



## Reflections on a dialogic pedagogy inspired by the writings of Bakhtin: an account of the experience of two professors working together in the classroom

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### **Abstract**

*The practice of a dialogic pedagogy inspired by the writings of Bakhtin is increasingly popular in different parts of the world. This article is an account produced in the spirit of such pedagogy. Two professors (one from Brazil, the other from the United States), both members of an international dialogic pedagogy study group, write together to discuss the work they developed in partnership under this educational paradigm when teaching a course on “Diversity in secondary education” in the School of Education of the College of Education and Human Development of the University of Delaware, USA. After presenting brief introductory information on who they are, how they met and how they happened to work together, the two scholars present classroom interaction data followed by reflections on to what extent certain forms of classroom interaction they identified in the data promote or inhibit the practice of a truly Bakhtinian Dialogic Pedagogy. In other words, what the readers will find in this article is not a traditional empirical study, but a telling case of two educators learning from one another about what counts as dialogic in the classroom, while at the same time using the aforementioned course as an anchor for multiple discussions.*

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**Katherine von Duyke** received her Ph.D. in Sociocultural and Communal Approaches to Education from the University of Delaware under the guidance of Dr. Eugene Matusov in 2013. Her research has focused on innovative educational practices: she has critiqued open democratic schools, analyzed the way student agency is conceptualized in education, and evaluated educational discourses for their ability to connect with student thinking. Deeply influenced by the works of L.S. Vygotsky, and M. Bakhtin she argues that education has traditionally focused on cultural transference, or an ideal of what culture should be. Instead, she suggests education can support students’ meaning making participation in and reflective and creative reinterpretation of culture.

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## 1. First reflections on dialogic pedagogy

*Anselmo Lima:*

I came to the United States of America interested, among other things, in finding out more about the practice of a dialogic pedagogy inspired by the writings of Bakhtin. My main interest was in the way teachers manage their classroom interactions with their students in as dialogic a manner as possible and in how dialogic they can be in and outside their classrooms. In other words, I expected to find out more about how a teacher could relate to his or her students similarly to the way the Russian novelist Dostoevsky was said to relate to his characters: on equal footing (cf. Bakhtin, 1984).

Many educators and scholars who work under the paradigm of dialogic pedagogy resort to Bakhtin's writings in the field of literary scholarship in order to transpose the Russian scholar's ideas to the field of education so that they can think and rethink teacher-student interactions in a new light. This is the case, for example, of Eugene Matusov<sup>1</sup>. His procedure is very representative of this approach. I will take and briefly discuss one example extracted from one of his books as a strategy to clarify for the readers what can be understood by a dialogic pedagogy inspired by the writings of Bakhtin. After referring to and being influenced by the following excerpt from the book "Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics" (Bakhtin, 1984):

The hero as a point of view, as an opinion on the world and on himself, requires utterly special methods of discovery and artistic characterization. And this is so because what must be discovered and characterized here is not the specific existence of the hero, not his fixed image, but the *sum total of his consciousness and self-consciousness, ultimately the hero's final word on himself and on his world* (Bakhtin, 1984, p.48 – italics in the original),

Matusov (2009, p. 80) argues that a teacher's approach to working with his or her students must be similar (but not equal!) to Dostoevsky's approach – as an author – to his heroes or characters. In this sense, he writes: "*good teaching* involves the teacher working with the student's self-consciousness" (italics added) because the "student's self-consciousness is the arena of the student's subjectivity where learning occurs".

After this initial reflection, Matusov (2009, p. 80), drawing now on the Bakhtinian idea that "Dostoevsky let his characters hear and respond to the author's words about them", goes on to explain that, similarly, "*good teaching* should be directed at the students' self-consciousness as well" (italics added), especially if the educator responsibly takes into account that "the teacher's monologic discourse

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Eugene Matusov was my Faculty Associate during the time I was in the United States. I would like to thank him for his prompt willingness to have me on his team.

about the student that objectivizes and finalizes the student generates legitimate teacher-resistance or self-suppression in the student's self-consciousness".

If this Bakhtinian dialogic approach to education is coherently followed, Matusov argues, the teacher cannot tell him or herself or the colleagues: "Oh, this is the student's misconception", nor can the teacher tell the student: "Oh, this is your misconception" because this would mean to objectivize and finalize the student according to the "deficit model", a procedure that "has little pedagogical value but great ontological harm"! (Matusov, 2009, p. 80).

According to Matusov, "instead, the teacher has to offer a counter-argument for the student's self-consciousness to consider" because "in *good teaching*, the teacher should not and cannot expect more than the student's serious consideration of the teacher's argument" [italics added] (and the arguments of other students, as well as those arguments of the texts offered by the teacher) as equal to the student's own arguments and ideas about the world and him or herself.

In this sense, the teacher's consciousness is and must be viewed as just another consciousness, with rights equal to those of the student (Matusov, 2009, p. 80; Bakhtin, 1984, p.49-50). Only under these conditions can the teacher and the student have equal rights and become dialogic partners or subjects: "*good teaching* [therefore] requires dialogue" (Matusov, 2009, p. 80).

Having these ideas in mind and desiring to see for myself that kind of "good teaching" in action, I arrived in the United States at the beginning of December, 2013, to do research in the School of Education of the University of Delaware and I had just met Professor Katherine von Duyke, who works under this educational paradigm (von Duyke, K. S., 2013) and who I was just beginning to establish a professional collaboration with, when I learned that she would be teaching a winter course on "diversity in secondary education" (EDUC419) starting at the beginning of January, 2014.

It was mid-December, 2013, then and I really felt like having the opportunity to sit in her classes – mostly as an observer – to learn from her both about her teaching approach and about matters of diversity in education. Even though I knew professors do not normally feel comfortable when they have colleagues come and sit in their classes (cf. Lima, 2013; Lima, Althaus & Rodrigues, 2011) and despite the fact that I did not feel confident myself about the response I could get, I "dared" to write her the following e-mail message

On Dec 17, 2013, at 1:33 PM, Anselmo Lima <xxxx@hotmail.com> wrote:

Hello, Kathy!

How are you? I was taking a look at the courses that are going to be offered by the School of Education in the winter and saw that you are going to offer a course whose name is "Diversity in secondary school" and I became very interested. Do you think it would be possible for me to attend your classes? Would you be ok with that? I think I could also help you with whatever it is you may need help with for or during the course... I think it would be a great opportunity for me to learn more with you... Please feel absolutely free to tell me what you think and feel, ok?

See you!

Anselmo Lima

While I (anxiously!) waited for her reply, I felt unsure and uncomfortable myself because I did not know to what extent my request would bother her or put her to some discomfort: we had really just met after all!

And yet, at the same time, I felt very excited and looking forward to having her as one of my first dialogic partners to work with in the USA<sup>2</sup>. This excitement increased when I got the following reply from her:

Anselmo,

It would be awesome to have you come to the course! Don't feel like you have to come to all of the classes because it will be quite an intense focus - but sure heck yeah - it would be great to have a colleague to reflect with, and for the students to hear about diverse cultural experiences.

Cheers,

Kathy

Only what she didn't know at the time was that I really did mean to come to all the classes and to be a part of that intense focus. From her message I could tell that our expectations did not initially quite match: and how could they? As I mentioned before, I was thinking about sitting in her class to learn from her maybe just like any of her students, though I knew I would in a way also be a "qualified" observer interested in dialogic pedagogy, whereas she talked about "having a colleague to reflect with" and expected her students to be "hearing about diverse cultural experiences". I thought to myself: that kind of answer can only come from a dialogic colleague! As the reader will notice along this text, my focus and hers were to merge gradually as we worked together, resulting in something at the same time richer than what she and I seemed to expect and to have in mind at first.

