Case-in-Point Pedagogy: Building Capacity for Experiential Learning and Democracy

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Experiential learning in and out of the classroom provides students with opportunities to learn from reflecting critically on concrete experiences. This article introduces Case-in-Point (CIP), an experiential teaching and learning strategy that uses critical reflection-in-action within the context of the classroom environment to modify behaviors in real-time. We broaden the use of CIP beyond its original realm of application, teaching leadership, to instruction in a range of disciplines, and we explore its use to build capacity for experiential learning and democracy.

Keywords: case-in-point, pedagogy, experiential learning, critical reflection, democracy

INTRODUCTION

The call for engaged, experiential education is not new. Dewey (1938) noted the tensions in educational theory between traditional and progressive approaches – the former focused on instruction for the acquisition of knowledge and the latter based on experience and discovery. Barr and Tagg (1995) pointed out that higher education insti-

tutions have been governed too long by a traditional "instruction paradigm," focusing on quality of instruction/instructors for the purpose of transferring knowledge to students (p. 13). They advocated a shift to a "learning paradigm" (p. 16) in which the educational experience is framed around discovery and construction of knowledge, development of students' competencies and talents, and the creation of powerful learning environments. The American Association of Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) *Liberal Education and America's Promise* (LEAP) initiative advocates the use of high-impact educational practices (e.g., learning communities, collaborative projects, internships) in pursuit of essential learning outcomes that prepare students for the complexities of a diverse and changing world (AAC&U, 2007; Kuh, 2008). Higher education can be a place where students develop as "empowered-civic-actors," but to accomplish that we must support them in being "empowered-actor-learners" in their own education (Clayton et al., 2014, p. 6). Students need opportunities to experience democratic processes, learn the values of democracy, and see their education as more than job training. Yet, today's educators continue to be challenged by systems and cultural trends that reward instruction over learning, which creates barriers to building capacity for democracy.

Additionally, economic trends are influencing educational trends, including positioning students as consumers of learning processes (Levine & Dean, 2012). The rising cost of tuition, coupled with access to enhanced technology, calls into question the value of traditional knowledge-transfer pedagogies (i.e., lectures). Students can find online programs that provide the same knowledge for lower cost. These conditions create high expectations for institutions to provide high-impact learning experiences that prepare students for civic and professional roles.

Experiential learning strategies such as internships, practica, study abroad, undergraduate research, and service-learning are dynamic, high-impact practices that typically create conditions for students to move beyond traditional classrooms and into learning contexts in broader communities (e.g., workplaces, community organizations). What if students experienced contextually-rich experiential learning in their classrooms before going abroad, taking a job at an internship, or entering a service-learning partnership? How might students – and, in turn, these complex activities and relationships – benefit from applying knowledge in a classroom prior to doing so in an external environment? How might they be better prepared, empowered, and effective both as learners and as citizens? Most fundamentally, how can we utilize experiential learning *in* the classroom to prepare for life and work beyond campus? While many experiential learning activities can be facilitated within classrooms (e.g., role-playing, problem-based learning, group

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projects, debate and deliberation), we suggest that case-in-point (CIP) pedagogy is a powerful vehicle for classroom-based experiential learning in real-time that can build capacity for other forms of experiential learning and for democracy.

CIP was originally developed as a pedagogy to teach leadership, but we find it applicable to instruction in a variety of disciplines. In this article, we outline key components of CIP pedagogy. We share several examples of how CIP can occur both within and beyond the classroom in a variety of disciplines. We also describe how CIP can cultivate reflection skills, facilitate exploration of values and behaviors, and prepare students to contribute to democracy. Although CIP is particularly well-suited to service-learning because of its ability to create spaces to learn about democracy in democratic ways, the pedagogy can build capacity to participate in other forms of experiential learning such as internships, study abroad, and undergraduate research.

