the prominence of certain citizenship concepts, the deficiencies in pre-service teachers' understanding of citizenship, the influence of patriotism or civic orientations, the necessary skills and pedagogical approaches, and the challenges encountered in implementing these practices. To provide clarity and coherence, these themes may be condensed into two overarching categories: Citizenship as practice which will be examined in due course but firstly Citizenship as a concept will be discussed.

One notable theme is the prevalence of specific typologies of citizenship, which serve as frameworks for analysing citizenship education and pre-service teachers' beliefs about democratic citizenship. The Westheimer and Kahne Model (2004) has been widely utilised across various research contexts, and alongside similar models proposed by De Schaepmeester (2022) and Paterson et al. (2012). Westheimer and Kahne's model identifies three conceptions of good citizenship: Being personally responsible, being participatory and being justice oriented. As demonstrated previously research using this typology has revealed a prevalent emphasis on personally responsible citizenship among teachers, with lesser recognition of

participatory and justice-oriented citizenship (Patterson et al., 2012). Similarly, Patterson et al. (2012) and De Schaepmeester (2022) present models aligning closely with Westheimer and Kahne's framework, highlighting the enduring influence of these typologies in shaping teachers' conceptualisations of citizenship.

The constrained nature of pre-service teachers' notions of citizenship is another salient aspect. Studies have indicated a predominance of personally responsible views of citizenship among pre-service teachers, emphasising attributes such as community engagement, adherence to laws, and respect for others (Fry and O'Brien, 2015; Castro, 2013). These findings resonate across diverse cultural and national contexts, reflecting a common tendency towards conservative definitions of citizenship (Zyngier, 2016; Messina and Jacott, 2013).

Furthermore, the theme of patriotic citizenship emerges, characterised by a conservative outlook and a focus on personal responsibility. Pre-service teachers subscribing to this ideal often prioritise traditional symbols and rituals of citizenship. This is typified in the USA for example with such undertakings as the Citizenship Test and the Pledge of Allegiance (Bohan et al., 2008; Chiodo, 2011). This emphasis on patriotism varies across contexts, with differing perceptions of citizenship education observed among student teachers in the UK, Singapore and Russia (Peterson et al., 2015; Altıkulaç and Yontar, 2019). But what of citizenship as practice?

In examining the citizenship practices of pre-service teachers, several key themes emerge. Firstly, there is a diverse array of skills and pedagogical techniques emphasised and there is a notable prevalence of practices with a critical element. Critical literacy exercises, role plays and civic debates are commonly utilized to foster thoughtful and informed citizenship among students (Chávez-Reyes, 2010; Marshall and Klein, 2009). Additionally, critical inquiry strategies are advocated as

essential for pre-service teachers to cultivation in their classrooms, thereby facilitating students capacity for active citizenship (Sanchez, 2010).

Secondly, strategies promoting active and global citizenship feature prominently in pre-service teacher education. Interventions aimed at fostering global citizenship awareness have shown promise in enhancing students identification with global citizenship ideals (Ullom, 2017). Cross-cultural perspectives on citizenship are also emphasised, with experiential and community-engaged learning further enriching students understanding of citizenship (Oryan and Ravid, 2019; Bulut, 2019).

Finally, challenges encountered in translating citizenship education into classroom practice are evident. Issues such as classroom climate, teacher confidence and alignment with policy mandates pose significant hurdles for pre-service teachers (Ambrose et al., 2010; Pitiporntapin et al., 2016). Moreover, the discrepancy between pre-service training and actual classroom implementation underscores the need for ongoing support and professional development in citizenship education (Scott et al., 2022).

In conclusion, an examination of citizenship as both a concept and a practice reveals multifaceted dynamics shaping pre-service teachers' beliefs and pedagogical approaches. Understanding these complexities is crucial for informing effective citizenship education and supporting teachers in cultivating active and informed citizens. So what then of practicing teachers and their civic identity? To address such a matter in current literature, we begin to introduce elements of the second research question, hinting at tensions between teachers individual civic identities and policy/curricular documents.

2.6.2 Practicing Teachers, Personal Experience and Civic Identity

Teacher civic identity research predominantly emerges from North America. Patterson et al.'s (2012) seminal study of 1,500 educators revealed a dominant personally responsible identity (65%), followed by participatory citizenship (25%), with social justice orientation comprising merely 6%. DiGiacomo et al.'s subsequent research (2021) confirmed this distribution's persistence, prompting concerns about teachers' capacity to foster change-oriented citizenship.

Knowles and Castro (2019, p.228) emphasise that only the social justice model promotes critical social engagement, yet it remains peripheral in educational frameworks. This pattern extends beyond the U.S. Barkman's 2022 Canadian analysis reveals similar deontological emphases in teacher ethics codes. Canadian civic identity discourse particularly centres on British relations and Indigenous reconciliation, what Carleton (2021) terms a 'historic failure of civic education' (p.474). Giroux (2021, p.700) characterises this as a crisis of civic literacy and public imagination.

European and Asian contexts demonstrate comparable patterns. Reichert and Torney-Purta's (2019) cross-national study found one-third of teachers prioritised civic knowledge and community participation, mirroring North American trends. Nordic countries exhibited stronger social justice orientations, though paradoxically with limited emphasis on political engagement. Dutch research revealed teachers favouring global and moral identities while maintaining political reserve (Veugelers, 2011), while Irish studies indicated fluid, evolving conceptions of democratic education (Motherway, 2022).

The literature conclusively demonstrates that teachers' civic identity significantly predicts their pedagogical approaches, supporting Knowles (2018, p.77) assertion

that instructional practices are mediated by personal values. This relationship manifests most prominently within classroom and school environments.

2.6.3 Civic Identity in A Professional Context

Schools constitute critical spaces for teacher civic identity formation, with Mockler (2011) emphasising the profound impact of institutional contexts on professional identity. Holland et al.'s (2001) 'Figured Worlds' framework—a socially constructed realm of interpretation—provides a valuable lens for examining teacher identity development. This framework, while extensively applied across educational domains, reveals schools as complex spaces characterised by Deleuze and Guattari's concept of smooth and striated spaces, where identity emerges through meaningful practices and discourse.

Democratic institutions nominally, schools face mounting tensions between their democratic potential and increasing performativity demands. Contemporary educational landscapes are marked by high-intensity external control (Salokangas et al., 2019), statistical governance (Ball, 2003; Poole, 2022), and global market forces that reframe education as an individual commodity rather than a collective good (Riddle and Heffernan, 2018). This context produces what Biesta (2019, p.657) terms a 'discourse of panic' regarding educational quality.

Teachers, conceptualised as 'policy entrepreneurs' (Ball et al., 2011, p.619), navigate complex terrains between autonomy and control. The implementation of civic education programs reveals significant disparities. Lindvall and Ryve's (2019, p.147) call this 'incoherence' and it manifests itself in divergent practices that can reinforce educational inequities (Wahrman and Hartaf, 2021a, p.4). This tension is exacerbated by the epistemic dominance of global policy actors and market-led discourse (Edling and Mooney Simmie, 2020).

Policy implementation versus enactment emerges as a critical distinction, with teachers serving as complex actors in policy translation. Schulte's 'politics of use' approach positions teachers as sense-making agents who appropriate policies while legitimising their interests (2018, p.624). This agency becomes particularly salient in subjects like Politics and Society, where teachers must balance democratic ideals against standardised measurements and outcomes.

The relationship between school democracy and pluralism remains complex. Larsen and Mathé (2023) highlight the correlation between teachers democratic experiences and their institutional perceptions, while democratic professionalism theory (Dzur, 2010; Anderson and Cohen, 2018) emphasises the potential for democratic action within educational institutions. However, as Westheimer (2022, p.45) notes, educational goals have shifted from civic engagement toward individual economic achievement, presenting new challenges for civic education's evolution in contemporary Ireland.

	Pre-Service Teachers	Practicing Teachers	Professional Context
Citizenship as Concept	Prevalence of specific citizenship typologies	Dominance of personally responsible identity over participatory/justice-oriented	Tensions between policy enactment and implementation
	Constrained notions of citizenship	- Influence of patriotism and civic orientations	Teachers as sense-making actors, appropriating policies
	Emphasis on personally responsible citizenship		Erosion of education's democratic potential due to focus on measurement, standards, evidence
Citizenship as Practice	Diverse skills and pedagogical techniques-	Teachers' civic identity as predictor of classroom practices	Challenges in translating citizenship education into practice (classroom climate, confidence, policy mandates)
	Strategies for active and global citizenship-	- Linking practice to school environment	Gap between pre-service training and classroom implementation
	Challenges in classroom practice implementation		Need for ongoing support and professional development
Personal Experiences		Teachers' epistemologies and contexts shape identity	Schools as figured worlds where civic identity is expressed and developed
		Teachers' personal lives (class, background) influence civic identity	Navigating performativity pressures and narrowing definitions of educational quality
			Democratic professionalism: potential for democratic action in schools

Table 3: *Summary of civic identity in context*

2.6.4 Civic, Political and Democratic Education in Ireland

The Irish context for civic education has been marked by a complex history of curriculum positioning and political influence. This journey has been significantly shaped by external political factors. This section of the literature review delves into the intricate history of civic education in Ireland and highlights the evolution of the subject from its early days when it was influenced by religious instruction, to the establishment of the Civic, Social, and Political Education (CSPE) programme and later, the Politics and Society curriculum.

In an Irish context, civic education and its associated teachers have had something of a chequered history in terms of its positioning on the curriculum and its place within

schools. However, what is clear is that both the subject and its educators have always been affected by the political environment of the time. All aspects of life in post-Independence Ireland were very much influenced by a 'theocentric paradigm' (O'Sullivan, 2005, p.106). The Catholic churches opposition to civic education meant that when the subject area of civics was introduced into primary schools, it was meant to be addressed within the context of religious instruction. The Department of Education noted 'there is obviously a very close affinity between religious education and civics' (Department of Education, 1971, p. 116). Reflecting the emphasis on patriotic values in civic instruction the then Minister for Education, Dr. Patrick Hillery, reported to the Dáil, The Lower House of the Irish Parliament , that the 'curriculum lends itself to the teaching of civics, as the teaching of history and religious instruction, and indeed the departmental regulations point out to the teachers the desirability of instructing the children on these matters' (Dáil Éireann Debate, 6th August 1971).

Some years prior in 1966, Civics was introduced as a mandatory subject in post primary schools by the then Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley and this was 'required to be taught for at least one class period weekly' (Dáil Éireann Debate 30th November 1966). Later in this speech the Minister reported a belief that 'the whole basis' on which the subject was introduced would be 'destroyed' if it were made an examination subject. It was eventually examined in June 1999 as part of the CSPE course which had been introduced from 1996.

In the years prior to this rebranding and reimagining of civic instruction, indeed practically from its inception, the subject had been beset by contradictory supporting documents, by perceptions of being tokenistic and by a perceived general ambivalence or indeed opposition from teachers. The formal syllabus implied a vision of citizenship education that involved accumulating knowledge about various

state organisations and institutions and was seen by all concerned parties as 'dull, boring and conformist' (Jeffers and O'Connor, 2008, p.2). Interestingly, one elected Member of the Irish Lower House of Parliament, Denis O'Sullivan T.D. went so far as to suggest that instruction in 'good citizenship' would help with the problem of 'juvenile delinquency' (Dáil Éireann Debate 8th June 1961).

A supporting pamphlet advocated for an active approach to teaching the subject so practitioners reportedly were never sure which document they should follow. These and other factors created a cumulative waning in popularity amongst both teachers and students and resulted in 'Civics' being on the margins of planning and timetabling. Indeed, the poor image of Civics was referenced in a Dáil Government Debate by John M Kelly one of the elected Members who said 'citizenship, civics, and all these other things on which they waste time in schools' were 'soft' subjects and would 'contribute nothing to his or her intellectual formation or his or her capacity to produce wealth or chances of a materially successful future' (Dáil Éireann Debate, 14 December 1984). Significant revisions arrived in 1990 however when the then Minister for Education (Mary O'Rourke) required the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to 'review the position of Civics' and to encompass 'elements of civic, social and political education'. Interestingly, the Ministers statement was in response to a question from a then politician but the current President of Ireland Michael D Higgins (Dáil Éireann Written Answers 31 January 1990).

The NCCA published the findings of this review in 1993 and four years later CSPE became a mandatory subject for all first-year secondary school students in September 1997. Built around seven key concepts (Rights and Responsibilities, Democracy, Stewardship, Interdependence, Development, Law, and Human Dignity) this structure was criticised by Wylie (1999) as 'centrally prescribed' with 'heavy

emphasis on knowledge and skills' which 'busy teachers will focus on to the exclusion of other important dimensions of the programme' (p.95). He also argued that 'there is little explicit reference to the need to develop critical and analytical approaches to the teaching of citizenship' (p.95). Since then however, as Lynch (2014, p.142) points out, market forces have come to have more of an influence on education policy and on curricular change.

Jeffers and O'Connor (2008, p.6) make the point that we have moved from living in a society to living in an economy, and that academic subjects are valued more than pedagogic subjects citing the allocation of four class periods a week to business while maintaining only one for CSPE. This ordering of subjects is also visible in assessment where CSPE is no longer examined as a stand-alone subject in the State Examinations system. Instead, it has been subsumed into a broader 'Wellbeing' framework and is assessed in school. In light of this development, the findings by McSharry and Cusack (2016, p.65) that CSPE teachers often exhibited uncertainty about their own opinions, is especially pertinent as the subject struggles to remain visible amidst the other two elements of the Wellbeing programme (Social Personal and Health Education and Physical Education). Another complicating factor in relation to teacher beliefs is the observation from O'Brien (2023, p.15) that a lack of training or experience in teaching CSPE may inhibit teacher agency. While CSPE has and continues to have several issues around teacher confidence and perception, at senior cycle level the story is somewhat different.

2016 saw the introduction of a dedicated Politics and Society course which would be examined as part of the Leaving Certificate programme. The current Politics and Society curriculum specifically aims to develop the student's abilities to be a reflective and active citizens, and in ways that are informed by the insights and skills of social and political science. It also aims to develop the learner's capacity to

engage in reflective and active citizenship, again informed by the insights and skills of social and political sciences.

While there has been some research carried out on CSPE and civic education (Duggan 2015, O'Brien 2023) there is an absence of research on Politics and Society, both as a subject and with the teachers delivering the programme. Seven years after the introduction of the course, this is somewhat surprising. It is intended that this research will help in addressing this issue, especially regarding questions and issues of civic identity and the teachers delivering the programme conceptualise such matters.

In conclusion, the journey of civic education in Ireland reflects a dynamic interplay of historical, political, and pedagogical factors. From its early roots influenced by religious instruction to the establishment of programs like CSPE and the more recent introduction of Politics and Society, the landscape of civic education has evolved amidst changing societal values and educational priorities. Despite the challenges, the many contradictory supporting documents, the perceptions of tokenism and the influence of market forces, the teachers have undoubtedly persevered. The evidence of this study demonstrates that they continue to strive to instil a sense of civic responsibility and democratic engagement in their students. Looking ahead, it is imperative that research continues to delve into the complexities of civic education, particularly in understanding the civic identity of teachers at Junior Cycle level especially and the impact of external political environments. By fostering a deeper understanding of civic education and its practitioners, Ireland can continue to nurture informed, engaged citizens who contribute positively to society. Having explored the theoretical underpinnings and historical context of civic education and teacher identity, the following chapter will describe the methodological approach employed in this study. The research aims to investigate the complex interplay between

teachers' personal civic identities and their professional roles in fostering democratic citizenship among students.

While the existing literature on civic education and teacher identity provides a robust foundation for this study, a critical analysis reveals several gaps and inconsistencies that warrant further exploration. For instance, while numerous models of civic identity development have been proposed, there is a lack of consensus as to how these models intersect with the practical realities faced by teachers in diverse educational contexts. Additionally, the literature often conflates different theoretical perspectives, such as the distinctions between civic republicanism and liberal democracy, and this can lead to ambiguous interpretations. This study aims to address these gaps by clarifying how various theories of civic identity inform the professional practice of Politics and Society teachers in Ireland. By critically examining and synthesising these models, the research seeks to offer a more coherent and contextually relevant understanding of civic identity within the Irish educational landscape. This literature review has aimed to provide a comprehensive exploration of the key concepts and theoretical frameworks relevant to understanding the civic identities of Politics and Society teachers within the context of Irish education. By situating this study within the broader discourse on democracy, civic education and teacher identity, the researcher has identified critical gaps in the existing literature, particularly concerning how teachers conceptualise and enact their roles as civic educators.

The review has revealed that while substantial research exists on the nature of civic education and on the role of schools in fostering democratic citizens, there is a notable paucity of studies specifically addressing the lived experiences and professional identities of Politics and Society teachers. This gap is particularly significant in the Irish context, where recent curriculum reforms have placed an

increased emphasis on civic engagement and political literacy. Theoretical perspectives on identity, especially those informed by social identity theory and role identity theory, offer valuable insights into how these teachers might navigate their dual roles as both educators and agents of democracy. However, the literature suggests that these roles are often fraught with tension, particularly in balancing the demands of an evolving curriculum with personal and professional beliefs about what it means to be a civic educator.

In addressing these gaps, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how Politics and Society teachers in Ireland construct and negotiate their civic identities, and how these identities influence their teaching practices. This research will also explore the implications of these identities for student outcomes in civic education, thereby extending the current academic conversation in meaningful ways.

In the following chapter, the focus shifts to the methodology employed in this research. It outlines the research design, includes details on the selection of participants, on data collection methods and analysis. By employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study seeks to capture the multi-faceted and complex realities of teachers' experiences, thereby offering a rich, in-depth analysis. This approach is particularly suited to addressing the research questions that have emerged from the literature review, providing a robust framework for exploring the intricacies of teacher identity in the context of civic education.

Chapter 3 Methods and Methodology

This chapter details the methodology underlying this research, beginning with an exploration of its significance, followed by a rationale for the choice between Grounded Theory and Phenomenology. It examines the ontological and epistemological foundations of phenomenology, focusing on Descriptive and Interpretative schools within identity research. The chapter then justifies Interpretative Phenomenology as an optimal approach for understanding lived experiences, covering key methodological components, including positionality, sampling, interviewing, and rigor. An integration of van Manen's Phenomenological Approach (2016) with the Voice-Centred Relational Method is presented, offering a synthesis in qualitative research. Additionally, the Listening Guide is introduced to foster an open, non-judgmental engagement, and the inclusion of systematic debriefing is discussed as an unplanned but valuable addition to the research framework. This chapter thereby establishes a comprehensive foundation for the methodology employed.

3.1 Significance of the Study

Teacher identity is a well-researched field; however, civic identity among teachers remains less explored, with far fewer studies focusing specifically on civic identity. The need to investigate teacher civic identity is underscored by the role of educators in shaping the civic values and engagement of future generations. For instance, De Cesare (2020, p.33) emphasises the role of 'centered Democratic education' in schools, which is crucial given the prevalence of 'civic deserts' among young people in rural and urban areas (Atwell et al., 2017, p.4). Understanding teacher civic identity illuminates how educators navigate these civic deserts, influencing students civic development through their own constructed professional identities.

The contemporary educational landscape is increasingly complex, with educators facing high expectations, diverse student demographics, and shifting policies. This environment, described by Schutz and Moss (1999, p.266) as an era of 'slogan systems' can erode teachers professional identities, reducing opportunities for self-reflection. In light of this, phenomenological research allows for 'in-seeing' (Heidegger, 1962) or deeper reflection, granting the participating teachers an opportunity to explore their own civic identities.

3.2 Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach

Teacher civic identity is dynamic, shaped by evolving contexts. This research explores how teachers construct and express civic identity in a changing educational setting through an interpretivist lens, focusing on the fluidity of identity as influenced by relationships and experiences. Interpretivism, centered on understanding subjective experiences, emphasises the contextual and relational aspects of identity. Here, identity is not fixed but is continuously shaped and reshaped by interactions and self-interpretation (Ericson and Kjellander, 2018, p.205).

Qualitative research, with its focus on understanding subjective experiences, is well-suited to this study. This work adopts a constructivist epistemology, positing that knowledge is context-dependent and value-laden (Howell, 2015). Three core assumptions shape this study: (1) knowledge is socially mediated, (2) identity is non-linear, and (3) the data undergoes a double hermeneutic process. Following an interpretivist framework, this approach enables 'voice-giving' (Hammersley, 2013, p.51) through narrative methods such as the Voice-Centred Relational Method (VCRM) and dialogic analysis, which include techniques like I-Positions and created dialogue to clarify contextual understandings of teacher civic identity.

This double hermeneutic approach, involving empathy and critical inquiry, allows the researcher to interpret participants' sense-making processes. The following questions guide the research:

How do Politics and Society teachers' lived experiences shape their civic identities?

How do teachers balance the Politics and Society curriculum with their personal civic values?

How do teachers navigate their civic identities within various school cultures?

These questions are examined through an interpretive, hermeneutical lens, employing the VCRM, also known as the Listening Guide. This method prioritises active listening to reveal layers of meaning within teacher narratives, enabling an analysis that emphasises relational context (Brown and Gilligan, 1992). The Listening Guide's stages, or 'listenings', uncover diverse voices within participants stories, enhancing understanding of civic identity through reflective, dialogic processes.

3.3 Methods and Methodologies: Grounded Theory or Phenomenology?

The choice of qualitative methodology significantly shapes the study's theoretical and philosophical foundation. Grounded Theory and Phenomenology were both considered, with Grounded Theory offering systematic coding and categorisation for theory generation. However, phenomenology's focus on subjective experience emerged as aligning more with the research aims, given the fluid nature of civic identity. Grounded Theory, originally developed to support qualitative inquiry in response to quantitative dominance (Charmaz, 2014, p.12), offers a robust coding process. However, phenomenology provides a richer, more nuanced framework for examining the depth of lived experiences, aligning more closely with this study's emphasis on interpretive understanding.

What then is the case for Phenomenology? As a philosophy and methodological approach, phenomenology allows for the exploration of lived experience (Frechette et al., 2020, p.1). Van Manen (2014) argues that phenomenology goes beyond descriptive analysis, capturing deeper, more affective aspects of human experience. This approach aligns with the study's goal of understanding how educators construct their civic identities and beliefs. By focusing on participants subjective interpretations, phenomenology offers insights that Grounded Theory's systematic coding may overlook, making it particularly relevant for examining complex, interpretive aspects of teacher civic identity.

This study's adoption of phenomenology, over Grounded Theory, reflects a constructivist ontology—viewing reality as socially constructed—and an interpretivist epistemology, which seeks to uncover meaning within participants lived experiences. While Grounded Theory leans towards a positivist perspective, phenomenology prioritises personal narratives, centering on how individuals interpret and make sense of their identities within social contexts. This choice underscores the study's commitment to exploring the complexities of teacher civic identity within an evolving educational landscape.

By focusing on phenomenology, this research positions itself to make meaningful contributions to understanding civic identity formation among educators, with potential implications for both theory and practice in citizenship education. Future research might explore mixed-method approaches to broaden these insights, yet phenomenology remains the most philosophically aligned methodology for addressing this study's research questions.

	Grounded Theory	Phenomenology
Research Focus	Develops an explanatory theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of the participants.	Describes and interprets the lived experiences of individuals regarding a specific phenomenon, aiming to capture the essence of the experience.
Ontological Assumptions	Reality is socially constructed and can be understood through the study of social processes and interactions.	Reality is subjective and based on individuals' unique backgrounds, contexts, and perspectives, which can shed light on the complexities and nuances of their beliefs and ideals.
Epistemological Assumptions	Knowledge is constructed through the interaction between the researcher and the participants, with the researcher playing an active role in theory development.	Knowledge is gained through the exploration of individuals' subjective experiences and the meanings they assign to those experiences. The individual's subjective experience is placed at the centre of the inquiry.
Methodological Procedures	Constant comparative analysis Theoretical sampling Simultaneous data collection and analysis Coding (various approaches, e.g., Glaser, Charmaz)	Phenomenological interviews to elicit detailed descriptions of Experiences. Emphasis on understanding and describing an event. Interpretation of a person's or group's lived experience for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon
Applications	Legitimating inductive qualitative research and examining the dynamic connections between meaning and human behaviour through an interpretive lens.	Revealing the meaning and essence of citizenship educators' experiences and perceptions, including their thoughts, feelings, and actions related to democratic practices and processes. Well-suited for expressing participants' accounts in-depth.

Table 4: Comparison between Grounded Theory and Phenomenology as a methodological approach.

3.4 Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions of the Phenomenological Investigation

Choosing the right research methodology is pivotal as it fundamentally shapes the research's ontological and epistemological foundations. Crotty (1998) highlights the importance of clearly articulating one's worldview, as it influences every research stage, from questions to conclusions. This chapter explains why phenomenology was selected as the methodological framework for investigating civic identity construction among Politics and Society teachers.

3.4.1 Ontological and Epistemological Foundations

This study assumes that 'realities are comprehensible' but only as 'changeable mental schema' that are informed yet adaptable (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.107). This perspective aligns with the complex social environment in which teachers' civic identities develop, requiring a qualitative approach (Lichtman, 2012, p.170). Initially, phenomenology emphasised epistemology; however, Heidegger's shift towards ontological questions led to an 'ontological turn' (Urcia, 2021, p.4). Heidegger (1962/2019) argued that 'being' is not objectively measurable but an aspect of lived experience, inseparable from cultural and historical contexts where language constructs reality.

Originally introduced by Brentano (1874) and developed by Husserl (1900), intentionality refers to consciousness directed towards objects or events, making experience meaningful. Here, examining how teachers direct their attention is central to understanding civic identity formation and can be divided into two areas as follows.

The first is subjectively mediated knowledge. Husserl's notion that phenomena are present only to a conscious subject raises the question of whether the social world exists outside consciousness. This study adopts the stance that the social world exists independently but is contextually situated. Drawing from Vygotsky (1962), who emphasised consciousness as shaped by social interactions, this approach allows for examining how teachers' experiences are influenced by their cultural and historical contexts. Constructed dialogical knowledge on the other hand highlights the role of dialogue and interaction in knowledge formation, seeing it as a dynamic, evolving process (McKenna, 2022, p.2). From a phenomenological view, experience is best understood through dialogical interactions, with meaning shaped by social contexts and co-constructed between researcher and participants.

Phenomenology was selected over other methodologies, such as Grounded Theory, after careful consideration of the research aims, underlying assumptions, and focus on the civic identity formation process. Phenomenology's emphasis on lived experiences aligns with the study's objective of exploring the nuanced, subjective process of civic identity development. Van Manen (2014, p.23) describes phenomenology as uniquely suited to inquiring into lived experience, treating human behaviour as more than physiological response. Ontologically, phenomenology assumes reality is subjective and shaped by individuals' unique contexts, making it ideal for studying the deeply personal, socially influenced nature of civic identity. Epistemologically, phenomenology centers the individual's experience, focusing on how teachers interpret their experiences in civic identity formation (Mertens, 2005, p.240). In-depth phenomenological interviews allow for capturing the complexity of identity development by revealing participants' lived meanings (Creswell, 2013; Marshall and Rossman, 2006).

Phenomenology's adaptability to the evolving nature of identity formation further supports its suitability. Its methods encourage understanding participants' backgrounds and contexts, offering a rich perspective on teachers' beliefs and ideals. The choice of phenomenology is driven by the study's focus on intentional, subjectively mediated, and constructed dialogical knowledge. Each aligns with phenomenology's approach to understanding how teachers focus their attention (intentionality), how knowledge is mediated through experience, and how meaning emerges through dialogue.

Selecting phenomenology reflects this study's ontological and epistemological congruence with exploring Politics and Society teachers' civic identities. This approach enables a deep investigation of teachers lived experiences while acknowledging the complex, socially constructed nature of educational contexts. The next step involves choosing a specific phenomenological approach, further refining data collection and analysis to align with the study's objectives.

3.5 Understanding the Diverse Schools of Phenomenology: Exploring Descriptive and Interpretative Approaches in Identity Research

 The field of phenomenology is divided into two distinct yet parallel schools: descriptive or eidetic (Lohmar, 2019, p.112) and interpretative or hermeneutical (Harvey and Land, 2016, p.102). The fundamental distinction between these approaches lies in their ontological foundations regarding the nature of reality. In interpretive phenomenology, the researcher's prior knowledge or experience of the phenomena under investigation is integral to the study. Conversely, in descriptive phenomenology, any prior knowledge the researcher possesses about the phenomena should not influence the study (Harvey and Land, 2016, p.102).

To comprehend the process by which teachers develop ideas about democratic citizenship and implement these ideas and experiences in practice, this study was situated within the interpretivist paradigm. This positioning aligned with the key characteristic of interpretivist research, which seeks to understand the individual rather than establish universal laws (Morgan, 2007, p.72).

Avenier and Thomas (2015) argue that the ontological assumption of interpretivism is the existence of multiple socially constructed realities. They further assert that, in terms of epistemic relativism, 'facts are produced as part and parcel of the social interaction of the researcher with the participants and knowledge is gained only through social constructions' (p.7). Burns et al. (2022, p.2) succinctly summarise the focus of interpretive phenomenology as the 'meanings of lived experiences of phenomena, lifeworld's and an enhanced appreciation for the multiple possible meanings of experience.'

Interpretive phenomenology offered the possibility of rich and detailed descriptions of participants' experiences and perspectives. Through in-depth interviews and document analysis, extensive data about educators' experiences with democracy emerged, which was analysed using various qualitative methods to identify common themes and patterns. Neubauer et al. (2019, p.91) argue that engaging in phenomenological research requires the scholar to 'become familiar with the philosophical moorings of our interpretations of human experience.' These descriptions provided insights into educators' beliefs and ideals, their pedagogical practices, and the ways in which they navigated the complexities of teaching about democracy in diverse and dynamic contexts.

Despite the clear historical phases in the development of phenomenology, certain characteristics overlap. The German school, represented by Husserl and his student Heidegger, is considered the touchstone for two styles of phenomenology that have

formed the basis for numerous derivatives. These two styles are the descriptive approach of Husserl and the more interpretative approach of Heidegger, which was shaped by hermeneutic philosophy (Greenstreet, 2014, p.15).

3.5.1 Husserlian Phenomenology: Unveiling the Essence of Conscious Experience and the Process of Reduction

Descriptive phenomenology, Edmund Husserl's late 19th-century innovation, examines how consciousness experiences phenomena, revealing their essential structural relationships (Leigh-Osroosh, 2021, p.1817-1818). Husserl's framework emphasises knowledges inherent subjectivity (Tassone, 2017, p.3) and introduces 'intentionality'—consciousness's directedness toward worldly objects (Mudri, 2021, p.6). Through detailed consciousness examination, he sought deeper insights into knowledge construction (Beyer, 2022, p.3), terming the recognition of phenomenal essence as *Anschauung* (Marosan, 2021, p.140).

Weber's subsequent 'interpretative turn' positioned social phenomena as products of individual interpretation (Strand and Lizardo, 2022, p.46), introducing *Verstehen* as a method balancing researcher objectivity with interpretation (Hanemaayer, 2021; Hammersley, 2014).

Husserl's methodology emphasises 'going to the things themselves' (Arnold, 2022, p.219) and achieving the 'natural attitude' (Husserl, 1983, p.51) through three stages:

1. **Eidetic Reduction**: Focusing on phenomenal essences rather than empirical specifics (Belt, 2022, p.407)

2. **Bracketing/Epoché**: Objective observation without preconceptions, termed 'the basic method of phenomenological analysis' (Van Manen, 2017, p.820)

3. **Transcendental Reduction**: Synthesising past research with participant meanings (Greening, 2019)

This process requires researchers to 'resist positing and refrain from assuming that a phenomenon is as it presents itself' (Giorgi, 2012, p.4), transforming existential 'obviousness' into intelligibility (Husserl, 1970, p.180). This framework later evolved through Heidegger's hermeneutic expansion (Lopez and Willis, 2004).

3.5.2 Interpretative Phenomenology: Unravelling Lived Experience and the Ontological Unveiling of Meaning

Interpretative phenomenology emphasises understanding experiential meaning through thematic engagement rather than descriptive phenomenology's focus on essences (Sloan and Bowe, 2014, p.8). Notably, hermeneutic phenomenology resists formalised analytical methods, allowing phenomenal context to guide data analysis (Landridge, 2007, p.11).

As a qualitative methodology examining lived experience and subjective interpretation, phenomenology aptly suits investigating Politics and Society teachers democratic sensibilities, their evolution, and daily manifestation.

Heidegger conceptualises everyday existence as Lebenswelt (lifeworld)— subjectively lived and intersubjectively shaped (Allen-Collinson and Evans, 2019, p.295). This existence-as-being-in-the-world principle rejects Husserlian phenomenological reduction (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016, p.2). Heidegger's Dasein ('being there' or 'presence') emphasises holistic human experience. Through Dasein, phenomena are unveiled ontologically by removing layers of everyday existential 'forgetfulness' (Frechette et al., 2020, p.2). The Heideggerian lifeworld precedes reflection or theorising. Grüny (2015, p.20) notes that 'Dasein' as 'being-in-the-world' forms ontology's foundation, rather than neutralised theoretical perspectives. Dasein projects a 'living being' that 'already know[s] this world through our coexistence with and in it' (Emerson, 2020, p.3), addressing the 'mutual entanglement' of being,

Dasein, and worldly existence (Suddick et al., 2020, p.2). Aguas (2021, p.3) suggests a 'fusion approach' beneficial for novice phenomenological researchers.

Phenomenological-hermeneutic research must navigate theoretical debates, philosophical positions, and meaning-making challenges (Dahlberg and Dahlberg, 2019, p.895). This study's adoption of interpretive phenomenology aligns with its aims to explore citizenship educators' lived experiences and civic identity development.

Descriptive (Eidetic)	Interpretative (Hermeneutic)
Husserlian Phenomenology	Heideggerian Phenomenology
Exploration of phenomena	Understanding meaning of experience
Emphasis on essences Intentionality	Unpeeling layers Lebenswelt (Lifeworld)
Anschauung	Dasein
Processes: Eidetic reduction Transcendental reduction Bracketing (Epoché)	**Processes:** Unveiling phenomena ontologically Uncovering/disclosing phenomenon Fusion approach

Table 5: Comparison between Descriptive and Interpretative Phenomenology

3.6   Justifying Interpretative Phenomenology: A Fusion Approach to Understanding Lived Experiences

Teherani et al. (2015, p.670) define phenomenology as a research approach that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it. The goal is to describe this experience both in terms of what was experienced and how it was experienced. This definition aligns with the justification for the interpretative approach provided by Frechette et al.

(2020, p.2), who contend that the main objective of interpretative phenomenology is to uncover or disclose a phenomenon by 'pulling away layers of forgetfulness or hiddenness' that are present in our everyday existence.

Frechette et al. (2020p.4) further expand on this saying that 'everydayness is characterised by forgetfulness,' citing the example of asking someone to describe the walls of their local grocery store; no matter how many times they have been there, some elements or aspects will prove elusive. This method can be applied when attempting to chronicle a concept such as teachers civic identity, as no matter how often they use it, there will be elements which they forget about. These can only be revealed through peeling away successive layers to reveal the phenomenon in its truest form.

While Husserl conceived phenomenology as fundamentally a philosophy, with the method he articulated intended to be a philosophical one (Giorgi, 2009, p.87), Heidegger (1962, p.245) argued that uncovering the basic structure of human understanding and existence was always going to be interpretive in character. Consequently, Heidegger argues that a means of bridging the gap between philosophical concepts and empirical tools was necessary.

This study aligned with the hermeneutic, existential, and ontological emphases contained in Heidegger's work, focusing on capturing the lived experiential meanings and understandings of the lifeworld and being from an ontological perspective. Heidegger rejected the notion of dualism, where the human subject is a spectator of objects, as espoused by Cartesian philosophers and Husserl. The interpretive approach is characterised by asking why the phenomenon comes about or how it unfolds over time (Elliott and Timulak, 2005, p.149).

A crucial element of the fusion approach in phenomenology is the Hermeneutic Circle. Returning to a Classical understanding of rhetoric and hermeneutics, the circle represents the relationship between the whole and its parts: we can only understand the parts of a text, or any body of meaning, out of a general idea of its whole, yet we can only gain this understanding of the whole by understanding its parts (Grondin, 2017, p.1). For Heidegger (2004, p.153), the circle possesses an ontologically positive significance, and the investigation must be concentrated on the phenomenon or thing itself, incorporating 'the first, last and constant task' (Gadamer, 2004, p.269).

Goodson and Silkes (2001, p.2) argue that adopting this approach 'explicitly recognises that lives are not hermetically compartmentalised' and there is a 'crucial interactive relationship' between individuals' 'lives, perceptions, experiences, historical and social contexts and events.' Dörfler and Stierand (2020, p.4) discuss what they call the 'most elusive aspect' of the lived experience, which is 'qualia' or the part of the lived experience that cannot be put into words, which appears in our consciousness, is accessible only through introspection, and is describable only in subjective terms. In other words, the challenge is to engage in the study of a person's lived experience of a phenomenon that highlights the universal essences of that phenomenon (Neubauer et al., 2019, p.93).

In selecting Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the primary research method, this study sought to deeply explore the lived experiences and personal meaning-making processes of Politics and Society teachers in Ireland. IPA was particularly suited for this research due to its focus on understanding how individuals make sense of their experiences, which aligned with the study's aim of examining the multifaceted identities of educators. While other qualitative methods, such as Grounded Theory, could also have provided valuable insights, IPA was chosen for its

capacity to uncover the nuanced and complex ways in which teachers perceive their civic identities.

However, it is important to acknowledge the inherent limitations of using a phenomenological approach. The emphasis on subjective experience means that the findings are deeply contextual and may not be easily generalisable to all teachers. Additionally, the researcher's interpretation played a significant role in the analysis, which could introduce bias. To mitigate these limitations, the study employed reflexivity and triangulation to ensure a rigorous and transparent interpretation of the data. The challenges and the steps taken to mitigate them will be described in greater detail in subsequent sections of this chapter.

The choice of IPA for this study reflected a commitment to understanding the intricate processes through which Politics and Society teachers construct and experience their civic identities. By centering the research on participants' lived experiences, IPA aligned with a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, which sought to uncover the meanings individuals ascribed to their experiences. This alignment underscores the importance of exploring how teachers' personal and professional contexts shape their identities, thereby providing a richer, more textured understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

3.6.1 Integrating van Manen's Phenomenological Approach with Voice-Centred Relational Method in Qualitative Research: A Paradigmatic Synthesis

Qualitative research 'persistently engages with life's profound and elusive questions, demonstrating a fascination with authentic human experiences' (Smythe and Gibbons, 2007, p.39). Max van Manen's phenomenological approach bridges descriptive and interpretative methodologies through five universal 'existentials' pertaining to 'everyone's life world' (van Manen, 2014, p.302):

1. Lived time (temporality)

2. Lived space (spatiality)

3. Lived body (corporeality)

4. Lived human relations (relationality)

5. Lived things and technology (materiality)

These existentials facilitate heuristic phenomenological exploration, simultaneously describing phenomena and mediating interpreted meanings (van Manen, 2014, p.302).