On January 6th, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm, I sat in my first class with Katherine (or should I say: "I sat in Katherine's first class"?). She briefly introduced me to her students as a Fulbright Visiting Professor who would be teaching that course with her. I felt at the same time surprised, honored and concerned. I was surprised because that was a whole lot more than I was anticipating. That was an honor because the kind of professional relationship she was beginning to establish with me was one of equality, even though I was expecting and felt I was supposed to be just a visitor who would be there to learn from her. And I felt concerned because at that time I just wondered if I would really be up to the task of working with her to teach that course and her students<sup>3</sup>.

As usual, I was equipped with my notebook and my mechanical pencil. Since I knew that one of her expectations was to "have a colleague to reflect with", I thought I would need to have something to talk to her about at the end of her class that first day. Therefore I immediately and carefully started to observe and document her interaction with the students. Since I wished to offer her an overview of her first class and to find out what she would have to say about it, especially from the standpoint of her step-by-step actions along time in the classroom, the result in my notebook was the following<sup>4</sup>:

#### ***KATHERINE VON DUYKE'S CLASS 1 – 01/06/14***

**14:55** – She calls the roll;

**15:00** – She presents herself;

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<sup>2</sup> My Faculty Associate at the University of Delaware was Professor Eugene Matusov. For further information, please visit: <http://www.cies.org/grantee/anselmo-pereira-de-lima#sthash.VezFkRhxDpuf>

<sup>3</sup> I actually taught two classes in that course on the matter of bilingualism in education. However, in this text, we will focus on Katherine von Duyke's teaching practice. We are currently working together on a text focusing on my own teaching practice as I taught those classes about bilingualism in education.

<sup>4</sup> In order to make the understanding of my personal notes easier for the readers, as I transcribe them here, I also introduce a few comments, clarifications and adaptations. I am well aware of the fact that – to different extents – my voice, Katherine von Duyke's and those of the students often inevitably get "mixed".

**15:05** – Seeking to introduce the course, she asks students: “what kind of diversity do you think affects education?” As they give her answers, she gradually writes them on the board, like this:

**“race”, “age”, “religious”, “disabilities”, “gender”, “styles”, “culture”, “personalities”, “socio-economic status”, “educational philosophy”<sup>5</sup>**

As part of her explanations about how she expects the course to be in approaching those topics, she points out: “It has to be a safe environment for us to make mistakes”.

**15:10** – She has an ipad mini in her left hand and looks at it from time to time as she talks. She asks: “How many of you are here because this course is required? Raise your hands”. It turns out the vast majority of students are there because the course is required. She moves on to ask: “What is the difference between a learner and a student?”. As students share what they think, she writes what they say on the board:

<b>LEARNER</b>	<b>STUDENT</b>
“desire is something motivated”; contents are “not memorized”, they are a “tool”; there is “inquiry”; it is about you “making a half [on] your own”; you are “open to learn”; “the teacher fosters guidance”; “you can be autodidactic”; “do you need a teacher here?”; the role of the teacher is that of an “expert, of guidance, of providing foundations”.	“grades”; “parents”; “trade-off: friends”, “expectations, economic pressures” [Katherine von Duyke’s translation of a student’s idea of “getting a job”]; “to get to the next level of the game” [Katherine von Duyke’s translation of a student’s idea of “going to college”]

She then asks: “who do you want to be in this course?”. Students’ unanimous answer is: “we want to be learners!”. She says: “good!” and goes on to explain, among other things: “our class will involve 1) reading; 2) giving you time at the end of the class to write on index cards for me: two things you have learned on the front and how you think we can improve our work on the back; 3) we will use a webtalk, which is for you to reflect on the class, to share materials among yourselves, etc. and the cards are for me. Since you want to be learners, I will direct the class at first and then I will gradually shift it from me to you as learners. As a Main Learning Project I will not ask you for written assignments. You are studying to be teachers and what teachers do most is ‘we talk’. So why would I have you write essays? You will be teaching the class at those times in fifteen-minute presentations. For our webtalk we will use Canvas, from the University of Delaware Platform. Remember: Canvas is for us and we’re not for Canvas”.

**15:35** – Also I would like you to know that “texting is ok in our class. There is no need to hide. If you hide: 1) you pay attention to me; 2) you pay attention to texting; and 3) you pay attention to hiding. If you don’t hide, you pay attention to me and to texting, but not to hiding and it makes your life and mine easier”.

**15:40** – “If you miss a class, you must interview two classmates and post a webtalk about the class as compensation. And remember: we’re a community of learners. Making mistakes is ok”.

**15:45-16:00** – break.

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<sup>5</sup> For example schools can be diverse between themselves in terms of educational philosophy, and this often has an impact on students of diversity (cf. Anyon, 1980).

**16:00** – “All right, guys, let’s pull class back together!” (there are many voices from students and she speaks in a somewhat loud voice so as to be heard by all). She gives each student a handout about “learning styles” and asks them to take a look at it together. She then writes all the learning styles on the board and asks students one by one if they think they are “visual”, “auditory”, etc. She gradually writes the results on the board, promising to take that into consideration as she teaches:

Visual-Kinesthetic	Visual	Auditory	Kinesthetic	Depends on the subject
II (2)	II II II III (9)	II II (4)	II II III (7)	III (3)

**16:30** - “Now... how do you want me to teach you? Do you want challenge or comfort in this class? Or you don’t know? Those of you who would like challenge raise your hands... now those of you who would like comfort... and now those of you who do not know”. As she does it, she computes the results and writes them on the board, promising to take that into account:

Challenge	Comfort	Dunno
12.5 students	4 students	9.5 students

**16:35** – “Who among you is a shy student? Raise your hands”. Many students raise their hands. “How can I go about you? Can I give you a lot of challenge? Can I ask you a lot of questions?”. At this moment, I see many more hands being raised, one after the other, and the teacher starts to listen to what individual students have to say about it one by one. Students seem all very excited and start talking among themselves even while there is one individual classmate talking to the teacher.

**16:38** – Katherine von Duyke asks students: “is diversity good or bad?”

**16:42** – She says “I think that’s enough for today’s class” and gives time for students to write their comments on the class in their index cards.

From **16:42 to 17:00** – students gradually write on their cards, stand up, come to the teacher, hand in their cards and leave the classroom. Right after 17:00, Katherine von Duyke and I sit together to talk about the class. She looks and sounds excited to know what I wrote in my notebook...

This is basically what our dialogic encounter and the beginning of our work together consisted in. This account of her first class will feed our dialogue throughout this text. I now give the floor to her.

***Katherine von Duyke:***

When Anselmo first suggested he might attend my class, I felt extremely nervous. Perhaps because there’s a little bit of judgment present in conversations about dialogism, and I can be flooded by the shaming message that I, in failing to be dialogic, have failed to be humane<sup>6</sup>. On top of that, this class would be the first time I would work with secondary education students instead of elementary majors, and the first time in an intensive winter session format. I also struggled with guidance from our department and the NCATE<sup>7</sup> inspired rubric that defines an outcome in which students’ overcome their personal bias. As a newly minted PhD in an adjunct position, I felt unsure about how much latitude with course goals I might take.

<sup>6</sup> I’ve since resolved this sense of moral dilemma, both students and myself live within the tension of pragmatics and dialogism.