CASE-IN-POINT

Case-in-Point (CIP) is a teaching and learning strategy by which students learn a practice by reflectively doing the practice in real-time (Green & Fabris McBride, 2015). The method was pioneered by Ronald Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and colleagues at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government with specific application to teaching the practices of adaptive leadership (Daloz Parks, 2005; Green, 2011), which is the process of "mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive" (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 14). The CIP method creates the conditions for students to observe and practice concepts in real-time; it is "the process of directing a group's attention to teachable moments, then holding collective focus on those moments long enough for individuals to engage themselves and one another in new and productive ways" (Green & Fabris McBride, 2015, p. 43). The following three classroom scenarios illustrate CIP through "teachable moments" across different course contexts and subject areas.

Scenario One: Examining Challenges of Research

> An undergraduate research methods class of 16 students is learning how to conduct structured interviews. The instructor pairs them up to interview one another in class using questions from their proposed research projects. The instructor's objectives are for students to have direct practice interviewing and to learn about how interview techniques can influence the authenticity of responses. Halfway through the first set of interviews, the instructor pauses the class and asks the interviewees, "How many of you feel you are trying to be calculated or careful in your responses?" A few of them raise their

hands. She then asks, "What is making you feel this way?" The students indicate that the location of the audio recorder is visible and that they are aware of the interviewer actively taking notes. The class discusses how the interviewees' experiences are influenced by the actions of the interviewers and how that dynamic might emerge in future research projects. One student says that researchers should not prioritize "getting the information" over "being with the participant." Another student says that, just like her, participants may want to be portrayed in a good manner, which might influence how they answer questions. The instructor then invites both the interviewers and interviewees to make adjustments for the second half of the session to help encourage more open and authentic responses.

Scenario Two: Experiencing Discomfort in Community Engagement

A group of 20 students in a community-engaged communication studies course is developing a deliberative dialogue protocol that aims to elicit stories from community members around food justice. They want to create the conditions to hear the stories of people experiencing food insecurity, but they find it hard to decide what is appropriate to ask. The instructor sees this as a moment to teach about discomfort and vulnerability as inevitable and even necessary components of facilitation in community work. She intervenes by saying, "It sounds like visiting with people experiencing food insecurity would be beyond your comfort zone. What discomfort are you feeling right now? What would it look like to be vulnerable right now?" The students share how nervous and uncomfortable they feel just having this conversation. In doing so, they recognize how they are demonstrating vulnerability with the other members of their learning community. The opportunity for the students to explore vulnerability in the conversation helps them be more comfortable with vulnerability as an element of the dialogue protocol they are designing.

Scenario Three: Practicing Environmental Ethics

A biology class of 50 students is out walking a nature trail to identify plant species. The instructor intends to use the campus as a laboratory for plant identification and also wants to create the conditions for learning about environmental ethics. As they walk past a creek that has several plastic bottles floating near the edge, the instructor asks if anyone has picked up any trash on their journey. A few students show they have picked up a few stray items. He asks, "Why didn't anyone go into the creek to pick up the bottles?" The group reflects on their com-

peting values of wanting a clean environment and personal convenience. It is more convenient to pick up a few items on the dry trail and carry them than it is to potentially get muddy and wet and have to carry more items as they walk. The instructor asks the students to think about other times they have chosen convenience over the environment and to think about examples in their daily lives of moments when they could give up small bits of convenience for the greater good of the environment. After the students discuss these questions in pairs, he has the class turn to walk back toward their building and asks, "What would it look like to do that right now?" As they walk some students experiment with new behaviors (e.g, walking farther to pick up trash, getting their hands dirty) – testing the balance between their environmental and convenience values. This activity serves as a starting point for their group projects aiming to raise awareness about environmental ethics.

THE MECHANICS OF CASE-IN-POINT

In each of these scenarios, instructors and students engaged in experiential learning through an intentional CIP approach. Table 1 summarizes a framework for CIP developed by Green and Fabris McBride

Table 1: 5-Step Framework for a Case-in-Point Session

	Teaching Leadership	Teaching in Any Discipline
Step 1	Know which leadership principle or competency you want to teach.	Be aware of learning outcomes that can be achieved through critical reflection on designed or serendipitous moments.
Step 2	Engage your group and get them interacting with some minimal sense of shared purpose.	Create or utilize a common experience amongst students or identify a teachable moment.
Step 3	Shine light on a moment, pattern, or dynamic that could relate to the leadership idea you are trying to teach.	Create the conditions for anyone in the system to shine light on a moment, pattern, or dynamic that could relate to a learning outcome you want to cultivate.
Step 4	Use the case you have illuminated to encourage or provoke group members to practice leadership skills.	Use the moment, pattern, or dynamic to have people in the system practice reflection-in-action, examine values and behaviors, and practice changed behavior in the moment.
Step 5	Debrief and invite learners to reflect on how to apply the ideas in the real world.	Debrief and invite learners to reflect on what occurred during the session for deeper understanding of the learning outcome.