The lived body, described as 'our pivot of existence' (Tembo, 2016, p.2), unveils otherwise invisible meanings (Foley et al., 2020, p.147). Temporality reflects identity experience (van Manen, 2014, p.306), while relationality, spatiality, and materiality examine interconnectedness, spatial experience, and material interactions respectively. These dimensions interweave within the lifeworld (van Rhyn et al., 2019, p.839; Rich et al., 2013, p.501).

Van Manen's six-step method provides a structured framework for exploring lived experiences 'through a dynamic interplay among research activities' (2016, p.30). The six steps are as follows:

1. Turning to lived experience's nature

2. Investigating experience as lived

3. Reflecting on essential themes

4. Describing through writing and rewriting

5. Maintaining strong phenomenon orientation

6. Balancing parts and whole

The method's 'heart' lies in writing, with descriptions forming the foundation for reflective writing through 'careful and repeated revisions both of the researcher's interpretive text as well as of the descriptive accounts themselves' (Friesen, 2023, p.6). This framework enabled deep insights into Politics and Society teachers' lived experiences, revealing nuances of their civic roles within educational contexts.

3.6.2 Voice-Centred Relational Method and Analysis

The Voice-Centred Relational Method (VCRM), also known as Voice-Centred Relational Method Analysis or the Listening Guide, complements van Manen's approach as an emergent method within qualitative research. Rooted in the work of Carol Gilligan (2004, 2015), VCRM is a qualitative research method that focuses on individual voices and the relationships between them. However, it can also be conceptualised as a methodology due to its specific set of assumptions about the nature of knowledge and the role of the researcher. These assumptions include:

1. The significance of the researcher's experiences and biases in the research process
2. The primacy of participants' voices
3. The importance of relationships between participants and the researcher in the research process

Sweeney et al. (2019, p.2) argue that as a methodology, VCRM 'focuses on the voices (the stories and perspectives) within participant narratives.' Bruneviciute (2017) concurs with its methodological status while acknowledging its initial development as an interviewing method.

VCRM can also be considered a method due to its specific set of procedures for data collection and analysis. These procedures, along with their corresponding steps in van Manen's approach, are as follows:

1. Reading data line by line, focusing on personal pronouns, especially I-Voices (Investigating experience as it is lived)

2. Identifying I-poems, short passages capturing individual participant voices (Describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting)

3. Analysing I-poems to identify patterns and themes (Reflecting on essential themes)

4. Writing analytic memos to record researcher insights (Maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon)

5. Reflecting on the research process to consider researcher biases and assumptions (Balancing research context by considering parts and whole)

Brown and Gilligan (1992, p.15) contend that VCRM is a method drawing on 'voice, resonance and relationship as ports of entry into the human psyche.' Gilligan and Eddy (2017, p.80) write that on an epistemological level, it functions as both method and methodology, 'framing the research process as a process of relationship, asking the researcher to listen closely and actively respond to data collection and analysis.' Moreover, it 'honours the role of the researcher-researched relationship, the intricacies of voice and silence, and perhaps most importantly, unearthing trends which may have gone unnoticed' (Woodcock, 2016, p. 1).

VCRM has been employed in various educational research studies. For instance, Chandler et al. (2022) utilised it to investigate students' experiences of synchronous online tuition, while Stickler (2021) employed VCRM in analysing language teachers' ideals. Clarke et al. (2023) applied VCRM to uncover perceptions of changing female teacher identities in India, and Abkhezr and Bath (2023) used it to analyse studies on student voice and counselling education in Australia.

The integration of van Manen's phenomenological approach with VCRM offered a robust framework for exploring complex human phenomena, such as teachers' civic

identity, within the qualitative research paradigm. This combined approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of lived experiences while honouring individual voices and relationships within the research process.

Stage	Key Principles	Considerations
Entering the Field	Establishing a relationship is an integral component of the research process.	Consider the researcher and participant as ongoing participants in the relationship.
Participants	People exist in interdependent relationships.	Respect the voices and perspectives of all participants.
Data Gathering	Knowledge is constructed through interaction with the self, others, and the broader social context.	Use multiple methods to explore different forms of engagement: Personal and interpersonal. Consider how participants speak about themselves, others, and their surrounding context.
Data Analysis	Data analysis should consider how people may speak of themselves and others, and their surrounding context.	Attend to the different forms of relationship (self, interpersonal, contextual). Consider the multiple voices within the data.
Dissemination	There is a relational ethic in representing the voices of participants.	Knowledge claims should reflect the partial, situated nature of constructed knowledge. Avoid objectification of participants. Present a partial understanding, instead of claiming to know the whole person's story
Reflexivity	Reflexivity throughout the research process is imperative	The researcher is an active participant in the research process.

Table 6 Integrating methodological framework into the study design (Bright 2019)

3.6.3 Unveiling the Tapestry of Teacher Identity: A Fusion of Phenomenology and Voice-Centred Relational Methods

The philosophical alignment between van Manen's phenomenology and VCRM becomes apparent in their shared commitment to understanding the depth and complexity of human experiences. Both approaches recognise the significance of context, interpretation, and reflexivity in the research process. van Manen's

phenomenology provides the philosophical groundwork by emphasising the exploration of lived experiences, while VCRM builds on this foundation by foregrounding the dialogical and relational aspects of those experiences. VCRM focuses on capturing and analysing voices and stories within a relational context, which complements van Manen's emphasis on lived experience and reflective writing. Interviews with teachers regarding their civic education journey were enhanced using VCRM principles. Once the data was collected Voice Centred Relational Analysis was used by the researcher to attend to the different voices within data, understand how, when, and why the voices arise, and explore the relationships between these voices, and between the voices and the context (Bright, 2019, p.155) The integration of van Manen's phenomenological approach with VCRM involves a dialectical interplay between exploring the essential themes of individual experiences and recognising the relational dynamics within a narrative.

Instead of traditional interviews, VCRM would suggest conducting narrative interviews that allow the teacher to tell their story in a more open and exploratory manner as the first step. Therefore, in this research, this involved inviting the teacher to share personal stories, anecdotes, and experiences related to their background, experiences and challenges of teaching Politics and Society etc. The focus was on capturing their voices and unique perspectives within the context of their journey. This prevents against theorising the self as a unitary subject and opens the possibility of considering the self as dialogical, multiple, and coming into being through relation and dialogue with others (Frances, 2023, p.53). The data was read line by line with particular attention paid to the personal pronouns that are used. Personal pronouns, such as 'I,' 'me,' 'you,' 'we,' and 'they,' help to identify the voices of the participants in studies using this approach. However data saturation was a real risk in this work, so I primarily focused on the I Voices of the individual participants, but I

did need to take the 'other' voices into account to give context to the I voices. This was crucial in telling the 'I Stories' but also for understanding the multiple voices. The Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin argued that language is always a multiplicity of languages so there are always multiple voices present so the researcher must be cognisant of this 'heteroglossia' or the 'polyphonic voices' present in a performance i.e. the interview (Cohen, 2009, p.333) How then did this approach work in practice?

Venn diagram:

Left circle:
Living the experience

Thematic Reflection

Writing and rewriting

Overlapping (center):
Depth

Context

Relationships

Understanding

Right circle:
Listenings

Voice

Reflexivity

van Manen's Phenomenological Approach

Voice Centred Relational Method/Listening Guide

Methodological Flow

Conduct narrative interviews to capture teachers' stories and perspectives

Read data line by line, paying attention to personal pronouns, esp I Voice (VCRM)

Identify and analyse I-poems to capture individual voices (VCRM)

Reflect on essential themes characterizing the phenomenon (van Manen)

Write and rewrite to describe the phenomenon, maintain a strong orientation to the research questions (van Manen)

Write analytic memos to record researcher's insights and reflect on the research process and researcher's biases (VCRM)

Figure 7: Unique and overlapping elements of van Manen and Listening Guide

3.7 The Listening Guide: Replacing Judgment with Curiosity

The Voice Centred Relational Method is also known as the Listening Guide and there is a set pattern to be followed when collecting and analysing the data which is laid out in many papers which have used the Listening Guide as part of the research process. Here however I am going to follow the guidance of Woodcock (2016) as this paper has a particular focus on how it might promote educational democracy. The following diagram illustrates the steps and associated actions when using the Listening Guide. To demonstrate this process in practice I will illustrate each listen with the content it produced and any annotations I made.

Listening for the plot
- Understanding the overall narrative structure and context of the interview.
- What is the main story being told?
- What are the key events and turning points?
- What is the overall tone and mood of the narrative?

Listening for the I
- Delves deeper into the interviewee's self-understanding and identity as expressed through their narrative.
- Using only I Statement
- How does the interviewee describe themselves?
- What are their values, beliefs, and aspirations?
- How do they see themselves in relation to others?

Listening for Contrapuntal Voices
- Explores the interplay between the interviewee's own voice and the voices of others (e.g., family, friends, society) that are present in their narrative.
- How do other people's perspectives influence the interviewee's experiences and choices?
- Are there any conflicts or tensions between the interviewee's own voice and the voices of others?

Composing an Analysis
- Synthesising the findings from the previous steps to create a comprehensive analysis of the interviewee's narrative.
- Key tasks:
- Identify key themes and patterns that emerge from the analysis.
- Connect the findings to broader theoretical frameworks or concepts.
- Consider the implications of the findings for research, policy, or practice.

Capstone Analysis
- Follow up call with participants
- Share initial findings
- Views on research process
- Address positionality/reflexivity for final time during interview phase

Figure.8: The Listening Guide Methodology

Listen One: Listening for the Plot

During this step, the main objective is to attend to the stories that informants share (Woodcock, 2016, p.3). Bekaert (2014, p. 101) asks a question about this stage of the Listening Guide: 'what is the participant choosing to tell me?' She also acknowledges the role of the personal and the 'I' of the researcher and their sense of self which is central to ensuring that the stories told by the participants emerge and that I as researcher do not impose my understandings on them.

Upon completion of interview transcription, a multi-layered analytical process was initiated.

This process began with a critical 'listening' of the interview recordings, during which observations were made directly on the transcripts. An example is shown here.
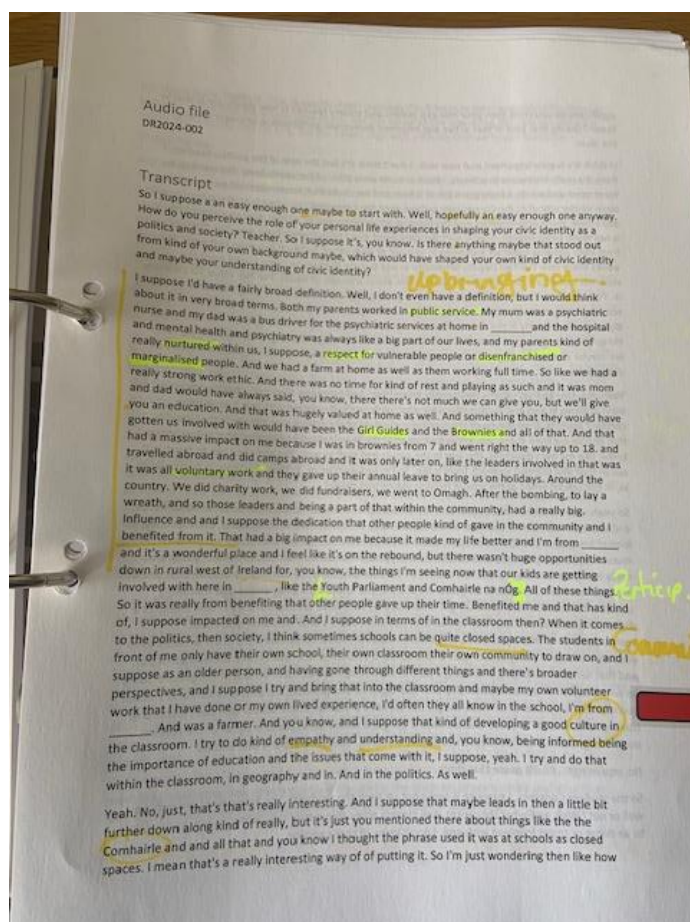
Figure 9: Listening For The Plot

The primary objective was to construct a comprehensive narrative arc of the teacher's life trajectory, encompassing their origins, influential factors, and conceptualisation of civic identity. At the same time, attention was paid to recurring phrasing and notable comments, as well as to the nuanced aspects of communication—the silences, hesitations, and moments of uncertainty—which often proved equally illuminating. The example here illustrates conflict in this part of the interview between curriculum demands and the teachers desire to explore the topic in more detail.
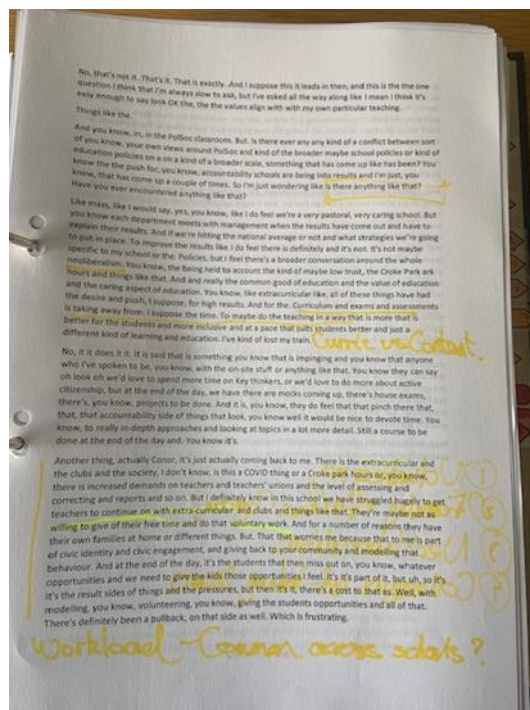
Figure 10: Emerging Voices

Post-initial review, a concise memo was generated, which captured the salient points and emergent questions. This memo, initially noted on the transcript for immediacy, was subsequently formalised into a separate document, an example of which is in the Appendices, ensuring the preservation of key themes, noteworthy observations, and potential avenues for further inquiry. This is an example of a memo created immediately after the interview had ended and the transcript downloaded.
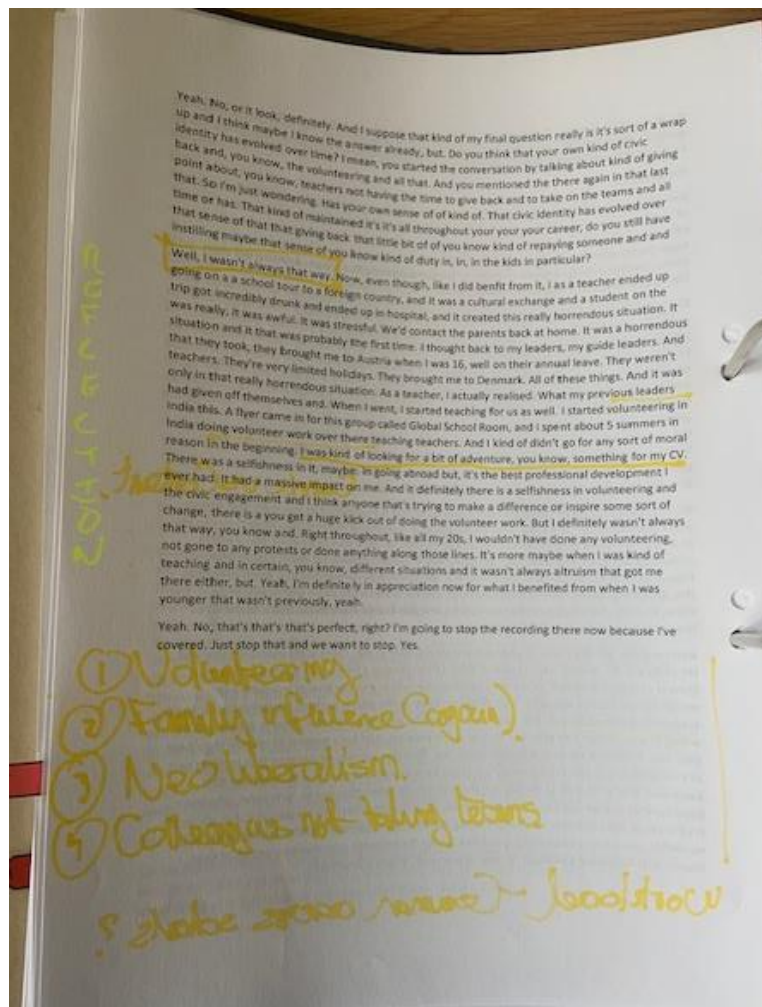
Figure 11: Memoing

The analytical process was inherently influenced by my positionality as a researcher, acknowledging the impact of my own life history and social identity. This dual role as both researcher and educator presented both advantages and limitations, echoing the observations of Jacobson and Mustafa (2019, p.9). While my insider status facilitated a nuanced understanding of implicit communications and contextual subtleties, often prefaced by phrases like 'you know yourself', it also raised potential concerns regarding bias or perceptual blind spots that an external observer might not encounter. This tension between enhanced credibility and potential bias underscores the complex interplay of subjectivities throughout the research process.

The practice of contemporaneous and post-listening memo making proved invaluable for several reasons. It served as a critical tool for reflexivity, aligning with Brown and Gilligan's (1992) advocacy for attentiveness to one's own reader response. This approach 'strengthens validity through its attention to personal reflexivity' (Woodcock, 2016, p.4). A colour-coding system was employed to differentiate multiple readings of each transcript, resulting in at least four distinct analytical layers per participant.

Beyond thematic identification, this method facilitated an exploration of the relational dimensions of emergent themes. The analysis focused on the interactional and relational aspects within the narratives, examining how these stories intersected with the educators' relationships with students, colleagues, and broader societal contexts. This relational analysis provided deeper insights into the educators' experiences, laying groundwork for subsequent analytical stages.

The iterative listening process, focusing on discovering individual voices rather than immediately linking themes across interviews, proved crucial for comprehending the depth and complexity of individual experiences and the variations between respondents' narratives (Hutton and Lystor, 2020, p.13). This approach aligns with Sullivan's (2012, p.67) concept of intertwining 'bureaucratic and charismatic elements' in dialogic data analysis—balancing the systematic identification of themes with the interpretive process of code and theme labelling, ultimately leading to the distillation of key findings.

These identified themes subsequently formed the foundation for the construction of stories or I-Poems, marking the second phase of the Listening Guide methodology. This approach ensures a rigorous, multi-dimensional analysis that respects both the individual voices and the overarching themes emerging from the data.

Listen Two: I Poems and Dialogical Engagement

The second listen involved reading the transcripts of each interview and highlighting

all the 'I' phrases therein. An example is shown here.
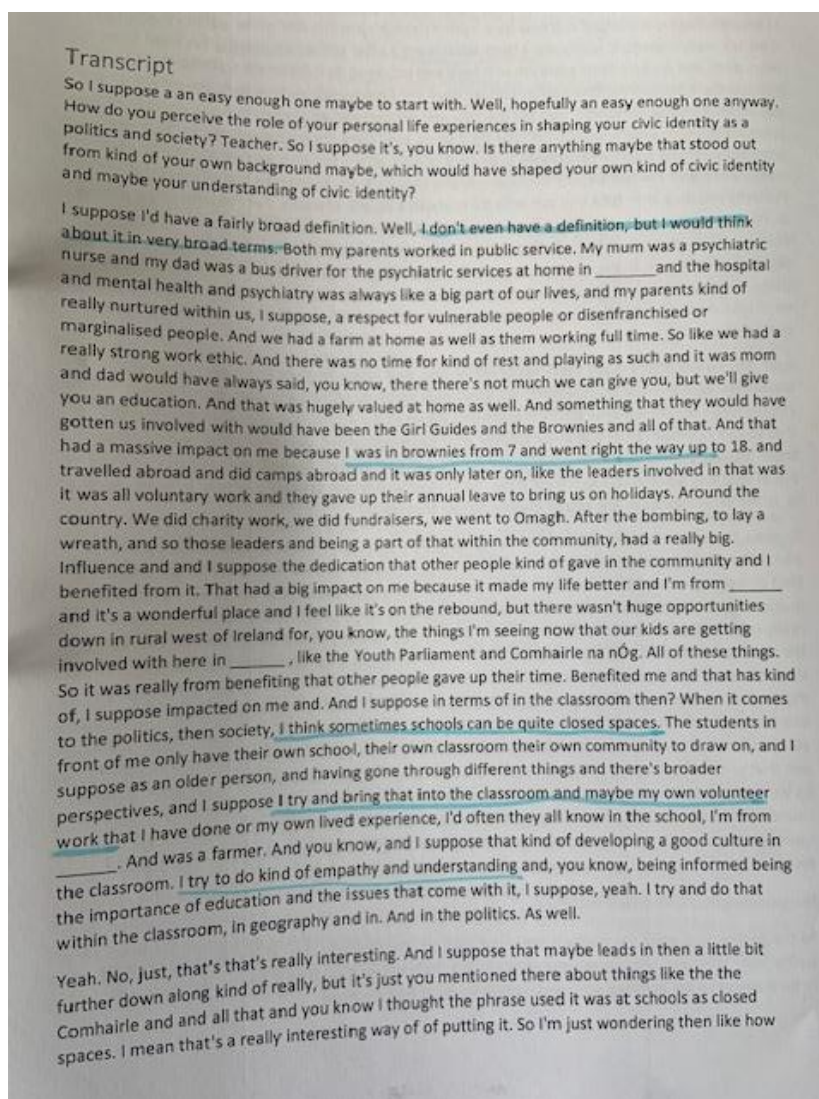
Figure 12: I-Poems

The adoption of I-poems as a methodological tool in this study is grounded in a

growing body of literature that emphasises the value of creative and poetic

approaches in qualitative research. Moran (2024, p.2) articulates the pragmatic

benefits of this method, noting its capacity for 'compression of thought through

succinctness and economy of words,' which necessitates 'choosing which words to

include and how to present them, leading to a reflective endeavour with little room

for the superfluous.' This perspective aligns with the assertion by Scott et al. (2023, p.3) that poetic inquiry can 'foster emotional connections, empathy, and deeper engagement with participant voices'—a crucial consideration given the phenomenological orientation of this study.

<u>Methodological Justification and Researcher Positionality</u>

The decision to employ I-poems as a central analytical tool reflects a deliberate methodological choice that intersects with my positionality as a researcher-practitioner. This approach offers several advantages. Firstly I-poems provide a structured method for isolating and analysing the first-person voice, aligning with the phenomenological emphasis on lived experience. By foregrounding the 'I' statements, this method facilitates a nuanced examination of how participants articulate their relationships with others and themselves, offering insights into the relational aspects of civic identity formation. The structured nature of I-poem creation helps to mitigate potential biases stemming from my insider-outsider status by focusing attention on the participants' own words and self-representations. Finally the process of constructing I-poems necessitates ongoing reflexivity, compelling me as researcher, to critically examine my interpretative choices and their implications for the research outcomes.

Initially, I had considered including phrases beginning with 'we,' 'they,' or 'them' in addition to 'I' statements. However, this approach quickly proved problematic as the inclusion of multiple pronouns generated an unwieldy volume of data, potentially obscuring rather than illuminating key aspects of teachers' narratives. Tolman and Head (2021, p.158) also caution against 'having too many voices' which resonated with my experience, highlighting the risk of 'over thematising rather than listening for the key elements of the experience.'

In response to these challenges, I made the methodological decision to focus exclusively on 'I' statements. This refinement aligns with the concept of 'intriguing segments' (Woodcock, 2016, p.4) This allowed for a more focused and nuanced analysis of participants' self-representations. The creation of I-poems facilitated a unique analytical perspective, allowing me, as Helme (2022, p.86) notes, to focus closely on the words which the interviewee uses about themselves 'without the noise of the complete narrative.' This led to the creation of the following I-Poem for this participant:

DR2024-002

I was in Brownies from 7 and I went right the away up to 18.

I think sometimes schools can be quite closed spaces. I try and bring into the classroom my own volunteer work.

I try to do empathy and understanding.

I think schools are a pillar of the community. I do feel we are a very pastoral, very caring school. I know in this school we have struggled hugely to get teachers to continue with extracurricular.

I thought back to my leaders, My guide leaders.

I actually realised what they had given of themselves.

I started volunteering in India. I kind of didn't go for any sort of moral reason in the beginning.

I was kind of looking for a bit of adventure, something from my CV. it definitely wasn't always that way, you know. Right throughout my 20s, I wouldn't have done any volunteering, not gone to any protests or doing anything that on those lines?

I'm definitely in appreciation now for what I benefited from when I was younger.

Figure 13: Sample I-Poem

This approach offers several methodological advantages: The condensed format of I-poems revealed concepts not directly stated but pivotal to understanding participants'

civic identities. The sequential nature of I-poems also illuminated shifts and (in)

consistencies in participants' self-representations over the course of the interview.

The sequence of statements was not altered in any way. The poetic form also

captured emotional nuances that might be lost in more traditional thematic analyses.

While the I-poem method offers significant analytical potential, it is important to

acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, the extraction of 'I' statements from their

broader narrative context risks oversimplification or misinterpretation. The method's

focus on explicit 'I' statements may not have fully captured the experiences of

participants who expressed themselves through alternative linguistic structures.

To address these limitations, I implemented several strategies. I regularly referred

back to full transcripts to ensure I-poems were interpreted within their broader

narrative context. I also shared I-poems with participants for feedback and

clarification, enhancing the credibility of interpretations. Finally by using I-poems in

conjunction with other analytical approaches it provided a more comprehensive

understanding of participants' experiences.

The adoption of the I-poem method necessitated a reflexive examination of my

positionality as a researcher-practitioner. My insider status as an educator provided

valuable contextual understanding but also risked influencing the selection and

interpretation of 'I' statements. To navigate this tension, I adopted a stance of

'critical proximity' (Massumi, 2002, p.174), maintaining analytical distance while

leveraging insider knowledge to enrich interpretations. This approach meant

continuously relating I-poem analyses back to the broader theoretical framework of

civic identity formation, ensuring interpretations were not solely based on personal

experience or assumptions.

The integration of I-poems into the broader phenomenological framework of this study offered a novel methodological approach to exploring the development of teacher civic identity. By explicitly acknowledging and critically examining my positionality throughout the I-poem creation and analysis process, this study has achieved a high level of methodological rigor and transparency. I was also conscious of maintaining the integrity of statements made by the participants while eliminating any excess or irrelevant content and deciding where the statement to be used in the I Poem should end.

The I-poem method, when combined with rigorous reflexive practice and methodological triangulation, provides a powerful tool for capturing the nuanced, subjective experiences of Politics and Society teachers. This approach allowed for a deep engagement with participant voices while maintaining the necessary analytical distance for scholarly inquiry.

As the study progresses to the presentation and analysis of empirical findings, the I-poem method will serve as a crucial component in elucidating the complex interplay between personal narratives, professional identities, and broader societal contexts in the formation of teacher civic identity.

Listen Three: Contrapuntal Voices, Double Voiced Discourse and Created Dialogue

Woodcock (2016, p.6) writes that the third listen in Voice-Centred Relational Method (VCRM) provides researchers with an opportunity to explore the ways in which voices can either 'melodiously interact' or exist 'in tension with one another.' Gilligan et al. (1990, p.115) term this tension or interweaving as 'contrapuntal.' Morgan et al. (2024, p.3) emphasise that these 'harmonies and dissonances' are 'honoured' rather than categorised into binary 'good and bad' classifications. In this

example we can see voices of conflict, disillusionment and uncertainty beginning to emerge within three paragraphs of each other.
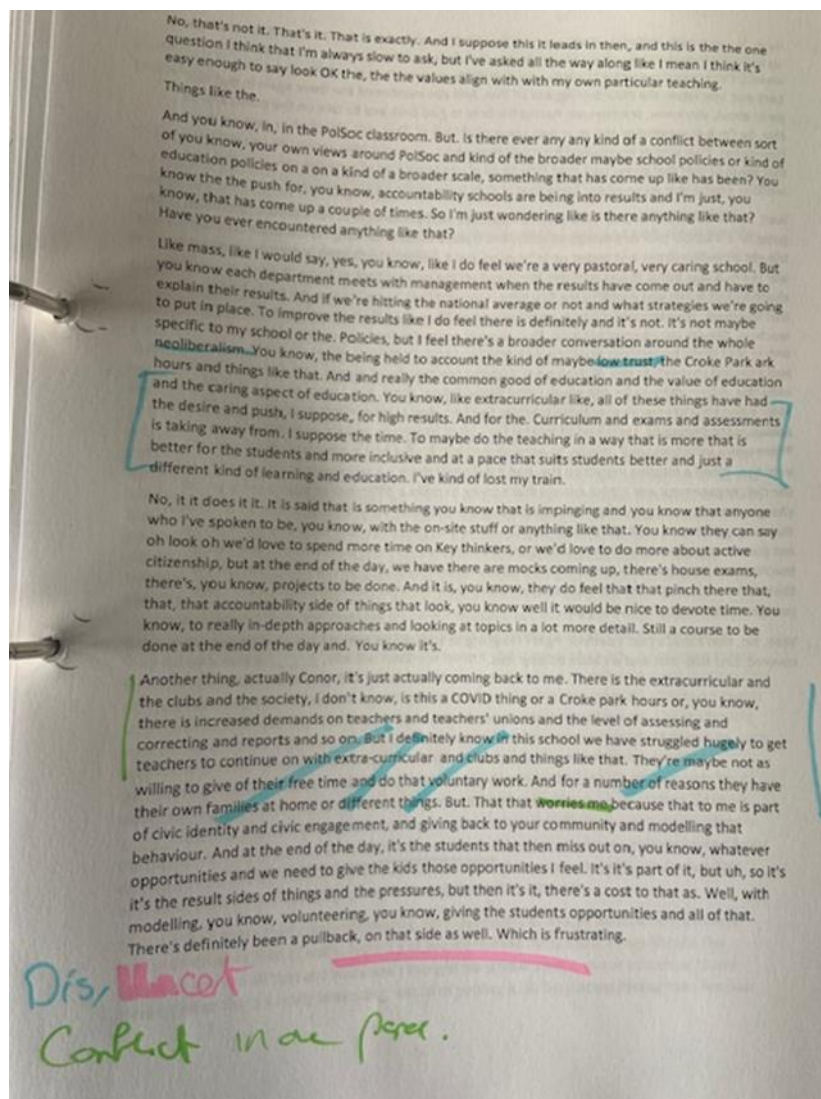
Figure 14: Contrapuntal Voices

The application of contrapuntal voices in educational research is well-established. Studies across various disciplines have employed this approach, including investigations with Religion educators (Hyde, 2012), English teachers delivering poetry classes (Grogan, 2020), music theory (Marlowe, 2018), and History (Stuart, 2022). The efficacy of this device in classroom settings is particularly noteworthy, as classrooms are 'full of potential speakers bidding for turns that are doled out by a single interlocutor: the teacher' (Rymes and Leone-Pizzighella, 2020, p.133). Leone-

Pizzighella (2022, p.10) further utilised contrapuntal voice analysis to examine what she termed 'side talk' employed by students to 'do school.'

Recent research has begun to focus on uncovering teachers' contrapuntal voices. Notable examples include Stickler's (2021) work with language teachers and O'Keeffe and Skerritt's (2021) study of male primary school teachers. These studies demonstrate the effective use of contrapuntal analysis to discern different layers of an individual's expressed experience (Hutton and Lyster, 2020, p.20).

Upon reviewing the color-coded transcripts from the first two listenings, it became evident that the voices overlapped in places, suggesting potential benefits from viewing them in relation to one another. This approach allows for the recognition of dominant voices while acknowledging the presence of others as a form of 'backing track.' The intricate interplay of voices, which can be conceptualised as a negotiation of power relations, offers a rich avenue for exploring the dynamics of human communication and social interaction. Stickler (2021, p.10) argues that the search for contrapuntal voices demonstrates the impossibility of reducing individuals to a single statement or voice. Gilligan et al. (2004, p. 165) emphasise that listening (as opposed to reading) for at least two contrapuntal voices acknowledges that individuals express their experiences through a multiplicity of voices or modalities. To further elucidate these voices, the concept of double-voiced discourse was incorporated into the analysis.

Double-voiced discourse is a complex communicative phenomenon permeating everyday interactions. Baxter (2014, p.29) defines it as a form of communication 'directed both towards the referential object of speech as in ordinary discourse, and toward another's discourse, towards someone else's speech.' In the context of interviewing teachers about civic identity, double-voiced discourse manifests when participants express not only their personal perspectives but also incorporate societal

or cultural voices that have influenced their identity formation. This process involves a dynamic interplay between the individual teacher's voice and the broader socio-cultural context in which they exist.

Mikhail Bakhtin, a key thinker in this area, posited that meaning only occurs within dialogue. For Bakhtin, language is not merely a grammatical arrangement into an understandable structure but is intrinsically connected to ideology (Shirkhani et al., 2015, p.514). Bakhtin challenges the assumption of a dichotomy between language and society, asserting that each word is intrinsically linked to both the addresser and the addressee. He argues that truth is not found within an individual's mind but 'is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction' (Bakhtin, 1984, p.11).

Bakhtin views the authoring of one's self as a teacher with an individual civic identity as a dialogic process involving two types of discourse: authoritative and internally persuasive. The former represents political and moral discourses, such as the word of the teacher or policymaker (Bakhtin, 1981). More pertinent to this research is Bakhtin's assertion that internally persuasive discourses are 'double-voiced,' partially reflecting the individual's own discourse and partially reflecting the authoritative discourses in which they operate (Brown et al., 2020, p. 449). This research has revealed a form of temporal fluidity in relation to the double-voice process. Participants' discussions encompassed past influences, present challenges, and future possibilities, not only in relation to their own civic selves but also to their students. Bakhtinian principles also have implications for the researcher, as they 'are not neutral onlooker but a constituent part of the research' (Hernandez Martinez et al., 2023, p.21).

Gilligan and Eddy (2021, p.145) emphasise that voice is not metaphorical or merely a means of conducting thematic analysis. Rather, it literally represents a person's

voice, encompassing its sound, the experience of listening to it, its tone, and all the attendant pauses and indecisions that characterise individual voices. They assert that 'voice is embodied, is in language and is an instrument of the psyche.' This perspective aligns with Gilligan et al.'s (2004) assertion that the richness of human experience lies in embracing the diverse ways individuals express their thoughts and emotions.

In conclusion, the integration of contrapuntal voices analysis and double-voiced discourse provided a nuanced framework for understanding the complex interplay of individual and societal voices in teachers' expressions of civic identity. This approach acknowledged the multifaceted nature of human communication and offered insights into the dynamic relationship between personal experiences and broader social contexts in educational settings.

Listen Four: Synthesising Multiple Listenings: The (Nearly) Final Step of the Listening Guide

The culmination of the Listening Guide method involves a comprehensive analysis of the data generated through each preceding step, necessitating the incorporation, synthesis, and consideration of all interpretations and memos (Petrovic et al., 2015, p.4). This final phase proved to be the most demanding, as it required a holistic examination of the data generated across the three previous steps. Upon initiating this process, it became apparent that the procedural and prescriptive elements of the Listening Guide, while invaluable during individual data analysis steps, were less conducive to the synthesis of these disparate elements. A thorough review of extant literature employing the Listening Guide revealed the necessity for a bespoke analytical approach that would preserve the integrity of the valuable data collected.

To address the challenge of data synthesis, a novel analytical framework was created: 'The Song of Civic Identity.' This framework drew inspiration from musical theory, specifically the concept of contrapuntal voices. In musical composition, it is imperative that individual voices (or motions) maintain their independence while simultaneously contributing to a harmonious whole. The four primary motions in contrapuntal music—parallel, similar, contrary, and oblique—were adapted to capture the multifaceted experiences described by the research participants:

Parallel Motions (Foundational Voices): These represent the initial phase of civic identity development, denoted by consistent directional movement.

Similar Motions (Pedagogical Voices): These capture the diverse approaches to prioritising civic identity in classroom settings, moving in the same general direction but with varying intervals.

Contrary Motions (Vulnerable Voices): These encapsulate elements of conflict, uncertainty, and detachment evident in participant narratives, moving in opposite directions.

Oblique Motions (Reflective Voices): These represent the juxtaposition of constant personal beliefs against shifting external influences, such as curricular changes or neoliberal discourses.