<sup>7</sup> National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Also, I had read Anselmo's paper about his research with teachers, and his use of the term "self-confrontation" troubled me (cf. Lima, 2013). My church experience of the term was for self-shaming. A whole course with an observer seemed daunting, I suspected I would flounder in multiple ways; I might get by with pulling a good class a session or two, but in the course of the whole semester I was sure to mess up some of the time. I wondered at the wisdom of adding additional anxiety to my workload.

Nevertheless, I agreed. I agreed because Anselmo didn't seem to be the judgmental type, and so I suspected that I misread the intention of his research. Secondly, I have personally found that reflecting on my practice is beneficial because so much of what teachers do is "on the fly". This very reality makes us both vulnerable to exposure: for the mistakes we might make in the heat of the moment, and yet reflection can provide valuable insights, and so I didn't want to pass up this opportunity. I invited Anselmo to not only observe my teaching, but to be in the dialogue – I presented him as a co-instructor to the class – because I felt that would give Anselmo an entry point into the dialogue and to even challenge what I might say to students, allowing for both reflection and adjustment in the moment as well as afterwards and privately. Should he choose to teach a class session, I would have the opportunity to observe and looked forward to learn from his approach<sup>8</sup>. I also felt a sense of responsibility for him as a researcher and colleague interested in dialogic education – for the same reason research subjects often sign on – to help him further science especially in this core area of my professional concern.

## 2. Questions, answers and further reflections on dialogic pedagogy

### *Anselmo Lima:*

Writing students' points of view on the board seems to be a very important part of your teaching practice. As students shared what they think the differences between "learners" and "students" are, you wrote their views on the board. I noticed that at times you didn't actually write on the board precisely what the students were saying. For example, when some students explained what a "student" is in terms of someone concerned about "getting a job" and "going to college", you wrote on the board: "expectations, economic pressures" and "to get to the next level of the game". Why did you choose to translate into other words what they said? Why was it necessary or important? How do you think they felt when they saw on the board not what they had just said but what you considered they meant? Do you think they would have felt differently if their words had been written on the board precisely as they said them? What are the consequences of this apparently unimportant detail for the promotion of a dialogic pedagogy in and outside the classroom?

### *Katherine von Duyke:*

At first, this observation by Anselmo really upset me about myself. Here I am, a dialogic professor, taking over and monologizing my students' words! Indeed, from a certain point of view, what can initially count as dialogic in the classroom is not to try to summarize or rephrase what the students say. For a moment I was flooded with shame because I want to be a coherent dialogic educator and monologism is often thought to be "bad", even if this idea may be questionable (cf. Matusov, 2009, p. 111-146). Scenes of my potential silencing (by summarizing and/or rephrasing), offending, and manipulation of students ran through my mind. I know that intuitively at times it felt like rephrasing was the right move, but intuitive responses – with something as sacred as someone else's words – can also be used unconsciously and clumsily – they can then suppress or even wound. This really drove me to think about the logic of this move so that I might make my use of it with students explicit and precise. Anselmo noted:

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<sup>8</sup> As pointed out previously, Anselmo did teach two classes on bilingualism in education in our class together.

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Anselmo Lima, Katherine von Duyke

For example, when some students explained what a “student” is in terms of someone concerned about “getting a job” and “going to college”, you wrote on the board: “expectations, economic pressures” and “to get to the next level of the game”.

As I was writing on the board, in my mind, I imagined a conversation between students and parents (get a job), students and society (economic pressures), and students and teachers (credentials to get to the next level). I was moving the dialogue from the experience of a single student’s personal dialogue within these societal pressures in order to make more explicit the societal discourse about schooling with whom the student is in internal dialogue.

As I was writing these responses, I was shaking my head in a tired and yet authoritarian way mimicking the finger-wagging adult who might say these things to students to encourage complicity in their own suppression. I hoped that the students intuitively felt that I had switched to and represented these other voices rather than twisting the one student’s words, but I didn’t stop and ask what they thought making my process transparent and open for discussion. They maybe felt supported as such rephrasing could sometimes be viewed as validating one’s thoughts or bringing community-level legitimacy to a student’s claim. They nodded, they did not object to the switch on their feedback cards, they might have simply been trying to make sense of my actions, been confused or disagreed.

My intention was to generalize the responsive voice of the student who raised her hand to the level of dialogue on the social plane, so that student’s in their seats could relate to, not just the student who answered from her personal experience, but also their own internal dialogue in relation to these societal discourses about schooling. I am often writing students’ perspectives on the board in a way that maps a larger discourse about an issue, so I will ask for students’ perspectives, other societal perspectives, and what researchers have found in investigating various views or problems.

We will use this map to think about what voices are in tension with each other, what values are represented behind them, what kinds of replies might be developed to them, and then how they might integrate them into their practice. I often ask students to select one issue in the semester for which they might develop their own course of teacher action. I ask, “What perspectives have we explored that are valuable and sensible for public education where, as teachers, we need to support the learning of all students and for whom our population is increasingly diverse?”. Students develop greater internally persuasive discourse (Bakhtin, 1981; Matusov & von Duyke, 2010) (internal to the greater societal discourse on these issues) and prepare replies to those who might not agree with them while being mindful of the possible contraindications of their own positions.

Often, I also suggest that if the values that are needed in public settings are in significant conflict with a student’s own values, they might consider what would constitute the best context for their own professional work. For example, one strongly evangelical student decided that, because of the relative inclusiveness of LGBTQ<sup>9</sup> emerging in public schools, she would prefer to work in a religious school. Another student decided that, because of her democratic values, she could not work in a school setting that imposed curriculum on students without their voice in its construction.

Both students decided they could not work in a public setting as they considered these issues for themselves. As a Bakhtinian professor I am concerned that students consider their answerability<sup>10</sup> as

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<sup>9</sup>Stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer as used by these communities. See: <http://www.lgbtqnation.com/>

<sup>10</sup> Bakhtin suggests: “Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself – in the unity of my answerability” (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 2). Our curriculum must answer to the lives of students and students must critically analyze the curriculum and its relationship to their lives.



teachers within the context of their own lives, the lives of their students, the school setting, and the curriculum. At the same time, we witnessed in these classes many times when students did realize they held biases that could be harmful to their future students and changed their perspectives as they dialogized them within the context of these class discussions and their imagined future teacher actions.

In having Anselmo point this out to me, I have had time to reflect on my actions and especially came to the conclusion that I must make my actions of changing their words more explicit for students, but I don't think I will change my method. I think it is important on two counts. The first is the need to both personalize my class and draw it out to the wider dialogue and concerns. I have noticed that people empathize with others first from their own perspective. Perhaps this is why Bakhtin disliked empathy on one level: it can be the aestheticizing of one's own experience through the mirror of the painful experience of others (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 25). For instance, in one of my current classes, a Jewish student expressed that she experienced racism that was like that of African Americans and an African-American student pointed out that she could never leave her color behind. There was quite a lot of tension in this class and I told the story of the murder of my first husband (many years ago) and how people often related their empathy to me by telling me stories of losing a loved grandparent or even a pet.

These stories used to make me burn with impatience, until a man who had lost a daughter through a rape and murder reached out to me. Her whereabouts was unknown for 9 months. His greater personal agony was evident to me, yet he was willing to hear and help me in my lesser story. He was a personal example to me of the forbearance I needed to accord others as they first experience my story through their own life pain, and then have the patience to draw for them the painful particularities that are different. In this way some would develop greater understanding about issues of grief, and even sometimes provide the the kind of thoughtful empathy that connected to the nuances of my story and my need for emotional connection. Because of this experience, I know I need to do both. Students need to understand issues of social justice<sup>11</sup> not only at an abstract level, they need to feel it, but to feel it they must go through their own stories and then dialogize these with the stories and needs of others.