Left column excerpted from Green and Fabris McBride, 2015

(2015); their specific, 5-step framework (excerpted in the left column) has been used by instructors and trainers in and out of formal education to teach principles of adaptive leadership. In the right column, we have broadened this framework to include teaching in any discipline.

Step 1. Be aware of learning outcomes that can be achieved through critical reflection on designed or serendipitous moments

CIP is a tool that allows educators to use what is happening in the moment to achieve learning outcomes. Not every teachable moment must be utilized; the instructor needs to keep in mind the learning outcomes of the course and take advantage of the particular moments in the room that will help students achieve them. For example, the instructor in the research scenario understands that teaching both interview skills and challenges of research such as authenticity of responses meet learning outcomes for the course. She facilitates this classroom interview activity knowing that issues of authenticity are likely to arise.

Step 2. Create or utilize a common experience amongst students or identify a teachable moment

It is vital for students to have a shared experience that allows them to form a working system. It is in the system that they will apply new learning and give and receive feedback. For example, the biology instructor takes all of his students near the creek with litter. He knows that many of his students saw the bottles and continued walking, so he used this as a teachable moment that most of the students in his class shared. He did not plant the bottles before class or know with certainty that the students would not pick them up, but he knew that somewhere throughout the walk it was likely students would choose convenience over the environment.

Step 3: Create the conditions for anyone in the system to shine light on a moment, pattern, or dynamic that could relate to a learning outcome you want to cultivate

The system will produce opportunities that can help generate teachable moments. The role of the facilitator is to be observant and call attention to (or "call out") the pattern, moment, or classroom dynamic. For example, in the community engagement course the instructor observed uncertainty in the students' actions in creating the protocol and noted that no one wanted to admit their discomfort. She was able to shed light on this moment by asking the students if they felt vulnerable, which created an open door to discuss and explore that vulnerability. Instructors can use such teachable moments to help students explore what is happening in the system, diagnose why, and try to make a change. Additionally, they can create the conditions that encourage students to surface and direct attention to these moments themselves, which usually occurs after the learning community has established trust and the students have participated in other CIP experiences.

Step 4: Use the moment, pattern, or dynamic to have people in the system practice reflection-in-action, examine values and behaviors, and practice changed behavior in the moment

CIP assumes that learning happens in systems, that everyone plays a role in the system, and therefore that everyone can change the system. To create change requires not only the ability to recognize patterns, but also to make meaning through reflection and to make immediate changes. For example, in the research course, students modify their behaviors related to interviewing and implement it in the same class period. They can see through this implementation if any of their changes increase authenticity of participant answers. The cycle of observe, interpret, intervene (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009), which is described in more detail below, is continuous and iterative, meaning that participants should make immediate observations about the effectiveness of their interventions. This process may occur several times during a CIP session. Through this process students can learn if their new behavior is or is not making change to the system. This real-time feedback loop is what provides value over reflecting after experience or reflecting during experience but not applying learning to modify behavior in the moment (i.e., during the CIP session).

Step 5: Debrief and invite learners to reflect on what occurred during the session for deeper understanding of the learning outcome

It is important to make clear when the CIP session ends and the debrief begins. In the debrief, learners should not try to implement new interventions. Instead they replay, reflect, and analyze the actions that occurred in the session; this is what Schön refers to as "reflection-on-action" (meaning, after the action not, as with "reflection-in-action," during the action). The reflection elicits new understanding as learners hear multiple interpretations from other voices in the system. Learners are required to "get on the balcony," (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p.7) which means reflecting on the system as a whole.