This framework facilitated a fourth listening of the interview data, utilising colour coding to delineate these motions. Subsequently, a graphical representation of the various voices was attempted, necessitating the grouping of elements within each motion category as illustrated in the following diagram.
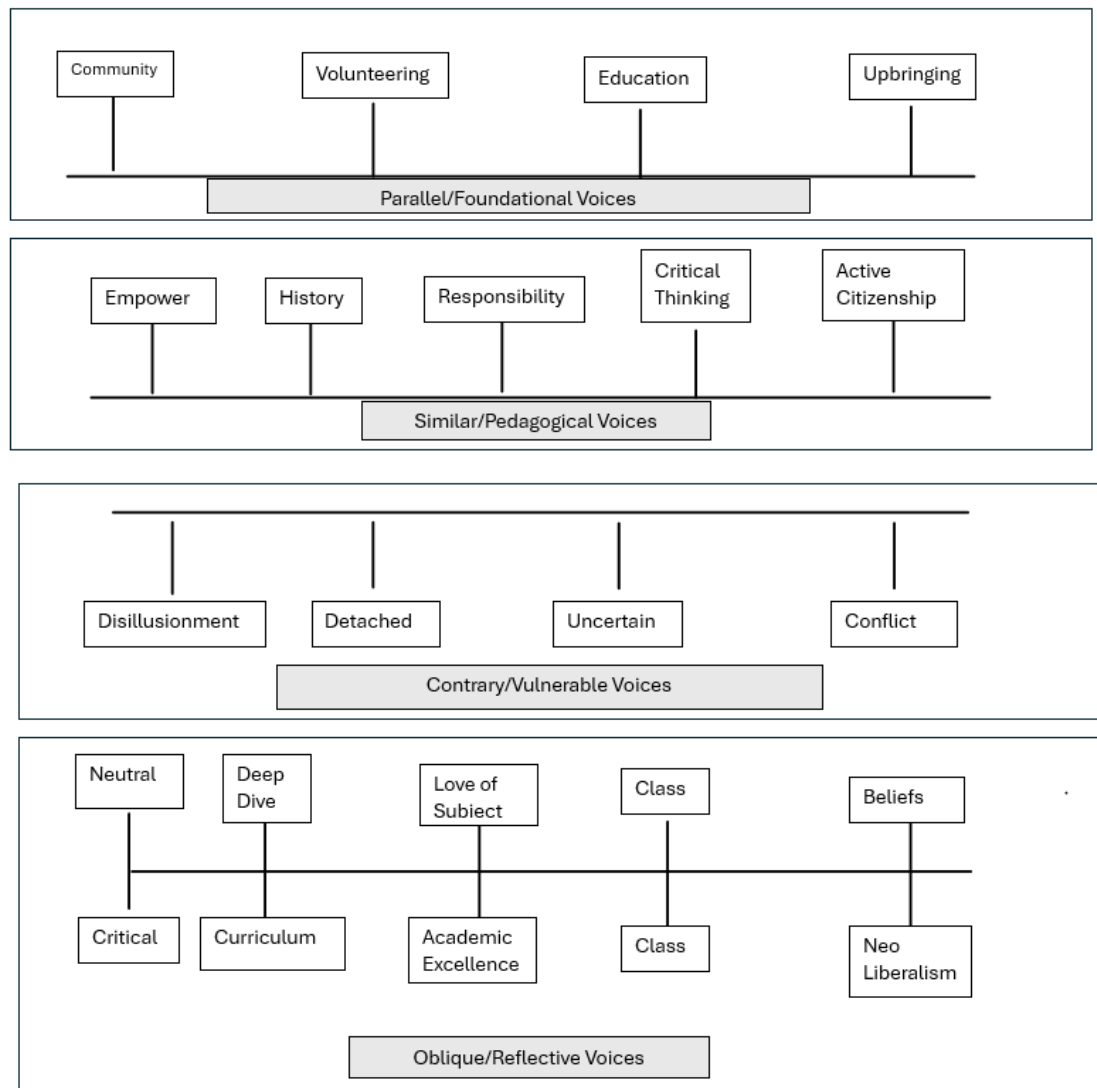
Figure 15: Voices of Civic Identity

Systematic Debriefing: An Unintended but Informative Extra Step

To conclude the data collection phase and enhance triangulation, rigour, and reflexivity, a capstone activity was implemented in the form of a systematic debriefing process (McMahon and Winch, 2018, p.1). This approach aligns with Brown and Benson's (2005, p.674) definition of a capstone as a crowning achievement and Starr-Glass's (2010) description of 'providing a holistic perspective' (p.9).

The debriefing process served as a critical mechanism for validating and verifying initial findings, consistent with member checking in qualitative research (Lincoln and

Guba, 1985). This iterative approach enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of research outcomes through triangulation (Denzin, 2016, p.81) and fostered a collaborative researcher-participant relationship (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p.16). Participants expressed appreciation for the recognition of their civic identity, aligning with Finlay's assertion that reflexive practices can empower participants by validating their experiences (2002, p.225).

Yilmaz (2013, p.319) posits that debriefings supplement qualitative methods like interviews, increasing credibility by mitigating method-specific errors and improving methodological consistency and self-awareness. The process also captured potential shifts in participants' perceptions due to subsequent reflection or experiences, enriching the temporal contextualisation of study findings.

Following initial analyses, all 18 participants were invited to engage in follow-up phone calls. Thirteen participants engaged in debriefing sessions lasting 20-30 minutes each. The sessions aimed to:

Discuss initial findings

Elicit participants' thoughts on these findings

Ascertain reflections on the interview process

The sessions began with an overview of the analysis process and main findings, followed by participant reflections. Non-participation was primarily due to time constraints, a factor warranting consideration in future research planning.

3.8 Navigating Research Dynamics: Positionality, Rigour and the Promise and Peril of the Listening Guide for Data Collection and Analysis

A fundamental epistemological tenet of interpretative phenomenology is that the researcher is inextricably embedded within the world they study, eschewing the notion of bias-free observation in favour of an interpretive approach to understanding phenomena (Neubauer et al., 2019, p.92). This paradigm acknowledges the researcher as an active agent in the co-construction of knowledge, transcending the role of a passive observer or data interpreter. In light of this epistemological stance, it becomes imperative to articulate a comprehensive and nuanced explication of my positionality as a researcher.

Positionality, as elucidated by Holmes (2020, p.1), encompasses both an individual's worldview and the stance they adopt vis-à-vis the research endeavour, including its sociopolitical context. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) delineate three primary dimensions through which researchers can articulate and develop their positionality namely by:

Locating oneself in relation to the subject matter, acknowledging personal perspectives that may influence the research trajectory.

Positioning oneself vis-à-vis the research participants, considering the reciprocal perceptions and power dynamics at play.

Situating oneself within the broader research context and methodological framework.

Building upon this tripartite conceptualisation, I propose the addition of a fourth dimension: analytic or hermeneutic positionality, which acknowledges the researcher's role in meaning-making during the analytical phase.

In situating myself vis-à-vis the subject matter, I acknowledged my professional background in education as a lens through which I interpreted the civic and professional identities of Politics and Society teachers. This reflexive stance necessitated a continuous critical examination of personal biases and preconceptions, particularly those stemming from my embeddedness within traditional civic structures and representations, i.e the Houses of the Irish Parliament. For instance, when participants critiqued aspects of parliamentary representation (e.g., gender or class disparities), I had to consciously bracket my own potentially defensive reactions to ensure an open and authentic engagement with their perspectives.

Addressing the relational dimension of positionality required a deliberate strategy to navigate and mitigate power dynamics inherent in researcher-participant interactions. By fostering an empathetic and respectful dialogic space, I created conditions conducive to authentic narrative sharing. This relational positionality was particularly crucial given the interpretative nature of the study, where my interpretations were inextricably interwoven with participants' narratives. The adoption of a collaborative approach to meaning-making aligned with the epistemological foundations of interpretative phenomenology and contributed to the richness and validity of the data gathered.

Positioning myself within the broader research context and methodological framework demanded ongoing reflexivity and methodological rigour. This involved a critical appraisal of how the educational and societal context in Ireland shaped both the research questions and the interpretative lens applied to the data. Moreover, the methodological choices, particularly the adoption of Interpretative Phenomenological

Analysis (IPA) and the Listening Guide, were scrutinised for their epistemological congruence and potential influence on data interpretation.

The introduction of analytic or hermeneutic positionality as a fourth dimension represented a novel contribution to the discourse on researcher positionality. This dimension acknowledges the researcher's active role in meaning-making during the analytical phase, moving beyond data collection and presentation to shape the emergent understanding from participants testimonies. The interpretative phenomenological data analysis framework, utilising voice-centered relational analysis and constructed dialogue, situates the researcher within the realm of the double hermeneutic (Rooney et al., 2023, p. 3). This concept elucidates the dual interpretative process wherein participants offer their interpretation of their civic identity formation, which is subsequently interpreted by the researcher. However, as Shinebourne (2011, p.18) notes, this understanding remains 'second order' as access to participants' lived experiences is mediated through their testimonies.

The multidimensional approach to positionality outlined above necessitated a robust reflexive practice throughout the research process. This reflexivity manifested itself in several ways:

1. Continuous journaling to document personal reactions, insights, and evolving interpretations.

2. Member checking with participants to ensure the fidelity of interpretations to their lived experiences.

3. Explicit acknowledgment in the write-up of how personal background, theoretical orientations, and methodological choices have shaped the research outcomes.

By adopting this comprehensive and multidimensional approach to positionality, including the novel dimension of analytic positionality, this research aims to achieve a high level of transparency, ethical rigour, and interpretative depth. This approach not only aligns with the epistemological foundations of interpretative phenomenology but also contributes to the broader discourse on researcher positionality in qualitative research.

3.8.1 Negotiating the Insider-Outsider Dichotomy: A Critical Examination of Researcher Positionality in Phenomenological Inquiry

Qualitative research, particularly within the phenomenological tradition, presents a fundamental paradox: the researcher must simultaneously immerse themselves in participants' experiences while maintaining critical awareness of their own biases (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994). This study navigates this complexity from an 'insider-outsider' perspective (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009), acknowledging the researcher's multifaceted roles as interviewer, study designer, interpreter, and professional within the field of study (p.54).

To address the tensions inherent in this positionality, a rigorous reflexive approach was employed throughout the research process. Central to this practice is the concept of bracketing, rooted in Husserl's epoché, which emphasises the suspension of preconceptions to allow authentic emergence of participants' experiences (Emiliussen et al., 2021, p.3). However, the feasibility of complete bracketing is contested. Dahlberg (2022,p.1020) proposes 'bridling' as an alternative, conceptualising it as a movement towards original understanding that maintains openness to unexpected revelations.

Implementing bracketing (or bridling) presented significant challenges, given the researcher's own extensive classroom experience. Following Giorgi's (2006) approach, bracketing was primarily applied during the analysis phase rather than

during interviews, allowing for more authentic engagement with participants during data collection.

To mitigate potential subjective influences and ensure phenomenological validity (van Manen, 2007), several strategies were employed:

The Listening Guide: Facilitated focus on emergent themes and "I" statements, distinguishing between participants' narratives and researcher interpretations.

Reflexive Journaling: Maintained throughout the research process for ongoing critical examination of positionality.

Member Checking: Engaged participants in verifying transcripts and preliminary interpretations to ensure authenticity of their voices.

3.8.2 Sampling

This study employed a non-probability, purposeful sampling approach, aligning with Emmel's (2013) conceptualisation of research as a process of identifying causal conditions and revising explanations based on evidence (p.157). Purposeful sampling, widely used in qualitative research, involves selecting participants who are particularly knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest (Cresswell and Plano-Clark, 2011). This approach enabled the gathering of 'information-rich data' (Palinkas et al., 2015, p.534) from Politics and Society teachers at the senior cycle level, aligning ontologically, epistemologically, and axiologically with the study's aims (Campbell et al., 2020, p.653).

The choice of purposive sampling was also anticipative, considering potential arguments for and against the study's credibility (Patton, 2015, p.34). The population was defined based on factors directly affecting the concepts under study, emphasising depth over breadth in understanding the phenomenon (Goldschmidt and Matthews, 2022, p.16).

While recommendations for sample size in phenomenological studies vary—ranging from 3-6 participants (Palinkas et al., 2015) to 5-25 (Creswell, 1998)—this study aimed for saturation, considered the 'gold standard' for determining purposive sample sizes (Beitin, 2012, p.243). Following ethical approval from DCU's Research Ethics Committee in January 2024, a call for participants was distributed through the Politics and Society Teachers of Ireland mailing list. From 23 initial expressions of interest, 18 participants were recruited, each providing informed consent and receiving detailed study information.

The sample size aligns with previous studies utilising the Listening Guide, which range from 5 (Ohlmann, 2014) to 18 participants (Zambos and Zambos, 2013). This approach, coupled with the multiple listening experiences in the analysis phase, was deemed sufficient to yield rich data and achieve theoretical saturation.

3.8.3 Interviewing

Qualitative research interviews, while often characterised as 'a conversation with a purpose'(Smith et al., 2022, p.57), present a complex methodological landscape in interpretative phenomenological research. The apparent simplicity of this conversational approach belies its structured nature, guided by specific research questions that elicit participants' narratives and perceptions of significant experiences. This process facilitates a 'rigorous exploration of the meanings and reflections on the experience' (Skilbeck et al., 2023, p.3), leveraging the idiographic nature of interpretative phenomenological analysis to access insider perspectives.

The prevalence of interviews in contemporary society, what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p.12) term an 'interview society', has led to a reliance on 'face-to-face interviews to reveal the personal, the private self of the subject' (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997, p.309). However, the apparent informality of research interviews masks their inherent complexity. Thomas (2020) delineates the multifaceted nature

of phenomenological interviewing, encompassing preparation, balancing structure and flow, and navigating the researcher's role between therapist and investigator.

Central to this process is the management of power dynamics. Researchers must 'calibrate social distance without making the subject feel like an insect under the microscope' (Sennett, 2004, p.38), striking a delicate balance between probing inquiry and facilitating self-disclosure. This approach aligns with Moustakas's (1994) concept of 'horizonalization', which requires researchers to grant equal value to each participant statement, ensuring that 'every horizon or statement relevant to the topic and questions' is treated as having 'equal value' (Ottergren and Ampadu, 2023, p.91).

Ultimately, as Creswell and Poth (2018, p.202) emphasise, phenomenology demands a process of reflection and interpretation by the researcher, who must synthesise and make sense of the collected data. This interpretative process, grounded in rigorous methodological principles, forms the cornerstone of phenomenological inquiry, enabling researchers to uncover deep insights into participants' lived experiences.

Interviews began on the 21st February and lasted until the 2nd of May. Breaks for the St Patricks Day weekend, Easter and my own holidays explained the lengthy time frame for interviews. Interviews were completed via Zoom and lasted for between 35 and 45 minutes. The interview transcript was downloaded immediately and edited for grammar purposes: the transcription software on Zoom didn't capture all the phrases correctly so these were edited while watching and listening back to the interview. As soon as practical then the first phase of analysis was carried out. This first 'listen, involved reading through the transcript while watching and listening to the recorded interview, taking notes all the time. I then wrote a short memo at the end of the process and deleted the recording of the interview. The second and subsequent

phases of the Listening Guide analysis could be completed using the interview transcript.

3.8.4 Rigour

Skilbeck et al. (2023 p.4) write that qualitative research is driven by 'trustworthiness which covers four criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.' Many different definitions of reflexivity exist but Olmos-Vega (2023, p.242) have searched qualitative literature, analysed, and synthesised their findings to define reflexivity as 'a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes.' Examination of the data involved the TACT Framework which alters slightly the Skilbeck et al. description.

Trustworthiness	Auditability	Credibility	Transferability
Dependable outcomes	Systematic data analysis	Triangulation	Description of context
Sources and quality of data	Transparent data collection	Mixed methods	Delimitation of study
Researcher experience	Data verification	Theory	Acknowledging multiple realities

Table 7 TACT Framework (Daniel, 2018)

Building on the work of Johnston et al. (2017), Daniel (2018) utilises Trustworthiness, Auditability, Credibility and Transferability (TACT) to underpin rigour in the research process and the relevance of the research.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is paramount, enhancing the understanding and interpretation of findings (Daniel, 2019). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose various techniques to establish trustworthiness, including reflexive journals, triangulation, and audit trails, while acknowledging the elusive nature of 'perfect criteria' (p.330). Loh (2013, p.9) distills trustworthiness to achieving verisimilitude and believability.

This study employed methodological triangulation through multiple 'listenings' during data analysis, aligning with Arias Valencia's (2022, p.5) definition of comparing data from different qualitative approaches. While not a formal reflexive journal, post-interview notes and initial transcript reviews were conducted, contributing to the reflexive process.

Auditability, crucial for transparency, requires detailed documentation of research processes and decision-making (Johnson et al., 2019). Under the TACT framework, this involves illustrating evidence and thought processes leading to conclusions (Daniel, 2019). This study meticulously documented ethical approval procedures, participant recruitment, interview timing (contextualised by concurrent referendum votes), and analysis.

Credibility in qualitative research concerns the congruence of findings with reality (Stahl and King, 2020, p.26). Noble and Smith (2015, p.1) emphasise the importance of incorporating credibility-enhancing strategies throughout the research process. This study employed triangulation and member checking, involving participants in verifying interpretations post-analysis (Creswell and Miller, 2009, p.6).

Transferability refers to the applicability of findings in other contexts (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014, p.785). Smith (2017, p.137) clarifies that transferability suggests valuable lessons for similar settings rather than generalisability. Stahl and King (2020, p.27) note that transfer requires 'thick description' of circumstances. In this context, transferability provides a framework for adaptation rather than a prescriptive replication guide for future studies.

3.8.5 Creative Methodology and Researcher Positionality in Phenomenological Inquiry: A Critical Examination

The study employs a creative research methodology, drawing on Beghetto's (2016) definition of creativity as 'anything deemed as both original and task-appropriate within a particular socio-cultural-historical context' (p.8). This approach is further supported by Riis and Groth's (2020) work, which highlights the value of creative methodologies in capturing embodied and experiential knowledge, particularly in practitioner research.

The justification for this methodological choice is multifaceted. Firstly it leverages the researcher's insider perspective as a practitioner-researcher, enabling rich, nuanced insights that might elude external observers. It also aligns with a phenomenological orientation, focusing on lived experiences and facilitating a dynamic interplay between theory and practice. Finally it reflects a pragmatic application, drawing on Dewey and Schön's philosophical traditions, emphasising practical application and iterative inquiry in educational research.

The study adapts Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) Four C model of creativity to justify the use of specific methods like the Listening Guide and I-Poems. This choice is supported by Coyne and Carter's (2018) argument that 'creative research methods can support and value participant voices, addressing potential power differentials between researcher and participants' (p.28) This consideration is crucial given the researcher's insider-outsider status.

Level	Description	Application in this study
Mini-c	Personal and Subjective Creativity	Reflexive Memos
Little-c	Everyday creativity	Semi-structured interviews fostering a participatory and collaborative atmosphere
Pro-C	Professional-level creativity	Analytical phase, leveraging professional expertise
Big-C	Eminent, field-changing creativity	Analytical phase, maintaining critical distance

Table 8 The Four C Creativity Model

Newnham and Gillett (2022) argue for the value of the creative process in advancing ideas and integrating complex emotions in research. They write that developing creative potential can enhance understanding and lead to new insights. The integration of techniques such as poetry and listenings within traditional qualitative research methodologies can foster the researcher's creative process, potentially resulting in more perceptive data analysis and interpretation. However, as Brooks et al. (2020, p. 2) caution, 'creative approaches have their own limitations.' These limitations may include: Participant discomfort with engaging in creative practices, the influence of social norms and cultural conventions on creative outputs and the potential for researcher bias in interpretation of creative artifacts. Here is a summary.

Aspect	Description
1. Methodological Strategies	Structured Approach: Traditional interviews with creative elements Diverse Sampling: Participants from various school types and backgrounds Reflexive Practice: Maintaining a reflexive journal Triangulation: Multiple data sources and analytical techniques
2. Researcher Positionality	Enhanced Insight: Professional experience enriches interpretation Potential Bias: Risk of over-identification requires vigilance Ethical Considerations: Navigating power dynamics and conflicts of interest
3. Methodological Approach	'Critical creativity' stance (Kara, 2015) Combines creative methodological approaches with critical reflection Leverages insider knowledge while maintaining analytical distance
4. Integration of Methods	Creative methods integrated with traditional qualitative approaches. Grounded in phenomenological principles Aims to capture essence of experiences and relational dynamics
5. Conclusion and Future Direction	Provides transparent and theoretically grounded basis for interpretation Subsequent chapters to offer academically rigorous and practically relevant insights Focus on lived experiences of Politics and Society teachers

Table 9 Summary of Creative Methodology

Chapter 4 Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents a rigorous analysis of the civic identities of Politics and Society teachers, as elucidated through the Voice-Centered Relational Method, also known as the Listening Guide (Gilligan et al., 2003). The analysis is structured to explore the multifaceted nature of these identities, examining the intricate interplay between personal narratives, professional experiences, and institutional contexts in shaping the civic roles that teachers embody.

The chapter begins by highlighting the links between the Ériu VOICE Model which was outlined in Section 2.2.4 and the results of this research. Carefully chosen quotes from the interviews will align with each component of the model thereby adding a qualitative dimension to the table making the link between theory and evidence tangible.

The chapter then moves on with 'Listening for the Plot,' a methodological approach that identifies the salient narrative threads defining each teacher's account. This section establishes the foundation by delineating the key events and experiences that contribute to the construction of civic identity. As Bright (2019) observes, researchers employing the Listening Guide often find themselves navigating 'lots of bits of information' (p. 159), necessitating a meticulous process of synthesis and interpretation.

Subsequently, the analysis transitions to 'Listening for the Voices,' where attention is directed towards the individual and collective voices within the narratives. This approach reveals the internal dialogues and external influences that characterise each teacher's civic identity. In a study encompassing multiple participants across diverse

contexts, the process of grouping these voices involved constant comparative analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014). This iterative process entailed moving between analysis and raw data to explore the nuances of different voices and ensure their appropriate categorisation.

It is crucial to note that none of the listenings in the data gathering and analysis phase were conceived as stand-alone entities. As Chandler (2023) emphasises, 'only together can they represent someone's experience' (p. 273). The integration of these multiple listenings is essential for constructing a holistic understanding of the participants' civic identities.

The final phase of analysis involved a comprehensive synthesis of the findings, drawing together the diverse elements to address the research questions and evaluate the initial hypotheses. This process of integration and interpretation allows for a nuanced exploration of the complexities inherent in civic identity formation within educational contexts.

The chapter concludes by situating these findings within the broader theoretical landscape, engaging with pertinent literature to elucidate the implications for understanding civic identity in educational settings. This synthesis not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge but also opens avenues for future research and practice in the field of civic education.

The starting hypothesis of this research was that secondary school teachers delivering the Politics and Society curriculum in post-primary education in Ireland demonstrate heterogeneous and dynamic conceptualisations of democracy and democratic citizenship. These conceptualisations are shaped through an interplay of personal biographical narratives, professional pedagogical experiences, formal educational backgrounds, and broader socio-political contexts within contemporary Irish society.

As primary mediators of civic education, these educators occupy a critical position in the formation of student's democratic consciousness and citizenship competencies. Their interpretative frameworks and pedagogical approaches significantly influence the efficacy of civic education and the cultivation of democratic dispositions among young citizens in the Irish educational system. Therefore, the following research questions will address these issues.

Research Questions:

1.   How do the lived experiences and biographical narratives of Politics and Society teachers in Irish post-primary schools inform the construction, evolution, and articulation of their civic identities, particularly within the context of Ireland's evolving democratic culture?

2.   What tensions and challenges do Politics and Society teachers encounter when attempting to reconcile their personal civic values and lived experiences with the prescribed theoretical frameworks and pedagogical objectives of the Politics and Society curriculum, particularly in relation to democratic citizenship education?

3.   In what ways do institutional school cultures, including organisational structures, leadership approaches, and community contexts, influence the negotiation, expression, and enactment of civic identities among Politics and Society teachers, and how does this impact their pedagogical practices?

The data that addresses the research questions is strategically woven throughout the results chapter, presenting both explicit and nuanced insights. At the surface level, findings are organised in direct response to each 'listen' in the Listening Guide process, allowing for immediate accessibility and clarity. Beneath this layer, deeper patterns emerge within and between the diverse perspectives captured, reflecting the complex interplay of voices involved. This dual approach not only contextualises the

data but also enriches the interpretive depth, ensuring that both overt responses and underlying themes are fully articulated within the analysis. It also reflects the value of the Ériu Voice model. The following table illustrates the linkages between the model and the data which emerged from the interviews.

Model Component	Description of Component in Ériu Model	Key Findings Related to Component	Example Participant Quote or Observation	Interpretation in Context of Model	Implications for Civic Identity
Values and Upbringing (Habitus)	Core values and early life influences shaping civic identity	Teachers personal values often guide civic perspectives	'My Uncle would have organised elections back into the 1980's' T.3	Reflects how early values frame civic identity	Shows that personal background strongly shapes initial civic orientation
Outside Influences (Doxa)	Societal/political climate and external factors affecting identity	External issues are discussed in class	'They are looking at things on TV in Israel, Gaza you know' T.14	Demonstrates impact of social context on identity and teaching	Highlights sensitivity to societal issues as part of civic identity
Institutional Influences (Frames)	School culture and professional expectations	School ethos shapes how teachers approach civic topics	'I do feel we're a very pastoral, very caring school' T.2	Frames teacher identity within school's values	Indicates that institutional environment can support or hinder civic expression
Civic Conceptions (Narrative Identity)	Teacher's interpretation of what it means to be a citizen	Concepts of citizenship vary widely among teachers	'I would be very much promoting responsibility' T.8	Reveals how teachers' ideas of citizenship guide pedagogy	Shows variety in civic definitions influences classroom practice
Ethos (Discursive Formation)	Teacher Beliefs on the Purpose of Civic Education	Differing views on civic education's goals impact approach	'Every single one of them can and should participate in some capacity...I'm going to do a mock Referendum' T.16	Suggests beliefs affect enthusiasm for civic topics	Highlights purpose-driven approach to civic education teaching

Table 10: Ériu VOICE Model and Results

4.1 Embarking on the Journey: An Analysis through the Listening Guide

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of civic identity, employing data collected through semi-structured interviews conducted using the Voice-Centered Relational Method, also known as the Listening Guide (Gilligan et al., 2003). This

methodological approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of participants' narratives, revealing a complex landscape of perspectives and experiences. The analysis adheres to the distinct stages of the Listening Guide, each serving as a critical juncture in this interpretive process.

The analytical framework comprises three interconnected phases:

1. Charting the Terrain: Listening for the Plot

This initial phase involved a meticulous identification and examination of salient themes, emotional valences, and relational dynamics within the narratives. It provided a foundational understanding of each participant's experiential context, setting the stage for subsequent layers of analysis.

2. Delving Deeper: Listening for the Voices

The second phase entailed a nuanced attunement to the distinct voices within each participant's narrative. Through the construction and analysis of I-Poems (Gilligan, 2015), potential tensions, ambiguities, and complexities within individual accounts were illuminated. This technique allowed for a more granular exploration of participants' subjective experiences and self-perceptions.

3. Connecting the Roads: Listening for Connections

The final phase involved a synthetic analysis, exploring the interconnections and divergences among participants' experiences. This comparative approach facilitated the identification of broader patterns and insights that emerged from the collective narratives, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of civic identity formation.

This multi-layered analytical process, grounded in the interpretive paradigm, revealed the nuanced and multifaceted nature of participants' narratives. It fostered a

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deeper comprehension of their lived experiences and elucidated the complex

interplay between these experiences and the construction of civic identity.

By employing this rigorous methodological approach, the study provides a novel

contribution to the existing body of knowledge on civic identity formation,

particularly within the context of Politics and Society teachers in Ireland. The

findings derived from this analysis not only offer insights into individual experiences

but also have the potential to inform broader theoretical understandings of civic

engagement and identity in educational settings.

4.1.1   Charting the Terrain: Listening for the Plot.

This section embarks on a deep exploration of the intricate processes through which

civic identity is formed, evolved, and expressed among the participants of this study.

Using the Listening Guide method, as outlined by Woodcock (2016), the chapter

uncovers the nuanced and multifaceted narratives of the participants, particularly

focusing on the intersection of personal experience, professional practice, and

broader social and cultural frameworks in shaping civic identity.

The role of personal experience is examined, especially those rooted in family and

community life, in the initial development of civic identity. This section reveals how

early influences, such as parental involvement in politics or community service, play

a significant role in shaping an individual's sense of civic duty and identity. It also

delves into the impact of community organisations and volunteering, underscoring

their contribution to the participants' civic identity formation during their formative

years.

A rigorous examination of the evolution of civic identity over time then follows,

providing an in-depth analysis of how participants' understandings and expressions

of their civic selves have transformed in response to varied life experiences and

social contexts. This section interrogates the tensions and contradictions inherent in navigating civic identities across different life phases, with particular focus on the influences of socio-economic status, professional roles, and cultural expectations.

Subsequently, the chapter explores the critical intersection between identity and professional practice, dissecting how participants' civic identities directly influence their pedagogical approaches within educational settings. This analysis underscores the reciprocal relationship between teachers' personal histories and experiences and their role in shaping their civic engagement and instructional methods. It further demonstrates that these civic identities not only emerge from personal and professional experiences but also actively inform and shape educational practices and student interactions.

To fully contextualise these findings, it is essential to illustrate why the Listening Guide method was selected, particularly in addressing issues of positionality. The study employed Woodcock's (2016) Listening Guide method, chosen for its effectiveness in capturing the multifaceted nature of personal narratives while fostering researcher reflexivity. During the first stage of analysis, I distilled the general themes from participant narratives, as suggested by Woodcock (2016), to gain a comprehensive understanding of each participant's story. This approach was complemented by Mazzei and Jackson's (2012) concept of 'out of field voices,' which addresses the unspoken yet meaningful elements that place individual narratives within broader social and cultural contexts.

Given the study's reliance on interpretative phenomenological analysis, I fully acknowledge the complex role I played as both actor, narrator, and interpreter of the data (Yeo et al., 2023). From the outset, I recognised the potential challenges posed by my positionality, which I had addressed in earlier sections, but which warranted further exploration in the analysis phase. Savin-Baden and Major (2013) argue that

positionality reflects the researcher's stance in relation to participants, while Ozano and Khatri (2018, p.190) emphasise that it 'involves how researchers view themselves and are perceived by others, whether as insiders or outsiders'. In this context, my dual role as a former teacher and researcher brought unique challenges and advantages, such as eliciting candid responses while also risking potential bias in interpretation.

My familiarity with the educational environment undoubtedly facilitated rapport-building with participants, but it also necessitated a heightened reflexive awareness of my potential biases. As Warin (2011, p.807) defines reflexivity, it is 'a relational awareness, an ongoing self-examination of how the researcher's presence influences the data, and how participants' responses shape the research'. Throughout this process, I employed reflexive journaling after each interview, documenting any immediate reactions or biases, which I later revisited to ensure my interpretations remained grounded in the participants' voices and not unduly influenced by my personal experiences.

Furthermore, I consciously employed the Listening Guide's inherent reflexive mechanisms to navigate these challenges, particularly through Woodcock's (2016, p.4) 'reader response' method, which emphasises the need for researchers to remain mindful of their own reactions and openly explore them. This reflective process helped mitigate the risks of subjective interpretation and ensured a faithful representation of participants' narratives.

Nevertheless, I faced ongoing challenges in situating my positionality. As Olekanma et al. (2022, p.4) note, researchers do not enter studies without preconceived ideas, and this became evident as participants frequently defaulted to shared phrases like 'you know,' assuming a shared understanding based on my past experience as a teacher. At times, this led me to consider Heidegger's notion of Dasein, or existential

being, whereby participants perceived me as someone who inherently understood the classroom dynamics they were attempting to articulate.

This recognition led me to explore the concept of 'insider explanatory phenomenology' (Dorfler and Stierand, 2024, p.4), which acknowledges the unique insights researchers with professional backgrounds may bring to the study. However, I ultimately rejected this approach, recognising the need for complete immersion in the analysis, rather than relying on shared professional backgrounds, to grasp the essential nature of the phenomenon. Instead, I adopted a stance of an '*experiential outsider*,' where my past experience informed my understanding, while my current role as a researcher positioned me as an outsider, thereby allowing participants to articulate their experiences with a balance of familiarity and independence.

In summary, as participants shared their narratives, I observed their stories crystallising around three key themes:

1. The role of personal experience in shaping civic identity

2. The evolution of this identity over time, and

3. The intersection of civic identity with professional practice.

These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of how teachers' civic identities evolve and manifest in their educational practices, offering a richer, more nuanced perspective on the development of civic identity in the context of education.

4.1.2   Personal experience and Civic Identity

Lannegrand-Willems et al. (2018) write that adolescence is one of the periods in life when 'individuals both question and define their place in society and form their identity' (p.731). In another article Enright and Toledo (2023) refer to this phase as a 'civic identity apprenticeship' (p.97). A more poetic description of the early development of civic identity comes from Fokina and Logunova (2023) who contend

that civic identity is 'finding one's true self in the stream of life' (p.240). Through this research it is clear that personal experiences have a lasting impact on the identification, creation, and formation of teacher's civic identity.

One major influence in the creation of the participants civic identity is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the family home. Parental example emerged as an important factor in the early development of civic identity. T.2 referred to their parents working in a particular section of the health service '*which was a big part of our lives*' and so the parents '*really nurtured within us a respect for vulnerable people or disenfranchised or marginalised people*'. T.1 referred to the fact that their parents were '*very political*' with their father being '*a shop steward and negotiator for a high-profile union*'. Because of this '*the news was religious in our house*' and so this participant says that they were '*always quite informed about political decisions, I would have known all the politicians over the years.*' The presence of another form of media was important for another participant who referenced the role of newspapers in developing her civic identity. T.3 was living overseas at that time in their life and so they were buying newspapers '*mainly to read about baseball*' but came to the realisation that '*if I'm buying the newspaper I might as well read it*' The family also had a subscription to an Irish newspaper which '*used come every week so I was reading about what was going on in Ireland.*'

T.10 identified '*personality politics*' as being the cornerstone of her civic identity while growing up. They referred during the interview to their household being known as a '*cancel house.*' I had never come across this term before, so they explained that the father was '*a big Fianna Fáil supporter, a big supporter of Charlie Haughey*' while the mother was '*the opposite to that.*' The net effect was that come election time because '*there was basically no vote in our house because the votes would cancel each other out*'. They also went on to explain that when votes

from their area were tallied there was always '*4 votes for Fine Gael and they knew one of them was hers*'. T.8 clearly stated that '*my own family were always Fine Gael*' but then bucks the trend by stating that '*I'd be more of a floating voter*'

Belonging to community organisations which fostered a sense of volunteering and giving back also emerged very early on in the interview process as a very significant influence on civic identity. Jacoby (2009) refers to the myriad of these community-based experiences as belonging to a 'big tent.' Kiesa (2012) found that civic identity is influenced by early opportunities for involvement in civic life, the nature of involvement opportunities, and whether students had civic role models. This argument held true in this research. In one interview T.2 referenced the Girl Guides where she was a member from 7 until 18 years of age. She went on to say that it '*had a massive impact on me*' especially the leaders who did the role '*voluntarily and they gave up their annual leave to bring us on holidays around the country*.' That dedication she says, '*had a big impact on me*' and the concept of volunteering surfaced later in the interview again. Other participants also discussed community organisations in the formation of civic identity with an emphasis on volunteering and giving back to the community being seen as integral to that identity. T.5 offered an understanding of civic identity as '*my relationship with people around me, my relationship with my community, my local community, the people I interact with, work and then particularly society, society as a whole*.' They were also very strong, in a similar vein to other participants, in their support for community organisations as a key part of civic identity. They were effusive in their support of the Tidy Towns competition as an integral part of their civic identity as they grew up in an '*environment where you're seeing adults around you constantly caring about the environment and you're thinking this is the norm so that kind of civic identity for me*

has been passed down' with a further qualifying remark that as a nation '*we're obsessed, making sure our villages lovely.'*

Given the Irish context of this study it is not surprising to see the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) which is responsible for some of the country's most popular sporting pastimes featuring prominently. In one interview T.4 says that '*growing up you go through to the structures like you play for the club and then I got involved with the club, you understand the importance of meetings and dialogue and communication and that's really important*' This led to a partnership with a local charity on particular activities which '*showed me the importance of getting involved in community, supporting local and working together.'*

That sense of giving back was clearly described by T.8 who, even though they had moved from his original home area to somewhere new, recalls getting a phone call shortly after moving into their new house to come and coach one of the local teams. Interestingly they referenced gender (and the fact that there are young girls in the family) as another key factor in taking up this role even outside of their own innate sense of giving back to his new community. Membership of and participation in Gaelic Games was also a significant factor in the creation of one participant's sense of identity but not in an entirely positive sense. T.9 had their early life experiences in Northern Ireland and clearly stated that '*if you played GAA then that was definitely an issue'*

Interestingly this participants overall sense of identity growing up in Northern Ireland tallies with those of others from the same community and era and focus on rights, inequality, and social justice. T9 also refers to '*early exposure to discrimination around our civil rights' which 'moulded me' as it 'permeated everyday life, permeated your home life, your school life, your sporting life.*' They concluded that part of the interview by saying that their early life experiences

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'*pushed me towards an early recognition of what civic identity was and the power that education could have in improving civil and civic life.*' A slightly different take came from another teacher (T.7) with similar experiences in Northern Ireland. They made the point that being brought up '*in a staunchly Unionist town sharpened my nose if you like, or antennae for inequality more so than sectarianism.*'

The empirical data reveals intricate relationships between family background, political socialisation, and civic identity formation, contributing to our theoretical understanding of how civic orientations develop across generations. This analysis situates participant narratives within contemporary scholarly discourse on political socialisation while illuminating previously underexplored dimensions of civic engagement in the Irish context.

The data strongly supports Jennings et al.'s (2009) foundational work on familial political socialisation, particularly regarding parental influence on civic orientation. However, the findings suggest a more nuanced relationship than previously theorised, especially concerning the transmission of specific political alignments. While participants consistently acknowledged parental influence on their broader civic consciousness, the direct inheritance of political party allegiance proved less consistent. This complexity is exemplified by cases like T.8, whose self-identification as a '*floating voter*' despite strong parental party alignment suggests the need for a more sophisticated theoretical framework for understanding intergenerational political transmission.

The temporal aspects of civic identity formation emerge as particularly significant when examined through the lens of recent scholarship on 'impressionable years.' While traditional frameworks such as Jennings and Niemi's (1981) focus on late adolescence and early adulthood (17-25), more recent theoretical developments by Bartels and Jackman (2014) and Laaker (2023) suggest a broader developmental

window. The current study's findings align more closely with these expanded temporal frameworks, indicating significant civic identity formation during both primary and secondary education years. However, the data also supports Janmaat and Hoskins' (2022) observations regarding pre-teen political disengagement, suggesting that early civic identity formation manifests primarily through community engagement rather than traditional political participation.

Perhaps the study's most significant contribution to existing literature lies in its identification of community service as a crucial, though previously undertheorised, component of civic identity formation. While Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) citizen typology provides a useful analytical framework, the intensity and universality of participants emphasis on community engagement suggests the need for theoretical expansion. This finding takes on particular significance when considered alongside the State of the World's Volunteerism Report (2022) findings on the relationship between volunteering and democratic values.

The Irish context adds another layer of complexity to these findings. ESRI (2023) data indicating significantly higher youth voluntary organisation participation rates in Ireland (36%) compared to the EU27 average (15%) suggests distinct national patterns in civic identity formation. This marked difference raises important questions about the role of cultural and institutional factors in shaping civic engagement patterns, pointing toward the need for more nuanced theoretical frameworks that can accommodate national variations in civic identity formation processes.

These findings contribute to our theoretical understanding of civic identity formation while highlighting the need for more sophisticated analytical frameworks that can account for the complex interplay between family influence, temporal development, and community engagement, particularly within specific national contexts.

4.1.3 The Evolution of Civic Identity Over Time

Youniss et.al. (1997) write that ideological clarification offered by membership of organisations is important for young people as they can build or reject them into their developing ideologies into adulthood. Yet the organisations described in the previous paragraph are, in theory at least, ideology free which leads to two questions in this part of the research:

Has the participants concept of civic identity evolved over time and

Why/Why Not?