The second is the following: if students think that they are learning of only each other's opinions, they feel that they are not learning anything, not taking away a broader consciousness beyond their life situation, instructional tools, or values that will help them be effective as teachers in their future classrooms. They express frustration if they feel course content is a free for all of anyone's perspective, and if that is the case, why take a class? Why not just argue with peers in the dining hall? They need to see how these perspectives map to wider perspectives in society, how they answer to each other, and how researchers attempt to bring clarity, validity, and new perspective to these tensions. Note to self, now more aware of the potential benefits and downfalls with this process – I will open dialogue around it.

***Anselmo Lima:***

Your classroom interactions seem to consist basically in you asking your students questions about hot social issues, having them answer them and writing them on the board. But you almost never seem to tell your students what you yourself think about those issues, what your positions are. Do you ever tell your students what you think and write it on the board? Yes? No? Why? Why is it important or not for the promotion of a dialogic pedagogy in and outside the classroom?

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<sup>11</sup> For an interesting discussion on how a society might be both socially liberal and diverse see Kukathas, (2007).

***Katherine von Duyke:***

This concern to dialogize societal tensions in the context of my classroom is also why I don't express my opinion on these issues, or I am loath too (but sometimes do). I am aware that the students can feel pressured by my power in the academy to adopt my position, or they can shorten the work of their own IPD<sup>12</sup> by adopting mine. Most importantly, my position may be totally inappropriate and problematic for them in the context of their teaching and so they need to be aware of possible teaching decisions and the values and history these actions carry.

I often draw on personal experience and tell stories to illustrate the values behind one perspective or another, or the tensions produced by teaching decisions within a certain perspective. I have to use these illustrations carefully because sometimes they are powerful experiences for me and I can get thrown into the feeling of my own experience – so I am careful to ask myself what the story illustrates and where should I stop it! At the same time, the students must leave the class feeling that they have a handle on the major points of controversy and how to reflect on possible courses of action. Indeed, this process itself may be revelatory for some students.

***Anselmo Lima:***

You said to students: our classroom “has to be a safe environment for us to make mistakes”. What does it mean? What do you mean by that? What is the connection of this idea with the promotion of a dialogic pedagogy?

***Katherine von Duyke:***

Their imagination of their future teaching context is extremely important, in my view, to ensuring that our present classroom is a safe environment for them to express their current perspectives. These “as if” scenarios provide a distinct chronotope<sup>13</sup> that exists apart from the students' here and now; so that, rather than critique their lives, we are imagining certain views lived out in practice in a rather Dostoevskian fashion<sup>14</sup>. When students are expressing their perspectives, the logic, concerns, and values behind their perspectives can be understood and appreciated even as the perspective might itself be highly problematic in a public school context.

For instance, if a student doesn't think that LGBTQ concerns and issues should be part of public classrooms, there are values behind that statement that need to be understood. They may have concerns for the integrity of family life, etc. Whatever these values, fears and concerns are, they need to be free to be voiced, otherwise they do not become dialogized in new contexts – such as public education. Instead, they can go underground when threatened and this promotes people to dig in and seek solidarity and political power and alignment with others within an echo chamber.

They are also important for students who deeply disagree with them to hear, to better understand how to reply to such voices. These discussions help students' self-understanding about the kind of values in their future workplace they are likely to thrive in. When these ideas are mapped across a board,

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<sup>12</sup> Internally persuasive discourse (IPD).

<sup>13</sup> Literally “time-space”: a unit of analysis for studying texts according to the ratio and nature of the temporal and spatial categories represented. The distinctiveness of this concept as opposed to most other uses of time and space in literary analysis lies in the fact that neither category is privileged; they are utterly interdependent (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 425). I add the notion of “axiology” as described by Matusov (2009). The students imagine their ideas carved in a previous time-space-axiology spoken in a future time-space-axiology.

<sup>14</sup> Bakhtin points out that the characters in Dostoevsky's novels embody differing ideological beliefs and work their ideas out with each other “authentically” and not towards the ideological ends of the author (Bakhtin, 1984).

students begin to consider alternative values that undergird diverse perspectives, but also their own ideas now dialogized in the context of public schooling. Suddenly, they may feel tensions and concerns within that context completely apart from their original contexts.

This example leads to another issue of safety in an academic environment. Grades cannot be tied to personal changes in students' values. Grades are, in one sense, a way of expressing how much alignment the student has achieved with the course content – at a college level it also often means using that content for critical analysis of problematic situations as well as reliably reproducing and showing mastery of core ideas in that analysis. In our U.S. environment we have the following new accreditation criteria from our National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE):

Opportunities for candidates to reflect on personal biases, access appropriate resources to deepen their understanding, use this information and related experiences to build stronger relationships with P-12 learners<sup>15</sup>, and adapt their practices to meet the needs of each learner (School of Education, internal memo, May, 7, 2013).

To “reflect on personal biases” means students, in similar department coursework, are asked to write essays about how their biases have changed, and then they are graded on the essay according to a rubric that, in part, suggests they divulge their biases and then self-reform. The grading process puts professors in the position to assess the level of bias that their students have; erasing the line between accountability and education. I think, to have this objective is very dangerous for a class on diversity. The course readings and social expectations of the class are already quite values-oriented. If I were to grade students based on their alignment with the course objectives the university would like to institute, I feel I would damage their rights as citizens to have and express their own conceptions of the good and decide on the appropriate context for their expression of it.

I think we often treat our pre-service teachers as if they are already professionals, and yet at the same time, they are baby adults barely out of their own ideological nests. The normal time and contexts accorded students in other disciplines to engage with liberal ideas and the time to mature into their own values and ideals is often denied to our pre-service teachers whose course load is highly structured by professional learning. The class must be safe for their emergent IPD – the authoring of themselves as hero-ideologists both personally and professionally<sup>16</sup>. I have written elsewhere how this process encourages the development of students' professional voice (Matusov & von Duyke, 2009).

What we do together in the class is reflective of the culture, but imaginary in terms of students' future actions as teachers. This gap between their future selves and the present culture doesn't ask students to reveal and/or change their personal biases, or try to pin down their present biases, though these obviously sometimes emerge. As a means to consider their views in terms of their future profession, I ask students to develop a Main Learning Project (MLP)<sup>17</sup> in which they reflect on a tension in education, discuss the diverse perspectives, and then come to a teaching decision and then address the PROS and CONS of their proposed decisions with classmates. For example, they might take a “don't ask, don't tell” policy towards LGBTQ issues in their classrooms. What are the benefits of that position? For whom? And what are the contradictions of that position and for whom? How will they answer to the sector of their classroom for whom it is a CON?

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<sup>15</sup> P-12: preschool to grade 12 learners.

<sup>16</sup> “Here also the internal open-endedness of the hero... the necessity of the appearance of a hero-ideologist who takes an ultimate position in the world, the type of person who takes an ultimate decision” (Bakhtin, 1984, p.301).

<sup>17</sup> My colleagues and I have changed the main classroom project from a “final” one (for us the teachers) to one focused on their inquiries.

By positioning students as interlocutors in present societal discourses important in education and, simultaneously as professional teachers in their future imagined classrooms, they have a safe space to creatively author their role as teachers without consequences to their present selves or future children. Within those two chronotopes – the given and the imagined – they can play with possible decision scenarios. They often do transcend their present perspectives, or sometimes they realize how much their values diverge from that of the climate in public education. This playful space allows students to change their IPD or not – importantly not determining what endpoint outcomes should be for their personal values that strip them of their agency as citizens in a democratic society.