Before the end of each class period, the instructor should make clear the CIP session is over and allow students to make observations and interpretations about how their modified behaviors played out in the system. The three scenarios above do not illustrate the debrief portion of CIP. The instructor in each scenario, however, would wrap-up the class period with debrief questions. For example: Did the participants in the research example elicit more authentic answers? Did the biology students feel their value of the environment outweighed the inconvenience of getting dirty? Did the vulnerability of the community engagement class lead to better progress on creating a dialogue protocol in the midst of discomfort?

Four Levels of Attention in CIP

As previously noted in steps three and four, the CIP process relies on the ability to diagnose situations by identifying moments, patterns, or dynamics that are happening in the learning space. These patterns may be observed at four levels of attention: individual, relationship/interpersonal, group/system, and context (Johnstone & Fern, 2010). The intentional use of observations, interpretations, and powerful questions at these four levels can help learners explore how an individual's actions are perceived by the group (individual), common patterns amongst member of the group (interpersonal), unique characteristics of the group (system), and external forces affecting the group (context). Facilitators may choose to address any of these four levels when calling out a case (i.e., identifying the real-time scenario). Figure 1 highlights a diagnostic question (taken from Green & Fabris McBride, 2015) as well as examples of what patterns of action could look like at each level as they might emerge in various experiential learning contexts.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND DEMOCRACY

Figure 1: Diagnosing at Four Levels of Attention

Individual	Interpersonal
-What is that person doing, and why?	-What is the pattern of behavior between individuals, and why is it occurring?
Examples:	Examples:
-The study abroad student acts as the know-it-all.	-Two internship students act competitively with each other.
-The undergraduate researcher is not citing sources very often.	-The study abroad students spend most of their time with other study abroad students and not the local people.
System	**Context**
-What dynamics and patterns are at play in this room?	-What outside forces are affecting this group?
Examples:	Examples:
-The service-learning class continues to seek easy fixes that make them seem like heroes.	-The undergraduate researcher becomes curious about how local elections influence civic engagement amongst students as a new research question.
-The internship student is constantly put down by other employees and not given meaningful tasks.	-The service-learning student feels tension between religious values and values of inclusion at her service-learning site.

One of the central purposes of higher education is to develop students' capacity for effective, active citizenship. CIP creates a context for students to achieve important disciplinary learning outcomes while also developing their capacity to learn and bring about change within not only their campus-based learning communities but also within the broader civic communities of which they are and will be citizens. The pedagogy thus builds capacities for experiential learning and for democracy. At the heart of these intertwined capacities are (1) critically reflecting-in-action to assess values and behaviors and implement change and (2) understanding how the learning system is a microcosm of broader social and organizational systems.

Critical Reflection-in-Action

In experiential learning, the relationship between action and reflection is key to moving toward learning outcomes. Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning model illustrates a four-stage cycle by which we learn: concrete experience, observation and reflection, forming abstract concepts, and testing new situations. To achieve substantial learning, we must engage in reflection; action is not enough. Ash and Clayton's (2009) DEAL model provides a structure for *how* to undertake critical reflection in order to generate, deepen, and document learning. The DEAL model offers a structure for guiding learners to make meaning of (i.e., learn from) their experiences, which helps improve the "quality of thought and of action and the relationship between them" (Ash & Clayton, 2009, p. 27).

When we reflect can also make a difference in the kind of learning and change that results. Schön (1983) contrasts reflection-*on*-action (after the action) with reflection-*in*-action (during the action). He was concerned with how to help individuals transfer academic content to professional contexts and build capacity for lifelong learning. Reflection-in-action creates the opportunity for individuals to examine values or behaviors in the moment, which leads to two benefits: (1) the individual becomes more aware of lived values, and (2) the individual has the opportunity to make immediate changes. If changes are made in the moment, the individual can see how those changes make a difference in the moment. Reflection-on-action provides an opportunity for individuals or groups to reflect when not distracted by the action. This can lead to new insights as well.