T.1 addressed the question of evolving identity very clearly by stating that '*10 years ago my political views would been very different. I can tell you now that I am nearly the opposite because now, I am working. I am now paying taxes*.' In this instance the teacher clearly acknowledged the role of economics in altering their political standpoint but also promoted a discussion on working vs middle class identity. This individual stated that '*both my parents are working class, I'm working class'* but a question from a college friend asking about 'how does it feel to be in the middle class?' prompted a serious debate on the issue. Indeed, he went so far as to quote his parents who said, '*you are middle class now, you're in a middle-class job*.' A later interviewee (T.10) also referenced the class element of civic identity by saying '*I'm probably a middle-class mother now'* again drawing a correlation between teaching and class. She also alluded to the changing and conflicting nature of her own civic identity. At the outset she said she is '*probably quite conservative*,' was born into a '*conservative Irish Catholic immigrant family in London'* and when the family returned to Ireland, she attended the local convent school. However, she then goes on to recount an incident on her first day in college when the lecturer walked in and '*my natural reaction was to stand up and bless myself*.' Her reaction when the lecturer declared themselves to be '*an atheist and a feminist'* was '*Thank God, fantastic,*

brilliant' seemingly at odds with her conservative upbringing. This could be

attributed to moving into a large urban area for college as opposed to remaining in

rural Ireland in the mid-1970s. Another interesting aspect of on the evolution of civic

identity comes from T.2 who engaged in the community activities described in the

previous section but then withdrew before re-evaluating her stance at a later stage in

life. Now she recognises the value of volunteer work, saying that you '*get a huge*

kick out of doing it' and goes as far as being worried that the '*giving back to your*

community and modelling behaviour part of civic identity is disappearing as

teacher's pullback on extra-curricular and clubs and things like that.' Again,

however tensions are not far from the surface. She acknowledges that '*right*

throughout, like all my 20s, I wouldn't have done any volunteering, not gone to any

protests or done anything along those lines' but did return to her original

understandings of giving back by volunteering to teach abroad '*which had a massive*

impact on me.' Once again however this statement is qualified with the admission

that '*I kind of didn't go for any sort of moral reason in the beginning. I was kind of*

looking for a bit of adventure, you know, something for my CV. There was a

selfishness in it.'

A number of participants also referenced the evolution of their civic identity since

they started teaching the course and this was particularly true for those who have

been involved from the outset. T.8 very clearly stated that their civic identity could

be '*categorised before and after PolSoc* (Politics and Society).' When pushed on

what they meant by that they explained that before they started teaching the subject

'*would have just put it down as voting, turning up and voting: that was kind of it.*'

Now they admitted that it is an '*all-encompassing thing now'*, '*promoting and*

looking after the rights of others' and '*promoting the idea of citizens having an*

impact in the different areas of society'. T.12 admitted that they were *'kind of*

surprised at the things I learned, and I was surprised at how the things I was learning as I was teaching gave me a framework in which to understand the world better.' Later they say that '*teaching the course has given me the arguments to back up what I already had a sense of.*' An increased awareness of global issues was the response of T.5 who said that '*maybe I lived in a bit of a bubble'* but '*you're just not aware, I suppose, of maybe other parts of the world what they're going through as well*'. Now however they are '*much more aware that I'm a kind of a global citizen and my actions here in Ireland do actually have a global impact'.*

T.11 and T.12 pointed out that they were now much more aware of their European identity as it (the PolSoc course) is '*bringing you out of your shell here and having to make the comparisons with EU policy and looking at EU influence and all that'* and interestingly they now look at Nordic countries and state that they have developed *'a more modern sense of Irish identity'*. So, while the latter point does not address civic identity per say the fact that this person is thinking about a broader concept of identity means that they are reconstructing their own sense of Irish civic identity. Having History as another teaching subject was mentioned by the majority of these respondents with T.9 saying that '*as a believer in the European project from a history teacher's perspective, it's one of the greatest peace processes of all time, given the continents history of conflict, some of which is still ongoing: that part of my civic identity comes into the school with me.*' Another participant with a history qualification (T.11) stated that '*You're constantly making comparisons between Ireland and the EU, it's bringing you out of your shell here and having to make the comparisons with EU policy, looking at EU influence, so you definitely develop a more modern view or a more modern sense of Irish identity, yeah.*'

These examples hint at a certain level of comfort amongst the participants in relation to EU identity and certainly does not reflect the contention by Osler (2011, p.3) that

education for national or global citizenship is 'troubled' by the emergence of an EU identity.

Petrovska's (2021) theoretical framework of civic identity formation provides a valuable analytical lens through which to examine the experiences of Politics and Society teachers, though it requires some modification to fully capture the temporal dynamics observed in this study. While her tripartite model of perceptual-systemic, normative-community, and individual-integrational stages offers useful categorisation, it is her mechanistic approach to civic identity formation that proves particularly illuminating for analysing the empirical data.

The mechanisms of origin, as conceptualized by Petrovska, manifest primarily through the internalisation of citizenship stereotypes and the imitation of civic behavioural models. This foundational stage emerged prominently in the research data, with participants predominantly demonstrating conformal patterns of civic socialisation. Their narratives frequently referenced positive parental and family influences characterised by community engagement, political awareness, and democratic participation. Youth leadership figures also emerged as significant agents of civic socialisation. However, the data also revealed instances of non-conformal socialisation, particularly in contexts of cultural and civic division, suggesting a more complex dynamic than Petrovska's model initially proposes.

The contemporary relevance of these mechanisms of origin becomes particularly salient when considering current socio-political developments in Ireland, especially regarding attitudes toward migration. The potential influence of authority figures from right-wing movements, particularly through demonstrations and social media activism, suggests possible implications for future civic identity formation patterns among young people.

The developmental stage of civic identity formation, characterised by the internalisation and protection of citizenship meanings, aligned with Jungian concepts of self-formation. However, the data revealed notable absences, particularly regarding formal political party engagement during youth. The research also identified significant shifts in civic identity corresponding to life-stage transitions, as exemplified by T.13's narrative of identity transformation between college years and career establishment.

The actual formation stage, which Petrovska characterises as an intersection of interaction, perception, information, and skills, revealed interesting departures from her theoretical framework. While her model emphasises motivation and goal-setting primarily through financial and social status considerations, the empirical data suggested a more complex dynamic. The notion of civic identity 'crystallisation' proved particularly problematic in the Irish context, with several participants describing significant identity destabilisation during the 2008-2012 financial crisis.

This destabilisation manifested in various ways, from T.3's transition from democratic engagement to civic apathy, to T.15's retreat to a '*very small footprint*' of civic identity. These findings suggest a more fluid conceptualisation of civic identity than Petrovska's model accommodates, particularly in response to significant socio-economic disruption. The data further complicated this picture through the experiences of career-change teachers, whose pre-existing professional identities influenced their civic identity formation in ways not fully captured by the theoretical framework.

These findings suggest the need for a more nuanced theoretical approach that can accommodate the fluid, responsive nature of civic identity formation, particularly in contexts of social and economic instability. They also highlight the importance of

considering how professional transitions, especially into teaching, may influence and reshape existing civic identities.

4.1.4 The Intersection of Identity and Practice and 'Out of Field' Voices

Perhaps now more than ever, the contention by Geoboers et al. (2013) that the development of citizenship of young people, and the role of education in this, is providing a lively discussion holds true. Davids (2018) writes that in order to develop citizenship and democratic values and practice, it 'becomes necessary to make sense of how teachers conceive of themselves in relation to propagating democratic values' and that 'democratic ways have to be made visible in the interactions and engagements in a classroom' (p.10). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that teachers' decisions as they relate to the promotion of a particular vision of civic life, citizenship, or democratic values, are related to the civic dimension of a teacher's professional identity. So, while schools are institutions where power permeates every aspect of its functioning, and the work of teachers is greatly managed, teachers are not passive agents (Narayanan, 2022). Pockets of autonomy are still to be found. Hadar et al. (2021, p.454) write that very often teachers will exploit the 'malleability' of curricular documents, school structures and decision makers and nowhere is this visible more than in the participants accounts of the intersection between identity and practice.

Sampermans et al. (2020) argue that not much has been known about how teachers' citizenship beliefs shape the way they socialise youth, and empirical evidence suggests that these beliefs, associated with their teaching practices and perceived school climate, reflect their citizenship norms. This connection between norms and teaching has also been explored by Akkerman and Meijer (2011) who describe three interconnected teacher identities: the professional identity or educational background, the institutional identity (affiliation to the institution they work for) and

the personal identity or background. Therefore, as Biesta (2016) writes educational activities can never be understood as completely neutral instruments: they are always internally and intrinsically – and possibly unconsciously – connected. The following section attempts to illustrate how these identities have unfolded across the interview process to varying degrees and it questions Biestas contention that educational activities are unconsciously connected.

4.1.4 A Personal Identity

Throughout the interviews a number of facets of personal civic identity and the link to classroom emerged. While there was a significant degree of correlation in a lot of cases, other interviewees illustrated a dichotomy between their own beliefs and classroom practice.

One example of this came during an interview with T.3 who felt that 'official' state bodies had failed them. They spoke about being '*caught by the moratorium and messed around with hours and stuff like that*' in the aftermath of the financial crash. Unions were '*useless 'and even though they are entitled to vote in the Seanad elections they said, 'I didn't want X to get in so I didn't vote.*' They also expressed a deep distrust of one political party due to historical issues, and wouldn't vote for their candidates '*if I was the last one there*'. They found it 'difficult' when a '*couple of kids in school go down the X rabbit hole.*' And yet the personal identity element emerges when it comes to their classroom practice. With a family background in local politics in particular this individual reverts to traditional outlets which reflects their citizenship norms. For example, having been in dispute with a mortgage provider over access to a tracker mortgage they appeared in front of an Oireachtas Committee to make their case. At the time of the interview, they were busy organising a voter registration drive ahead of a referendum saying, '*I try and encourage them to be a bit more active.*' They also say they are '*a floating voter*' and

'*try and tow the middle line even though it might be eating you to say I want to come down on one side or the other.*' T.7 mentioned that '*when I first started off I was kind of reluctant to let them see my political persuasions*' and even now, having been through a number of cycles of Politics and Society with various groups, admits that '*I have never taught identity, skimmed through it for short questions*'. Another interviewee (T.15) again referring back to the post 2008 period, spoke of that time hardening an identity which '*I thought was very kind of fluid*', becoming '*very disillusioned*' and became more focused on classroom practice which promoted student voice and critical thinking even though they described themselves as '*authoritarian and traditional.*'

Teacher positionality and the desire to foster a sense of critical engagement with democratic institutions and processes features quite prominently in other interviews as well. These can be broken into two camps: those who play a devil's advocate role and assume a stance on one side with the goal of provoking a response or others who present both sides of an argument and let the students make up their own minds. T.8 very clearly stated '*I'd be very conscious that I'd have my own opinion on it and I might share that with the students if I think it's relevant, but for the most part I will always try and play devil's advocate.*' Another respondent, T.6, said that by playing devil's advocate the students '*found it hard to pin me down and can't really figure out what my position is.*' They made the point that this approach is forcing students to '*develop the vocabulary to articulate things that are obviously in their heads.*' T.6 took on this role but in a slightly different way by advocating for some of the key thinkers in the syllabus who are more right wing in their writings and then '*listen to all the voices coming from different places and perspectives.*'

The second broad division in teacher positionality are those who present both sides of a debate and allow students to make up their own minds. T.15 said, '*I'd always try*

to present both sides of it' and let the students make *'an informed decision'* claiming that in their classroom the mantra is *'You're not entitled to an opinion, you're entitled to an informed opinion.'* T.16 stated that *'you obviously want to provide a balanced side'* to discussions but an emerging theme in this approach was the situation in the Middle East. T.5 said that *'PolSoc class is the class for you to discuss that, but you have to make sure it's within the parameters of the curriculum because it can just spiral.'* T.14 adopted a more pessimistic stance by saying that events such as that will promote a more cynical world view amongst their students. T.15, who presented both sides in their practice, defended this by saying that a guiding principle they instilled in their students was that *'no idea is above scrutiny.'*

Practice which amplifies student voice also emerged as a theme. T.14 spoke about enabling their students' voices so that *'they have a meaning; they have something positive to say...it can empower them'* while T.9 stated that *'No matter how small you think your voice is or how isolated or lonely you think your voice is you have a voice and you do use it.'* T.17 spoke about their classroom being one with *'lots of debates, there's lots of questioning.'* To get to that point however is not easy. T.4 references the fact that students were *'tentative to engage'* with the methodologies practiced and freedoms allowed in their classroom *'in the first few weeks'* but now they are *'engaged more and their motivation increases.'* T.14 put it more succinctly by saying when the students first arrived into their class they were *'beaten down, understood the system and go sit down, be quiet'* and *'don't have the confidence to engage.'* Another teacher said it was *'like pulling teeth when doing a walking debate'* early in fifth year as they were not accustomed to it as a methodology.

4.1.4.B Professional Identity

Teacher professional identity can be understood as forming within but also outside of the narratives and stories that form the fabric of teachers lives (Mockler, 2011). T.8

stated very clearly that their professional identity can be '*categorised as before and after Politics and Society.*' Their pre-identity consisted of '*social responsibilities as a citizen of Ireland, turning up and voting*.' Now however, after '*7 or 8 years teaching I'd look at the overall picture of civic identity*.' For this teacher, that encompassed '*rights and responsibilities as a citizen' 'trying to promote the rights of others'* and '*promoting the idea of citizens having an impact in the different areas of society.*' The impact may be through '*voting but it might be through protesting, or it might be through various different avenues' but it's an 'all-encompassing thing now.*' Clearly the years spent teaching Politics and Society as well as taking part in official and indeed unofficial professional development opportunities have brought about a sea change in their understanding of themselves as a Politics and Society professional. Although not as dramatic other respondents told a similar story. T.4 said that '*it's a course where you can never stop learning because it's so contemporary, it's in the present, it's ever changing.*' The same interviewee also pointed out that they had been to the European Parliament and said, '*I don't think 10 years ago that would have been me exactly'* and this year marked their first trip to the National Parliament in Dublin. T.11 also spoke of their own personal growth and having a '*better understanding of how I see myself as compared to even three years ago, I've come on in leaps and bounds.*'

Other participants saw their identity evolving not just as teachers and citizens of Ireland but with the inclusion of a European dimension. This was particularly true of those who had History as one of their teaching subjects. T.9 for example referenced the role of John Hume when they were young. He was '*revered in my household'* in helping '*shape my civic identity around being a European and certainly a Europhile.*' This extension of civic identity to the supra-national level was reflected in that school being prominent in '*the EuroPass programme, EuroScola and other*

European projects' as *'my school has a European identity.'* Another teacher, (T.12) who lived in a variety of countries and attended European schools, saw their *'values as an EU citizen as something much more important than most people do*.' Again, this was reflected in their admission that they really enjoyed teaching topics which emphasised the '*pluralistic, diverse, cosmopolitan aspects'* of the course. Finally, there were participants (T.5 for example) who admitted that their civic identity had evolved completely from thinking '*I knew the issues in Ireland, maybe I lived in a bit of a bubble*' to admitting '*I'm kind of a global citizen'* and '*You're no longer just thinking about me, myself and my local area.*' They also admitted that '*when you're teaching stuff like that, you're forced to kind of open yourself up to that 100%'*. Similarly, T.14 said they are '*most comfortable with what we see in front of us and what we see around us as opposed to the macro, the global*.' However again they admit that '*over time, I've gotten more comfortable with that*.'

The participants were also very keen to articulate what they saw as potential disruptors to their professional identity as Politics and Society teachers. One of the key points of tension throughout many of the interviews was the desire to fully explore the various learning outcomes and engage the students with them to the greatest extent possible and the requirement to have the course finished for the Leaving Certificate exam. Some, like T.6, are quite comfortable and use '*nice little checkpoints like the October assessments*' to gauge progress. T.5 said that it became a problem in 6th year as they are '*brilliant at vocalising their opinions'* but '*you're trying to fine tune their essay writing skills*.' Some, like T.6, resorted to having a timer on the board to keep everyone on track and someone else gave out extra readings to keep on top of things '*even though only one or two might do them.*' T.6 spoke of a '*constant tension*' between getting the syllabus finished and '*really exploring the subject thoroughly*.' Others though adopted a more practical approach

when utilising student interest in topics. T.8 said, '*look the lads will be throwing grenades every now and then'* about topics for discussion so they flipped the situation around and said, '*we'll talk about this but only if you can link it back to an exam question, case study or key thinker: bring that to me and we'll plan for it.*'

One of the main changes they described was how they are now expected to 'sell' the subject in Transition Year, having to do '*a hard sell'* as T.6 put it as it is up against newer '*trendy subjects.*' T.1 admitted to '*having a good bit of confidence'* with the 5th and 6th year students: however, dealing with Transition Year groups was '*more stressful, I'm thinking, well, I want a job in the next 12 months, so I need a class, I need to sell the subject, but I don't want to put a ribbon and bow and sprinkles on it.*'

The big challenge described by T.8 was '*getting them to commit to it over Biology or over Chemistry.*' T.4 admitted to being more entrepreneurial and '*saw a huge market for it'* in Transition Year because '*some students don't like History on its own or Geography*' and they had '*15 credits of politics'* from third level to use and since then '*I haven't looked back.*' T.18 said that they leave out '*stuff like essays, data-based questions*' in TY '*just to give a taste of the topic.*' The commodification of Politics and Society in TY is dealt with in very stark terms by T.16 who says, '*numbers have dropped considerably, I suppose largely due to so many subjects on offer in the school as well, they're competing trying to sell the subject as much as anything else.*' This summary arguably represents the biggest challenge to the Politics and Society teachers' professional identity. Schools will not make a subject available without the pupil interest, no matter how much it aligns with the overall mission statement and values. This then leads into the last form of identity as described by Akkerman and Meijer which is institutional identity.

4.1.4. C Institutional Identity

Isin and Turner (2002) argue that current citizenship constructs are built not on legal rights but as a 'social process' through which individuals and social groups 'engage in claiming, expanding or losing rights' (p.4). This in turn, they claim, has led 'to a sociologically informed definition of citizenship in which the emphasis is less on legal rules and more on norms, practices, meanings, and identities.' Schools therefore are 'concrete spaces that bring to light' many of these norms and identities and are centrally involved in the processes through which young people develop their sense of belonging and learn the meanings and practices of citizenship' (Sobhy, 2023). Artefacts such as mission statements or value statements can, in many if not all cases, reflect idealised aspects of citizenship but ultimately it is the teachers who have to interpret these aspects through the prism of their own practice. This then requires an answer to the fundamental question of 'who am I and what do I care about?' (Haduong et al., 2023).

Given that Politics and Society has only been included on the Irish curriculum since 2016, it is still a relatively new subject and there are two main groupings in terms of those teaching it. Firstly there are the schools involved in the pilot phase who were picked by the Department of Education and secondly there are other schools that decided to offer the subject usually after a taster module in TY as described previously.

Teachers involved in the initial phase spoke of how it aligned with their and their school's sense of civic identity. T.14 very clearly articulated how the core values of the school are '*courtesy, respect and responsibility*' and this tallied with their own civic identity and sense of responsibility. T.15 responded that '*we have a very cosmopolitan student body, a cosmopolitan environment that kind of fits well*.' However they also allude to the fact that two senior politicians were past pupils of

the school and this may have had an impact on the decision to include that school in the pilot phase. Of the other schools who have come on board since the initial phase identifying the alignment between school values and teachers own views is important. T.4 cited the three values in the school ethos and how the strategic plan of the school is to support the holistic development of the student so they '*felt confident going to the principal and asking to introduce Politics and Society*.' T.2 mentioned that the ethos is based on '*mutual respect, community and excellence*' which importantly is '*lived and breathed in the school.*' Another trait which comes out in the interviews is how teachers identify with school policies which promote student voice. T.5 said that '*the ethos of the school is rooted in development of the individual student and that's rooted in student voice*' before going on to explain how they use the Student Council to illustrate the decision-making process. Furthermore, they go on to state that '*I don't think I would teach in a school that didn't align with my civic identity; the school ethos here very much aligns with my worldview*' before reiterating '*I think it would be very hard to teach this subject in a school where there was that type of misalignment.*' However, there was also evidence that some degree of 'misalignment' was encountered.

T.9 observed that '*they're often only words on a website or prospectus claiming to promote tolerance, respect, partnership and care*' They go on to say that '*if you talk to students in the Politics and Society classroom they can point to where there's a lack of respect or no collaboration or partnership.*' They also come out strongly to say '*sometimes you can come up against a culture that might not be on the same page as you.*' In a more subtle differentiation T.12 said that the managerial body '*has an ethos which really matches with the course around empowerment, steward of the environment, caring and social justice.*' However on the ground '*the school wasn't really ready, there's a natural conservativism, maybe a kind of patriarchal element,*

maybe authoritarian that makes it challenging.' More tellingly, in line with institutional identity, they refer to themselves as '*being the outlier due to conservative staff, conservative staff room, conservative management*' which is '*exhausting*.' T.7 bemoaned the fact that management were lauding their position on league tables which was '*indicative of where the trajectory of our school is going*' and '*I'm not entirely comfortable with that*.'

Finally, there was a fear expressed that Politics and Society could become a subject that aligned more with the values of middle-class schools or students from those backgrounds. T.7 observed that there's '*30% of kids who travel from outside this area*' which was described as a '*leafy suburb*' and this teacher felt that they might be '*left behind or denied equality of condition*' if the focus on '*academic excellence*' continues. Similarly, T.11 stated that '*you want students who are in working class areas to feel like they have that same ability to get involved and to participate*.' This can create issues for teachers who have to broach issues of social class and privilege for example in schools where the majority of the student body would be from middle class households. The same teacher (T.11) admitted that '*I feel guilty, creating the other*' when discussing these issues as there are some students in the class who come from areas of socio-economic disadvantage '*down the road a few miles.*' These fears are reflective of the fear espoused by Merry (2016, p.131) that the possibilities of cultivating critical consciousness based on a diverse student population are at risk of becoming few and far between with a particular form of political education and political stability becoming established.

Analysis of this section reveals complex intersections between teachers' personal civic identities, their pedagogical approaches, and the institutional frameworks within which they operate. The findings illuminate several key theoretical and

practical tensions that characterise the delivery of civic education in contemporary educational settings.

Central to these findings is the dynamic interplay between teachers' personal civic orientations and their professional practice. The data demonstrates a notable dialectical relationship whereby teachers navigate between their private civic disillusionment and their professional obligation to foster democratic engagement. This phenomenon manifests particularly clearly in cases where teachers exhibit significant personal scepticism toward political institutions while simultaneously facilitating student political participation through activities such as voter registration initiatives. This tension exemplifies Akkerman and Meijer's (2011) conceptualisation of teacher identity as an ongoing dialogical process, characterised by the coexistence and occasional conflict of multiple professional and personal positions.

The transformative impact of teaching Politics and Society emerges as a significant factor in teachers' professional identity formation. Teachers consistently articulate distinct demarcations between their pre- and post-Politics and Society identities, reporting expanded civic perspectives and increasingly internationalised civic orientations. This evolution aligns with Mockler's (2011) theoretical framework regarding the narrative construction of teacher professional identity, while suggesting that civic education functions bidirectionally, simultaneously developing both student and teacher civic consciousness.

The pedagogical approaches employed by teachers reveal sophisticated strategies for engaging with controversial content, primarily manifesting in two distinct but complementary methodologies: adversarial argumentation and pluralistic perspective-taking. These approaches reflect different interpretations of citizenship education's fundamental purpose, correlating with Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) theoretical distinction between justice-oriented and participatory citizenship models.

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Significantly, these pedagogical choices operate within constraining institutional and market-driven frameworks that fundamentally shape civic education's implementation. Teachers must navigate between competing demands: the imperative for deep learning versus examination requirements, and the need to position Politics and Society competitively within the curriculum marketplace. This tension exemplifies Apple's (2006) critique of neoliberal educational commodification, raising fundamental questions about authentic civic education's viability within market-oriented educational systems.

The findings further reveal varying degrees of alignment between teachers' civic identities and institutional values, ranging from harmonious integration to significant discord. This institutional context proves crucial in shaping civic education practices, supporting Sobhy's (2023) theoretical position regarding schools' centrality in citizenship formation. Moreover, this variability in institutional alignment suggests potential opportunities for Politics and Society teachers to function as institutional change agents, while simultaneously highlighting the constraints within which such change must operate.

4.1.5   Final Thoughts on Step One of the Listening Guide

The findings of this study align with and extend current theoretical perspectives on identity formation and narrative analysis. The participants' stories corroborate Shankar et al.'s (2001) assertion that narratives are crucial in making experiences meaningful and constructing self-identity. This study extends this understanding by demonstrating how professional contexts, particularly the teaching of Politics and Society, can significantly influence the narrative construction of civic identity. The methodological approach utilised, in line with Edwards and Weller's (2012) observations, recognises the interview data as a co-construction between researcher

questions and participant responses. This perspective enriches our understanding of how civic identities are articulated and negotiated within the research context.

The Listening Guide's allowance for 'messy, disorganised' narratives (Gilligan et al., 2003) proved particularly valuable in capturing the complex, often contradictory aspects of civic identity formation. This approach revealed how teachers' civic identities are continuously evolving, shaped by the interplay between personal beliefs, professional roles, and institutional contexts. Aligning with Moisander et al.'s (2009) emphasis on the importance of broader narratives, the first step in analysis highlights how societal and cultural factors significantly influence individual civic identity formation. This finding contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between personal civic identities and broader societal discourses. The application of the Listening Guide, particularly its first step of 'Listening for the Plot' provided crucial insights into the participants' civic identity journeys. This approach allowed for a holistic understanding of each participant's narrative while also revealing common themes and divergences across the sample. So, what did this first foray into analysis reveal about the teachers sense of civic identity?

Firstly, the evidence clearly demonstrates that participants' struggled to define their civic identity, despite teaching the concept, which reveals a significant gap between professional knowledge and personal reflection. This finding has important implications for teacher education and professional development programs in civic education. The study also underscores the fluid and context-dependent nature of civic identity and challenges static conceptions of identity formation. This finding contributes to ongoing scholarly debates about the nature of identity in late modernity (Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 2000). The research further highlights the reciprocal relationship between teaching Politics and Society and personal civic identity formation. This finding extends our understanding of how professional roles

can shape personal identities and vice versa. The following section therefore offers a deeper consideration by listening for the various voices that constitute the participants civic identities.

4.2 Delving Deeper: Listening for the Voices

The second step in using the listening guide is seeking the first-person voice through the 'I' (Yeo et al, 2023, p.3). Hutton and Lystor (2021, p.16) write that attending to voice is an important epistemological conviction for researchers, as 'voice is a way of constructing meaning with voice constructing reality and the reality of research constructing voice.'

Unlike most qualitative methodologies the listening guide takes into account, and addresses, the mind's ability to 'dissociate or push knowledge and experience out of conscious awareness, highlighting an associative, or indeed dissociative logic rather than linear, rational, causal thought processes' (Gilligan and Eddy, 2017, p.79).

I phrases are associative but the use of other phrases such as 'you' and 'they' show a certain amount of dissonance within the speaker. The second step in the listening guide is creating I Poems by extracting all the I phrases and organising them into stanzas.

The order of the I phrases is the same as they appear in the interview transcript. By following the 'I 'statements of the informant, I was able to listen for the informants 'thoughts, desires, wishes, needs, conflicts, and silences that are articulated in the first-person voice' (Raider-Roth, 2000, p.47). Brown (2019, p.1) refers to the recent 'creative turn in qualitative research'. Researchers utilising creative approaches, of which the use of poetry is one, become 'bricoleurs, drawing on a variety of disciplines, employing multiple strategies and ultimately using whatever works' (Denzin, 2016, p.205). Elsewhere Grisoni (2011, p.19) talks about the 'seductive

qualities of creative methods' and the 'opportunities and challenges' presented by what she calls 'unorthodox data'. Her defence of poetry as both a method of data collection and analysis however does show why it is particularly appropriate in this research:

> *Poetry holds the potential to capture emotion and express the unsayable with passion, truth, and intensity, taps into emotions and uncovers layers of thought and feelings, explores the shadow side of experience as well as the light. Those who engage in the process become co-creators of meaning in a way that blurs distinctions between researcher and participant, writer and reader, method, and analysis.*

Each individual I Poem is available in the Appendices so the following table summarises the intricate evolution of civic identity which emerged through the interviews. It outlines the multifaceted experiences and reflections of individuals as they navigate their personal and professional lives, shedding light on themes such as career aspirations, identity, informed citizenship, and social mobility. The narratives, as interpreted by the researcher, reveal hidden messages about self-reflection, about social justice, and about the transformative power of education. By examining the interplay between personal background, societal influences, and professional responsibilities, this document provides a comprehensive analysis of how civic identity is shaped and reshaped over time. The insights gathered here offer valuable perspectives on the role of education, community engagement, and personal growth in fostering active and informed citizenship. The contents of each I Poem are described under the following headings and are intended reflect and capture the qualities as described by Grisoni.: Themes, Hidden Messages, and the Evolution of Civic Identity. The full versions are available in Appendix C

Participant Number	Themes	Hidden Messages	Evolution of Civic Identity
DR2024-001	Career aspirations, Identity and detachment, Informed citizenship	Self-reflection, Social mobility, Cultural pride	Transition from personal background to educating for informed citizenship
DR2024-002	Personal growth, Social responsibility, Youth and adulthood contrasts, Gratitude	Importance of role models, Self-discovery, Power of education	From reluctant participant to advocate for social responsibility
DR2024-003	Political engagement and frustration, Civic responsibility, Critical thinking	Frustration with politics, Self-awareness, Social influence	Evolving from political engagement to scepticism of institutional politics
DR2024-004	Community involvement, Empowerment, Lifelong learning	Leadership, Adaptability, Social awareness	Growth from participant to community leader and advocate
DR2024-005	Civic identity formation, Educational influence, Global awareness	Integrity, Youth empowerment, Balance in teaching	Expansion of worldview, embracing social responsibility
DR2024-006	Civic identity, Political expression, Professional ethics	Integrity, Institutional navigation, Self-reflection	Increased alignment of personal beliefs with teaching
DR2024-007	Social awareness, Educational practices, Upbringing's influence	Identity complexity, Critical reflection, Social advocacy	Recognition of complexity in teaching and civic identity
DR2024-008	Responsibility, Critical thinking, Social justice	Education as empowerment, Navigating engagement challenges, Holistic learning	Growth in commitment to responsibility and social justice in education
DR2024-009	Impact of education, Bias awareness, Student empowerment	Resilience, Equity, Intrinsic motivation	Development toward fostering student autonomy and active citizenship
DR2024-010	Cultural heritage, Personal growth, Community role	Open-mindedness, Role modelling, Embracing change	Adaptation to diverse perspectives within civic engagement
DR2024-011	History's impact, Community alignment, Political engagement	Lifelong learning, Community-driven identity, Ethical awareness	Balance between history, personal morals, and political action
DR2024-012	Civic identity and social justice, Professional and personal overlap	Complexity of privilege, Critical engagement	Transformation through social justice and self-examination
DR2024-013	Civic identity struggle, Individualism vs. community	Internal conflict, Continuous learning, Authenticity	Grappling with individualism in the face of collective expectations
DR2024-014	Belonging, Educational adjustment, Controversial teaching	Adaptability, Critical perspectives, Socioeconomic factors	Embrace of community belonging and critical civic teaching

DR2024-015	Identity and belonging, Civic engagement, Class and ideology	Search for identity, Disillusionment, System critique	Exploration of alternative approaches to civic engagement
DR2024-016	University influence, Student empowerment, Educational balance	Continuous learning, Balanced perspectives, Student-centered approach	Ongoing growth in civic identity, influenced by teaching methods
DR2024-017	Civic identity through diversity, Educational influence	Openness, Embracing diversity, Reflection	Civic identity shaped by multicultural experiences and historical context
DR2024-018	National vs. civic identity, Political engagement	Youth empowerment, Adaptability, Institutional support	Understanding civic identity through youth and institutional perspectives

Table 11: Summary analysis of I-Poems using Themes, Hidden Messages and Evolution of Civic Identity

The narratives presented through my interpretation of the I-Poems created by the participants offer a profound exploration of civic identity, shaped by personal experiences, educational backgrounds, and societal influences. Each interviewee's journey reflects a unique interplay between their upbringing, professional roles, and evolving perspectives on civic engagement which ultimately leads to the creation of their civic identity.

The recurring themes of identity, social mobility, and civic responsibility highlight the complexities of navigating personal beliefs within professional settings. The interviewees' struggles with political disillusionment, social justice, and educational challenges underscore the ongoing tension between individual values and

institutional expectations. This tension often manifests in feelings of self-doubt, frustration, and the search for authenticity.

These vignettes also reveal a collective commitment to fostering critical thinking, empathy, and active citizenship among their students. Despite facing challenges, the interviewees demonstrate resilience and adaptability, continually seeking to align **their** teaching practices with **their** civic values. Their reflections on personal growth, the impact of role models, and the importance of community engagement provide valuable insights into the transformative potential of education.

The next section will seek to represent the dualities, tensions, contradictions and complementary elements of the participants civic identities through the third step in the listening guide namely looking for connections.

4.3 Connecting the Roads: Listening for Connections

The third listening of the interview transcripts involves attending to the participant's voices, not for their content or themes, but for the quality or musicality therein (Gilligan and Eddy, 2017, p.79). The individual I-Poems are contained in Appendix A, while the themes of each are described in Section 4.2. This third listening led to a methodological conundrum: the I-Poems, while raw and containing an innate rhythm, lacked the detail needed for rigorous analysis. Conversely, the thematic analysis, while valuable, lacked the immediacy and impact which the I-Poems contain. Consequently, I engaged in a process of simultaneous analysis, as illustrated in this image below.
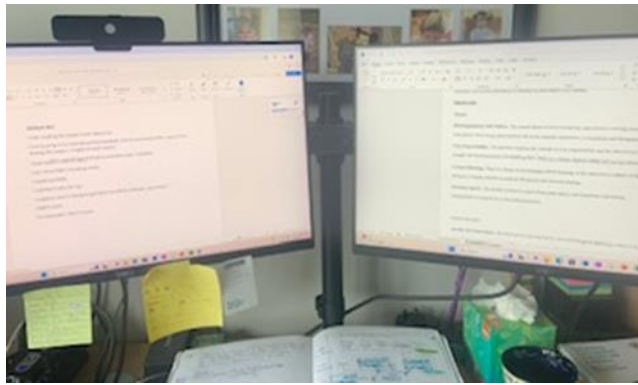
Figure 16 Simultaneous analysis

This involved extracting static themes from vibrant poems from the screen on the left and transferring them to the screen on the right, in a process that reflected the quest for melody and tension between what was said, attempting to reconcile both as the researcher, from experience of the initial listener and then as the data analyst subsequently. Woodcock (2016, p.6) describes such a process as another avenue 'to explore the ways themes either melodiously interact or are in tension with one another.' The qualities of the voices within the poems and thematic document can be said to be in 'contrapuntal motion,' which in music theory is the general movement of two melodic lines with respect to each other. This movement can be described as parallel in that both voices move in the same direction. However it can also be described as similar in that both voices move in the same direction but at different intervals or contrary in that voices move in opposite directions. A final and important aspect of contrapuntal motion is the oblique nature of opposing movement where one voice remains stationary while the other moves either upward or downward.

For the purposes of this research, I felt that this nomenclature did not suit the subjects and subject matter at hand. Therefore, I have decided to describe the voices/motions as follows: Foundational, Pedagogical, Vulnerable, and Reflective, corresponding to Parallel, Similar, Contrary, and Oblique, respectively.

Parallel Motion/Foundational Voices: Just as parallel voices move together; teachers and their civic identities can align with broader societal values and goals. For instance, some teachers in this study engage in community-based civic activities designed to benefit the entire community (such as joining the Tidy Towns committee), reinforcing their identity as active citizens.

Similar Motion/Pedagogical Voices: Similar to voices moving in the same direction but by different intervals, teachers' civic identities can be shaped by diverse experiences. Each teacher's journey toward civic engagement may vary, yet collectively contribute to a rich tapestry of civic educators. The voices of the teachers in the I-Poems certainly fall under this description.

Contrary Motion/Vulnerable Voices: Teachers often encounter opposing forces challenges, conflicting values, or differing perspectives while navigating their civic roles. These tensions can influence their civic identity development. Like contrary motion, these opposing forces create movement and depth. Some participants, for example, spoke of disillusionment with political structures and institutions after significant personal or national events but they still wished to convince students of the worth, albeit with a critical stance of these institutions.

Oblique Motion/Reflective Voices: Sometimes, teachers remain steadfast in their civic commitments while others around them change. Oblique motion reflects this dynamic. One voice, that of the teacher, remains constant, while the other shifts due to external factors. In this research, the challenges presented by understandings of class as a concept and by understanding of the self operates outside of identity fitted into this category perfectly.

According to the Listening Guide, the third listening is designed to uncover the myriad of voices contained in each interview. Unwittingly, and as a phenomenological listening researcher, I found that there were nearly too many voices, which is why I adopted the four headings described above as a way of 'quelling the cacophony' (Tolman and Head, 2021, p.158). Additionally, I undertook a fourth listen, as well as an additional fifth step, which proved particularly useful in understanding the how and why of what was said during the interview.

The most common findings of this fourth listen and of the fifth phenomenological analysis are summarised in the following sections.

4.3.1   Parallel/Foundational Voices

Chavez Rojas et al. (2021, pp.258-259) talk about teacher identity being summarised as comprising three elements: multiplicity (multiple identities), discontinuity (not static) and sociability (identity constitutes a set of personal meanings developed with regard to oneself, it is also shaped by the voices of others). It is to this latter classification that we turn when discussing the parallel or foundational voices of civic identity. Having listened to the interviews numerous times I extracted the following foundational voices: Voices of personal experience, voices of an evolving sense of civic identity and 'out of field' voices. Each of these voices tallies with the concept of sociability as described previously.

Experiences throughout life, particularly those from adolescence, have a lasting impact on shaping civic identity. Westheimer and Kahne (2004, p.241) speak about 'good' citizens being active community members, putting the needs of others above themselves and consuming news media related to civic life. Naturally, family background was found to be of significant importance in shaping civic identity. T.2

for example clearly described the impact of their parents on their civic identity by saying '*my parent's kind of really nurtured within us, I suppose, a respect for vulnerable people or disenfranchised or marginalised people.*' T.1 mentions that '*my mother and father were very political'* before explaining that the father '*was a shop steward'* and therefore there was an emphasis on rights and the Constitution which was described as '*our Bible of Law really'* in their teaching. Broader family members also helped nurture a sense of civic identity among other participants. T.3 for instance spoke about their '*Uncle X , he would have worked for Y and he would have organised the elections'* and '*when elections came up, we were all recruited, you know*' and they remember '*hanging over the barrier*' in the election count centre.