One student in this class suggested at the outset of his MLP that he suspected he might have bias as a white male teaching history. He wanted to investigate this possibility. Later he concluded that when he teaches he will include the voices and cultures of his students in history classes. This example would be trite if it had been engineered in a classroom where students knew they would be graded and judged by “producing and overcoming” biases for the teacher and university’s consumption. His sincerity expressed the important tensions between cultural sensitivity and providing the keys of access to dominant culture (c.f. Delpit, 2004). Importantly, it would be hard to separate the student’s biases and the bias structurally part of his experiences as a teacher within the dominant culture – one that has provided him with a textbook and lesson plans that support structural inequity.

I have tried to understand the interplay between these two spaces, the now and the future, analytically in conversations with my colleague Ana Marjanovic-Shane, who developed a framework on three chronotopes she uses to compare drama education and dialogic education (Marjanovic-Shane, 2011). What is important in the present for me about her ideas is that she suggests more drama in dialogic education and more dialogism in drama education. For my purposes, adding imagination to our dialogic classroom creates a space in which students can move from societal ideas to their future selves and test these new perspectives without necessarily claiming a personal change in their views. In fact, it is reasonable for students to hold a set of personal views that differ from their professional views out of a sense of civic responsibility for their classrooms. It is in the tension between dialogic selves that IPD is continuously recreated.

As an educator, I feel it is my goal that my students become aware of alternative views and values, not causing them to arrive at a particular pre-defined point. Yet, I also want to protect the school system that my children go to from potentially biased teachers. But if our classroom is a safe space for students developing IPD, I have to be aware of this side of myself – this fear that they will be bad teachers – and try to make them over into what I think a good teacher will be. I have to remember my role as an educator, as a mentor teacher or school leader, and avoid inducting them into the culture or into a particular school. At that point, their professional obligation is towards the students they serve, just as at this point my professional obligation to them is primarily as students and not as teachers.

More and more I am becoming conscious of how the ways in which I frame a semester, class, or feedback can close down a student’s sense of agency. And so this is also what I mean about a “safe” environment – that the current given discourses or even my ideas on the practice of pedagogy is not imposed on students, but that they are invited to transcend and create new pedagogical discourses, maybe even changing my practices and values. Related to this, I have to give students the freedom to ignore me. For instance, I might say to students: “Why don’t you include this author in your paper or presentation?” And if they don’t, I might become insulted or they may feel pressured. Instead, I need to also add: “You don’t have to take my suggestion if it doesn’t work for you”, because I do not want

students to guess what I want and produce it. I want them to express their own ideas and sometimes in that process they can seem to go in one direction and then realize they are really more about another.

The class must be safe for their agency. Because of this danger to impose my ideas on students, grades are based on their submission of assignments and their reflection on their ideas from alternative points of views only. Also, it is very easy to get an A. I expect that students will not be very articulate in these issues nor have much comfort with our classroom context initially, but will have more and more to say as the semester progresses. Should I punish them for such growth or determine how it will proceed for students? I'm not comfortable with that.

***Anselmo Lima:***

Many teachers – maybe even the vast majority of them – do not allow their students to use their computers or cell phones during the classes, alleging that those aren't but distractions and disruptions of the teaching flow. Contrary to that trend, you actually encouraged students to use those devices: "texting is ok in our class. There is no need to hide. If you hide: 1) you pay attention to me; 2) you pay attention to texting; and 3) you pay attention to hiding. If you don't hide, you pay attention to me and to texting, but not to hiding and it makes your life and my life easier". Could you explain the impacts of this approach on the promotion of a dialogic pedagogy in and outside the classroom?

***Katherine von Duyke:***

Along with this sense that my students are transcending the culture's ideas about education even as we are discussing contemporary and historical discourses, there is the awareness that students bring their own contemporary position as members of society to the class. The classroom, in my view, has to recognize students' lived experiences and accommodate them, not only as an issue of race, class or culture, but as an issue of generational diversity: the students and I are 35 years apart, nearly 2 generations. When I was growing up, the internet was the World Book Encyclopedia, and one's family had to be fairly wealthy to own a set. Phones were attached to walls so you had to stand next to one in order to talk to someone. When I first got a mobile phone, I would stay in one place and it took me a long time to move while talking. I am aware that how I experience and live out my existence in the world can be quite different from the way my students do it, even if on many other factors we seem similar. We now live in a time of abundant information and constant ongoing multiple conversations – this is the embodied experience of my students' lives. I think it is useless to attempt to police this reality out of my classroom. Not only do they have cell phones out; sometimes they are shopping on their laptops!

This is not to say it doesn't make me sweat with anxiety at times – I'm old school and when students aren't paying attention, I'm afraid "someone" looking in the door will think my students are disengaged. Sometimes "someone" is a student in my own classroom who feels that I have failed to take control of the class or their classmates are taking "advantage" of me. This is one reason why I choose to make this teaching decision explicit for students. The other reason for this decision is that it gives me a good sense of how engaged and engaging my material is; a technique I learned from my former advisor, Dr. Eugene Matusov. It lets me query the class, in an indirect way: is our discussion reaching them at an ontological level? If so, students will spend more time attending to the class discussion than to their computers, or, when they look up and make a comment, it is clear that they have been following the dialogue even if they have been cruising for new shoes. Ladson-Billings (2001) suggests teaching in a culturally sensitive way has much to do with the meanings teachers make of students' behaviors. I exhibit this orientation by not making assumptions about how students use their attention in my classes.

***Anselmo Lima:***

I noticed your concern about the students being there just because the course is required. And the majority of them actually were! Then you moved on to discuss with them the difference between being “learners” and being “students” as well as the corresponding consequences for the role the teacher may play in working with them, depending on what they choose to be. Can you elaborate on this idea and on why it is important to discuss this issue with students, especially when most of them are there just because of institutional requirements?

***Katherine von Duyke:***

I learned to contrast student *versus* learner from my former advisor, Dr. Eugene Matusov, as a way to assess a particular class, and to raise some hope and desires in the students about their own learning. Based on Bakhtin (1990), I think students are answerable for their own lives for themselves, not just to the institutional demands or the demands of society. This discussion indicates to students they have another layer of safety to be themselves in the class and can connect to their own meanings and purposes and not just my own. Students have repeatedly told me that one of the things they dislike about testing and grades is that they often find themselves reading and learning, and they would like to pursue an idea further, but to do so would take away from the material the teacher expects to have covered.

Additionally, they know they have to learn the material in terms of the meanings the teacher makes of it, and not their own. For this reason, they often end up learning the material in the way the teacher wants it to be learned and then mentally “eject it” to clear ground for the next unit or course of study. This is so prevalent that it is revelatory for students that their own meanings can have value and can be significantly educational without arriving at prescribed outcomes. One student recently wrote on an index card, which I am paraphrasing here somewhat: “You can’t define for students the end points of the meanings they will take from the course”.

Rather than give students one reading to respond to I provide an online file of multiple readings at multiple levels of difficulty and ask students to pick one to describe and respond to in one long continuous web chat. They read not only the readings but some of each other’s writings – yet another way to immerse them in the wider dialogue and invite their participation and increasing capability and agency in taking on these societal issues – but they also read what they want, as much as they want, and, from a recent survey I gave them, about a third suggest they often search for and read additional articles. Students often post these findings to the class web.