Why we reflect can influence our change-making process. Argyris and Schön (1978) distinguish between single- and double-loop learning; critical reflection can generate either or both of these types of learning, depending on our purposes in undertaking it. Single-loop learning leads to changing "strategies of action." For example, if an employee observes at the beginning of his shift that the sanitation bucket has cold water, his reflection on the negative consequences of that action might lead him to leave the next shift with hot water. Double-loop learning examines the values behind an individual or organizational practice, therefore potentially leading to a change in not only a behavior but also the assumptions or values that produce it. If the same employee

examines the values behind the cold water having been left in the previous shift, he might wonder if accommodating time pressures (e.g., by clocking out early) is valued more highly among his co-workers than preparing for the next shift. Addressing this issue – perhaps by talking with those workers about the pressures they feel and being part of revising shift change policies and practices instead of just changing his personal behavior – can result from critical reflection oriented toward understanding and changing underlying systems. The ability to make this kind of change in the underlying system is in line with developing democratic skills to enact change for the common good.

Critical reflection oriented toward double-loop learning produces a practice where individuals confront their espoused theory with a theory-in-use. An espoused theory-in-action (or ideal value), such as "taking care of the environment" contrasts the theory-in-use (or lived value): "I do not like to be inconvenienced." It is more difficult to own one's espoused values when faced with one's theory-in-use when they contradict each other. Critically reflecting on the discrepancy may lead to a change in behaviors that live up to the espoused theory or a realization that the theory-in-use is actually the dominant value.

CIP pedagogy is a powerful tool to help us understand and enact how, when, and why to reflect. The CIP framework builds on Kolb's cycle through a similar process called an Adaptive Cycle: observe, interpret, intervene (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). Essentially, it is experiential learning in real-time. The participant makes meaning in the moment by moving from the "dance floor" (place of action) to the "balcony" (p. 7) (place of observation and reflection/meaning making), back to the "dance floor" (experiment/intervene). In doing so, participants are not only actively participating in the system, they are also able to see the system as a whole. When participants notice that there is a gap between espoused values and behaviors, CIP provides opportunities to explore this gap through real-time analysis.

Microcosms of Democracy

Palmer (2011) writes, "We learn from how we are taught as well as what we are taught, and it is important that we learn democracy… democratically" (p. 133). CIP pedagogy lends itself to learning democratic values and processes because the framework itself is democratic – creating conditions for collaborative, shared decision making in which students become experts on their own actions. Thus, CIP creates a kind of real-time "holding environment" (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009, p. 155) or laboratory in which to experience and explore the intersections of course topics and democratic practices. The dynamics and engagement in the classroom system is a microcosm of other broader organizational, political, or social systems in which we are all situated.

It can be overwhelming, if not impossible, to try to teach students how concepts work in all scenarios – in other words, to try to "cover

the field" (Palmer, 1990, para. 13). It is much more effective to help students experience and come to understand deeply how concepts play out in systems, or what Palmer calls "teaching from the microcosm" (para. 16) – using particular, immediate instances of a concept to examine it in its full complexity and range. Learning in this way allows students to understand and apply their in-the-room (microcosm) practice to systems, organizations, and society more generally. CIP is a way to bridge systems, for example by utilizing the experience of being a member of a classroom community to build capacities for membership in broader communities.

In the scenario of the community engagement course, the students surfaced their discomfort and uncertainty about talking with – much less actually interacting with – people who experience food insecurity. Their experience in the classroom is layered with issues of diversity, privilege, and "othering." The classroom system manifests the same issues found in other, broader systems, acting as a microcosm of those broader systems. Letting the students examine their discomfort and practice being vulnerable with one another can build their comfort level with being vulnerable in other uncomfortable situations. This does not mean we never need to leave the classroom, but it does provide opportunities for students to learn in the classroom with peers and thus build their capacities to learn and work effectively with others. It is arguably more responsible to build capacity for multiple competencies (e.g., valuing diverse voices, embracing conflict) before going into the broader community.

CIP has the potential to develop engaged citizens through co-created learning communities. Students can get excited having responsibility for thinking and behaving in ways that advance the system: "Students' commitment and curiosity are fueled when they take responsibility for action with consequences for other people, and this, in turn, leads to increased effort and attention" (Eyler, 2009, para. 12). CIP creates an environment in which interactions within a system become the textbook or a learning laboratory to teach and practice the purposes and processes of democracy.