Moving slightly further afield, it is obvious that involvement in community organisations is a key feature of developing civic identity. T.2 and T.5 for example both mention the local Tidy Towns Committee with T.5 saying in terms of what comprises their civic identity that

> *'A lot of it would be like taking pride in your village like tidy towns would be very, very big, so from a very young age, there is your immediate family members and then your wider family, who are involved in tidy towns. There's a pothole on the road. Everyone's furious about it, everyone's engaged and how can we get this fixed and I think it's the old kind of trope in Ireland. The parish politics is huge.'*

They also added that '*as a young person, you're seeing members of your family being quite vocal over things you know and members of your area, like your neighbours and things. And you're thinking this is the norm*.' Youth organisations such as the Scouts and Girl Guides also had a big impact on T.2. They had

*'Gotten involved with the Girl Guides and the Brownies and all of that. And
that had a massive impact on me because I was in Brownies from 7 and went
right the way up to 18 and travelled abroad and did camps abroad and it was
only later on, like the leaders involved in that was it was all voluntary work,
and they gave up their annual leave to bring us on holidays. Around the
country. We did charity work, we did fundraisers, we went to Omagh. After the
bombing, to lay a wreath, and so those leaders and being a part of that within
the community, had a really big influence and I suppose the dedication that
other people kind of gave in the community and I benefited from it. That had a
big impact on me because it made my life better.'*

Participation in the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was also key in developing
civic identity. The GAA is Irelands largest amateur sporting organisation and is
responsible for the promotion and administration of Irish sports. T.4 talked about
how getting involved with the GAA '*showed me the importance of getting involved
in community*.' T.13 also spoke of the importance of being part of the GAA
community and promoting '*a sense of value in what you care about, coming from a
country area and coming from that sense of community*.' T.15 spoke about
volunteering with their own local GAA club, a club that somewhat uniquely operates
exclusively through the medium of the Irish language and how important that was.
These experiences provided early lessons in citizenship, volunteering, and social
responsibility and they align with the concept of a 'civic identity apprenticeship'
(Enright and Toledo, 2023, p.101). They also mirror what Malin et al. (2015, p.103)
call 'civic development' namely the process of developing the skills, knowledge,
attitudes, and inclination for full participation in political and community life'.

Civic identity as has been discussed is not static in that it develops and evolves
throughout life. Family upbringing may provide the initial foundation, but later

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experiences can reshape and refine one's sense of civic responsibility. For example, one participant (T.8) described their evolving perspective from a family of strong political affiliation to becoming a '*floating voter*.' T.1 referenced how their sense of civic identity may have been more left leaning in university but once they had commenced regular employment and started paying taxes such stances softened and this outlook was echoed by other participants such as T.9 who notes,

> '*You could be a left-leaning idealist in in in college or university. And then when you finally get on the property ladder, start a family, you got a career for yourself, have children going to university, things like that. You know your political persuasions can fluctuate you know whether you're economically Left leaning or socially conservative or politically liberal? I suppose so, yeah. You know that that recognition of your civic identity and where you will be in that civil space was something that has chopped and changed through life.*'

While the research focus was initially directed towards the teachers' narratives, the interpretivist approach to knowledge generation acknowledges the presence of 'out-of-field voices' (Mazzei and Jackson, 2012, p.748). These encompass the larger social, cultural, and political context that shapes their experiences. These can be seen as additional characters in the narrative, those that also significantly influence the plot. The Irish context is particularly relevant for understanding background influences in sense making in this research. As an example, the emphasis on volunteering within the community is also relatively strong. T.5 for example says

'*it's a much more volunteer related thing, but people are engaging to make sure that their area develops a certain way and then as a young person, you're seeing members of your family being quite vocal over things you know and members of your area, like your neighbours and things. And you're thinking this is the norm*'

T.2 states that '*I try and bring that into the classroom and maybe my own volunteer work that I have done or my own lived experience, you get a huge kick out of doing the volunteer work.*' T.18 adds to the evidence and claims,

'*We were raised with a very strong sense of the right to vote and the need to vote and to contribute to our societies, that was very strong and to volunteer that would have informed kind of me as like when I was younger so that my sense of responsibility would have come very much from my own background*'

This foundational understanding of the nature of volunteering in context leads into the exploration of similar or pedagogical voices.

4.3.2 Similar/Pedagogical Voices

As with the foundational voices, a number of distinct pedagogical voices emerged through the various phenomenological analysis listening processes: These voices include the voice of empowerment, the voice of the active citizen and the voice of the critical thinker. What teachers say and do in their civic education classroom is not a new area of study and much has been written about focusing on learning goals (Evans, 2006), on the kind of citizen that teaching should produce (Westheimer and Kahne, 2003 and 2004), on civics and lifelong learning (Schugurensky and Myers, 2003) and on Participatory Citizenship (Reimers et al., 2014). Studies examining the 'why' of teachers civic education practice are considerably more difficult to find however. As Hess and McAvoy (2014) point out, helping students develop their ability to deliberate political questions is an essential component of democratic education but introducing these issues can be pedagogically challenging. Molina-Girón (2016, p.145) argues that citizenship education with a clear political orientation aims to

Increase its students political attentiveness by directing their attention to political and governmental affairs, discussing political and policy related issues, and encouraging participation in politically oriented activities such as rallies and petition signing.

One must consider if this important statement holds true for the participants in this study? Generally, one would have to affirm that it does, especially when the three pedagogical voices are examined closely.

The empowerment of students became apparent in two ways in the study: One general and one very specific. Taking the general theme of empowerment to begin, T.14 describes very eloquently that if

They (i.e. the students) find someone willing to listen to them so you know they can empower them, you know, and that's that, geez, that's the best thing education can do for anyone is empower you, give you something.

T.8 refers to empowerment as promoting a sense of '*responsibility to engage with the various authorities, whoever they might be, if you want to bring about change*' and then states, '*I'm obviously trying to guide them in that regard*'. T.5 acknowledges that the primary function of schools is teaching and learning but states that '*a secondary function that no one really talks about anymore is to prepare our young people to be active participants in society*' and interestingly to '*make sure like they're law-abiding*'.

Pfister et al. (2022, p.32) state that one of the most important ways teachers can support students' sense of civic efficacy is 'by supporting their feelings of empowerment and being able to impact change.' In this research, teachers spoke more specifically of the need to empower women and young girls to take more ownership of political life and decision making. T.12 spoke very strongly on her role

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in promoting '*female education and empowering women*' especially in relation to social justice and being active in the school strikes for climate. Others felt that having role models was very effective in promoting female empowerment. T.10, for example, spoke of her excitement at meeting a high-profile female Member of Parliament asking for a photo saying '*you're a great role model for these girls*' and further qualifying that '*they knew who she was, so that was good.*' This leads us to consider the potential value of the second voice, that which we describe as the active citizen voice.

Active citizenship is, like the majority of concepts in this work, open to interpretation and contested definitions. Activities that not only sustain but advance democracy such as campaigning, voting, collecting, and signing petitions, demonstrating and volunteering are commonly seen as inherently democratic actions. However, the definition used by Hoskins (2014) is especially useful in the context of this study as it includes the activities mentioned and adds the statement that 'there is a normative value element to active citizenship' (p.14). This means that active citizenship involves participation not only with respect to others, but with the democratic processes at its core.

Given that the interviews were carried out around the time of a Referendum in Ireland, it is no surprise to see that voting figured prominently as an action that teachers felt was a key part of civic identity. T.5 for instance, cited the example of a party leader who became involved in politics by winning a local election by one vote, explaining that '*you're showing them your vote does matter*' and to '*use what you've learned from this class going forward.*' Similarly, T.10 said they hoped that

I suppose ultimately that they'd vote that they'd take part, that they'd see that part of that they're part of a democracy. They're part of a Civic Society, and they have an important role in it.

T.12 mentioned that many of the students would be voting for the first time in the Referendums on Family and Care and pointed out that, based on classroom discussions, '*a lot of them would be voting differently than me*' and they also say, '*it's interesting to see the ones who feel kind of confident enough now at this stage in 6th year to say, 'I don't agree with you on that'*. The teacher also acknowledges that '*when it comes to actually voting, I can see their own decision-making processes going on and I think it's really interesting and it's, you know, it's infuriating, but it's also necessary.*'

There was also evidence of support for student councils in schools in the research findings. Halfon and Romi (2021, p.115) write that student councils 'advance student rights, enhance the fostering of a positive school climate and help educate students to democracy, social involvement, and volunteering for the community'. T.5 echoes this statement by describing how

> *The ethos of the school is rooted in development of this individual student, and that's rooted in student voice, hearing from the students. So, the importance of the student Council, the importance of all those elected committees that the students are involved in and encouraging students to get involved with us. And, encouraging students understand how decision-making is made.*

A variation on the student council is described by T.2 who mentions a '*student congress*' where they bring '*all of the student leaders, such as class captains, prefects, peer mentors together*', explaining that '*we're a very pastoral, a very caring school.*' They do this it is claimed because '*it seeks out from the students what we're doing well or not and what they want or if there's other things that they'd like us, you know to be doing or to get involved with*.'

Outside of the school settings, the teachers express a hope that they can transmit their own sense of active citizenship to the students. T.5 explains as follows: *'Don't be on your bar stool giving out about something. There are politicians there. Use them. Use your County Council, get on to your county councillor.'*

This statement would be typical of the views expressed around active citizenship, getting involved, using existing structures or taking initiatives as an individual. Other forms of active citizenship mentioned include charity work. T.4 describes how they had a part time summer job working with a local charity. This involved bringing

> *'members of the Brothers of Charity down to the hurling club twice a week just to use the facilities, play a bit of sport. The people that are in the Brothers of Charity would be people with autism and disability. And it kind of showed me the importance of getting involved in community'.*

Another example was from T.10 who talked about helping older people improve their IT skills: *'So, we do like a log on learning, we bring in some of the older people in and you know, teach them, and also helping a local choir for people with Alzheimers ... They go over and help clean that up. And they send flowers.'*

The teacher goes on to say *'I think if you start local and they can see that they can make a difference in the locality maybe they enjoy that and they might keep that up. So I think start locally.'* There was a wide range of opinions expressed on what sort of civically minded student would emerge at the end of two years in the Politics and Society course.

Terms associated with participation, along with participation itself, such as voice, decision and voting appeared in 16 of the 18 interviews. T.4 states, *'in terms of civic identity, voice is very important'* and T.9 reinforces the point to the students that *'no matter how small you think your voice is, or how isolated or lonely you think your*

voice is you do have a voice and you do use it.' Six participants referenced the importance of engaging with the student council in school while there was also reference by T.2 to '*prefects, peer mentors, student council reps*' to illustrate that '*there are ways you can get involved'*. T.5 also linked voice to the school ethos and the development of the individual student through '*encouraging students to understand how decision making is made in school.*' The same participant also advocated students to '*raise your voice*' perhaps through a '*strongly worded letter*' or through '*contact your local councillor'*, while T.12 wanted their students to realise that '*their job as citizens is to use that voice for what they think is the very best thing.*' The final pedagogical voice which became apparent through the research analysis was that of critical thinker voice or consumer voice.

As a subject, Politics and Society encompasses many different views. Some are complementary, while others are more in opposition to each other, and teachers are expected to negotiate between all oppositional positions and reconcile them variously with their own. In doing so, teachers should 'familiarise students with a range of views on citizenship so they may form their own opinions' (Zuurmond et al. 2023, p.10). This desire to create critical thinkers was a key theme in the research participants' understanding of civic identity. References to the development of critical thinking skills were contained in 11 of the 18 interviews. T.7 for instance spoke of how they encouraged '*open dialogue and critical thinking'*, saying it was '*crucial*' that the students develop their critical thinking skills. Many other teachers spoke positively of this aspect also. T.9 introduced the students to the '*theoretical underpinnings around critical analysis dialogue*' in order to foster a '*discussion around democratic deliberation.*' One interviewee (T.17) noted that the need to develop critical thinking skills amongst students was '*totally new terrain*' but

acknowledged that adopting such a mindset '*makes the specification come alive for the kids like.'*

Another representation of civic identity, promoted by the teachers in the research, was that of a participatory citizen. T.4 hoped that their students would have '*that critical awareness that keeping up to date, being able to make up their own mind on something.'* T.9 described using elements of critical analysis dialogue along with critical thinking because '*we're talking about student agency, empowerment, and active citizenship, which is sometimes only paid lip service to outside of politics and society.'* T.13 elaborated further and voiced the belief that the students should have

> '*an informed opinion and don't just jump on the bandwagon and join what's going on or some campaign on social media without actually doing your homework and very much promoting critical thinking and having your own voice, but be able to defend it in an argument, you know.'*

The data highlights three key pedagogical voices that emerge from teachers' perspectives on developing civic identity in students. Firstly, there is a strong emphasis on empowering students, particularly in promoting female empowerment and providing role models for young girls to engage in political and social activism. Secondly, teachers emphasise the importance of fostering active citizenship, encouraging students to participate in democratic processes such as voting, campaigning, and engaging with local communities through volunteering and civic initiatives. Thirdly, teachers aim to cultivate critical thinking skills, familiarising students with diverse perspectives and encouraging them to form well-informed opinions based on evidence and analysis. These three voices, those of empowerment, active citizenship and critical thinking all serve to underscore teachers' multi-faceted approaches to nurturing civic identity and to preparing students to be engaged and responsible citizens in a democratic society. So far in this section, the foundational

and pedagogical voices have, for the most part, been positive and moving in the same direction in creating a civic identity. Now however, on deeper analysis and more thorough phenomenological listening, the voices become a little more discordant, out of sync and they may in fact be more revealing about the participants' civic identity development.

4.3.3   Contrary/Vulnerable Voices

As with teachers' pedagogical voices, research into teacher vulnerability is not a new concept. Kelchtermans (1996, 2006) for instance writes about the moral and political roots of vulnerability. More recently, Bacova and Turner (2023) describe vulnerability in teacher identity, particularly in times of unexpected social change. Gao and Yuan (2024) explore professional vulnerability in an era of performativity. In one form or another, the issues described by these authors surfaced among the participants in this study and it is timely now to explore each of them more fully. The voices that emerged were the uncertain voice, the disillusioned voice and the voice of conflict.

Uncertainty is not necessarily a negative concept. Dewey for example valued uncertainty because 'it marks an inquiring, hunting, searching attitude, instead of one of mastery and possession. Through its critical process true knowledge is revised and extended, and our convictions as to the state of things reorganised' (1916, p.295). While Dewey saw uncertainty as something to be embraced, this research process found that the first question asked in every interview generated a form of uncertainty that could not necessarily always be viewed as entirely positive. Each interview began with the same question: '*What is your sense of your own civic identity and how did you arrive at this sense?*'

Some of the participants were quite upfront about not really having considered such a notion. T.15 for example stated '*people, and myself included, would only ever have*

the vaguest sense of an identity.' Others such as T17 were hoping for a definition before answering. The majority of participants however, even those who eventually provided well-thought-out understandings, initially expressed uncertainty by uttering phrases like '*I suppose'* or '*I think.*' This indicated that even as the interviews started, and despite having read the information sheet, participants were still unsure of what their own civic identity was and what it meant to them. T.4 openly admitted to searching for a textbook definition as they '*weren't trying to put my own words on it.*' T.18 said they had '*great fun in class with the students trying to figure out their sense of civic identity but never thought about doing a similar exercise for themselves*'.

Such an admission demonstrates that the Politics and Society teachers in this study have an understanding of what their civic identity is, or at least should be, but they have never been asked to articulate it or to give voice to it properly before. Yeo et al. (2023,p.4) refer to these cues, both linguistic and non-verbal, some subtle others not so much, as evidence of 'embodied discomfort', a sense that the stoic mask slips, and confidence is replaced by something approaching insecurity as individuals realise that in a change to their usual routine, they will now have to explain their own decisions and values. In some interviews, such notions were barely concealed, if at all, while others lay hidden before emerging at unexpected times. For example, T.2 spoke about their own sense of volunteerism, bemoaned the lack of this spirit among teaching colleagues, but revealed just before the interview was due to terminate that '*right throughout my 20s I would not have done any volunteering.*'

Another vulnerable voice to come out of the research was that of disillusionment. Previous studies on teacher identity have explored ideas of disillusionment in their work, but usually as a distinct phase in the teachers' journeys. Moir (1990) for example in her study of first year teachers attitudes toward teaching included

disillusionment along with anticipation, survival, rejuvenation, reflection and anticipation. In this study of Politics and Society teachers, the sense of disillusionment is not a distinct phase but it is undoubtedly something that runs concurrently with all the other voices. It probably ties in more with what Kelchtermans and Hamilton (2004) call the 'becoming someone who' perspective of teaching. This is especially relevant in this study as all the teachers are still arguably in the process of becoming Politics and Society teachers in a newly emergent curricular area. Some of the participants only have one or two years of experience of the subject while those who have been teaching it since it was first introduced in 2016 say that teaching it involves a '*constant kind of lifelong learning and you're kind of keeping up to date with current events.*' (T.4)

Meijer and Van Driel (1999) argue that teachers are not 'just' teachers but are history teachers, politics teachers or teachers in other dedicated areas of study and that importantly, description is core to their identities. Therefore, exploring the vulnerable voice of teachers in this study is an essential part of their 'subject autobiography' (Meijer et.al, 2014, p.301). Feelings of disillusionment can be examined into two parts. Firstly, there is a sense of disillusionment with politics especially in Ireland and how that impacts on the teaching of the subject. Secondly, there is a sense of disillusionment because of the changing status, either real or perceived, of Politics and Society as a subject in schools.

In relation to the first area of disillusionment, the strongest opinions were expressed by teachers impacted by the financial crash of 2008 and by the ensuing era of austerity. T.15 for example says their civic identity was '*very kind of fluid*', saying '*I have voted for multiple different parties at different times and different elections broadly based on character, on kind of candidate quality*.' However their views '*hardened around 2008, 2009 with the crash, I became very disillusioned, I'd be*

broadly centre leftish, and I became very disillusioned with X policital party.'
Similarly, T.3 said they '*got caught by the moratorium'* which was an enforced stay on promotions in schools so they could not apply for roles which would have brought increased remuneration through allowances for taking on extra responsibilities. The participant reported on the personal financial burden of being '*done out of my tracker (a mortgage with favourable interest rates) and like, I really fought tooth and nail to get that tracker back. And I didn't get it back in the end.*' T.13 spoke of being caught in the housing crisis, not being able to afford rent and moving from place to place where they could afford to live while teaching. Meijer et al. (2014, p279) refer to these as 'critical incidents' which 'reveal, like a flashbulb' the 'major choice and change times in people's lives' which are 'imbued with meaning' for the storyteller. As T.3 reported

> *It obviously does then influence your approach and your understanding of citizenship, and you know, participation, that you have all these experiences, and you know you're coming at it from a justice perspective.*

The other sense of disillusionment came with the evolving status of Politics and Society in schools. This links back to concerns around teaching hours and being able to afford to stay teaching in particular schools, for example in areas of high rent. T.6 in the course of the interview made reference to '*trendy subjects*' and how they are perceived to pose a significant challenge in terms of attracting students to pick Politics and Society for their final two years of secondary education. For context, the Senior Cycle Curriculum continues to undergo significant change as new subjects continue to be added. T.6 said that Politics and Society was '*being squeezed'* and asked pointedly, '*when do you say 'stop!'.*' The pressure to attract enough students in any one school to form a Politics and Society class was described as really dispiriting for a significant portion of the participants. T.8 for example openly admitted that '*it's*

a hard sell, especially to young people' before saying '*I'm hoping this year I've identified a good few lads, I'm hoping we should have good numbers again.*' Having to repeat such an enrolment process every year is surely attritional and is referenced by Santoro (2021) who states that disillusionment is 'rooted in discouragement and despair borne out of ongoing value conflicts with pedagogical policies, reform mandates, and school practices' (p.3).

Finally, from the evidence of the phenomenological investigation, we examine the voice of conflict. Once again, research on conflict and on teacher identity has been carried out previously. Pillen et al. (2013) discuss the tensions inherent in beginner teachers' identities while van der Want et al. (2018) explore different identity issues among experienced teachers. Lau et al. (2022, p.2) argue that identity tensions should be investigated in relation to the different stages in professional life and also that context 'comprises the school community at the micro level along with societal expectations and top-down educational policies at the macro level'. This study adapts this perspective slightly. The micro level is now represented by the individual teacher and the conflicts that they experience internally are invariably played out in the school community, at a meso level, but are precipitated by educational policies at a macro level. How teachers experience and deal with conflict internally is therefore a unique feature of this study and is best exemplified in their views on the conflict between 'the teachers soul and the terrors of performativity' (Ball, 2003, p.215).

T.7 and T.8 both provide useful vignettes as a way of describing this conflict. T.7 declares

> *I think in the last couple of years there is this focus on the promotion of academic excellence, they (i.e. management) don't hide it, right, it's out there,*

and it's a relatively new sort of focus or direction. That's the sense I get, I'm not entirely comfor with that.

When describing the school they said '*I mean it's a leafy suburb, right? I would say there's about 70%, maybe middle-class kids*' but they also reference the other 30% who '*are from backgrounds that are you know, just not conducive to study, you know?*' T.7 reinforces this observation describing students

> *some coming in, hungry in some cases, dishevelled very few. And I think there is a problem there potentially that these students might be left behind or might be denied what is it Kathleen Lynch calls the equality of condition. Here, they're not facilitated.*

Teachers struggle to reconcile such a realisation with occurrences such as being '*congratulated on a Zoom call actually about a month ago because our school was (ranked) in the league table*' and adding '*it was kind of indicative of, I think, where the trajectory of our school is going*'. The teacher noted, '*It doesn't feel like it's normal.*' This reflects what Daliri-Ngametua and Hardy (2022, P.11) term the loss of 'human contact with the data.'

T.8 also referenced the use of league tables, not in terms of use within a school but when it came to parental and student school choice. They are aware of the fact that '*one of the feeder schools (to third level) close to us is a private school and the young lads are conscious of that*' and '*they would look at you know, the league tables and stuff like that*' when it comes to picking a secondary school. This teacher goes on to say that '*I suppose we'd consider the impact that has on education and access to education in the area, it's more to do with legacy and access.*' Kemmis et al. (2014) term this 'the happenings of practice'. This can have very serious implications for teachers because if student enrolments drop then there are

ramifications for staffing levels and teacher retention. Peters (2003, p.115) would call this education as 'knowledge capitalism'. There is also a chance that the experiences of these two participants, if reflected on a broader scale, could arguably change the broader nature of teaching as a profession 'into a now transient job that could only be endured for much shorter periods of time' (Daliri-Ngametua and Hardy (2022, P.7).

The ongoing tensions and conflicts as described and experienced by these teachers can potentially undermine their sense of civic identity and their commitment to the teaching profession. The external pressures and internal conflicts faced by teachers can also shape their perceptions of their roles in society and effect their abilities to contribute to the broader goals of education, such as promoting equity, inclusion and social justice.

4.3.4 Oblique/Reflective Voices

While the search for contrary voices was perhaps the most challenging, identifying oblique voices was perhaps the most interesting. The role of reflection and reflective voices in exploring and shaping identity is described by Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, p.182) as 'a key means by which teachers can become more in tune with their sense of self and with a deep understanding of how this self fits into a larger context which involves others'

One example of understanding self and context comes via the teachers who either grew up or lived for a significant period in another jurisdiction. Some participants grew up during the most violent period of the island's recent history. T.9 for example spoke about their school days and the

> *Huge turnover of staff because they were travelling from all over the six*
>
> *counties to get into Belfast to go to work and it wasn't a particularly nice time*

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to be doing something like that with bomb scares and upheaval and things like

that. So it was quite a difficult time.

This teacher spoke about how they reflected on those experiences during their college and teacher training phase and how they '*actually pushed me towards an early recognition of what a civic identity was and the power that education could have in in improving civil and civic life.*' However, they did add that

You find yourself wrestling with it (i.e. civic identity) in the politics and society classroom because civic identity does involve formation and reflective analysis or negotiation of personal group identities as they are relative to your presence, role in, participation in public life.

They also draw a subtle but important distinction between civic identity and political identity, describing the following realisation,

As someone who has faced discrimination, inequality, poverty as a young person, with those personally lived experiences, I have to be very conscious that any baggage associated does not enter my classroom and become a political identity as well.

Clearly this teacher has reflected deeply on an ongoing basis on the nature of their own identity and the need to keep civic and political identity separate. The research process also allowed other teachers the space to reflect on the impact of growing up and/or working abroad had on their civic identities. T.7 '*went through all that, you know, 1980's, 90's stuff*' before moving to London to teach there. They reflected on how this experience showed how assumptions can be made '*in the media, in certain words and tone*' that '*I think made me very conscious of that type of thing.*' T.9 was born into '*a conservative Irish Catholic family immigrant family in London, so that would have formed quite a lot of my background.*' This teacher didn't really expand

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on this, mainly because they moved back to Ireland when they were of school going age, but further explained, '*I always know that it's kind of in my background*' and that there is '*nothing I can do about it but there's a much bigger world out there I suppose.*' Continuing the idea of a bigger world, T.12 reflected on their '*pluralistic, diverse civic identity*' as a result of living in a variety of countries which gave a '*cosmopolitan aspect*' to their identity. Despite admitting '*I was very Catholic*' they see themselves as '*very progressive, very liberal on social issues.*' They also say that their civic identity has '*probably developed over the last six years in a way that maybe is perhaps surprising to me, that I kind of, yeah, I have been influenced by what I do every day.*' The paragraph discusses how some teachers' experiences of growing up or living in different locations and during difficult times, such as the Troubles in Northern Ireland or as immigrants in London, have shaped their understanding of civic identity. It highlights the challenges they faced and how they had to consciously separate their personal experiences and political identities from their roles as educators. The paragraph also touches on how exposure to diverse environments and cultures can foster a cosmopolitan and progressive civic identity. These have clearly shaped the interviewees' initial or stationary views, but they demonstrate openness to different perspectives towards civic engagement and cosmopolitan or moving views. While these teachers' external experiences arguably played a role in shaping their civic identities, internal conflicts regarding class became the dominant theme in this section.

Maguire (2005, pp.428-429) writes that class is 'a complex amalgam of the material, the cultural the emotional and the social: it is structural, but it is also struggled over, contested and reconfigured.' However as Keane (2023, p.1) points out 'relatively little attention has been paid to how it is conceived and enacted in the context of the professions, including teaching'. As a theme, class features prominently in the

Politics and Society specification, usually through the theories of established '*key thinkers*' or through the works of Kathleen Lynch (2024, 2016). Some of the teachers proceeded to describe their own experiences of class and how these experiences tallied with the work they were doing with the students. T.17 for example spoke about their students meeting others at an event where there were '*so many students from various backgrounds, middle class, real socio-economic mixture*.' They spoke of how their students found it a '*real eye opener*' in that they saw first-hand the '*social class difference*' and how '*confident*' some private school students could be. This participant saw such an opening as a '*teaching moment*' in terms of class and how the students '*experienced it, felt it and how they sensed it*.' This latter point reflects a fear that was expressed by others regarding Politics and Society in schools. T.14 spoke about how at an in-service event '*we spoke about the number of schools in working class areas that do not offer the subject*.' They also expressed the fear that it was becoming '*a subject for middle class schools, particularly in upper middle-class areas*' because '*you want students who are in working class areas to feel like they have that same ability to get involved and to participate*.'

However, the main focus here is not on class as externally manifested but on how the teachers in this study reconcile differing concepts of it internally. As with the voices of conflict when discussing vulnerability as part of civic identity, two vignettes may illustrate the complexity of discussing class as part of a Politics and Society teachers' civic identities. T.1 reported struggling to reconcile their own perception of themselves as working class individuals with an outsider telling them that they were more middle class, simply because of the nature of their teaching job. For such a relatively straightforward statement, understanding it requires a great deal of unpacking of covering perceived identity, of value beliefs around teaching as an occupation and of upbringing. T.1 was very much of the opinion that '*I am working

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class, I come from a working-class background.' Their friends' comments that they are certainly middle class, caused them to reflect and it took an intervention by their parents, saying that, '*you are middle class now you're in the middle class job*'. T.1 admits, '*you know, and it kind of dawned on me, yeah I'm kind of a middle class now but I don't feel like that.*' Even such a clear statement is far from definitive but it does go some way to illustrating how teachers need to reflect on their identities, to question them and refine them; especially in a subject area such as Politics and Society, which places such emphasis on identity. The other example of teachers reflecting on class and on identity has more of an external focus but it still has important implications for internal struggles associated with it. T.11 states that

> *the majority of teachers in Ireland are from a middle-class background, that's an issue. So, for role modelling and whatever, there's not enough coming from working class areas.*

Interestingly, the mention working class areas is something that T.1 did not mention and instead this participant was more focused instead on teachers' family backgrounds. T.11 expands on the idea of areas being considered working or middle class by saying the majority of students in the school

> '*understand that they're privileged, but then you know when you're doing the privileges of the grinds and all that and all these privileges that they have and the cultural capital*'.

The participant noted pointedly that '*I do feel a little bit conflicted in that*'. They go on to add that there is a school '*just down the road a few miles and then I'm saying, you know, that would be a disadvantaged school there and I'm very careful about saying socially disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged area*'. They explain that

> *'I do feel that's not fair on the kids in in that area. I'm, you know, referring to*
>
> *them that in a disadvantaged area. You know, I'm sort of creating the other*
>
> *and I find that like I don't know, maybe there's something wrong there.'*

It is reasonable to surmise that this teacher is struggling to bridge the class gap by avoiding a self-spoken narrative that could be considered to be demeaning or insulting.

In conclusion, the reflections of T.1 and T.11 underscore the multifaceted and often contested nature of class identity among Politics and Society teachers. T.1's journey illustrates the internal conflict and gradual reconciliation of personal and professional identities, highlighting the influence of upbringing and occupational status on self-perception. In contrast, T.11's narrative reveals the external dimensions of class identity, focusing on the broader socio-economic disparities and their implications for role modelling and student perceptions. Both vignettes illustrate the necessity for teachers to engage in continuous self-reflection and critical examination of their identities, particularly in the context of teaching a subject that emphasises the intricacies of social stratification and civic identity. These narratives not only shed light on the personal struggles of educators but also call for a more nuanced understanding and discussion of class within the teaching profession, reflecting the complex interplay between personal beliefs, societal expectations, and professional responsibilities.

4.4 Polyphonic or Polyvocal: Unravelling the Sheet Music of Civic Identity

Hutton and Lystor (2019, p.25) write about the 'analytical importance of voice and the value of listening for polyphonic voices located in private spaces.' I argue that 'phonic,' when understood as relating to speech sounds, does not do justice to the messages contained in the narratives that emerged through the listening guide

process. Instead, I contend that Polyvocal is a better summation, as it reflects 'many voices, many truths' (Mitchell, 2023). Classic music theory defines 'contrapuntal' as a combination of 'multiple, independent, melodic voices, each with its own distinct rhythm and contour' to create 'a rich texture where the voices interact harmonically and melodically, contributing to the overall complexity and depth of a composition.' This perfectly represents the many nuances, paradoxes, and intricacies that have emerged through this process. If I were to represent the voices of civic identity on sheet music, it would look something like this
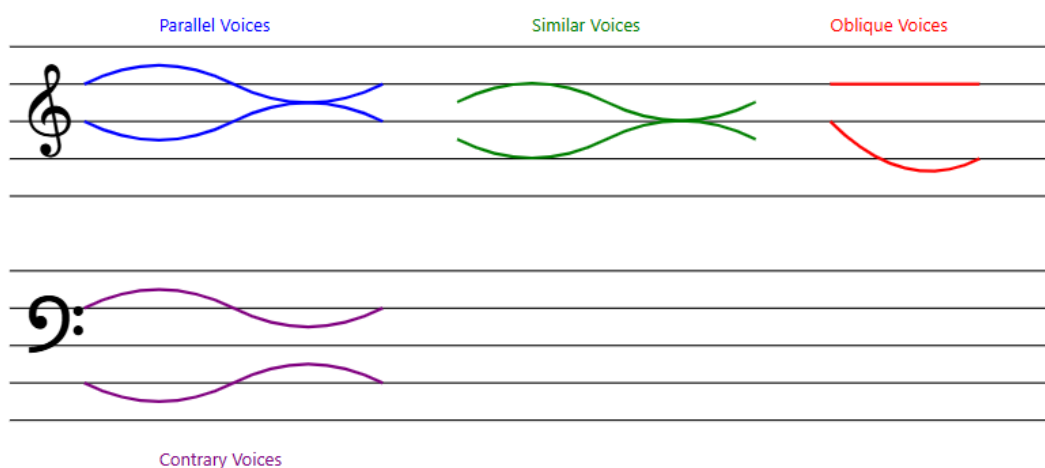
Figure 17: The Phenomenology of Contrapuntal Voice Analysis

This conceptual musical score represents the various 'voices' mentioned in this chapter. This analysis employs a musical metaphor to conceptualise the complex, multi-layered nature of civic identity formation among Politics and Society teachers in Ireland. Drawing on the theoretical framework of polyphonic analysis, this study identifies four distinct but interrelated voice patterns that characterise participants' narratives.

Parallel/Foundational Voices emerge as consistent themes of community engagement and volunteerism across participants' narratives. These voices, conceptualised as parallel melodic lines in the treble clef, maintain consistent presence while exhibiting

varying degrees of proximity depending on career stage and life circumstances. Their positioning in the higher register reflects their aspirational and idealistic nature in participants' civic identity formation.

Similar/Pedagogical Voices represent the related but distinct concepts of active citizenship and civic responsibility. These voices, while maintaining similar trajectories, demonstrate subtle variations that reflect individual interpretations and applications of these concepts within educational contexts. This pattern illuminates the nuanced relationship between theoretical understanding and practical implementation of civic education principles.

Oblique/Reflective Voices capture the dynamic tension between static and evolving elements of identity, particularly evident in participants' negotiations of socioeconomic class identity. This pattern reveals how some participants maintain fixed class identifications while others experience significant identity reconstruction through professional advancement, highlighting the complex interplay between personal history and professional status.

Contrary/Vulnerable Voices, positioned in the bass clef, represent opposing movements in participants' narratives, particularly evident in expressions of disillusionment and detachment. Their lower register placement symbolises the underlying tensions and vulnerabilities that characterise participants' civic identity formation.

This polyphonic framework reveals the temporal and developmental nature of civic identity formation, with different voices achieving prominence at various points while maintaining continuous presence throughout participants' narratives. Multiple iterations of analysis were required to fully appreciate the complexity of these interweaving voices, revealing subtle counterpoints such as the tension between

promoting voter registration while personally abstaining from voting, or advocating for subject engagement while struggling with institutional pressures for academic performance.

The analysis culminates in what one participant aptly termed '*a different sameness'* suggesting a civic identity that simultaneously embraces transformation while maintaining connection to traditional communal values. This conceptualisation reflects the dynamic nature of civic identity formation in contemporary Ireland, characterised by continuous negotiation between established social structures and emerging global perspectives.

This polyphonic analysis provides a novel theoretical framework for understanding the complex, multi-layered nature of civic identity formation among educators, while highlighting the ongoing tensions between traditional and emerging forms of civic engagement in contemporary Irish society.

The findings from this study make several significant contributions to the field of civic identity and education, particularly in the context of secondary school teachers who teach Politics and Society in Ireland. First, the research deepens our understanding of how civic identity is not a static construct but a dynamic and evolving phenomenon shaped by personal experiences, professional practice, and socio-political contexts. By using the innovative Listening Guide methodology, the study reveals the multiplicity of voices that constitute teachers' civic identities, capturing the tensions, contradictions, and harmonies that arise as these educators navigate their roles. The study's application of musical theory, particularly the concept of contrapuntal motion, to analyse the interplay between different aspects of civic identity not only enriches the analytical process but also provides a fresh lens through which to understand the complexity of civic identity formation.

This chapter used the Listening Guide method to organise the analysis around distinct 'voices' emerging from teacher narratives: foundational, pedagogical, vulnerable, and reflective. Each voice aligns with specific components of the Ériu VOICE model, offering a nuanced view of how various elements shape teachers' civic identities. This underscores the Ériu VOICE models relevance by showing how each model component captures unique influences on civic identity, from deeply ingrained personal values to the influence of institutional and societal frameworks. The foundational voices in the findings reveal how teachers' early values and social backgrounds—captured within the "Values and Upbringing" (Habitus) component of the Ériu model—serve as a core influence on their civic identity. Teachers' narratives frequently reference family values, community, and early civic experiences, demonstrating how these formative experiences shape their perspectives on citizenship and civic responsibility. Pedagogical voices reflect teachers' professional engagement with civic education and align with the model's 'Institutional Influences' (Frames) and 'Civic Conceptions' (Narrative Identity). Many teachers describe how school culture, policies, and resources impact their approach to civic education. Their conceptions of what it means to be a good citizen inform their pedagogy, revealing an alignment with the Ériu model's emphasis on the ways institutional factors and individual beliefs about citizenship shape civic identity in the classroom. The vulnerable voices highlight teachers' challenges and uncertainties, particularly when societal pressures conflict with their personal civic beliefs. This aligns closely with the 'Outside Influences' (Doxa) component, where broader social and political contexts challenge teachers' values and create tensions in their professional roles. Themes in this section reveal how external issues, such as topical debates or democratic backsliding, influence and sometimes complicate teachers expressions of civic identity. Reflective voices showcase teachers beliefs about the

purpose of civic education and their introspection regarding their role in fostering democratic values, aligning with the 'Ethos' (Discursive Formation) component of the Ériu model. Teachers' reflections demonstrate an awareness of the broader goals of civic education, such as encouraging critical thinking and active citizenship, and indicate how these beliefs shape their practices in the classroom.

Overall, this study contributes to the field by providing a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the factors that shape civic identity among Politics and Society teachers in Ireland. It bridges the gap between theory and practice, offering both scholarly insights and practical recommendations for enhancing civic education. The innovative methodological approach and the rich, multi-dimensional analysis of teacher identity make this research a valuable addition to the literature on civic education, teacher identity, and reflexive practice.

Building on the findings discussed, the following chapter will synthesise the key insights gained from this research and offer conclusions that underscore the implications for both theory and practice. It will also present actionable recommendations for educators, policymakers, and teacher training institutions aimed at strengthening civic education and supporting teachers in their crucial role as civic educators. By reflecting on the study's contributions and proposing future directions, this final chapter will provide a comprehensive roadmap for advancing the field of civic identity and education.