***Anselmo Lima:***

After students shared their views on the difference between “learners” and “students”, you asked them: “who do you want to be in this course?”. Their unanimous answer was: “we want to be learners!”. And you said: “good!”. I got the feeling that that’s the answer you had been meaning to lead them to all along because you actually wanted them to wish to be learners. To what extent can a teacher be dialogic or monologic in his or her teaching approach when he or she knows beforehand precisely where he wants to lead his or her students by means of a specific classroom discussion?

***Katherine von Duyke:***

My question was actually sincere, and I have asked it many times before and I usually get mixed responses. I was surprised by this response. Many students WANT to be students and not learners for this course for many possible reasons: 1) they have mastered the game of being a student and are very

good at returning the least amount of work for the greatest amount of credential (Labaree, 1997); 2) they don't care about the course content for themselves: they either feel they know all they need to know about diversity already and have nothing to learn, and/or are sick to death of the diversity sensitivity lectures/training they have been forced to endure elsewhere; 3) they don't see any reason to commit their free selves (as learners) to my agenda, which they suspect is my real objective; 4) they are worried that being a learner in this class will conflict with their pressures from other classes and so it is better to give up on their agency as learners in order to manage multiple demands; and 5) they expect that I will add value to their learning and provide a means of engaging them and so it is my job to make the course interesting apart from their efforts at becoming engaged.

We old school hippies sometimes think that students are eager to learn in their own ways if we would just "free" them to do so. In fact, sometimes educators with this mindset are sadly disappointed to find that this is not true, and even can become angry at their students (Matusov, 2012; Shor, 1996). I think this anger and disappointment is rooted in our American ideology of individualism and our historically cognitive approach to education; we tend to decontextualize our students from their cultural and socio-institutional situations and we treat our political ideology as a pedagogical method.

Asking the students if they want to be "students" or "learners" gives me one way to index these factors in my classroom and develop a means for these conflicting agendas to be recognized. For example, all students who minimally respond to assignments and come to class will get an "A". This "A" is clearly calibrated on their participation in class and on the web, and in turning in assignments. It is not predicated on their effort, nor a prescribed set of values as an outcome of their learning. If they want to play the credentials game, I make it easy for them; if they want to learn, I don't punish them by, for example, insisting that they give equal attention and effort to all assignments. Students can do as little as write "I disagree" or "interesting" as a response to every assignment and come to class and shop on their laptops the whole time, and still get an "A". Students "discover" that they can pursue their own ends without risking their grades; one student recently suggested that because I have no penalty for late assignments, she could explore more readings than I assigned to her own satisfaction and then comment on them when she felt ready. Students in reality *have* to be students within our institution, but I try to structure my class in such a way as to give them breathing room to also be learners. Their Main Learning Project (MLP) asks them to be answerable to themselves and others for their teaching decisions – this adds value to their professional selves and they cannot avoid engagement as they are also answerable to their peers as future colleagues. Often they carry these projects well beyond the parameters of the class, into future talks, research, or thesis papers. Sometimes, not as often, students also do very limited work on their MLP. I choose not to judge them for that, I believe the process we have engaged in is a good one, but I recognize different students will be able to or want to access it differently.

If students tell me they want to be students only, I feel they are telling me they want to be taught and not have their own lives be engaged, and so I begin with a lot of discussion about their own experiences. As they begin to engage in discussions about their experiences with peers, they discover a lot of diversity exists that they were not aware of and so begin to feel that there is more to know. If they want to be primarily learners, I have an indication that they have areas in mind already about diversity that they want to explore further. Sometimes these arise in the form of fears – they want to research the number of times diverse students commit crimes against white teachers, or they have a sibling with special needs and they want to study the issue of inclusion more carefully.

In my view, students are not only creating their own meanings from class topics – they are creating society by altering its meanings, values and practices through their own recreation as they act for

themselves at points where they articulate with society; as in the case of my white male student teaching history. The emphasis in dialectical materialism is often on societies' writing of individuals, but we must also consider that society forms itself out of individuals who slightly or even broadly change society in the course of their participation, or even disrupt society. I think we cannot see and study much of how individuals change society through participation because institutions have focused so heavily on the reproduction of culture, but we can choose to reproduce or transcend institutional culture in any given moment.

If we recognize that students are always recreating society by their participation in it, we can promote this aspect further by elevating their authorial agency (Matusov, 2011) in the structure of the course. I believe that engagement comes not from extrinsic motivation, and not from some mysterious passionate interests thought to be intrinsic to the person, but rather from a person's sense that they can bring something fresh to their interaction with societal practices.

***Anselmo Lima:***

When introducing and explaining what you expected for the students' Main Learning Project, you said "since you want to be learners, I will direct the class at first and then I will gradually shift it from me to you as learners", "you will be teaching the class at those times in fifteen-minute presentations". You pointed out that, as a Main Learning Project, you would not ask them for written assignments because they are studying to be teachers and what teachers have to do most is to talk rather than to write. Why did you choose to do it that way and how did you go about assessing the work that students did? How was it important for the promotion of a dialogic pedagogy in the classroom?

***Katherine von Duyke:***

This is a very good question! Also not easy to answer! My original thought was that groups of students could present their ideas to each other in a series of two presentations. In the first they present the teaching dilemma, some background information, how they might investigate it, and ask for feedback from their peers. In their second round, they present a brief survey of the literature on the dilemma, a research – if they have investigated the views of stakeholders – and their subsequent teaching decisions, which may differ among group members. I ask the class to provide the presenters with feedback, and I provide feedback on a rubric that mainly checks for things like: clear description of the dilemma, personal connection to the issue, consideration of alternative views, and generation of a good discussion. I then provide feedback and comments on their ideas. I suggest to students that their exploration of ideas is more important than their construction of a coherent argument, something that might in fact take them several semesters of revisions to construct over several courses. I encouraged them to use their research as the basis for a paper in a subsequent class or for an independent study project.

I think of assessment as built into the project. Students are explaining their research and teaching decisions to colleagues who can ask them tough questions. Assessment comes both from the influence their project has on others, and on how much responsive dialogue is generated. For instance, one student discussed her situation as a bi-sexual student with a transgender sibling. What classroom tensions can arise in that case? How might a teacher make decisions that ensure a safe community for such students? What have teachers/schools been doing and what has been the effect? Her story and insights were riveting for students. It was evident that she had both taught them about the issue, and influenced them to think more deeply about how their teaching decisions can affect such students. Did we think together about these important issues as a result of this student's presentation? I would say yes. Students were also supportive of growth, even if the topic was not altogether riveting or new for most of



the class. They sensed when an issue was important for a student and surprised even me with the supports they provided for personal transcendence. Can we measure for personal or classroom wide transcendence? Can we plan for it? If we plan for it, will we kill it? In dialogic pedagogy we are surprised by each other, we don't know what others think or how their thinking will affect ourselves. Can we plan for or measure such surprises? I heard a talk by a philosopher, Ruth Chang, recently discussing the difference between reasoning based on quantifiable information, and the kind of reasoning we sometimes have to do based on values that align with who we are and want to be. The first is not problematic beyond isolating accurate measures. Once you have them, a decision can be made, and in fact is already given. In the second case, the world of values can't be quantified nor can someone else give us a reason.

This response in hard choices is a rational response, but it's not dictated by reasons given to us. Rather, it's supported by reasons created by us. When we create reasons for ourselves to become this kind of person rather than that, we wholeheartedly become the people that we are. You might say that we become the authors of our own lives (Chang, 2014, 11:43 min).