CIP can be used to surface issues of power and authority and also to encourage students to actively participate in and reflect on these issues as they exist in the classroom. For example, students organizing themselves for small group work may uncover values, loyalties, and defaults that perpetuate systems of marginalization. It is not uncommon for students to default to modes of decision making that provide quick answers or quick solutions. CIP allows us to consider how these behaviors mirror tendencies to rush through democratic processes in the name of efficiency or to avoid the hard and time consuming work of trying to understand one another. So while CIP was developed as a way to teach the practices of leadership, it provides a powerful framework for teaching democracy.

IMPLICATIONS

There are risks in using the CIP pedagogy. CIP purposely diffuses power in the classroom, leading to increased pressure for students to take action without direction. Prior experience in educational systems may well have reinforced their roles as consumers of knowledge rather than active participants in their own learning, with the result that students are not used to learning this way and it can be disorienting. Students who find such discomfort too much to handle may become upset, lost, or disengaged. Their discomfort or perceived lack of direction could be reflected in teacher evaluations (see Hufnagel, 2015).

Clayton and colleagues (2014) describe how students used to more traditional pedagogies who are newly engaged in experiential learning can lose confidence in learning how to learn and default to over-reliance on and desire for high levels of structure. They also suggest that faculty, staff, and community members might similarly experience discomfort or hesitancy as participants in and facilitators of counter-normative practices. CIP pedagogy positions facilitators of learning in non-traditional roles. They may be criticized by colleagues and students for the relative lack of direction, protection, and order they provide in the classroom; they may face resistance from others and insecurity from within. It is helpful to find allies who have experience with non-traditional teaching who can provide support. And it is important to understand that, as Clayton and colleagues suggest, these challenges "have, as their flip sides, the potential to transform us and the broader systems within which we live and work … because they require and foster shifts … to democratic paradigms, identities, and structures" (p. 27).

CIP can be a risky and disorienting experience for everyone, and we believe it is best learned through experience. The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC), a nonprofit organization committed to developing civic leaders for the common good, provides in-depth experiential seminars to individuals interested in learning to use CIP. We recommend that instructors seek out resources to build their own capacity for using this pedagogy before implementing it (see, for example, Daloz Parks, 2005; Green & Fabris McBride, 2015; Hufnagel, 2015; Johnstone & Fern, 2010). Additionally, more research is needed around the use of CIP in disciplines beyond leadership studies and in various experiential learning contexts. The development of discipline-specific and experiential learning applications will help faculty, staff, and students implement this pedagogy effectively.

CONCLUSION

Democracy is both a political system and a way of life, and for it to flourish we need to develop democratic values in citizens (Dewey, 1937/2010). Saltmarsh and Hartley (2011) claim that an effective

way to develop values of democracy (e.g., participation, task sharing, reciprocity in public problem-solving, inclusiveness, and equality of respect for all who contribute to community) is through practice within educational experiences.

Dewey (1937/2010) set the foundation for experiential education to develop students as citizens through empowering them to be actors in – rather than spectators in or merely recipients of – their own education. The relationship between education and democracy calls for faculty to align democratic purposes and processes with pedagogical design to provide democratic learning spaces for learning and enacting the knowledge, skills, habits, and identities of democracy. Clayton et al. (2014) provide five examples of walking the talk of democratic engagement in experiential learning: (1) designing program-level operations to cultivate student ownership, (2) designing the first days of class to build students' capacities as empowered actors, (3) designing a course to engage students locally in international human rights discourse, (4) designing an academic program as partners, for partnerships, and (5) designing popular education and graduate work to advance social justice. As we have illustrated, designing real-time democratic learning space through CIP adds to this list as another powerful way to have students learn democracy through democratic processes.

CIP creates the conditions to explore values and behaviors at play in any given situation and to practice revised behaviors in the moment. Participants learn from exploring their own values as well as those held by the system. CIP is an underutilized but powerful way for participants to engage in experiential learning and, we believe, should be applied more widely in higher education beyond leadership studies. It can help develop students' capacities for building a better world as they actively practice and critically reflect on democratic values and behaviors. CIP allows students to experience democratic purposes and processes in real-time and become agents in their own and others' learning and agents of change in their communities.

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