Chapter 5 Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has delved into the development of teachers' civic identity, with a particular focus on Politics and Society teachers and their evolving conceptualisations of democracy and citizenship. This chapter now presents an in-depth analysis of the findings from this study, focusing on how Politics and Society teachers construct and interpret their civic identities within the Irish educational landscape. This chapter is structured around the research questions that guided the investigation, allowing for a systematic exploration of the personal, curricular, and institutional factors influencing teachers' civic identities.

The three research questions are as follows and will be addressed in this section:

How do the lived experiences of Politics and Society teachers inform the construction and evolution of their civic identities?

What are the perceived challenges that Politics and Society teachers face when aligning their personal civic values with the theoretical frameworks of the Politics and Society curriculum?

In what ways do school cultures impact the negotiation and expression of civic identities among Politics and Society teachers?

The chapter begins by examining the role of lived experiences in shaping civic identity, revealing how teachers backgrounds, beliefs, and life events inform their professional and civic roles. This is followed by an analysis of how teachers navigate tensions between their own civic values and the theoretical underpinnings of the Politics and Society curriculum, with findings shedding light on the adaptive strategies teachers employ to balance institutional expectations with personal convictions. The chapter then explores the influence of school culture, investigating

how varying levels of institutional support and community engagement impact teachers' ability to express and enact their civic identities.

By structuring the analysis around these core questions, the chapter will provide a comprehensive view of the dynamic and multifaceted nature of teacher civic identity. This chapter not only addresses the study's central questions but also offers insights into the broader implications for civic education and teacher development in Irish schools, highlighting the importance of reflective practices, curricular flexibility, and supportive school environments in fostering engaged and resilient civic identities among educators. By adhering to this structure, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive discussion of the study's findings, their practical applications, and their implications for future research, situating the work within the broader academic and educational context. To further highlight the significance of these findings, it is essential to explore the philosophy of language as espoused by Mikhail Bakhtin.

He theorised that people speak with multiple voices, each driven by its own intentions, resulting in an identity that is continually (re)constructed and negotiated (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011). These voices or 'I Positions' emerged clearly during the data gathering and analysis phases of this project. The potential of these I Positions and the voices informing them are not always complementary to each other, and the I in one position can 'agree, disagree, understand, misunderstand, oppose, contradict, question, challenge, and even ridicule the I in another position' (Hermans and Hermans-Jansen, 2001, p.249). These multiple, possibly contradictory positions proved useful in understanding the development of the civic identity of Politics and Society teachers in Ireland. Henry (2019, p.2) contends that these 'multiple and complexly intersecting relations create tensions that can make identity formation a highly challenging process,' a statement that is undoubtedly true, but interpreting this process is even more challenging.

It is clear, however, that secondary school teachers who teach Politics and Society in Ireland have diverse and evolving understandings of democracy and democratic citizenship, influenced by their subjective experiences, educational background, and the socio-political context. These teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' understanding of democracy and citizenship, and their perspectives can significantly impact the effectiveness of civic education. Through this work I have attempted to understand how secondary school teachers in Ireland, who teach Politics and Society, view their civic identity and how their perspectives have evolved over time. I have also sought to delve deeper into the factors that influence teachers' views on citizenship and democracy, and how they navigate the complexities and tensions in creating a civic identity.

Using the Listening Guide was the most useful approach to take as it serves as both a method and methodology, a way of working and a logic of working (Gilligan and Eddy, 2021, p.141). Consisting of sequential steps or listenings, this approach provided the nuanced analytical technique needed to understand the complexity of identity (Hall, 2011). A typical study using the Listening Guide consists of the following steps:

1. Initial Analysis or Listening for the plot points.
2. Listening for the individual or Constructing I-Poems.
3. Hearing the Different Voices or finding the Contrapuntal voices.
4. Carrying out an analysis or pulling everything together.

For this research, however, I added an additional step where I returned to the participants for a short follow-up call and review. By doing so, this capstone analysis, not only helped me in relation to reflexive practice but also gave some ownership of the research process back to the participants.

5.1 The Researcher's Journey: Reflexivity and Positionality

The research process began initially with an admission and an awareness of the researcher's dual positionality; that of being a former teacher as well as that of researcher. This highlighted for the researcher, the importance of reflexivity, which involved acknowledging how background and biases may influence the intended research process. The listening guide, with its emphasis on 'reader response,' served as a tool to capture the researcher's own immediate reactions and potential biases both during and after interviews. This was aided through reflexive memos that were compiled immediately after the interviews and before analysis took place.

It can be admitted phenomenologically, upon review, that navigating such a dual role proved challenging. Participants may have seen the researcher as an 'insider' due to our shared profession as second level teachers, and the concern was that this could potentially alter their interview responses. Conversely, some of the evidence may suggest that prior experience as a teacher may not have granted complete insider status. Examining the use of phrases like '*you know*' or '*you know what it's like*' in interviews suggests participants expected the researcher to understand their experiences based on shared professional knowledge. This prompted consideration of '*insider explanatory phenomenology*,' which utilises the researcher's own background to illuminate the participants experiences (Dörfler and Stierand,2020, p. 10). Ultimately however, it was decided to embrace the researcher role as an 'experiential outsider' - someone with past experiences that inform understanding but someone importantly who remains outside the current teaching environment. This balance allowed for a drawing on prior knowledge and a maintaining of critical distance. There was perhaps something of a missed opportunity during the review session with each participant to enquire whether they saw me as a teacher or

researcher but such an inquiry is possibly more of a phenomenological curiosity and of a lesser relevance to answering the initial research questions.

Examining the four voices that emerged through the Listening Guide process allows for a discussion of the findings and for recommendations under each sub-set.

5.2 Foundational Voices: Analysis and Recommendations

Rami and Lalor (2024) highlight the multi-dimensional and context dependent nature of civic identity with significant differences in scope and opinion depending on the educational discipline of the teacher. Other factors include recent and established history, relationships to their pasts and their neighbours, experiences of and attitudes towards the EU and experiences of democratic practices in the country itself. With all those factors in mind the main voices which emerged at this point in the research process were those of personal experience, evolving civic identity and '*out of field*' voices.

5.2.1 The Role of Personal Experience

Petrovska (2021, p.168) posits that 'public declarations of citizenship' often diverge from the actual existence of civic identity as 'a personal substructure.' This discrepancy is evident among the participants in this study, many of whom struggled to articulate a definition of civic identity independently. Instead, they sought guidance from me as the researcher, they referenced key thinkers from the Politics and Society course, or in some cases they prefaced their responses with hedging statements such as '*I suppose*' or '*maybe*.' This linguistic strategy, identified by Hyland (1995, p.34) as 'an expression of tentativeness in language use that represents an absence of certainty,' was prevalent in the interviews. Despite this uncertainty, personal experiences significantly influenced the participants' civic

identities. The family backgrounds were a pivotal factor, with many participants citing parental influence as being fundamental in nurturing their civic identities. For instance, T.2's parents, who worked in the health sector, instilled in them a respect for vulnerable people. T.1's politically active household fostered an informed political perspective also . The political dynamics within other households also played a crucial role too. T.10's experience in a household with contrasting political views led to a unique understanding of civic identity, exemplified by the concept of a '*cancel house*' where opposing votes nullified each other. Engagement with media, such as newspapers, further contributed to civic awareness. For example, T.3's initial interest in sports evolved into a broader understanding of civic matters through exposure to newspapers.

The variation in the definition of civic identity is not inherently problematic, given the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the participants. However, a more concerning issue is that many teachers in this study are uncertain about the value of their own backgrounds in shaping their civic identity. Even those who acknowledge their backgrounds sometimes feel the need to disguise or neutralise their identity in a classroom setting. This phenomenon may be linked to the concept of Open Classroom Climate (OCC). The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), a large-scale international project that regularly collects data from tens of thousands of school students, around 14 years of age typically, uses OCC as one of its metrics. While the focus is primarily on students, one criterion examines whether teachers present multiple perspectives on an issue when explaining it to their classes. Jerome et al. (2024, p.21) argue in a systematic literature review that a good student-teacher relationship may be mutually reinforcing in the context of effective citizenship education. Therefore, future research in an Irish context could explore

this claim and could investigate the potential link between classroom climate and teachers' willingness to discuss their own civic identities.

5.2.1 Evolution of Civic Identity Over Time

There is substantial evidence indicating that teachers' civic identities evolve over time. T.13 for example remarked, '*it (civic identity) does change the more you experience, the more you're adding to it*' before introducing the notion of '*a big wheel of civic identity'*. This underscores the dynamic nature of civic identity, which evolves in tandem with personal milestones and life changes. In this instance the speaker mentioned how a spell in Australia made them *'feel closer to Irishness'* It is possible to trace work on the evolution of civic identity back to the identity status paradigm of Marcia (1966), which advances the idea that identity development results from identity exploration, a sense of searching and choosing among alternatives, and to commitment which involves selecting and investing in a stable set of goals, values, and beliefs.

More recently, Lep and Zupancic (2023), identify four identity statuses: achieved, diffused, moratorium and foreclosed. In this study, the diffused status is characterised by a lack of interest in exploring or committing to civic participation. This was not evident among the participants in this research. Instead, the observed patterns were foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved. Foreclosed identity involves a commitment to parental views on civic engagement without personal exploration. Evidence of this was seen in participants consuming the same media sources as their parents, identifying individual politicians rather than differing ideologies, and being aware of voting and elections. Over time however, these individuals began to develop their own identities, particularly during college and during their early teaching careers.

A moratorium identity entails exploring different meanings of citizenship and ways to participate in the community without committing to a specific path. Participants encouraged students to engage and express their civic identity in various ways. T.16 emphasised the basics of democratic participation taught early in secondary school, noting, '*That kind of sense of, you know, what it means to participate as a citizen and might even go back further to, you know, when you start, when you're in secondary school, doing CSPE, the very basics of, you know, what it means to participate in democracy.*' T.5 highlighted the importance of background in ensuring students are equipped to engage with civic society, stating the importance of '*behaviour modelling like how we engage with society, modelling ourselves, what our expectations are for young people, how we expect them to engage.*'

An achieved identity involves a commitment to a specific style of civic participation following a period of exploration. For many participants, this manifested in activities like voting, engaging with civic agencies, encouraging students to register to vote, contacting elected representatives, as well as visiting buildings and institutions associated with democratic processes.

In chapter four the study references the 'Big 5' transition markers as described by Settersten and Ray (2010). These include leaving home, completing schooling, entering the workforce, marrying and having children. This study introduces and highlights an additional marker, one that is relevant to an Irish context especially and that is, the acquisition of housing. These milestones collectively contribute to the development of civic identity, as they often correlate with increased civic engagement and responsibilities. The availability and affordability of housing have clearly been identified as factors influencing teachers' civic identities in this study.

 Housing affordability constraints can necessitate lengthy commutes for teachers, thereby disrupting their integration into local communities and potentially hindering

the development of a strong civic identity. This, in turn, has contributed to a teacher shortage, with qualified individuals either unavailable due to geographical limitations or discouraged by extensive commutes. For instance, during the interview scheduling process, one teacher specifically requested a weekend meeting due to limited availability during weekdays caused by their lengthy commute. Such evidence leads into another factor impacting the evolution of civic identity, and these are best explored in terms of 'out of field' voices and their significance.

5.2.2 The Significance of 'Out-of-Field Voices': Context and Social Location

Deleuze (1989, p.226) employs cinematographic imagery to discuss not only what is within the frame of the research interview but also what lies outside the frame, that which 'fills the visual not seen with a specific presence.' Mazzei and Jackson (2012, p.748) refer to these as 'out of field voices,' noting that they can both 'guide and constrain our participants, some of which we have access to as researchers, but many of which we may not.' Without reanalysing the content from Chapter Four, it is clear that the broader socio-political context plays a crucial role in shaping civic identity. While some contexts, such as a sense of giving back to the community are positive, in others, like the availability of housing and its impact on volunteering in the community and school, these are detrimental to the nurturing of activities integral to civic identity. For instance, T.2 and T.13 highlighted the adverse effects of having to move from school to school due to unaffordable rents in the areas in which they were teaching.

This analysis underscores the necessity of considering the broader socio-political environment when examining civic identity. The positive aspects, such as community engagement, are often overshadowed by systemic issues like housing affordability, and these can impede teachers' abilities to establish stable and long-

term commitments to their communities. This instability not only affects their professional lives but it also affects their capacity to foster a robust civic identity among their students. Therefore, future research must critically engage with these 'out of field voices' to fully understand the complexities of civic identity formation in varying socio-political contexts.

5.2.3 Recommendations for practice

This research underscores the profound impact of individual experiences on the formation of civic identity. Teachers can harness their own backgrounds and experiences to create authentic and engaging learning opportunities for students. Sharing personal stories about volunteering, political engagement or involvement in community organisations can inspire students and can make civic and democratic concepts more relatable. Atkins and Hart (2003, p.157) assert that civic identity develops through three key elements: (a) participation in one's community, (b) acquisition of knowledge about the community and (c) adoption of fundamental democratic principles, such as justice and the protection of civil liberties. These elements cultivate an individual's civic identity, which refers to their 'sense of belonging to a larger polis and responsibility to contribute to its health' (Blyth, 2009, p. 415).

Civic identity encompasses 'subjective, ethical, and political facets, lying at the heart of common notions of citizenship and civic participation' (Hart et al., 2011, p.772). Haste and Bermudez (2017) emphasise the role of historical consciousness in constructing civic identity, noting that economic conditions can also influence civic identity in multiple ways (Hart et al., 2011). However, as Kenny (2017, p.2) points out, Ireland could have been considered a fertile bed for populism during the austerity era post the 2008 financial crisis. However such populism only manifested itself in a 'limited and unusual form' as evidenced through the water charge civil

protests at that time. How could such civic unrest happen in Irish society? Kenny argues that this shows the 'irreducible complexity and locality of populism' and therefore the best way to study and counter it is 'not through theory and the search for similarity but through observation of diversity'. To turn this statement around and to employ it as a phenomenological grounding, it could be argued that this study has engaged with teachers to closely observe and to engage with the diverse local factors that shape their political views and sense of belonging. By recognising and responding to these distinct local realities, it is possible to better cultivate a civic identity that resonates with people's lived experiences and thereby strengthens democratic participation from the ground up, in turn negating the local factors that facilitate the growth of populism.

Therefore, teacher training programs might be encouraged to consider more fully, the importance of teachers' personal backgrounds in shaping their civic identities. Workshops and reflective exercises could help teachers to recognise and to articulate their civic identities and to foster a deeper understanding of how these identities influence their teaching practices. Training could include strategies for creating an open classroom climate (OCC) where multiple perspectives may be discussed. This could help teachers feel more comfortable in sharing their own civic identities and experiences, and thereby contribute to a richer educational environment. Media literacy could also be incorporated into teacher education and into professional development programs, so as to highlight how media engagement enhances civic awareness. This could help teachers guide students in understanding and analysing how civic issues are presented in the media in various and often conflicting ways.

Teachers often serve as role models by actively participating in their communities. Sharing such experiences with students could demonstrate the practical application of civic values. Schools could create opportunities for teachers to engage with local

communities such as volunteer programs, or with community projects or partnerships and local organisations. This could reinforce the connection between personal civic identity and professional responsibilities. T.2, for example, lamented that schools, '*despite being pillars of the community*,' are '*quite closed spaces*.' Given the significant role that community and upbringing play in the formation of teachers' civic identities, educational institutions could integrate community-based learning opportunities into the curriculum. Flecky (2011, p.2) defines community-based learning (CBL) as 'a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs as part of structured opportunities, intentionally designed to promote student learning and development.' CBL has been shown to increase students' civic engagement skills (Carlisle et al., 2020). Teachers should be encouraged to foster connections between students and among local community groups, thereby enabling students to engage in real-world civic activities and projects. This could help students develop a practical understanding of civic responsibility and enhance their sense of belonging and agency within their communities. By highlighting the role of these groups in their own civic identity development, teachers can acknowledge their importance and instil the same sense of volunteering and community activism in their students. Of course, this presents as just one aspect of civic identity, and it may not be seen as important or relevant by all teachers. Teachers can also create inclusive classrooms that celebrate the diversity of student experiences and backgrounds. This fosters a sense of belonging and encourages students to see their own potential as active citizens in the present time, and not just in the future.

The most significant step in integrating civic identity development into teaching practice is for teachers to acknowledge their own civic identity. For example, T.13, an experienced teacher of Politics and Society, admitted to being '*confused as to how*

you define civic identity, to be honest. Like I was going to e-mail you back when I read the questions. What definition of civic identity are you working off here? Because that confused me.' They did offer a definition before asking, '*Am I on the right track there?*' For an experienced teacher to reach such a developed career stage without ever having considered their civic identity was noteworthy, and they were not an outlier. For students and tutors during the initial teacher education phase, coursework or projects could be an integral part of assessment for Politics and Society as well as CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education) teachers. Identifying the civic dimension of their identity is crucial because this dimension holds powerful implications for the preparation of current and future citizens. If teachers do not understand their own civic identity, how can they be expected to do similar, or arguably more, for the students in their classes?

For practicing teachers, the opportunity to engage in such an exercise is more constrained but not completely absent. Throughout the year, OIDE (the Department of Education and Skills body responsible for delivering Continuous Professional Development opportunities in schools in Ireland) holds in-service days for new and existing Politics and Society teachers. Sessions at these courses could be dedicated to helping teachers identify their own sense of civic identity, to sharing this sense with others and listening to what they have to say about personal lives, professional responsibilities, and pedagogy. This could help them begin to see the commonalities and potential that exist regarding civic identity development.

5.2.4 Recommendations for future research

The findings of this study suggest several promising avenues for future research. Longitudinal investigations are recommended to track the evolution of teachers' civic identities over extended periods, capturing the impact of various life events,

career stages and societal changes. Such studies could provide valuable insights into the dynamic nature of civic identity formation and could elucidate the factors influencing its development at different stages. Employing mixed-methods research designs that combine qualitative and quantitative data is also recommended to provide a comprehensive understanding of teachers' civic identities. Methodological approaches, including surveys, interviews, classroom observations and analysis of curricular materials and policy documents, could offer a holistic and multifaceted perspective on the phenomenon under investigation.

Investigating the relationship between teachers' civic identities and student outcomes related to civic engagement, political participation and democratic values is crucial. This line of inquiry could inform strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of civic education programs and for fostering active citizenship among students, thereby yielding practical recommendations for aligning teachers' civic identities with the desired outcomes of civic education initiatives.

Examining how various aspects of teachers' identities, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and religious affiliation intersect with their civic identities, could provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex factors shaping teachers' perceptions of citizenship and of their roles as civic educators. An intersectional approach to exploring civic identities may unveil the intricate interplay between personal and social dimensions of identity construction.

Engaging teachers in collaborative action research projects focused on exploring and enhancing their civic identities is recommended. Such projects could empower teachers to critically reflect on their beliefs and practices while contributing to the development of practical strategies for fostering civic identity development in educational settings. Participatory approaches could bridge the gap between theory

and practice, fostering a symbiotic relationship between research and pedagogical praxis.

Finally, analysing the impact of institutional policies, school cultures and educational reforms on teachers' abilities to develop and express their civic identities in the classroom is essential. Such investigations would inform policy recommendations and support systems for creating environments conducive to fostering teachers' civic agency. These studies would then contribute to the development of institutional frameworks that nurture and sustain teachers' civic identities, ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness of civic education.

These foundational voices represent the bedrock of civic identity, core beliefs, values and experiences that form the foundation of teachers' civic identities. These voices are deeply rooted in personal history, in early educational influences, and in the socio-political environments in which the teachers were raised. They serve as the initial framework through which teachers conceptualise democracy and citizenship, and they provide a stable yet evolving foundation upon which their professional identities are built.

It is important to recognise how these foundational voices influence teaching practices. The foundational voices are not static; they evolve as teachers engage with their students, with curriculum and with broader educational contexts. This evolution marks the beginning of a pedagogical transformation, one in which foundational beliefs are translated into classroom practices, those aimed at fostering civic engagement and critical thinking among students.

5.3 Pedagogical Voices

It is worth reviewing the three similar pedagogical voices that emerged in chapter four: Empowerment, active citizenship, and critical thinking. The following sections

elaborate a discussion on the implications of each of these themes for teachers' civic identities and, in doing this we revert to significant literature, thereby reflecting on various themes from chapter two and extending their significance based on the evidence from the study data.

5.3.1 Empowerment

In this research, the term empowerment assumes dual significance. For the researcher as a phenomenologist, empowerment involved recognising and amplifying the voices of research participants, thereby making their experiences and perspectives central to the research (Lather, 1991). This process was facilitated through the creation of narratives via transformative interviews with teachers, this enabling them to articulate their civic roles and responsibilities (Woodcock, 2016). This approach complemented the teachers' understanding of empowerment, a theory that they themselves direct toward their students in class. The narratives reflect teachers' professional identities and highlight their sense of civic duty, which empowers students and resonates with Jacoby's (2009) concept of 'big tent' experiences whereby community involvement fosters civic engagement.

The collected narratives reveal a complex interplay of voices shaping both civic identity and classroom practice. A recurring theme in the evidence is the desire for students to develop critical thinking skills and have their own voice. T.13 emphasises '*promoting critical thinking and having your own voice but being able to defend it in an argument...Don't be the sheep that just follows.*'

Moreover, the concept of student voice, defined by Holquist et al. (2023, p.724) emerged as pivotal for empowering students. This is loosely defined as providing opportunities for students to participate in and influence decisions that shape their lives. T.4 articulates the significance of students learning to develop their voice so

they '*feel heard*' and therefore become more engaged. T.12 links student voice to future citizenship, asserting that a student's '*job as citizens is to use that voice*.'

Empowering students to have a voice in their education is not only about enhancing engagement but also about preparing them for active participation in democratic processes. Teachers like T.12 believe that cultivating a student's ability to articulate and defend their viewpoints is fundamental to their development as informed, active citizens, so that '*you can make a change, and you can make the world a fairer and a better place.*'

5.3.2 Active Citizenship

The concept of active citizenship is deeply embedded in teachers' efforts to connect students with their communities. Participants often referenced their upbringing and their community experiences as critical to fostering such connections. T.10 for instance, expressed a desire to '*continue what I'm doing in the local community*,' while T.11 felt '*at one with the community*.' This commitment to active citizenship aligns with contemporary educational theories that emphasise experiential learning and community involvement as pathways to civic engagement (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004).

By encouraging students to engage with local community groups, teachers facilitate the beginning of students' own civic journeys, thereby helping them to understand and navigate the social and political landscapes of their communities. Active citizenship also involves educators modelling civic engagement. For example, T.11 comments on a perceived sense of place within the community; '*I'm from that area and I think what's important as well is that I live in the area and I'm from the area. So, I'm at one with the community*. Such a comment arguably underscores the role of teachers as civic role models, one which is crucial, given that it provides students with tangible examples of civic participation and responsibility (Levine, 2011).

Furthermore, active citizenship education promotes a sense of responsibility and agency in students. Such a pedagogical approach aims not only to educate but also to inspire students to become proactive members of their communities, members who could be capable of initiating and participating in social change. However, fostering active citizenship is not without its challenges. Teachers need to navigate the diverse socio-political contexts of their students and need to address potential resistance to civic engagement. Strategies such as inclusive curriculum design and community partnerships can help mitigate these challenges and can enhance the effectiveness of active citizenship education.

5.3.3 Critical Thinking

Fostering critical thinking is a central theme in developing students civic identity. Teachers like T.9 highlighted the importance of translating critical analysis skills into tangible actions and outcomes. They talk about their power as a teacher to '*deliver something transformative*' and getting their students to '*vote, join an NGO, work for a charity*' but '*don't sit on your hands, defend, protect and promote your values*'. This emphasis aligns with the broader educational goal of developing independent, reflective thinkers capable of engaging with complex social issues.

Other teachers stressed the necessity of not merely accepting information at face value. T.18 for instance encouraged students to be critical of information, stating: '*I've encouraged them to be critical of information...not just assume all opinions are valid...you need to prove it*.' This approach is essential for developing civic literacy, an idea which Morgan (2016, p.2) defines as the knowledge and skills needed to participate effectively in civic life at various levels.

By promoting critical analysis skills, educators aim to equip students with the ability to form their own evidence-based views. T.7 underscores this by stating, '*You encourage open dialogue and critical thinking...to base their opinions on evidence*

and consider different perspectives.' This focus on evidence-based reasoning is fundamental to fostering informed and engaged citizens.

However, concerns emerge about the changing status of Civic, Social, and Political Education (CSPE). T.9 feels that junior cycle reforms have '*stripped that back, dumbed it down*' compared to the previous CSPE curriculum. This perceived de-emphasis on civic education could potentially undermine efforts to develop students critical thinking and civic literacy. These changes call for a critical evaluation of current educational policies and for close scrutiny of their long-term impact on civic education (Giroux, 2011; Nussbaum, 2010).

5.3.4 Recommendations for practice

Teachers could focus therefore on developing students critical thinking skills as a core component of civic education. This might involve teaching students how to analyse, interpret and critically evaluate information, all of which are essential skills for active citizenship. As has been outlined previously in this study, citizenship is an intrinsically contested concept and is one that is defined in terms of different and opposing views (van der Ploeg, 2019). Zuurmond et al. (2023, p.10) argue that teachers should 'familiarise students with a range of views on citizenship so they may form their own opinions'. Educators in turn could be provided with professional development opportunities to enhance their ability to teach such skills effectively.

Schools could create structures and opportunities for student voice to be expressed and to be heard. As with the concept of citizenship, the notion of voice eludes a unitary definition. Indeed, Macfarlane and Tomlinson (2017) argue it is a 'nebulous and contentious term subject to multiple interpretations and implies a series of conceptual commitments, teaching strategies and behavioural orientations' (p.4). The mechanics of student voice 'vary dramatically from passive, inauthentic forms of participation through to more active, authentic forms of engagement' (Mendes and

Hammett, 2023, p. 164) Therefore teachers should be trained to facilitate and support student voice, thus ensuring that students feel empowered to express their opinions in an authentic manner and to contribute in ways that might be considered more meaningful to their educational environment and broader community. Such a proposal could include student councils, participatory classroom practices and forums in which students could engage in decision-making processes.

The study highlights concerns regarding the diminished status of CSPE in the Junior Cycle curriculum. As Sautereau and Faas (2023, p.567) point out, decisions around the status of subjects on a national curriculum 'not only reflect macro-political priorities at a certain point in time but also has implications on the norms, values and principles that young people are taught about.' Policymakers and educational leaders could consider revisiting and potentially reinstating CSPE as a standalone subject in order to ensure a comprehensive and structured approach to civic literacy. If reinstating CSPE is not feasible, then could consideration be given to including more empowering tasks for students in the current curriculum? Given that the early years at second level typically provides a context within which students' social contexts begin to expand, why then should their 'existing cognitive skills' not be expanded into 'thinking about broader civic contexts' (Bauml et al., 2023, p.133). After all, Guillaume et al. (2015, p.322) highlight early adolescence as a 'developmental niche for emergent citizenship.' In particular they consider the role of teachers influencing their actions, specifically their civic engagement. Such an approach could help teachers build on their own sense of civic identity and may also remove barriers to instilling a sense of civic purpose in their students (Bauml et al., 2023, p.133). Furthermore, if CSPE remains in the Irish curriculum and within the Wellbeing framework, it is worth noting that authentic forms of participation increase feelings of belonging and connectedness and are also significant predictors of wellbeing

(Anderson et al., 2021, p. 2). Such an outlook could help create and maintain a strong foundation for students' understanding of democracy and of civic responsibilities, one that hopefully would carry through to senior cycle and beyond.

5.3.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could explore the long-term development of civic identity among students who engage in community-based learning and other civic education initiatives. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how early experiences in civic education influence civic engagement and identity in adulthood.

Other studies could investigate the effectiveness of professional development programs focused on teaching critical thinking and fostering student voice in the context of civic education. Research could assess how these programs impact teachers' instructional practices and students' civic outcomes.

It would also be instructive to conduct comparative studies to evaluate different models of civic education across various educational systems and across differing cultural contexts. This research can identify best practices and provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing civic education globally.

The experiences of student voice and agency in diverse educational contexts, including under-resourced schools and marginalised communities, could be investigated further. Research could examine the barriers to student voice and develop strategies to overcome these challenges, ensuring equitable opportunities for all students to participate in civic life.

There could be efforts made to evaluate the impact of recent educational reforms, such as the integration of CSPE into the Wellbeing curriculum on students civic literacy and engagement. This research could involve both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the outcomes and identify areas for improvement.

Pedagogical voices emerge as teachers actively translate their foundational beliefs into educational practice. These voices reflect the methods, strategies and pedagogical decisions that teachers employ to instil democratic values and civic responsibility in their students. The transition from foundational to pedagogical voices is marked by a shift from personal introspection to professional action. Teachers draw upon their core values to shape their instructional approaches, creating learning environments that empower students to develop their own civic identities.

This transition is not merely a linear progression but rather a dynamic process in which foundational beliefs continually inform and are informed by pedagogical practice. For example, a teacher's belief in the importance of social justice may lead to the incorporation of critical pedagogy in the classroom, which in turn deepens the teacher's own understanding and commitment to these foundational principles. This recursive relationship between belief and practice underscores the fluidity between the foundational and pedagogical voices.

5.4 Vulnerable Voices

The research findings illuminate several vulnerable voices among the participants, thereby revealing the intricate interplay of forces that shape their professional identities and experiences as Politics and Society teachers. The voices, described here as disillusionment, uncertainty and conflict, all reflect the daily navigations of teachers and they underscore the importance of examining teacher vulnerability to fully grasp the complexities of the professional role.

Foucault (1980) posits that the self is not anchored in a set of socialised roles but is continually repositioned through discourse. In this research, discourse is pivotal to the unfolding narratives, encompassing the form, structure, content and context of

these narratives (Bamberg, 2011). Traditionally, the manner in which a person tells a story, either through word choice, tone or repetition, they typically 'create a presentation of the person's identity and how they perceive themselves and others' (Chamberlain, 2020, p.141). However, this research focuses on the self and the diverse voices within teachers' stories of self and civic identity development. The inherent tensions among these voices are expected and significantly, they influence both professional and civic identities. For instance, Richards (2023) discusses how a teacher's professional identity impacts and is impacted by their commitment, self-esteem, agency and self-efficacy. Leeferink et al. (2018) and Yang et al. (2022) explore the multiple, contested, and fragmented identities of teachers who must navigate these tensions within a 'culture of performativity' (Yang et al., 2022, p.43).

Leeferink et al. (2018, p.82) poetically describe teachers navigating 'curricular currents' within these experiences, identifying 'themes across a subset of the experiences of a person's (professional) life'. Fairley (2020, p.1042) defines tensions as the 'push and pull of dissonances or conflicts that arise' as teachers 'experiment with and try to claim the identities they imagine for themselves.' Teachers also face tensions when there is a mismatch between their social identities and their institutional experiences (Nazari et al., 2023, p.6). This exploration of teacher vulnerability and of the tensions within their professional and civic identities sets the stage for a deeper examination of disillusionment, and this is seen to be a critical aspect of their lived experiences.

5.4.1 Disillusionment

Day and Kingston (2008, p.8) conceptualise identity as a 'composite consisting of interactions between personal, professional, and situational factors.' This research reveals that these factors manifest in contrarian voices at different times, but never simultaneously within each participant's narrative. For instance, participants who

expressed profound personal disillusionment with their civic identity, with national politics and with voting, were paradoxically the ones who organised voter registration drives and who took pride in being part of the pilot phase of Politics and Society. In a very real sense they expressed feeling '*trusted'* to '*invent'* their role as Politics and Society teachers.

In terms of professional disillusionment, there is a recurring theme of teachers striving to do their best for their students; a feeling that often masks any contrarian voices. However, the looming threat of insufficient student enrolment for the upcoming school year and the need to '*recruit'* students in Transition Year were common concerns. Teachers in larger schools did not share the same anxieties as those in smaller schools. For example, T.17 noted, '*our scale, number one, helped in terms of offering it, numbers, just pure numbers of students taking it up*.' Others, like T.4 and T.1, were more candid, stating they '*saw a huge market for it'* or '*I need a class, so I need to sell the subject*.' This professional disillusionment with the marketisation of Politics and Society also intersected with situational factors.

Situational factors contributed to the sense of disillusionment to varying degrees. While most participants spoke positively about their schools mission statements, ethos and values, T.15 for instance mentioned, '*We're so used to a cosmopolitan environment that it kind of fits well with us.* 'Some voices highlighted discrepancies between their schools' stated values and their lived experiences. One participant noted, '*we need to look beyond words because culture is a barrier, it might not be on the same page as you*.' The link between professional and situational disillusionment was evident, particularly when participants observed the evolving nature of their schools. T.7 remarked on the senior management team's transparent '*new trajectory'* towards '*promotion of academic excellence',* an idea that arguably was driven by league table performances. By directly referencing the influence of Kathleen Lynch,

and her concept of the equality of care, as a key founder the course, this teacher questioned whether the '*small percentage*' of students from outside the school's catchment area would be negatively impacted or '*not facilitated*,' concluding that '*it doesn't feel like it's normal.*'

This exploration of disillusionment among Politics and Society teachers naturally leads us to another critical theme; that of uncertainty. The theme of uncertainty delves into the pervasive sense of unpredictability and ambiguity that further complicates the professional and personal identities of teachers.

5.4.2 Uncertainty

Recent research has examined the theme of uncertainty through the lens of the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM), a term coined by Pasi Sahlberg in 2012. The power of such acronyms lies in their ability to 'take hold in the social imaginary and act as a signifier for a complex amalgam of policies and practices that students and educators experience as an education system that feels 'cracked' (Fuller and Stevenson, 2019, p.1). By framing teaching as a technical skill, these practices fail to '*consider the broader social, political, philosophical understandings of good teaching*' (Mayer and Mills, 2021, p.47). Consequently, teachers in this research expressed significant uncertainty not only about their civic identity but also their capacity to '*prepare our young people to be active participants in society, to be engaged in society.*' This uncertainty extended to their own practice, particularly the '*constant tension between getting the curriculum, the syllabus finished and really exploring the subject thoroughly.*' Politics and Society was frequently described as a difficult subject to teach, with one participant admitting '*I genuinely find it hard to teach it.*' Despite this, some teachers viewed uncertainty positively and emphasised the importance of continuous learning and lifelong education in order to improve their teaching effectiveness. The negative impacts of uncertainty cannot however be

overlooked. The following section focuses on the uncertainty of content and practice, as evidence from the study reveals that these aspects are often intertwined.

Regarding content, several participants were teaching in schools that were part of the pilot and initial rollout of the Politics and Society curriculum. Having approached management to be involved, they felt '*trusted*' to deliver the course but found themselves in a challenging position. Comments such as '*Nobody could say we were doing it wrong*' and '*we kind of got to invent what we taught*' reflect this sentiment. Conversely, they acknowledged that '*we had to invent how*' the subject was taught, which was '*one of the hardest things.*' Even eight years into the subject, participants felt they were '*still very much in the inventing phase,*' with T.14 likening the pursuit of content to chasing a '*white whale.*' Significant levels of uncertainty also surrounded the practice of teaching specific topics; those often related to the teachers' other subjects.

For example, history was a common subject among participants with 11 of the 18 having studied or taught it. T.14 explained, '*issues like colonialism, post and neo-colonialism, coming from a history background, I'd be very comfortable with those kinds of things.*' However, they struggled with the sustainability aspect, which they considered '*probably the most important aspect of the civic aspect of the course.*' This highlights the contrarian voices within their civic identity, as they were '*far more inclined to look at the local rather than global*' but now had to incorporate a global dimension. Another teacher from a business background found development and exploitation topics resonated more with them, while a history teacher admitted, '*I don't have an interest in Geography,*' making the sustainable development section a '*slog.*' This teacher coped by integrating historical perspectives, such as colonialism and dependency theory, where their knowledge base was arguably stronger.

Key historical events also played a significant role in shaping participants' civic identities, but uncertainty persisted throughout. T.11 referenced '*the 1916 Rising*' as foundational to modern Irish identity but admitted to students, '*I'm learning just as much as you are, we're doing this together.*' The practice of teaching Politics and Society was characterised by varying approaches. T.10 embraced the '*chaos*' of their practice, while T.15 described their style as '*authoritarian and traditional.*' T.8 admitted to promoting personal views that were contrary to their beliefs on curricular topics such as '*Genetically Modified Organisms*'. Preparation for class was described as time-consuming and draining, with T.11 emphasising the need for extensive personal engagement and preparation. T.13 expressed feelings of inadequacy, stating that '*sometimes I feel I'm not intelligent enough for this subject*,' and contrasting their lack of confidence at Politics and Society with their competencies in their History classes.

Given the nature of the subject and the methods employed by its teachers, it is unsurprising that elements of conflict emerged in the interviews. The following section explores the conflicts that arose in the evidence from such uncertainties and examines their impact on teachers' professional and personal identities.

5.4.3 Conflict

This section delves into the theme of conflict within the context of teacher identity development, drawing on this study as well as building on prior research by Pillen et al. (2013), van der Want et al. (2018), and Lau et al. (2022). However, this analysis adopts a more nuanced perspective by focusing on the internal conflicts experienced by individual teachers, those which manifest within the school community and those that are influenced by macro-level educational policies. Drawing from Ball (2003), this section emphasises the conflict between a teacher's intrinsic values and the demands of performance-driven educational systems. Sachs (2016, p.414) chronicles

the auditing of teacher professionalism through 'performance management and performance cultures.' Neoliberal audit practices have relegated teaching to 'a junior profession which may attain adulthood through the quantification and documentation of professional knowledge against standards' (Mockler, 2022, p.168). One participant echoes such sentiment and describes these practices as a '*kind of neoliberal stripping back of the nature of human existence.*' Another highlights the need for '*a broader conversation around the whole neoliberalism, you know, the being held to account, the kind of maybe low trust*.'

Two teacher vignettes (T.7 and T.8) vividly illustrate these internal conflicts. T.7 expresses discomfort with the emphasis on academic excellence and with the inequality within their school community; contrasting it with the pressure to perform well in league tables. T.8 discusses the impact of league tables on school choice and the implications for educational access and staffing levels; reflecting on the broader consequences of such practices. Desierto and de Maio (2020, p.149) argue that educators have 'borne the brunt of widespread casualisation coupled with the damaging re-conceptualisation of themselves as human capital and sellers of education.' The need to market Politics and Society in Transition Year was a major issue for participants as they sought teaching hours for the upcoming academic year. The increasing prevalence of 'audit and performance-based corporate culture orders the whole system while ranking everyone within it' (Yin and Mu, 2022, p.67). Jackson (2021) points out that teachers and subjects are often in such contexts, drawn into 'a winner takes all race for status' (p.2).