I could measure the quality of their English writing, or their research, but I am not an English teacher, and this is not a research course. This is a course about ethics and their decisions as a hero-ideologists: their developing their own reasons for how they will live out their professional ethics. I could assess the approach they take to developing their reasoning, and I do somewhat, but this class is not about their reasoning processes, that belongs in philosophy or logic courses. This class is primarily about their engaging with the voice of the other. I think the dialogue within the class is a much more meaningful and rich formative assessment that develops conversations and relationships that move beyond the semester. If I start assessing their engagement with the voice of the other, aren't I beginning to author their lives? Can this assessment be quantified on a neutral scale with universal validity? If my students were teachers, I could assess their teaching by their actions towards various students, but this is an entirely different ontology in education. These are some of the dilemmas I have struggled with in teaching courses in diversity.

On a minor scale, I find it a bit of a complication when too many students prefer to work individually on their own projects until we have many presentations that begin to overtake the deeper content of presentations and dialogue I have prepared for students. We developed table top presentations, somewhat like poster demonstrations, but with power points so that we could have 12-per-class sessions. This seemed to have many notable pluses, but became impossible for me to assess one by one. I think the solution might be to ask students to record them so that I can give each student feedback.

***Anselmo Lima:***

I noticed you often hold your ipad in your left hand and look at it from time to time as you teach. Do you use your ipad to prepare your classes? How do you think the use of an ipad helps you (or does not help you...) as your classroom dialogic interactions unfold?

***Katherine von Duyke:***

The ipad allows me to show videos or presentations on the classroom screen from my laptop, while having a set of notes in my hands that are rather extensive and allow for flexibility. On the ipad I have a series of questions divided by tensions and issues that we might move through or jump to in our discussions. I have had a basic list approach, a lesson to follow – questions to ask to explore a topic more fully. I have found two problems with this approach of mine because not only do I want students to be free to speak and examine their own perspective and others, to test ideas presented by research, etc.

but to also have some determination about the emerging curriculum, especially in defining the areas they want to explore and not only me. Initially, when you joined my course I was trying to stick to a curricular plan, but very quickly I realized that I stopped listening to students and worried about getting my sets of points to discuss on the floor – which meant I was leading shallow discussions.

I switched to an open curricular approach, changing the use of time in our class. This means I can ask students at the end of class if they want to continue with the topic or move onto something else. Lately, I also discuss possible questions we can explore further for the topic we are on, as well as list topics we might move to. This then highlights the second struggle I have with my previous lesson format. In picking a topic students select a wider area, and I jumped on it with my prepared lesson.

In discussing my discomfort with my approach with my friend and colleague Ana Marjanovic-Shane, I found that she ends her classes by both selecting a topic and making a web of possible sub-topics that might be explored with students, and then vote together on where to start. I really wanted to do this, so I developed a web at the beginning of class and we discussed at length students concerns and I also included what I felt was important for me to share with them.

I would like to better organize my questions and activities around a growing potential list of topics. These topics are always changing for students as the landscape of education changes. Five years ago, issues of sexuality were hard to discuss, now new concerns have emerged. The context of our field, our university, etc. changes what becomes important to study. I also no longer believe that information is necessarily more meaningful or comprehensive when presented in linear form, and so I am not concerned about “covering” the curriculum. As Rancière (1991, p.41) says, “everything is in everything”; delving deeply into one area always connects also with many other issues.

Finally, I think that our course format – being dialogic towards multiple perspectives – is at the heart of diversity, and so we are participating in a way of being open to diversity not just learning about its issues. So yes, the ipad allows me a lot of flexibility in attending to students concerns, and I am working at developing my course preparation to better enable me to bring important research to the students’ consideration.

***Anselmo Lima:***

What would you say is the function of the index cards and the webtalk in working with students? How do those resources help you promote a more dialogic classroom environment? What are some of the challenges and/or difficulties you face in using those resources?

***Katherine von Duyke:***

I give students a 5X7 index cards at the beginning of each class and I ask for two things – their impressions of the class topic on one side, and their evaluation of how the class has gone on the reverse. These have been invaluable! Their criticisms are often painfully true and I have to work hard to correct them. I can sometimes use videos that are dense without stopping them and allowing time for discussion and questions. Thanks to my students for pointing this out to me!

Also, they let me know if a lesson dragged or if time “flew by” and that has helped me develop techniques to increase the dialogue in my classroom. They have also let me know what they have taken from the class, which is a big boost for me. They become excited to share their new insights, sometimes they also share their painful relationship to a topic – this helps me to be supportive of students, and this

often enables them to feel safe to share their experiences with the wider class – peer experiences are very compelling for students.

Sometimes half the class will hate the topic and the other class will love it, sometimes only a few students really like the topic because they feel it relates to their concerns about teaching, while the rest of the class feels they have no such concerns (and may not). This gives me an idea of which topics are core, and which might be important for various majors.

For instance, music education students find issues of gender extremely important for their practice. They also are extremely interested in culturally relevant pedagogy<sup>18</sup>, and also have often not thought much about the advantages they have for creating a culture in their classrooms as they often have a multi-grade environment that might have the same students for years – a very different situation for teachers who see students for a year or even only a semester. The cards have helped me attend to these concerns.

Another advantage of the cards is that it gives students a chance to change our classroom practices. Students will point out difficulties in meeting classroom requirements, or how a requirement undercuts a more important concern, or if a practice has outlived its use value. Because my students, mostly, are going to be doing what I am doing – I have decided that it is useful to make my decision-making and struggles explicit for them, and to even seek their advice.

In a way, I am instituting a democratic classroom, without throwing all of my practices open to change without the students experiencing them first. One decision that came up with this course that you attended is that there was a lot of readings for any given evening, and the especially math content area majors did not like to read long tomes while the English content majors loved them; some students worked jobs and had two courses, others had more leisure.

These struggles emerged on the cards, and so we discussed how to handle the reading assignments as a class in order to have them be meaningful for students. They decided that the English majors or others who wanted to would read and summarize the longer articles and book chapters, while those with short amounts of time or low reading patience could either read the shorter articles and do the same, or simply comment on someone else's posting. The tension I struggled with, the fairness of reading distribution, was not a concern for the students. So I re-organized the class web so that all reading discussion occurred on a single discussion thread, and anyone who participated on that thread received credit. For me it is about being in the dialogue at any level, and not about how much is produced.

Some students may listen intently and read a great deal of their classmates' writings and the articles, but produce little. They can be heavily engaged and learning a lot, but not yet able to articulate their thoughts well. I consider that some students are still at the "inarticulate phase" of their ability to participate in the speech genre for talking about diversity (cf. Lima, 2013-2014). At the same time, students feel answerable to themselves and to their classmates for their learning and participation. I also reason that their Main Learning Project pushes them and reveals their efforts in taking responsibility for their learning. In this way I feel I allow students to grow in their articulateness (cf. Lima, 2013-2014) over the course of the semester and make their learning meaningful and nuanced for themselves, and yet also push them to grow publically.

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<sup>18</sup> Culturally relevant pedagogy has several meanings, but at heart it's about teaching with an awareness of student's diverse perspectives and lived experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Students do not respect a course that is too easy and doesn't add value to their lives, or one that is disconnected from their life and concerns, or one that is so nit-picky with requirements, it hampers their efforts to learn and explore. My grading system is based on participation only. Even with that, sometimes not all students receive "A's". It seems to be a reasonable measure of their ability to engage with the course – and if they can't, for whatever reason, some standard of participation makes that clear for them as well.