The concerns expressed in this study suggest that these ongoing tensions and conflicts have the potential to erode teachers' civic identities and their commitment to the profession; thereby potentially risking transforming teaching into a transient occupation. Addressing these internal conflicts and external pressures is crucial to

sustaining teachers' sense of purpose, as well as sustaining their contributions to educational goals such as equity and social justice.

5.4.4 Recommendations for Practice

The findings of this study underscore the necessity for a comprehensive approach to address the multifaceted challenges faced by Politics and Society teachers. This approach could foster a supportive and empowering environment, one that nurtures teachers' professional growth and well-being.

Firstly, educational institutions might prioritise initiatives that cultivate a culture of holistic support for educators. This could involve revisiting school policies and practices in order to ensure alignment with this philosophy. Providing resources for professional development, for mentorship programs and for opportunities for reflective practice is essential. By equipping teachers with the necessary tools and supports, they can better navigate complex professional challenges, thereby mitigating feelings of disillusionment and enhancing their sense of efficacy.

Furthermore, it is imperative to reframe the discourse surrounding education to emphasise its intrinsic value beyond market-driven metrics such as enrolment numbers and league table rankings. Policymakers and educational leaders could advocate for policies and practices that prioritise the holistic development of students, aligning these with the principles of equity, inclusivity and social justice. This shift in focus could help counteract the disillusionment stemming from the perceived prioritisation of market-oriented approaches to education.

Moreover, actively engaging teachers in co-creating and refining institutional values and practices is crucial. Ensuring alignment between school policies and the lived experiences of educators and students could foster a sense of agency and ownership

among teachers, thereby cultivating a supportive environment conducive to professional growth. Collaborative decision-making processes that value teacher perspectives could promote a more inclusive and empowering educational landscape.

In terms of curriculum and pedagogy, comprehensive training and support could be provided to help educators navigate new and evolving subject matter. Developing professional development programs tailored to the specific needs of Politics and Society teachers, and with an emphasis on interdisciplinary content knowledge and effective pedagogical strategies, could enhance teachers' confidence and competences in delivering high-quality instruction.

Additionally, fostering cultures of collaboration and of knowledge-sharing among educators is arguably vital in the context of evolving curricula. Enabling teachers to draw upon each other's expertise and experiences through peer mentoring and through community-building opportunities, could facilitate professional growth and mitigate feelings of isolation or uncertainty.

Curriculum reform efforts could advocate for critical thinking skills and for participatory citizenship as central components of educational frameworks. Recognising the importance of these competencies in preparing students for active civic engagement could help align curricular goals with the broader mission of Politics and Society education.

Promoting dialogue and reflection on issues of social identity and privilege within educational contexts is also recommended. Providing opportunities for critical self-examination and professional development in this area could foster greater awareness of societal inequalities and their impact on education, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and equitable teaching practices.

Finally, it is arguably crucial to empower teachers as agents of change within their own institutions. Revisiting school policies and structures to ensure alignment with the principles of inclusivity, autonomy and democratic decision-making, could create an environment that values more significantly the voices and perspectives teachers.

Such a comprehensive approach would not only address the immediate challenges faced by Politics and Society teachers but it would also arguably lay the groundwork for a more equitable and supportive educational landscape in schools generally.

5.4.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Building upon the insights gained from this study, several avenues for future research are recommended to deepen our understanding and to inform ongoing efforts to support and empower Politics and Society teachers.

Firstly, conducting longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impacts of teacher vulnerability on job satisfaction, on retention and on overall well-being is considered crucial. Such research could provide valuable insights for improving the teaching profession and for fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational system.

Additionally, investigating strategies for supporting teachers in navigating the complexities of their professional identities might be deemed essential, given the evidence voiced in this research. Identifying effective approaches for addressing vulnerabilities and conflicts encountered in the teaching profession could inform the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms.

Comparative studies across educational institutions could illuminate the impact of different institutional cultures on teacher well-being and effectiveness. By identifying best practices and areas for improvement in fostering supportive

environments for educators, policymakers and school leaders could implement evidence-based strategies to enhance teacher morale and performance.

Evaluating the effectiveness of policy interventions aimed at mitigating teacher disillusionment and promoting civic engagement is also recommended. Assessing the impact of initiatives such as curriculum reforms, professional development programs and collaborative practices, could arguably inform the refinement and optimisation of these efforts.

Exploring the interplay between teachers' social identities and their experiences of conflict within educational settings could yield valuable insights. Examining how factors such as class, race and gender intersect with professional identities and act to shape teaching practices could inform the development of more inclusive and culturally responsive educational approaches. Investigating student perspectives on teacher vulnerability, on disillusionment and on conflict is also recommended. Understanding how these factors influence student learning experiences and civic engagement could provide a rounded view of the educational landscape and could inform strategies for enhancing student outcomes.

Finally, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations between researchers in education, in sociology, in psychology and in other relevant fields would be very much encouraged. By bringing together diverse perspectives and methodologies, a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between personal, professional and societal factors could be developed; those that affect teachers' experiences and effectiveness.

As teachers navigate the complexities of translating their civic beliefs into practice, they inevitably encounter challenges that give rise to vulnerable voices. These voices reflect the tensions, uncertainties and conflicts that teachers face as they strive to

align their professional responsibilities with their personal values. The transition from pedagogical to vulnerable voices highlights the difficulties that arise when ideals meet the realities of the educational system. In the findings of this research, these have included the pressures of standardisation, the marketisation of education and the emotional toll of teaching.

The vulnerable voices are not merely expressions of weakness or doubt, rather they reveal the resilience and adaptability of teachers as they confront and navigate daily curricular and social challenges. This transition is critical because it exposes the interplay between external pressures and internal struggles. It illuminates how teachers' civic identities are continually shaped by both positive and negative experiences. The vulnerable voices serve as a reminder that the process of identity formation is not without its difficulties, but such challenges also offer opportunities for growth and deeper self-reflection.

5.5 Reflective Voices: Listening Between the Lines

Woodcock (2016) writes that the third and fourth listenings, in a phenomenological investigation such as in this research, are meant to allow the researcher 'opportunities to bring to light insights into how the informant attends to his or her life, as a way of knowing or as a channel of discovery' (p.6). A key feature of these two listenings is to extract two themes of the narrative that 'melodiously react with one another or that are in tension with each other' (Raider-Roth, 2005, p.50). So, while a third listening yielded the contrarian voices, the disillusionment, the uncertainty and the conflict expressed by the participants, it was still felt necessary that there was a need to capture the voices which were anchored around the ideas; those that signified a sense of participants struggling to come up with a definite position. The usual phrasing of

these voices is '*oblique*.' In astronomical terms an oblique orbit is when an orbiting planet spins on its axis but tilts away from this axis at different points: as applies for example with unfolding of the earth's seasons and the proximity of the Northern and Southern hemispheres to the sun. Similarly, the participants in this research expressed certain thoughts and yet, within the same interviews, they veered between two different points without necessarily contradicting themselves. As a phenomenological researcher, I applied a different term to such anomalies, calling them '*reflective'* voices.

This part of the study highlighted how experiences such as growing up during the Troubles in Northern Ireland or how living as immigrants in London, have influenced teachers' understandings of civic identity. It demonstrates the need for them to separate their personal experiences from their professional roles as educators. Additionally, the evidence delves into the complex interplay between class identity and teaching, thereby highlighting the internal conflicts that teachers face in reconciling their perceived class identities with their societal expectations and professional roles.

5.5.1 Reflective Voices-Self and Class

The findings from this study illustrate the complex and multi-faceted nature of civic identity formation among Politics and Society teachers in Ireland. The narratives highlight how teachers' personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and socio-economic contexts shape their understanding and enactment of civic identity in profound ways. Notably, the study underscores the pivotal role of reflection and critical self-awareness in navigating the nuances of civic identity within the profession of teaching.

A salient theme that emerges is the influence on teachers' conceptions of civic identity of growing up and of living in diverse geographical and socio-political

contexts. Experiences such as living through the Troubles in Northern Ireland or immigrating from a conservative Irish Catholic family to London appear to have fostered a heightened awareness of the complexities of civic engagement and of the need to separate personal and political identities from professional roles. This finding resonates with Beauchamp and Thomas's (2009) assertion that reflection is a crucial means for teachers to develop a deeper understanding of how their sense of self intersects with broader societal contexts.

The narratives also reveal the impact of exposure to diverse environments and cultures on the development of cosmopolitan and progressive civic identities. Teachers who have lived in various countries express a '*pluralistic, diverse civic identity*' (T.12) and a willingness to embrace social progressivism and liberal values. This aligns with the notion that experiences of diversity can foster openness to different perspectives and a more inclusive understanding of civic engagement (Banks, 2008).

However, the most prominent and contentious theme that emerges from the study is the internal struggle of teachers with the concept of class and its implications for their civic identity. The findings highlight the complex interplay between material, cultural, emotional and social dimensions of class; those articulated by Maguire (2005). Teachers grapple with reconciling their perceived class identities and the evidence demonstrates that these are shaped by family backgrounds and by upbringing, along with the external perceptions of their socio-economic status as professionals.

The vignette of T.1's experience exemplifies this internal conflict, one in which an external assertion of middle-class status clashes with their deeply ingrained sense of being working-class. The need for reflection, for questioning and for refining one's identity becomes apparent, particularly in the context of teaching a subject such as

Politics and Society; one arguably that places a strong emphasis on identity formation.

Furthermore, the study reveals concerns about the potential for Politics and Society to become a subject that is predominantly offered more so in middle-class and in privileged schools, thereby limiting access for students from working-class and less privileged backgrounds, according to T.14. This concern resonates with the broader discourse on the perpetuation of social inequalities through educational systems and signals the need for inclusive and equitable access to critical subjects that foster civic engagement generally (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

The evidence also sheds light on the challenges that teachers face in addressing class dynamics within their classrooms. T.11's reflection on the perceived privilege of their students and of the need to avoid creating an '*other'* when discussing socio-economic disadvantage, highlights the delicate balance required in facilitating discussions around class difference, without unwittingly perpetuating stigma or marginalisation.

These findings contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse on the intersection of class, education and civic identity. Keane's (2023) observation about the relative lack of attention paid to how class difference is conceived and enacted within professions like teaching, underscores the significance of this study's contributions. By delving into the lived experiences and reflections of Politics and Society teachers, this research provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between class, identity, and civic engagement within the teaching profession.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Practice

Fostering opportunities for reflective practice is vital to support teachers in navigating the complexities of their identities. It is recommended that educators be

encouraged to engage in continuous self-reflection and critical examination of their identities, particularly in the context of teaching subjects that explore social stratification and civic engagement. To this end, educational institutions could provide structured opportunities for reflective practice, such as journaling, peer discussions or professional development workshops, in order to facilitate deeper introspection and identity exploration.

Moreover, promoting inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices is imperative. Fernandes et al. (2021) argue that the emergence of democratic societies leads to the need for citizens civic engagement since their future sustainability and social welfare largely depend on the awareness and interest shown particularly by young citizens who will be the future decision makers. There is some concern expressed in the research evidence that Politics and Society, as a school subject, could be perceived as a subject for middle class schools and that it may not be offered in certain other school types. Alscher et al. (2022) for example found that students in certain school types in Germany have less access to civic education classes. Schools should strive to offer Politics and Society as a subject to students from all socio-economic backgrounds. This could involve lobbying for policy changes at a higher level or seeking funding to support the implementation of the subject in more schools. Castillo et al. (2015) suggest that offering civic education classes (along with high quality teaching) can weaken the link between socio-economic background and a willingness to participate in civic activities. Teachers should be equipped with strategies to navigate the complexities of diverse backgrounds and experiences, ensuring that their personal narratives and identities do not hinder their ability to create inclusive learning environments. Professional development programs focused on culturally responsive teaching practices could be

developed, thereby enabling educators to bridge gaps between their own experiences and those of their students.

Also, facilitating discourse on class identity within educational institutions is considered crucial, based on the findings of this research. Open dialogues should be initiated to explore the multifaceted nature of class identity and its implications for teaching and learning. Critical discussions on the role of teachers as role models and the potential impact of socioeconomic disparities on student perceptions and aspirations should be encouraged.

Additionally, it is recommended to integrate reflective practices and identity exploration into teacher education programs. Reflective practices and identity exploration could be incorporated into teacher education curricula, thereby equipping prospective teachers with the tools to navigate the complexities of their personal and professional identities. Collaborations with experienced educators could be fostered to develop case studies and scenarios that explore the intersections of identity, class and teaching practice.

5.5.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Several avenues for future research could be pursued to deepen our understanding and to inform ongoing efforts that support teachers in navigating identity complexities and in fostering inclusive educational experiences.

Firstly, longitudinal studies on identity development could be conducted to examine the evolution of teachers' civic identities throughout their careers, thus exploring the impact of personal experiences, professional development and institutional contexts. Additionally, investigating the long-term effects of reflective practices on teachers' abilities to navigate identity complexities and to foster inclusive learning environments is also recommended.

Comparative studies across diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts could be undertaken to explore the role of societal factors in shaping teachers' perceptions of class identity and of their professional practices. These studies could aim to identify best practices and strategies for promoting inclusive and culturally responsive teaching in various educational settings. Furthermore, exploring the intersectionality of teacher identities is crucial. Investigations could be conducted to examine the intersections of class identity with other aspects of identity, such as race, gender or ethnicity; and the impact of such factors on teachers' experiences and professional practices. Developing a comprehensive understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of teacher identity and of its implications for pedagogy and for student outcomes is also considered essential.

Finally, empirical studies could be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of various reflective practice interventions, such as journaling, peer discussions or professional development workshops; those that could support teachers identity exploration and professional growth. The most impactful strategies could be identified, and evidence-based frameworks for integrating reflective practices into teacher education and into professional development programs could be developed.

By implementing these recommendations for practice and future research, educational institutions and policymakers could support teachers in navigating the complexities of their identities. It could also foster inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices. Ultimately it could enhance the educational experiences of diverse student populations.

The voices described in this section of the study represent the culmination of the identity formation process; one where teachers critically examine their experiences, their challenges and their practices in order to gain a deeper personal and professional understanding of their civic identities. The transition from vulnerable to

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reflective voices is marked by a move from experiencing and confronting challenges, to making sense of these experiences through reflection and self-examination.

Reflective voices are particularly significant because they integrate the insights gained from foundational, pedagogical and vulnerable voices into a cohesive understanding of the self. This integration is not a resolution of tensions but rather an on-going dialogue within the self, one in which different aspects of identity are continuously negotiated and re-defined. The reflective voices therefore represent both the endpoint of the current exploration and the starting point for future research.

5.6 Conclusion

The exploration of Politics and Society teachers' civic identities has illuminated the complexities and challenges these educators face in their professional and personal journeys. This study, rooted in the Listening Guide methodology, has evidenced the surfacing of four distinct voices; the foundational, pedagogical, vulnerable and reflective. These have encapsulated the multi-faceted nature of teachers' experiences and have captured their evolving conceptualisations of democracy and citizenship. This concluding chapter synthesises the key findings, interprets their implications for practice and policy, and offers directions for future research, thereby providing a comprehensive closure to this inquiry.

Reflecting on the researcher's positionality, it is essential to acknowledge the concept of the '*experiential outsider*.' This perspective has significantly influenced the interpretation of the findings and has offered a unique vantage point that balances both empathy and critical distance. The experiential outsider approach facilitated a deeper understanding of the participants' narratives while constantly maintaining a necessary analytical rigour. This dual perspective enriched the study and enabled a

nuanced interpretation of how teachers' civic identities are shaped by their personal histories, by their professional contexts, and uniquely by broader societal dynamics.

The primary voices identified in the narratives were foundational, pedagogical, vulnerable and reflective. Each phenomenological outlook provides distinct insights into the development of civic identity among Politics and Society teachers. Foundational voices highlight the intrinsic motivations and core values that underpin teachers' conceptualisations of democracy and citizenship. Personal experiences, early educational influences and deeply held beliefs play a pivotal role in shaping these foundational perspectives. Pedagogical voices reflect the practical implications of civic identity on teaching practices. They reveal how teachers integrate their civic values into classroom instruction, fostering critical thinking, empowerment and active citizenship among students. This integration is vital for developing students civic literacy and engagement.

Vulnerable voices expose the challenges and vulnerabilities that teachers face, including the pressures of performance-driven educational systems, internal conflicts and the emotional toll of navigating complex professional landscapes. Addressing these vulnerabilities is crucial for sustaining teachers' commitment and well-being.

Reflective voices underscore the importance of continuous self-examination and professional growth. Teachers' reflections on their practices, identities and the broader educational context contribute to their ongoing development and adaptation.

The transitions between the foundational, pedagogical, vulnerable and reflective voices are not merely shifts in perspective but are deeply interconnected phenomenological phases of identity development. Each voice builds upon the previous one, creating a layered and nuanced understanding of civic identity among Politics and Society teachers. By carefully articulating these transitions, we can

appreciate the complexity of identity formation and the ways in which teachers navigate and reconcile the various dimensions of their professional and personal lives. This integrated approach ensures that the narrative of civic identity development is coherent, is comprehensive and that it is reflective of the lived experiences of the teachers who participated in this study.

5.7 Interpretation of Findings

The interpretation of these voices reveals several implications for practice, policy and research. The foundational perspectives underscore the need for teacher education programs to emphasise the development of personal civic values and their integration into professional practice. By fostering a strong sense of civic identity from the outset, teacher education programmes can prepare educators to navigate the complexities of democratic citizenship. The pedagogical implications suggest that professional development programs could focus on enhancing teachers' ability to cultivate critical thinking and active citizenship in their students. This involves providing comprehensive training in interdisciplinary content knowledge and effective pedagogical strategies.

Vulnerable voices address the vulnerabilities identified requires a multifaceted approach that includes institutional support, professional development and policy reforms. Creating a supportive environment that prioritises teachers' well-being and professional growth is essential for mitigating feelings of disillusionment and fostering a sense of efficacy. Reflective voices encourage reflective practice and are vital for continuous professional development. Opportunities for reflection, dialogue and peer mentoring can enhance teachers' capacity for self-examination and growth, ultimately contributing to their effectiveness and resilience.

The study's findings have several practical implications. Educational institutions could prioritise initiatives that foster a culture of holistic support. This includes revisiting school policies and practices to align with principles of equity, inclusivity and social justice, thereby providing resources for professional development, mentorship programs and reflective practice opportunities. Comprehensive training and support could be provided at curriculum and pedagogy to help educators navigate new and evolving subject matter. Professional development programs tailored to the specific needs of Politics and Society teachers could enhance teachers' confidence and competencies in delivering high-quality instruction.

Fostering cultures of collaboration and knowledge-sharing among educators is vital. Peer mentoring and community-building opportunities could facilitate professional growth and mitigate against feelings of professional isolation or uncertainty. Empowering teachers as agents of change within their institutions is crucial. Engaging teachers in co-creating and refining institutional values and practices could foster a sense of agency and ownership, thereby promoting a more inclusive and empowering educational landscape.

There are various implications for future research. Building upon the insights gained from this study, several avenues for future research are recommended: Conducting longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impacts of teacher vulnerability on job satisfaction, retention and overall well-being is crucial. Such research could provide valuable insights for improving the teaching profession and for fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational system. Investigating how various aspects of teachers' identities, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status and religious affiliation, intersect with their civic identities could provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex factors that shape teachers' perceptions of citizenship and their roles as civic educators.

Comparative studies across educational institutions could shed light on the impact of different institutional cultures on teacher well-being and effectiveness. Identifying best practices and areas for improvement could inform the development of supportive environments for educators. Evaluating the effectiveness of policy interventions aimed at mitigating teacher disillusionment and at promoting civic engagement is also recommended. Assessing the impact of initiatives such as curriculum reforms, professional development programs and collaborative practices could inform the refinement and optimisation of these efforts. Investigating student perspectives on teacher vulnerability, disillusionment and conflict is crucial. Understanding how these factors influence student learning experiences and civic engagement could provide a holistic view of the educational landscape and inform strategies for enhancing student outcomes.

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the development of civic identity among Politics and Society teachers. By illuminating the foundational, pedagogical, vulnerable and reflective voices within teachers' narratives, the study provides valuable insights into the complexities and nuances of their experiences. The practical recommendations and directions for future research outlined in this chapter aim to foster a more supportive and empowering educational environment for teachers, with a view to ultimately enhance their ability to cultivate informed and engaged citizens. Through a multifaceted phenomenological approach that addresses both practical and research dimensions, this study aspires to contribute to the ongoing efforts that support and empower educators in their vital role as civic educators.

5.8 Strengths and Limitations of the Research

Research into how teachers position themselves as civic actors is not a new field, as evidenced in the literature review within this work. Much of this literature however

has focused on how educators 'construct the role identity of citizen through the context of their work in school' (Torsney et al., 2024, p.70). However, this research offers unique insights into the nuances of civic identity construction and the underlying beliefs that teachers hold regarding citizenship. The objective was to illuminate the intricate interplay between teachers' professional roles as Politics and Society educators and the multifaceted dimensions of their identity formation; thereby offering significant implications for educational practice and societal contributions.

Despite its burgeoning relevance, the exploration of teacher civic identity remains largely underexplored within the scholarly landscape, particularly in Ireland. Consequently, researchers navigating this uncharted terrain encounter both promising avenues for insight and inherent methodological challenges. This section has critically examined the strengths and limitations inherent in the research endeavours devoted to unravelling the complexities of teacher civic identity. Specifically, it has delved into the utilisation of the Listening Guide, with its emphasis on voice and interpretation, as a methodological framework for data collection and analysis. This discussion delineates its distinctive strengths and acknowledges its attendant weaknesses. Subsequently, the ensuing discourse elucidates the nuanced intricacies of employing the Listening Guide within the context of investigating teacher civic identity, thereby offering a comprehensive evaluation of its utility and proposing strategies for methodological refinement and advancement.

Berryman (2019) argues that 'social constructions, language, shared consciousness, and other social interactions' are essential means for researchers within the interpretivist paradigm to uncover facts (p.273). She posits that to find answers to qualitative questions, researchers need to frame their inquiries in ways focused on understanding 'the how and the why' (Ryan, 2018, p.9). In uncovering and

understanding these dimensions, 'truth and knowledge are subjective' due to our cultural and lived experiences. Therefore, Voice Centred Relational Analysis, or the Listening Guide, emerges as a compelling phenomenological methodological approach for capturing the intricacies of individual narratives and facilitating a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena such as teacher civic identity. Drawing upon the seminal work of Gilligan et.al, (2003), the Listening Guide embodies a relational and interpretive stance, aligning closely with the epistemological underpinnings of interpretivism by prioritising the voices and perspectives of research participants.

The Listening Guide has been in use for more than 30 years and 'actively encourages researchers' to unravel, qualitatively, the complexity of the 'multiple melodic lines' in research participants voices (Sorsoli and Tolman, 2008, p.498). These authors also point out that this method of 'tuning into the rhythms, harmonies, and disjunctions present in research interviews' facilitates the exploration of experiences that are 'most complicated, taboo, or awkward to share with others.' Throughout the research interviews, participants revealed personal details about their backgrounds, their understanding (or lack thereof) of their own civic identity, about their hopes, disillusionments, and, in some cases, about a very real lack of confidence in teaching the subject. By engaging in a process of deep listening and by attending to the nuances of language, tone and embodied expressions, the Listening Guide enabled me, as a phenomenological researcher, to 'unearth the underlying meanings embedded within participants' narratives, thereby facilitating a comprehensive exploration of their lived experiences' (Brown and Gilligan, 1992, p.15).

Another benefit of the Listening Guide is its emphasis on the primacy of voice. Within the interpretive paradigm, voice has been privileged because 'voice lingers close to the true and the real, has become seen almost as a mirror of the soul, the

essence of the self' (Mazzei and Jackson, 2012, p.745). Guba and Lincoln (2005, p.209) argue that researchers are 'more conscious of having readers 'hear' their informants—permitting readers to hear the exact words and occasionally, the paralinguistic cues, the lapses, pauses, stops, starts, reformulations, of the informants'. This goes deeper than the examination of tone and language as described previously. Listening to the pauses, the silences, the delaying '*umms*' and '*let me think*' utterances that punctuated the various listenings, revealed the insecurities, uncertainties and indecisions surrounding the participants' civic identity.

Furthermore, the Listening Guide's emphasis on relationality and contextuality resonates with the interpretivist emphasis on understanding phenomena within their sociocultural milieu (Finlay, 2002, p.537). As teachers' civic identities are inherently shaped by their interactions with various social, institutional and cultural contexts, employing a method that foregrounds relationality is particularly apt for eliciting rich and contextually embedded data. Additionally, the iterative nature of the Listening Guide process, which involves multiple readings and interpretations of the data, aligns with the iterative and reflexive nature of interpretivist phenomenological inquiry. This approach allows researchers to continually refine their understanding in response to emergent insights and 'systematically attend to the many voices embedded in a person's expressed experience' (Gilligan et al., 2004, p.157).

Moreover, the Listening Guide offered a structured yet flexible framework for data analysis, enabling the researcher to address both the content and the form of participants' narratives (Brown and Gilligan, 1992). This holistic approach was well-suited to the exploration of complex constructs such as teacher civic identity, which encompasses not only cognitive beliefs and values, but also affective dimensions and embodied experiences. Through the systematic application of coding and thematic analysis, the researcher uncovered patterns, contradictions and underlying themes of

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evidence within the data; thereby generating 'rich and nuanced interpretations' (Braun and Clarke, 2022, p.177) that captured the multifaceted nature of teacher civic identity.

Despite its strengths, the Listening Guide approach also presents several challenges. Brown (2018, p.2) writes that non-traditional or 'messy' approaches to data collection imply 'messy analysis and messy dissemination.' Furthermore, dissemination 'cannot be merely through the written word but must in itself be a creation in a form that is suitable to portray the participants messages'. Finding an approach to presenting findings that covered contrapuntal, double and hidden voices presented a significant phenomenological challenge. Morgan et al. (2024) point out that the Listening Guide methodology toolkit, which includes poetic analysis and reflexive thematic analysis, while essential, 'can be especially challenging for emerging qualitative researchers' (p.7). While many resources describe qualitative methods, fewer are available to guide novice researchers, particularly with the mechanics (Enosh and Ben-Ari, 2016). The logical approach inherent in the Listening Guide, as described by Woodcock (2016), could become an obstacle if researchers cannot transition successfully from one step to the next. For example, creating the I-Poems was both difficult and time-consuming, and required a meticulous examination of each line of the transcript to extract the I elements. This difficulty was compounded by the researcher's own positionality, as described previously. Gilligan (2015) argues that in a relational framework such as that of the Listening Guide, the researcher must be responsive, not neutral, during the interview process, as this affects a person's ability to 'give voice to or even know his or her experience' (p.73). Instead of merely acknowledging participants' statements or asking them to elaborate, this research involved asking probing questions such as

'*Why do you think that?*' or '*What brought this about*?' Such an approach generated a vast amount of data that required extensive analysis.

Generating results, particularly 'clean*'* quantifiable data, is never the challenge in phenomenological enquiry. Mauthner and Doucet (2011, p.417) write that for researchers, 'data analysis is our most vulnerable spot, the area of research where we are most open to criticism'. A critique directed towards the Listening Guide approach concerns the perceived disparity in power dynamics, highlighting the imbalance between the authority vested in the researcher and the perceived vulnerability of the participants. While questions of power can be levelled at any qualitative method involving interviews and interpretation, the nature of data gathering and analysis in this format warrants particular attention. Researchers make choices and decisions about what questions to ask, how to ask them, and how to interpret the interviews and the words that participants use. Mauthner and Doucet (2011) argue that when conducting research 'on and in the private sphere,' the power differentials are 'particularly pronounced' (p.423). They also question whether turning private issues into public concerns risks 'appropriating their voices and experiences, and further disempowering them by taking away their voice, agency, and ownership' (p.423). To mitigate this concern, the researcher conducted an additional round of data collection as described in the previous chapter. By following up and member-checking with the interviewees, the process provided them an opportunity to share in the data analysis process, to clarify their reflections, and to comment on the initial findings, thereby shaping the phenomenological impact of the process. This approach aimed to ensure that both researcher and participant voices were represented in the analysis.

In conclusion, the Listening Guide emerges as a methodologically robust approach for data collection and for analysis within the interpretivist paradigm. It has offered a comprehensive and nuanced means of exploring the complexities of the phenomenon

of teacher civic identity. Its relational orientation, its contextual sensitivity and its structured yet flexible analytic framework, has made it particularly well-suited to the exploration of subjective experiences and to the generation of meaning-making processes. By addressing the recommendations for methodological refinements, future research could further enhance our understanding of teacher civic identity development and could contribute to the promotion of democratic citizenship among students.

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Appendices

I Poems

DR2024-001

I wanted to become a teacher.

I applied for a position, I got all the politics and society hours.

I can really bring my interest and my experience in this area to bear.

I just think that's very important for young people to understand it.

I just wanted to make sure that I was doing everything right.

I could breathe a wee bit because they were so decent.

I was more stressed in ways with the TYs.

I want a job in the next 12 months, I need a class, I need to sell the subject.

I did a pretty decent job.

I feel a lot more seasoned than fresh out of the oven.

I do not give you my opinion.

I can kind of detach myself, I am not from the locality.

I would always say I am an Ulster man.

I watched the news, That was religious in our house.

I was always quite informed.

I'm working class, I'm working class. And only because of how hard my parents worked.

DR2024-002

I was in Brownies from 7 and I went right the away up to 18.

I think sometimes schools can be quite closed spaces. I try and bring into the classroom my own volunteer work.

I try to do empathy and understanding.

I think schools are a pillar of the community. I do feel. We are a very pastoral, very caring school. I know in this school we have struggled hugely to get teachers to continue with extracurricular.

I thought back to my leaders, My guide leaders.

I actually realised what they had given of themselves.

I started volunteering in India. I kind of didn't go for any sort of moral reason in the beginning.

I was kind of looking for a bit of adventure, something from my CV. it definitely wasn't always that way, you know. Right throughout my 20s, I wouldn't have done any volunteering, not gone to any protests or doing anything that on those lines?

I'm definitely in appreciation now for what I benefited from when I was younger.

DR2024-003

I was reading the paper from about 12.

I was buying it to read about the baseball. And it was kind of like, well, if I'm buying the paper, I might as well read it.

I kept politics and dropped history and that was a mistake.

I can remember counting votes.

I tread carefully.

I wouldn't vote for her.

I suppose you're trying to get them to think critically, you know?

I didn't vote.

I'm annoyed.

I don't count.

DR2024-004

I'm a big part of my local GAA club.

I actually got a part time summer job with the charity. And it showed me the importance of getting involved in the community.

I guess what it did was told or taught me kind of how the real world works and the importance of getting involved.

I felt very confident going to the principal at the time and asking to introduce the subject.

I felt there was kind of a gap in regards to the subject choice for students.

I saw a huge market for it.

I would emphasise the importance of critical thinking And I have that balanced view.

I think they learn how to develop a voice. I think that's really important.

I feel like it's a course where you can never stop learning.

I was in the European Parliament and I don't think 10 years ago that would have been me exactly.

I kind of wanted to learn more. I wanted to learn as much from other teachers.

DR2024-005

I'm from a very small village. I would say there's no big kind of moment for me that shaped my civic identity, It would just be like a series of things through my life, like, you know?

I look at the turn out here compared to the national averages

I think it's always great to have case studies of the local elections.

I think as a teacher I'm very mindful somethings are quite heavy in politics and society and you can't just be kind of dumping the issues of the world onto the students.

I suppose the ethos of the school is rooted in development of the individual student, and that's rooted in student voice, Importance of the student council, The importance of all those elected committees that the students are involved in and encouraging students to get involved with.

I don't think I would teach in a school that didn't align with my civic identity.

I think it would be very hard to teach this subject in a school where there was that type of misalignment.

I lived in a bit of a bubble

I'm much more aware. I'm a kind of global citizen.

I think when you're teaching stuff like this subject, you're forced to kind of open yourself up.

I remember with the invasion of Ukraine happened, Israel and Gaza kicked off politics and society is the class with you to discuss that, but I have to make sure it's within the parameters of the curriculum.

I suppose for me it is really important That we make sure our young people are active participants in society, We want them to be a good, active participant in society. I think that's really, really important.

DR2024-006

I wasn't, you know, trying to put my own words on it.

I suppose it's something that evolves over time.

I was relatively late into teaching.

I suppose we would always have talked about politics at home.

I mean, every teacher should be creating or fostering a sense of, you know, a civic identity among the students. I suppose it hits home even harder when you're teaching politics and society because you're teaching the nuts and bolts of it and how it works.

I definitely think that there's parts that I find that strike a chord with me.

I suppose I'd be coming from a place where I would maybe sort of talk about the political spectrum a bit more.

I don't think you should have to hide your political ideology.

I know what I believe might not have been there in the past in certain settings.

I think management were very positive about the subject from the start.

I don't know if there had been soundings beforehand.

I feel there's times when my civic identity might have to interact with the way I teach, and I feel around the course at times I have to be careful about that.

DR2024-007

I was brought up, you know, in quite a staunchly Unionist town.

I think I bring some of that into the classroom, and I think it probably sharpened my nose, if you like or antenna for inequality.

I caught in a real melting pot of a school.

I mean they all support the same football teams, the same music, and it's funny.

I just think there's definitely some parts of my upbringing and work, I just think maybe,maybe,maybe made me very conscious of that kind of thing, Differences and sameness, you know?

I probably have more real life examples to fall back on.

I was kind of reluctant to let them see how can I put my political persuasions.

I have never taught identity. I've skimmed through it for short questions, but I've never done an essay on identity until right now. I'm going to start next week because there's so much stuff going on.

I'm not sure what purpose would it serve for me to come straight out and go right. I'm on the left or you know, whatever.

I mean, it's a leafy suburb, right?

I think in the last couple of years there is this focus on the promotion of academic excellence. I don't know is that normal? I don't. I don't know. It doesn't feel like it's normal.

I think it almost should be compulsory, to be honest with you.

DR2024-008

I would be very much promoting that. Well, you have responsibility to engage with the various authorities, whoever they might be. I would be trying to incorporate elements where you look at promoting responsibility.

I'd be very conscious that I try and have my own opinion on it and I might share that.

I would always try and play devil's advocate for the most part.

I was very conscious of how, in teaching at a boys school, how the perception of women in sport and I often find myself arguing, trying to provide context around it.

I have life experience.

I suppose the challenge I find at the moment is when we've been doing sustainability.

I find that a challenge because young people are not overly interested In that they don't consider what they eat.

I said to the lads Everything in civilian life is relevant to the exam.

I would hope they would have knowledge and a little bit of built-in responsibility with the knowledge that they've taken away.

DR2024-009

I'm educated in the North.

I attended a failing school at second level.

I and my teachers would have had to travel into this area to go to school, I started to get a feeling for what education was all about.

I'm a history teacher as well, because I knew what was going on in the outside world. It permeated everyday life. Permeated your home life, permeated school life and your sporting life as well.

I have to be quite conscious that I don't bring any of that political affiliation or any baggage that comes with having faced discrimination and inequality in my younger life. I have to be very conscious of that.

I think we need to look beyond words.

I primarily interested in student empowerment, student agency, and active citizenship. I've gotten some wonderful emails over the last number of years.

I don't have that anxiety.

I would do it for free.

DR2024-010

I think I'm probably quite conservative.

I was born into conservative Irish Catholic family and immigrant family in London.

I'm probably like a middle class mother now.

I try not to react immediately to what they're saying.

I've learned like that's, you know, kind of take a deep breath. Listen to what they're saying and appreciate what they're just saying.

I wonder if I wasn't dealing with young people all the time.. They are as important to me as my identity is, I suppose.

I've had to work on it, and it's definitely evolved. I'd come from a Convent school

I just think it's very difficult to keep up with everything that's happening in the world.

I said you're a great role model for these girls.

I love chaos of TY

I'm hoping there's going to be an election. I'm very excited.

DR2024-011

I did actually have a note there for myself, the 1916 Rising.

I think the course itself, you see, is very left-leaning. I think it's definitely about. And you want to run with it.

I'm from that area. I live in the area. I'm at one with the community. I would be probably somewhat aligned with their values.

I feel a little bit guilty as I'm sort of creating the other.

I'm learning just as much are you are.

I've joined a political party.

DR2024-012

I kind of assumed you meant by civic identity, kind of like my political values.

I grew up in a very international community.

I think that obviously marks out probably my civic identity.

I would see myself as very progressive.

I would see myself as very liberal on social issues.

I also would have a very strong sense, I suppose, of kind of social democracy and social justice.

I was very Catholic.

I kind of fell into this. I come from the History field.

I'm incredibly privileged in every aspect of my life to be who I am, where I am and that's deeply unfair.

I'm like a fish swimming in the water.

I enjoy teaching the things I don't agree with.

I think that makes it quite problematic.

Sometimes I'm seen as causing trouble.

I don't think I am the outlier.

DR2024-013

I'm confused as to how you define civic identity, to be honest.

I think a civic identity is what do I care about or who am I or what values are important to me

I'm from a farming family.

I didn't go into teaching straight from college. I've done loads and loads of different jobs. I've rented all over the city. I've had all that kind of life experience.

I've never lost that sense of local community. I think even when you go abroad you nearly feel closer to Irishness.

I suppose the course in general is very much on the kind of left side.

I'd be sort of in favour of individualism. I would have kind of clashed with the school leaders. I didn't verbalise it. But I used to kind of nearly agree with them more than I agree with the school policies.

I always feel like I should be doing more.

I very much stick to what you're meant to do.

I genuinely find it hard to teach it, Sometimes I feel like I'm not intelligent enough for this subject.

I'm thinking I can't do any better myself, you know? I feel sometimes there only barely half a step ahead. I'm just totally different than the history classroom.

DR2024-014

I suppose belonging to your own place as well is a massive part, I think, of your civic identity.

I think maybe the subject is misnamed in many ways. It's more sociology and politics in my view.

I suppose we're very comfortable with what we see in front of us.

I took the controversial view of looking at a topic that wasn't very popular in Irish history.

I would have been very, very much this is what I think and I would launch into it.

I think since COVID and teaching on this forum changed that massively.

I was lucky today in a double class to have the time.

I'm very, very lucky working in a very, very middle class at school.

DR2024-015

I think most of the time when it comes to civic identity, people and myself included would have only ever have the vaguest sense of identity.

I have a very small footprint in terms of civic identity. I am kind of almost in an enclave. I very much feel like I'm on a little island.

I could see myself as kind of civically minded, generally, generally benevolent, but not particularly effective.

I do my bit of volunteering.

I was politically aware but never party political, I have voted for multiple different parties at different times.

I became very disillusioned.

I'd be a little bit probably more authoritarian and traditional.

I absolutely hate it because there's a kind of constant pitting of the classes against each other.

I suppose it's very neoliberal.

DR2024-016

I suppose it would be rooted in my time doing politics in university, what it means to participate as a citizen.

I wouldn't say I've got my own figured out.

I think if you let them speak to each other, there is actually a big student voice, let the students tell each other.

I don't think the knowledge is there at junior cycle.

I just finished policy making with my fifth years and it was a slog

I suppose depending on what issue you're covering, you obviously want to provide a balanced side to it.

I was very, very lucky with the group.

I'm a history teacher as well.

I don't want to sell them a dream.

I kind of want them to have that awareness of what's going on.

DR2024-017

I was hoping you would give me the definition.

I suppose, like maybe the volunteering kind of aspect.

I tried to go back, to come forward.

I suppose we went to France, I was actually living in an immigrant sort of suburb.

I'm just drawing on those things because they give you perspectives different from your own.

I think maybe it's a cliche.

I suppose they challenged me to revisit all that.

I had a heightened awareness of tolerance and diversity, having had a little bit of experience of other cultures and travelling.

I taught history as well.

DR2024-018

I suppose in in terms of it, we have our national identity that would be part of it.

I think in terms of civic identity, we sometimes talk a lot in terms of what we are entitled to.

I fear the turn out is going to be quite low.

I think as part of our civic identity that that voting right and that exercise of our voice is really important.

I think when it comes down to it, that is really one of the major things we need to do is be involved in the political process, have our voices heard, have our statements made and work with that.

I found that I used to start with kind of bigger concepts.

I start now with the basics.

I don't have a background in geography, and I don't have an interest in geography, so I struggle with sustainable development.

I think when we're creating these things, we tend to forget we're still dealing with 16- and 17-year-olds.

I started bringing politics in here because we had very enthusiastic Principal

I do think sometimes, we get a little bit sidelined

Appendix B: Ethics

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

DCU

Joe O'Hara
School of Policy and Practice

25th January 2024

REC Reference: DCUREC/2023/248 (Expedited Review)

Proposal Title: Politics and Society Teachers' Identities: Constructing Civic Selves

Applicant(s): Joe O'Hara, Martin Stynes and Conor Reale

Dear Colleague(s),

Thank you for your application to DCU Research Ethics Committee (REC). Further to its review by the committee and resting on the assumption of information accuracy and completeness, DCU REC is pleased to issue ethical approval for this research project. Please include reference to this approval in all materials used to recruit research participants.

Researchers are responsible for ensuring that the research project to which this ethical approval refers is carried out as specifically described in the application form. Should modifications to the research project be required at a later stage, researchers must submit a research amendment application form to REC for approval, prior to the implementation of modifications.

Please note that it is the responsibility of the PI to ensure that any other DCU compliance requirements relevant to the research project, such as those related to data protection, insurance, health and safety, or legal issues, are fully met in advance of initiating the project.

As part of DCU REC's ongoing monitoring process, a research progress report may be required. DCU REC will request this report from the PI as appropriate.

DCU REC wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Melrona Kirrane
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee

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Note: Please retain this approval letter for future publication purposes. Research students should include this letter as a thesis appendix.

DR2024-001:

Themes:

Career Aspirations and Teaching Experience: The theme of career aspirations and teaching experience is central to the narrative here. The interviewee reflects on their desire to become a teacher, their experiences in applying for positions, and their observations about teaching politics and society. This theme underscores the interviewee's passion for education and their commitment to imparting knowledge especially on matters of politics, democracy, and civic knowledge to young people.

Identity and Detachment: The interviewee made several references to their identity, including their regional background as demonstrated in the clear declaration that 'I am Ulster man' and their working-class upbringing. The discussion also revealed an interesting struggle to reconcile reported perceptions of class (I'm working class) with external observations that they are in fact middle class. This will be explored in the next section in more detail as clearly this struggle will impact on the interviewees approach in class and identity in the classroom. For example, the interviewee reflects on their ability to detach themselves from the local area (I'm not from the locality) and re-emphasises their working-class identity by referencing trips home by saying 'I walk into my local pub, and everyone knows me'

Informed Citizenship: The mention of watching the news and being well-informed suggests a theme related to informed citizenship. The interviewee values staying informed about current events and emphasises the importance of being knowledgeable about the world around them, reflecting a commitment to informed civic engagement which was developed at home from an early age.

Self-Reflection: The interviewee's reflections on their experiences as a teacher and their identity suggest a hidden message about self-reflection and personal growth. This implies that the interviewee is introspective and seeks to understand themselves and their role in society through their experiences as a teacher.

Social Mobility: The mention of the interviewee's working-class background and the hard work of their parents suggests a hidden message about social mobility and the impact of socioeconomic factors on individuals' lives. This implies that the interviewee values their upbringing and recognises the importance of hard work and perseverance in achieving their goals.

Cultural Identity: The interviewee's emphasis on their regional identity as an 'Ulster man' suggests a hidden message about cultural identity and pride. This implies that the interviewee feels a strong connection to their regional roots and values their cultural heritage as an integral part of their identity.

Evolution of Civic Identity: Suggests an evolution of the interviewee's civic identity through their experiences as a teacher and reflections on their upbringing. Despite their detachment from the local community, the interviewee demonstrates a commitment to educating young people and fostering informed citizenship.

DR2024-002:

Themes:

Personal Growth and Development: The central theme revolves around the interviewee's evolution in understanding and participating in civic engagement and community involvement.

Education and Social Responsibility: The interviewee reflects on the role of schools as community pillars and their own efforts to integrate volunteer work and empathy into the classroom.

Youth and Adulthood Contrasts: A recurring theme is the difference in the interviewee's engagement with civic activities during their youth (e.g., involvement in Girl Guides) compared to their early adulthood where they freely admit that right throughout their 20s, they would not have done any volunteering. This complicated approach to the value of volunteering as part of their civic identity is further evidenced when they talk, with a sense of frustration, about staff members not getting involved in extracurricular activities.

Gratitude and Appreciation: There is a theme of gratitude towards mentors, such as Scout and Guide leaders, and an appreciation for the opportunities provided by these experiences.

Hidden Messages:

Importance of Role Models: The interviewee's reminiscence about Brownie and Guide leaders suggests the significant influence of positive role models on their civic identity development.

Journey of Self-Discovery: The narrative reveals a journey of self-discovery and realisation, from initially engaging in volunteer work for personal gain to recognising its deeper moral and societal significance.

Impact of Education: The interviewee's efforts to incorporate empathy and volunteerism into their teaching underscore the transformative potential of education in shaping civic identity.

Cyclical Nature of Influence: The interviewee's newfound appreciation for past experiences suggests a cyclical pattern of influence, where the impact of early mentors and experiences resurfaces later in life.

Evolution of Civic Identity: Significant evolution in the interviewee's civic identity from youth to adulthood. Initially driven by personal motives and external influences, such as scouting and academic pursuits, the interviewee undergoes a transformative journey towards a deeper understanding of social responsibility, empathy, and community engagement. This evolution is marked by introspection, gratitude for past experiences, and a newfound commitment to incorporating civic values into their personal and professional life. Overall, the narrative illustrates the complex interplay between personal experiences, education, and societal influences in shaping an individual's civic identity.

DR2024-003:

Themes:

(Dis)Engagement with Politics: The central theme revolves around the interviewee's evolving relationship with politics, from strong initial interest, driven by familial experiences, to frustration and disengagement.

Civic Responsibility: The narrative explores the concept of civic responsibility and the interviewee's struggle and disenchantment with fulfilling their duties as a citizen, such as voting and staying informed.

Critical Thinking: There is a theme of encouraging critical thinking, as the interviewee reflects on their attempts to engage students in political discussions and decision-making.

Personal Agency: The narrative hints at a sense of personal agency and frustration with feeling marginalised or insignificant in the political process.

<u>Hidden Messages:</u>

Apathy and Frustration: The interviewee's decision not to vote and feelings of annoyance reflect a sense of disillusionment and frustration with the political system. This is despite a very strong personal background in the political system, especially around elections

Self-Reflection: The narrative suggests a degree of self-awareness and introspection, as the interviewee reflects on their past actions and attitudes towards politics.

Social Influence: References to reading the paper from a young age and being influenced by external factors (e.g., buying the paper for baseball but reading other sections anyway) suggest the influence of societal norms and media on the interviewee's civic identity.

Power Dynamics: The interviewee's mention of treading carefully and not voting for a particular candidate hint at power dynamics and the complexities of political decision-making.

<u>Evolution of Civic Identity:</u> The interview suggests a complex evolution of the interviewee's civic identity, marked by initial curiosity and engagement with politics, followed by disillusionment and disengagement. While the interviewee demonstrates awareness of civic responsibilities and attempts to promote critical thinking, they ultimately express frustration and apathy towards the political process. This evolution reflects broader societal trends of scepticism and disconnection from

traditional political institutions, as individuals grapple with issues of agency, influence, and representation in democratic systems.

DR2024-004

Themes:

Community Engagement: The central theme revolves around the interviewee's active participation in community organisations, such as the local GAA club and charity work, highlighting the importance of community involvement in shaping civic identity.

Empowerment and Initiative: There is a theme of empowerment and initiative, as the interviewee takes proactive steps, such as proposing Politics and Society a new subject at school and seeking opportunities for personal and professional development which ultimately proved successful.

Education and Critical Thinking: The narrative emphasises the role of education in fostering critical thinking and developing a voice, suggesting a connection between academic pursuits and civic engagement.

Continuous Learning: The theme of continuous learning underscores the interviewee's commitment to personal growth and professional development, both as a teacher and an active member of their community.

Hidden Messages:

Leadership and Advocacy: The interviewee's confidence with introducing Politics and Society at school and their involvement in a visit to the European Parliament suggest a hidden message of leadership and advocacy for causes they believe in.

Perseverance and Adaptability: The narrative implies a sense of perseverance and adaptability, as the interviewee navigates challenges and seeks new opportunities for

learning and growth. They reference for example that fact even though they have been teaching it since 2018 they 'feel like it's a course where you can never stop learning'

Empathy and Social Awareness: The interviewee's experiences with charity work and community involvement reflect a sense of empathy and social awareness, highlighting the importance of compassion and understanding in civic engagement.

Personal Transformation: References to feeling confident and empowered indicate a personal transformation in the interviewee's civic identity, from a passive observer to an active participant in shaping their community and society. This is evidenced through their trips (for the first time) to centres of democratic power in Brussels and Dublin

Evolution of Civic Identity: The interview depicts a marked transformation in the interviewee's civic identity, from initial involvement in community activities to taking on leadership roles and advocating for change. Through their experiences in education, charity work, and community engagement, the interviewee gains confidence, develops critical thinking skills, and cultivates a sense of social responsibility. This evolution reflects a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between personal growth, community involvement, and civic engagement, highlighting the interviewee's transformation into an active agent of positive change within their society. Overall, the narrative portrays a dynamic journey of self-discovery and empowerment, underscored by a commitment to lifelong learning and making a meaningful impact on the world around them.

DR2024-005

<u>Themes:</u>

Formation of Civic Identity: The central theme revolves around the gradual

formation and evolution of the interviewee's civic identity, influenced by personal

experiences, education, and societal contexts.

Education and Teaching Philosophy: There is a recurring theme of the importance

of education in shaping civic consciousness, with the interviewee reflecting on their

role as a teacher and the responsibility to cultivate active citizenship among students.

Examples include 'ring your county councillor,' 'get involved with tidy towns'

'engage with the student council.'

Social Awareness and Global Citizenship: The narrative touches upon the

interviewee's journey from living in a 'bubble' to becoming a 'global citizen,'

highlighting the expansion of their worldview and awareness of global issues.

Ethical Considerations in Teaching: The theme of ethical considerations in

teaching emerges as the interviewee discusses the challenges of addressing sensitive

political and societal issues in the classroom while adhering to curriculum

guidelines.

<u>Hidden Messages:</u>

Personal Integrity and Alignment: The interviewee's assertion that they wouldn't

teach in a school that doesn't align with their civic identity suggests a hidden

message of personal integrity and the importance of aligning professional values with

personal beliefs.

Empowerment of Youth: References to the importance of student voice and participation in school committees convey a hidden message of empowerment and agency for young people in shaping their communities and society.

Balancing Act: The interviewee's discussion of teaching sensitive topics within curriculum parameters underscores the delicate balance between fostering critical thinking and respecting educational guidelines and restrictions.

Evolution of Civic Identity: Gradual evolution in the interviewee's civic identity, from a sense of being insulated in a small village to embracing a more global perspective and a commitment to active participation in society. Through personal experiences, education, and teaching experiences, the interviewee becomes more aware of societal issues, ethical considerations, and the importance of empowering young people to become engaged citizens. This evolution reflects a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between personal values, education, and civic responsibility, ultimately shaping the interviewee into a proactive advocate for social change and youth empowerment.

DR2024-006

Themes:

Evolution of Civic Identity: Once again the central theme revolves around the gradual evolution of the interviewee's civic identity, influenced by personal experiences, family upbringing, and professional responsibilities as a teacher.

Education and Civic Responsibility: There is a recurring theme of the role of education in fostering civic responsibility and identity, with the interviewee discussing their approach to teaching politics and society and the importance of creating a sense of civic engagement among students.

Political Ideology and Expression: The narrative touches upon the theme of political ideology and expression, with the interviewee expressing their belief in the importance of transparency and openness about personal political beliefs, despite potential challenges in classroom settings.

Professional Ethics and Boundaries: References to being careful about the interaction between the interviewee's civic identity and teaching responsibilities suggest a theme of navigating professional ethics and boundaries in the classroom.

Hidden Messages:

Personal Integrity and Authenticity: The interviewee's insistence on being transparent about their political ideology suggests a hidden message of personal integrity and authenticity, emphasising the importance of aligning professional practices with personal beliefs.

Navigating Institutional Dynamics: References to management's support for the subject and the interviewee's caution about potential conflicts between their civic identity and teaching responsibilities hint at the hidden message of navigating institutional dynamics and balancing personal values with professional obligations.

Continual Self-Reflection: The narrative implies a hidden message of continual self-reflection and introspection, as the interviewee grapples with the complexities of their civic identity and its interaction with their teaching practices.

Evolution of Civic Identity: Evolution in the interviewee's civic identity, influenced by personal experiences, family discussions about politics, and professional responsibilities as a teacher. Through their role in teaching politics and society, the interviewee becomes more aware of the intersections between their personal beliefs and teaching practices, leading to a deeper understanding of the complexities of their civic identity. This evolution reflects a journey of self-awareness and ethical

consideration, as the interviewee navigates the challenges of balancing personal values with professional responsibilities in the classroom.

DR2024-007

<u>Themes:</u>

Upbringing and Identity: The theme of upbringing and identity is central to the narrative. The interviewee reflects on how their upbringing in a 'staunchly' Unionist town has shaped their perspective on inequality and differences. This theme underscores the influence of personal background and experiences on civic identity and social consciousness.

Awareness of Inequality: References to the interviewee's 'antenna for inequality' and consciousness of differences and sameness highlight themes related to social awareness and sensitivity. The interviewee demonstrates a heightened awareness of social issues and a commitment to addressing inequality, reflecting a broader concern for social justice and equity.

Educational Practices: The narrative touches upon themes related to educational practices and teaching philosophy. The interviewee discusses their approach to teaching identity and their thoughts on promoting academic excellence. This theme reflects the interviewee's commitment to providing a comprehensive education that fosters critical thinking, social awareness, and civic engagement.

Complexity of Identity: The interviewee's reluctance to reveal their political persuasions and their hesitation about teaching identity suggest a hidden message about the complexity of identity and the challenges of navigating personal beliefs in educational settings. This implies that the interviewee grapples with the complexities of identity and strives to maintain neutrality and objectivity in their teaching approach.

Critical Reflection: The statement 'I'm not sure what purpose would it serve for me to come straight out' implies a hidden message about the importance of critical reflection and deliberation in shaping one's civic identity. This suggests that the interviewee values thoughtful consideration and introspection when navigating social and political issues.

Call for Action: The statement 'it almost should be compulsory' suggests a hidden message about the interviewee's belief in the importance of promoting social awareness and civic engagement in education. This implies that the interviewee advocates for systemic changes that prioritise social justice and equity in educational practices.

Evolution of Civic Identity: Evolving civic identity for the interviewee, influenced by their upbringing, experiences, and teaching environment. Despite their reluctance to reveal their political persuasions, the interviewee demonstrates a heightened awareness of social issues and a commitment to addressing inequality. Their hesitation about teaching identity reflects a growing recognition of the complexities of identity and the need for thoughtful consideration in educational practices. Overall, the narrative portrays a journey of self-discovery, critical reflection, and advocacy for social justice within the context of education.

DR2024-008

Promoting Responsibility: The theme of promoting responsibility and civic engagement is central to the narrative. The interviewee emphasises the importance of engaging with authorities and incorporating elements that promote responsibility into their teaching approach. This theme underscores the interviewee's commitment to fostering civic responsibility and active citizenship among their students.

Critical Thinking and Perspective-taking: References to 'playing Devil's advocate' and providing context around issues suggest themes related to critical thinking and perspective-taking. The interviewee encourages students to consider different viewpoints and engage critically with complex issues, reflecting a commitment to fostering analytical skills and informed citizenship.

Gender Equality and Social Justice: The mention of advocating for the perception of women in sport highlight's themes related to gender equality and social justice. The interviewee demonstrates a commitment to challenging stereotypes and providing context around issues of gender discrimination, reflecting a broader concern for social justice and equity.

Hidden Messages:

Empowerment Through Education: The interviewee's emphasis on incorporating elements that promote responsibility and critical thinking suggests a hidden message about the role of education in empowering individuals to become active and responsible citizens. This implies that the interviewee views education as a tool for fostering civic engagement and social change.

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Navigating Challenges: The mention of challenges in teaching sustainability and engaging students suggests a hidden message about the complexities of promoting civic responsibility in education. This implies that the interviewee grapples with the realities of student disinterest and the difficulty of fostering engagement with certain topics.

Holistic Learning: The statement 'everything in civilian life is relevant to the exam' suggests a hidden message about the importance of holistic learning and its connection to civic responsibility. This implies that the interviewee values interdisciplinary approaches to education that encourage students to connect classroom learning to real-world issues and responsibilities.

Evolution of Civic Identity: Suggests an evolving civic identity for the interviewee, influenced by their professional experiences, teaching philosophy, and commitment to promoting responsibility and social justice. Despite facing challenges in engaging students with certain topics, the interviewee demonstrates a resilience and determination to foster critical thinking, perspective-taking, and civic responsibility among their students. Their emphasis on holistic learning and empowerment through education reflects a broader evolution towards a more inclusive and socially conscious civic identity.

DR2024-009

Themes:

Education and Identity: The theme of education and its influence on civic identity is, once again, central to the narrative. The interviewee reflects on their experiences attending a failing school and the impact it had on their understanding of education and civic engagement. This theme underscores the importance of education in shaping individuals' perspectives and civic responsibilities.

Consciousness of Bias: The narrative touches upon the theme of consciousness of bias and the need to avoid bringing political affiliation or personal baggage into teaching. The interviewee acknowledges the importance of being mindful of their own experiences with discrimination and inequality and strives to approach teaching with neutrality and fairness.

Student Empowerment: References to student empowerment, agency, and active citizenship highlight themes related to the interviewee's teaching philosophy and goals. The interviewee expresses a commitment to fostering student engagement and autonomy, reflecting a belief in the importance of empowering young people to participate actively in civic life.

Hidden Messages:

Personal Growth and Resilience: The mention of attending a failing school and facing discrimination suggests a hidden message about personal growth and resilience. Despite experiencing challenges, the interviewee demonstrates a determination to overcome adversity and pursue their educational and professional goals.

Commitment to Equity: The interviewee's consciousness of bias and commitment to looking beyond words implies a hidden message about the importance of equity and fairness in civic engagement. This suggests that the interviewee values inclusivity and strives to create an environment where all students feel respected and valued.

Intrinsic Motivation: The statement 'I would do it for free' suggests a hidden message about intrinsic motivation and passion for teaching. This implies that the interviewee's commitment to student empowerment and active citizenship stems

from a genuine desire to make a positive difference, rather than external rewards or recognition.

Evolution of Civic Identity: Despite facing challenges and discrimination in their youth, the interviewee demonstrates resilience and a commitment to equity and fairness in their approach to teaching. Their focus on student empowerment and active citizenship reflects a belief in the importance of fostering civic engagement and autonomy among young people.

DR2024-010

Themes:

Cultural Background and Identity: The theme of cultural background and identity is central to the narrative, with the interviewee reflecting on their upbringing in a conservative, Irish, Catholic, immigrant family in London. This background influences their worldview and civic identity.

Personal Growth and Evolution: The narrative touches upon the theme of personal growth and evolution, as the interviewee reflects on how their civic identity has evolved over time. They acknowledge the influence of their upbringing and experiences, as well as their efforts to listen, learn, and adapt.

Parental and Professional Roles: References to 'being a middle-class mother' (even allowing for the caveat of the interview saying probably at the beginning of the statement) and working with young people highlight themes related to parental and professional roles in shaping civic identity. The interviewee's interactions with students and their role as a teacher influence their understanding of civic responsibility and engagement.

Engagement with Current Affairs: The mention of struggling to keep up with everything happening in the world and expressing excitement about an upcoming election suggests a theme of engagement with current affairs and political events. This reflects the interviewee's interest in participating in the civic life of their community and staying informed about societal issues.

Hidden Messages:

Open-mindedness and Empathy: The interviewee's emphasis on listening, taking a deep breath, and appreciating other perspectives suggests a hidden message of open-mindedness and empathy. This implies a willingness to engage with diverse viewpoints and understand different experiences.

Role Modelling: The statement (in the context of having met a Member of Parliament during a visit to Dublin) 'you're a great role model for these girls' implies a hidden message about the importance of positive role modelling in shaping civic identity. This suggests that the interviewee values their influence on others, particularly young people, and strives to set a positive example.

Embracing Chaos: The mention of loving the chaos of TY (Transition Year) suggests a hidden message about embracing uncertainty and spontaneity in civic engagement. This implies a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances and find value in unexpected experiences.

Evolution of Civic Identity:

Despite their conservative upbringing, the interviewee demonstrates openness to different perspectives, empathy towards others, and a commitment to continuous learning and growth. Their engagement with current affairs and excitement about civic events reflect a desire to actively participate in the civic life of their community.

DR2024-011

<u>Themes:</u>

Personal Connection to History: The mention of the 1916 Rising highlights the theme of personal connection to historical events and their influence on civic identity. This suggests that historical events play a significant role in shaping the interviewee's understanding of their civic responsibilities.

Alignment with Community Values: The narrative touches upon the theme of alignment with community values, as the interviewee expresses a sense of belonging and shared values with their local community. This connection influences their civic identity and sense of responsibility towards their community.

Self-Reflection and Guilt: References to feeling guilty about 'creating the other' suggest themes related to self-reflection and the moral complexities of civic engagement. The interviewee grapples with their role in shaping perceptions of others and acknowledges the need for self-awareness in their actions.

Political Engagement: The mention of joining a political party hints at the theme of political engagement and its impact on civic identity. This suggests that political participation is an important aspect of the interviewee's civic identity and reflects their commitment to enacting change within the political system.

<u>Hidden Messages:</u>

Continuous Learning: The statement 'I'm learning just as much as you are' implies a hidden message of humility and openness to new perspectives. This suggests that the interviewee views civic identity as an ongoing process of learning and self-discovery, rather than a fixed state.

Community Influence: The mention of living in the area and being aligned with community values implies a hidden message about the influence of community on civic identity. This suggests that the interviewee's sense of civic responsibility is deeply intertwined with their connection to their local community.

Ethical Considerations: The expression of guilt about 'creating the other' suggests a hidden message about the ethical considerations of civic engagement. This implies that the interviewee grapples with questions of moral responsibility and the potential impact of their actions on others.

Evolution of Civic Identity: An evolving civic identity for the interviewee, influenced by their personal connection to history, alignment with community values, and engagement with political activism. The interviewee grapples with questions of moral responsibility and the complexities of civic engagement, demonstrating a willingness to learn, reflect, and take action within their community and political sphere.

DR2024-012

Themes:

Definition of Civic Identity: The central theme revolves around the interviewee's interpretation of civic identity as synonymous with their political values and beliefs. They reflect on their progressive, liberal, and socially democratic views, as well as their sense of social justice and privilege.

Upbringing and Community: There is a recurring theme of the interviewee's upbringing in an international community, which significantly influences their civic identity. This upbringing fosters a sense of openness, progressivism, and social consciousness.

Social Justice and Privilege: References to the interviewee's strong sense of social justice and acknowledgment of their privilege highlight themes related to equity, fairness, and the recognition of systemic advantages.

Professional Identity: The narrative touches upon themes related to the interviewee's transition from the field of history to teaching and the challenges and rewards of teaching subjects that may conflict with their personal beliefs. This reflects the intersection of professional identity with civic identity.

Hidden Messages:

Complexity of Identity: The interviewee's acknowledgment of feeling like a 'fish swimming in the water' suggests a hidden message about the complexity of identity and the interplay between individual experiences, values, and societal influences in shaping civic identity.

Critical Engagement: References to enjoying teaching topics the interviewee disagrees with and being perceived as causing trouble imply a hidden message about the importance of critical engagement and open dialogue in civic education. This suggests a willingness to confront challenging topics and stimulate critical thinking, even if it leads to discomfort or controversy.

Normalisation of Privilege: The interviewee's recognition of their privilege and acknowledgment of its unfairness suggests a hidden message about the normalisation of privilege and the need for individuals to critically examine their own advantages and societal structures.

Evolution of Civic Identity: Despite their progressive and socially conscious beliefs, the interviewee grapples with the complexities of privilege and the challenges of teaching topics that may conflict with their personal views.

DR2024-013

Definition of Civic Identity: The central theme revolves around the interviewee's struggle to define civic identity and their understanding of what it means to them personally. The interviewee reflects on their values, life experiences, and sense of belonging to a local community as integral components of their civic identity.

Life Experience and Identity Formation: There is a recurring theme of the interviewee's diverse life experiences, including working various jobs and renting in different areas, shaping their sense of identity and connection to their community. These experiences contribute to their understanding of civic engagement and belonging.

Individualism vs. Community: The narrative touches upon themes related to individualism versus community values, with the interviewee expressing a preference for individualism and occasionally feeling at odds with institutional policies that prioritise collective interests over individual autonomy.

Self-Doubt and Perceived Inadequacy: References to feeling inadequate or unintelligent for teaching the subject and questioning their ability to effectively convey its content suggest themes related to self-doubt and imposter syndrome in the context of teaching civic education.

Hidden Messages:

Internal Conflict: The interviewee's internal conflict between their individualistic beliefs and institutional expectations implies a hidden message about the

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complexities of navigating personal values within professional settings. This suggests a tension between staying true to one's beliefs and conforming to institutional norms.

Continuous Learning: The interviewee's admission of feeling inadequate and their desire to do more imply a hidden message of continuous learning and growth. This underscores the importance of humility and self-reflection in the process of civic identity development and teaching practice.

Authenticity: References to feeling closer to Irishness abroad and maintaining a sense of local community despite diverse experiences suggest a hidden message of authenticity and the importance of staying connected to one's roots and values amidst life's changes and challenges.

Evolution of Civic Identity: There again is a clear suggestion of an ongoing evolution in the interviewee's civic identity, influenced by their personal experiences, values, and professional experiences as a teacher. Despite feeling a sense of connection to their local community and a preference for individualism, the interviewee grapples with internal conflicts and uncertainties about their ability to effectively teach civic education.

DR2024-014

Themes:

Belonging and Identity: The central theme revolves around the importance of belonging to one's own place and community in shaping civic identity. The interviewee reflects on the significance of local connections and familiarity in influencing their understanding of civic engagement.

Subject Misnomer: There is a recurring theme of the misnaming of subjects, with the interviewee suggesting that Politics and Society could be more accurately described as Sociology and Politics. This theme underscores the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of civic education.

Comfort and Change: The narrative touches upon themes related to comfort with the familiar and the impact of change, particularly in response to teaching on online platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviewee reflects on how their teaching practices and perspectives have evolved in response to these changes. The metaphor of being 'very comfortable with what we see in front of us' conveys a sense of complacency and familiarity, highlighting the interviewee's reflection on the need to challenge established perspectives and embrace change in civic education.

Controversy and Perspective: References to taking a controversial view in teaching and expressing strong opinions suggest themes related to controversy, perspective, and the importance of critical thinking in civic education.

Hidden Messages:

Adaptability and Growth: The interviewee's reflection on how teaching on an online platform has changed their approach implies a hidden message of adaptability and growth in response to new challenges and circumstances. This suggests a willingness to evolve and adapt teaching practices to better engage students in civic education.

Challenging Perspectives: The interviewee's mention of taking a controversial view in teaching and expressing strong opinions suggests a hidden message of challenging students perspectives and encouraging critical thinking. This underscores the importance of fostering open dialogue and diverse viewpoints in civic education.

Socioeconomic Context: References to working in a middle-class school imply a hidden message about the influence of socioeconomic context on civic identity and education. This suggests that one's environment and social background can play a significant role in shaping perspectives on civic engagement.

Evolution of Civic Identity: I think that the transcript suggests an evolving civic identity for the interviewee, characterised by a willingness to challenge established perspectives, adapt to new teaching environments, and embrace the interdisciplinary nature of civic education. The interviewee reflects on the importance of local connections and community belonging, as well as the impact of teaching practices and socioeconomic context on their understanding of civic engagement.

DR2024-015

Themes:

Identity and Belonging: The central theme revolves around the interviewee's sense of identity and belonging within their civic community. The interviewee grapples with feelings of detachment and isolation, describing themselves as having a 'very small footprint' and feeling like they are on a 'little island.'

Civic Engagement and Effectiveness: There is a recurring theme of civic engagement and effectiveness, with the interviewee expressing a desire to contribute to society through volunteering and political awareness. However, they also acknowledge feelings of ineffectiveness and disillusionment with the political system.

Political Disillusionment: The narrative touches upon themes related to political disillusionment, with the interviewee describing their disillusionment with the political process and expressing frustration with the perceived divisiveness and ineffectiveness of political discourse.

Social Class and Ideology: References to feelings of authoritarianism, traditionalism, and frustration with class divisions suggest themes related to social class, ideology, and societal structures.

<u>Hidden Messages:</u>

Search for Identity: The interviewee's exploration of their civic identity and feelings of detachment suggests a hidden message of searching for a sense of belonging and purpose within their civic community.

Disillusionment with Politics: The interviewee's disillusionment with the political system and frustration with political discourse imply a hidden message of scepticism towards institutionalised forms of civic engagement and a desire for alternative approaches to effecting change.

Critique of Neoliberalism: References to feeling 'neoliberal' and frustration with the constant pitting of classes against each other suggest a hidden message of critique towards neoliberal economic policies and their impact on societal divisions and inequalities.

<u>Evolution of Civic Identity:</u> A complex and evolving civic identity for the interviewee, characterised by feelings of detachment, disillusionment, and frustration with the political process and societal structures. Despite their efforts to engage in civic activities such as volunteering and political awareness, the interviewee expresses a sense of ineffectiveness and scepticism towards traditional forms of civic engagement. Their reflections reveal a desire for a more inclusive and effective approach to civic participation, as well as a critique of neoliberal ideologies and societal divisions.

DR2024-016

<u>Themes</u>

Roots in Education and Experience: The central theme revolves around the influence of the interviewee's experiences in university politics on their understanding of citizenship and participation. This theme underscores the importance of education and personal experiences in shaping civic identity.

Student Voice and Empowerment: There is a recurring theme of empowering students to have a voice in their education and in civic matters. The interviewee emphasises the importance of student engagement and dialogue as integral aspects of fostering civic awareness and participation.

Educational Challenges and Strategies: The narrative touches upon themes related to teaching challenges, such as the lack of knowledge at Junior Cycle level, the difficulty of teaching policy making, and the importance of providing balanced perspectives on issues. The interviewee also highlights their approach to teaching history as a means of raising awareness about current events and societal issues.

Authenticity and Awareness: References to not having their own civic identity 'figured out' and not wanting to 'sell them a dream' convey a theme of authenticity and a desire to cultivate students awareness of real-world issues and complexities.

<u>Hidden Messages:</u>

Continuous Learning: The interviewee's admission that they haven't fully figured out their own civic identity suggests a hidden message of continuous learning and self-reflection. This emphasises the ongoing nature of civic identity development and the importance of remaining open to new perspectives.

Balancing Perspectives: The emphasis on providing balanced perspectives on issues suggests a hidden message of critical thinking and the importance of considering multiple viewpoints in civic education. This encourages students to develop their own informed opinions rather than accepting one-sided narratives.

Student-Centered Approach: The emphasis on letting students speak to each other and empowering them to have a voice suggests a hidden message of student-centered pedagogy and the belief in the importance of student agency and empowerment in the learning process.

Evolution of Civic Identity: Dynamic evolution in the interviewee's civic identity, influenced by their experiences in university politics, teaching practices, and ongoing self-reflection. Despite uncertainties and challenges, the interviewee demonstrates a commitment to empowering students, fostering critical thinking, and raising awareness of societal issues. Their approach to teaching history and policy making reflects a desire to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to engage meaningfully in civic life.

DR2024-017

Themes

Civic Identity Exploration: The central theme revolves around the interviewee's exploration of their civic identity, influenced by experiences such as volunteering, travel, and exposure to diverse cultures. There is a recurring theme of personal growth and development, as the interviewee reflects on how various experiences have shaped their perspectives on tolerance, diversity, and civic engagement.

Self-Reflection and Awareness: The narrative touches upon themes of self-reflection and heightened awareness, as the interviewee revisits past experiences and challenges themselves to consider different viewpoints and perspectives.

Educational Influence: References to teaching history suggest a theme of the influence of education on civic identity, as the interviewee's professional experiences contribute to their understanding of historical context and societal dynamics.

Hidden Messages:

Openness to New Experiences: The interviewee's willingness to 'go back, to come forward' and draw on diverse experiences suggests a hidden message of openness to new perspectives and a willingness to learn and grow.

Importance of Diversity: References to living in an immigrant suburb and experiencing other cultures imply a hidden message of the importance of diversity and multiculturalism in shaping civic identity and fostering tolerance.

Critical Reflection: The interviewee's acknowledgment of clichés and the challenges posed by revisiting past experiences implies a hidden message of the importance of critical reflection and questioning assumptions in the development of civic identity.

Evolution of Civic Identity: More nuanced evolution in the interviewee's civic identity, influenced by a variety of experiences and perspectives. Initially seeking definitions and exploring volunteering, the interviewee reflects on their time living in diverse environments and traveling, which heightens their awareness of tolerance and diversity. Teaching history further contributes to their understanding of societal dynamics and historical context. Throughout the narrative, there is a sense of openness to new experiences and perspectives, as well as a commitment to critical reflection and self-awareness.

DR2024-018

National and Civic Identity: The central theme revolves around the distinction between national and civic identity, with the interviewee reflecting on the importance of civic engagement, particularly in relation to voting rights and political participation.

Civic Responsibilities: There is a recurring theme of civic responsibilities, including the exercise of voting rights, active participation in the political process, and the importance of having one's voice heard in society.

Education and Teaching Challenges: The narrative touches upon themes related to teaching challenges, such as adapting teaching methods to cater to students understanding, grappling with unfamiliar subjects, and the influence of school management on teaching practices.

Hidden Messages:

Youth Empowerment: The interviewee's emphasis on the importance of involving 16- and 17-year-olds in discussions about civic issues implies a hidden message of youth empowerment and the recognition of their potential to engage meaningfully in societal matters.

Adaptability and Growth: References to adjusting teaching approaches and starting with basics suggest a hidden message of adaptability and continuous growth in response to teaching challenges and changing student needs.

Institutional Support: The mention of having an enthusiastic principal and the importance of school management implies a hidden message about the significance

of institutional support in fostering effective teaching practices and promoting civic education.

<u>Evolution of Civic Identity:</u> Gradual evolution in the interviewee's understanding of civic identity and teaching practices. Initially, the interviewee emphasises the importance of political participation and the exercise of voting rights as essential components of civic engagement. However, they also acknowledge the challenges of teaching unfamiliar subjects and the need to adapt teaching methods to effectively engage students. This evolution reflects a growing awareness of the complexities of civic education and the importance of addressing students' needs and levels of understanding.

Interview Notes-DR2024-001

Natural flow of conversation, fascinating journey and perspective on teaching.

The interviewee's story highlighted a key theme: the twisty path of career development: lots of voices. They considered law, ended up becoming a Politics and Society teacher. What impact on identity?

Their **upbringing** offered valuable insights. Growing up in a **politically active household with unionised father instilled a strong sense of social justice and civic awareness**. This likely influences their teaching style and curriculum focus on human rights and social justice issues.

Discussions about **social class** were also insightful. Despite entering a middle-class profession, the participant maintains a strong connection to their working-class roots. This internal negotiation highlights the complexities of social class and the importance of personal experiences in shaping professional and civic identity.

The interviewee's commitment to neutrality and fostering open dialogue in the classroom is impressive. Their emphasis on diverse perspectives and **critical thinking** reflects a democratic approach to teaching. Furthermore, their willingness to tackle contentious topics showcases a dedication to meaningful student engagement.

Interview Notes - DR2024-002

Importance of lived experience: Interviewee highlights the significant role their **background and volunteer work** play in shaping their approach to teaching civic identity.

Interviewee expresses **frustration** with the pressure on teachers to achieve results, which they feel takes away from fostering a well-rounded civic identity in students.

Reflects on how their own sense of civic identity has grown and **changed over time**, particularly through volunteering experiences.

Possible Voices

- Frustration: When discussing the pressure on teachers to achieve results and the decline in extracurricular activities.

- Gratitude: When reflecting on the positive impact of their own volunteer experiences and those who volunteered for them when they were younger.

- Realisation: When describing the moment they truly understood the value of volunteer work they benefited from as a youth.

- Interviewee feels schools should be more open to the **community** and vice versa.

- Interviewee is a big advocate for guest speakers and getting students involved in real-world issues.

- The school ethos aligns with the interviewee's values of mutual respect, community, and excellence.