One of the difficulties students have pointed out to me with my requirement of the cards is that they feel they are having to do "double" when they are also asked to reflect on the class on our online discussion page. I have since suggested that the cards are optional but that their reflections on the card are very meaningful for my preparation and, at the same time, I would rather they said what they want to publicly. I think in the future I will just keep the cards on the table.

Another difficulty is that sometimes the cards are painful for me to read: the criticisms aren't always pleasant. Especially these seem to occur at the beginning of semesters. I think it is not usual for students to feel they have a voice in lessons that is authentic, and this new opportunity may give them a chance to express their frustration with classes in general in mine. I have learned to become increasingly comfortable with discomfort. I strive to put on my researcher hat and understand what value to me might exist in the most negative of messages and also place them in the wider context of the students' experiences. By the end of the semester, students are much more respectful and any criticism seems authentic to issues I create in the classroom itself.

The "core content" knowledge of this class can't begin and end with the class. Students need to be aware of the problems of diversity in education – the tensions that might arise in their practice, they need to develop concern for the diverse other or low socio-economic student struggling in the American system in whatever schooling context our students choose to work in, and they need to be aware of the broader dialogue as well as research into these issues in education (as well as how to make use of these sources for their decision making). I can't determine the outcome of students learning because they enter and leave from different places and with different concerns, but I can develop a form of practice that is appropriate to their career field in addressing these concerns, and to provide certain theoretical lenses that are useful ways of examining these often complex and messy issues. For example, all students, no matter their biases, benefit from having a sense of how pervasive and tacit culture is for all of us.

### **3. Unfinalized last reflections on dialogic pedagogy**

*Anselmo Lima:*

Reading the literature on dialogic pedagogy, one can often remark that for many scholars who claim to be dialogic educators, even though some of them may write the contrary, monologism in classroom interactions is considered something bad that ought to be combated and eliminated at all costs and that, consequently, dialogism is something good that should be sought above everything else in order to replace each and every possible form of classroom monologism (cf. White & Peters, 2011; Matusov, 2009; 2013). It seems in fact, as if this was really possible to accomplish, that some educators actually "dream" of promoting in their classrooms what I have called "absolute dialogism".

What do I mean by that? I think Bakhtin's definition and discussion of speech genres can be useful to get this idea across. He speaks of speech genres in terms of relatively stable forms of utterances (Bakhtin, 1986). In his definition, there are two essential aspects to be pointed out and

considered: one regarding the side of stability (the “given”, the “old”) and another regarding the side of relativity (the “created”, the “new”) of every utterance (Bakhtin, 1984; Lima, 2013).

That which is stable can also be deemed monologic and remains the same from one moment to the other, therefore repeating itself identically along time. That which is relative can also, in its turn, be considered dialogic and can never be the same from one moment to the other, for it keeps changing, that is, it is continually (re)created or dialogized. Thus, an utterance is indissolubly and at the same time repetition of previous utterances and their recreation. In other words, monologism and dialogism coexist and are always indissolubly present and linked at the same time and in different degrees in every utterance, as Bakhtin (1984, p. 106) points out: “a genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously”.

Now, a whole course from its very beginning to its very end, can be viewed as an utterance and, as such, it will have its corresponding speech genre or variety of educational speech genre (Lima, 2010). In that sense, in every class, part of the living patterns of teacher-student interactions will dialogically come from previous classes and another part, dependent on and impossible to be separated from the first part, will be new, (re)created at the unrepeatable moment at which the class is taking place so as to anticipate and prepare also for future classes. A class is therefore always relatively stable, given the fact that – from this standpoint – it is always repeated (“old”) and at the same time recreated (“new”) as a class in this never-ending chain or flow of classes. To consider the repetition-recreation ratio of a class or, in other words, its ratio of monologism-dialogism is important if we are concerned about how dialogic a class can be.

Following this line of reasoning, it turns out that the greater the side of recreation of a class the more dialogic it will be. However, this side of recreation or dialogism can never be so great as to outgrow its indissoluble side of repetition because that would mean to destroy the relative stability of the class educational speech genre by completely eliminating its side of monologism and trying to create something new out of nothing: in that case, only its side of relativity would remain. In this respect, from a Bakhtinian point of view, “the single utterance [or class], with all its individuality and creativity, can in no way be regarded as a completely free combination of forms of language [or of teacher-student patterns of interaction]” (cf. Bakhtin, 1986, p. 81). In other words, there can be no such thing as “absolute dialogism” in teaching a class and some degree of monologism in the classroom is nothing to be ashamed of at all, as Katherine von Duyke said she was, at first, when I pointed out to her that she was summarizing or rephrasing her student’s words at a certain point.

As I sat in Katherine von Duyke’s classroom, I was – among other things – seeking to identify the relatively stable form of her dialogic teaching practice. Of course, I was not able to identify it only by observing her on the first day of that course. I needed to sit in each and every one of her classes, from Monday through Thursday, from January 6, 2014 to February 6, 2014, in order to document her teaching practices in my notebook, using my mechanical pencil. As a result, as we sat down together after every class to reflect on how the classroom interactions were taking place, her relatively stable forms of dialogic interaction with students unfolded and revealed themselves right before our eyes.

And I remember what she asked me: “well, is it good or bad?”. My answer was: “it doesn’t have to be good or bad. It simply is the way it is. It is neither good nor bad. It is necessary!” just as Bakhtin (1986, p. 79) argues: “if [educational] speech genres did not exist and we [teachers and students] had not mastered them, if we [teachers and students] had to originate them during the speech process [in the

classroom] and construct each utterance [class] at will for the first time, speech communication [in the classroom] would be almost impossible”.

Therefore, it was from this point of view that I observed and commented on each of Katherine von Duyke’s classes and asked her questions every time we sat down together to talk after a day’s work. It was also exactly from this very point of view that I came up with the previous questions for her based at the same time on my observation notes about her first class in that course and about all the others classes that followed.

***Katherine von Duyke:***

I think having time to reflect with another dialogic practitioner was incredibly valuable for this course. First, it was important for me to understand the place of stable and unstable, changing aspects of the classroom – and to develop a living flow between the two. If my stable elements are too fixed for too long, the students become tired; yet, if I strip away everything that is routine they become disoriented, anxious and frustrated. There is a kind of breathing that occurs between; these poles of repetition and recreation, the intensity of discussion and topics we engage in, and how learning is constructed within our teaching institution.

Anselmo’s perspective was very useful to me. I felt in the past that perhaps these cycles of change indicated a problem – that the class was either too structured or too unstructured, that I had too little control or took too much, that students were too unfree or too unguided. I had begun to think of each course in the semester as a journey that begins with strangers and new concepts and ends with dialogue partners constructing new ways of being in the world, one in which the walls of the classroom fall away. Now, I also think of each class as a lived event with it’s own breathing patterns. I learned to attend to the emotions in the classroom as a way to adjust my teaching to be more in the appropriate moment with students.

These are metaphorical inferences at this point, but – through our research both now and in the future – I hope to understand these factors in deeper ways. Time, as we also experienced it, changed over the course of the semester, it moved from quite slow to nearly breathless with so many ideas, projects, and inspirations of the students. I’ve come to think of the classroom as a series of chronotopes that changes in time/space and axiology throughout the course of the semester, one that even has multiple chronotopes in differing relations with each other as the semester progresses.

This is an analysis for a next research project and article of course. It is incredibly valuable to be able to discuss these issues with another Bakhtinian scholar who is able to devote time to sit for a whole semester in one’s class and provide that “surplus of vision” that sees what I cannot. It moved me out of the excessive monologism that teacher’s can sometimes experience – isolated in their heads about their teaching – to productive reflection.

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