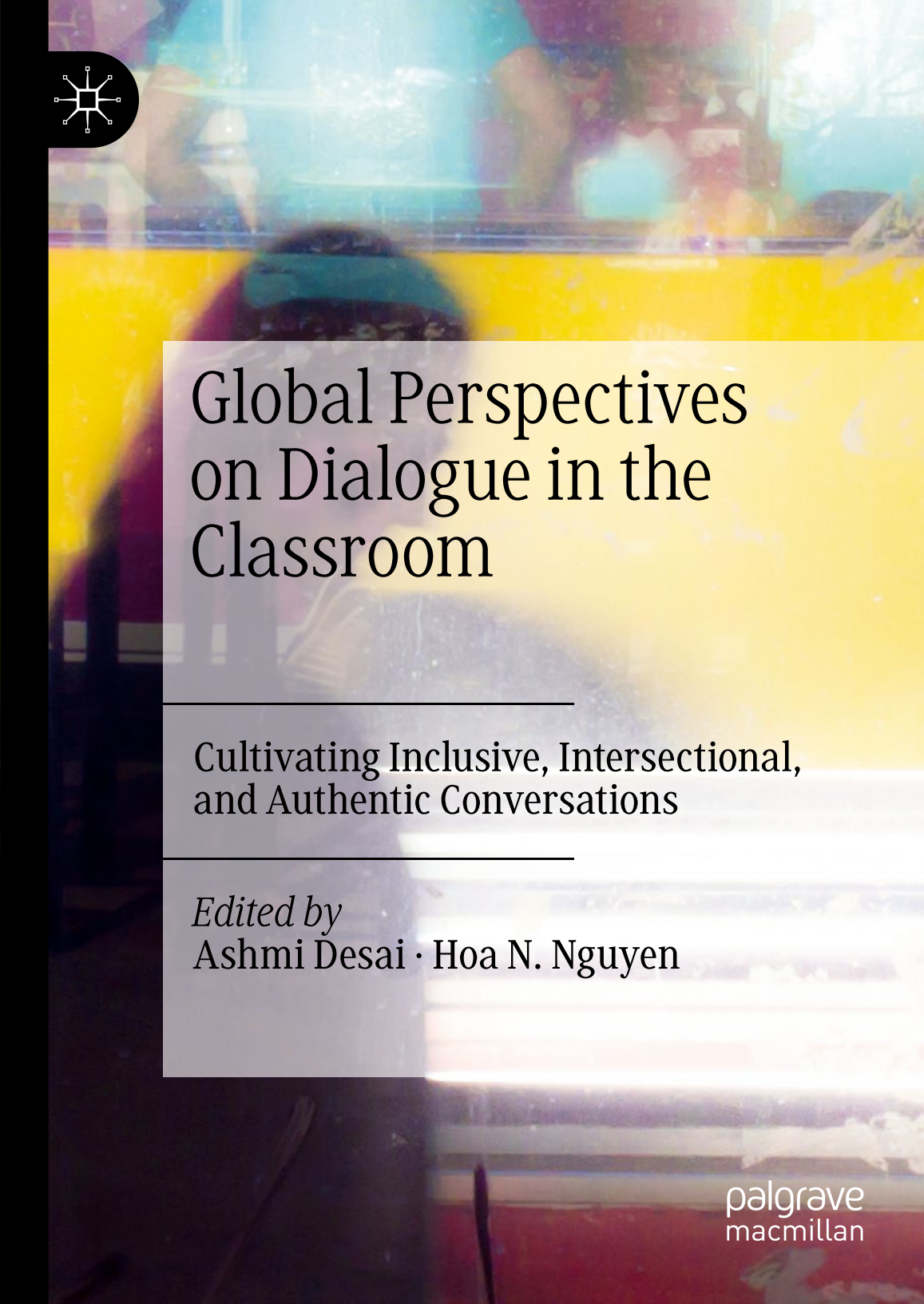

Global Perspectives on Dialogue in the Classroom

Cultivating Inclusive, Intersectional, and Authentic Conversations

Edited by
Ashmi Desai · Hoa N. Nguyen

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Global Perspectives on Dialogue in the Classroom

"A book that takes seriously the moment we are in and the global nature of the imperatives for dialogue. For those interested in expanding the work of dialogue, social change and social justice, this will become required reading. An essential guide for change makers who seek to delve deeply into the new ways we have now come to understand the varieties of human experience and expression."

—Kazi Joshua, *Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Whitman College, USA*

"A wonderful text that expands understanding of dialogue to include categories of people often given less attention, with chapters focusing on people who hail from multiple national communities as they pursue diverse goals. This collection offers readers fresh ways to understand and appreciate others whose lives are different from their own."

—Karen Tracy, *Professor Emeritus, Department of Communication, University of Colorado Boulder, USA*

"Ashmi Desai and Hoa Nguyen have called together a room full of scholar-activist-educators who openly and vulnerably share both their discontents with a perspective of dialogue rooted in colonial, oppressive structures and their efforts to reconcile their training in dialogue with a more culturally resonant practice. Reading this edited volume is an invitation into that room—a unique opportunity to listen to nuanced conversations about dialogue, conversations that question how foundational practices in dialogue might actually exclude and further marginalize cultural ways that have liberatory potential. The authors in this volume speak and write from communities often unseen, unacknowledged or silenced in discussions about dialogue; ironically, white, European men are often centered in dialogic origin stories. *Global Perspectives on Dialogue in the Classroom* rectifies this and, in doing so, challenges readers to rethink how we came to learn about dialogue, what we believe constitutes dialogue and, most importantly, the purposes of dialogue. The authors included in this volume provide a vision for dialogue as community engagement, as organizing, as protest and as activism. This book was born from a wondering about a standard practice in dialogue, one I've used many times myself, and blossomed into this lovely, challenging, insightful text that unseats assumptions in the field and challenges practitioners to see the potential of dialogue for social change."

—Colette Cann, *Associate Dean and Professor in International and Multicultural Education School of Education, University of San Francisco, USA*

"This important text about intergroup dialogue decenters U.S. and eurocentric epistemologies of race and decolonization to focus on perspectives from the global south that are often marginal and underrepresented. To center healing and non-western ways of knowing as part of intergroup dialogue pedagogy is to move beyond how we have come to know each other racially and spatially. This text creates space for other ways of knowing and learning about race, racism and the functions of whiteness globally from which we can begin to create new pathways for dialoguing across differences. It is a must read!"

—Kimberly N. Williams Brown, *Assistant Professor of Education, Vassar College, USA*

"This book answers the urgent call to apply dialogue aligned to social justice in our polarized communities. It not only advocates but also shows how to interrupt conflict with dialogue, in the voices of grounded practitioners drawing on Reflective Structured Dialogue, Intergroup Dialogue and other approaches. Through well told stories from classrooms to conflict zones, and across various identities, including Chicanx and Indigenous, this book invites readers to interrogate their own notions of power and privilege in a globalized world."

—John Sarrouf, *Co-executive Director and Director of Program Development, Essential Partners, USA*

Ashmi Desai • Hoa N. Nguyen
Editors

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To the many people and communities who remain unnamed in their creation and pursuit of dialogue since times immemorial

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gentle reminders to trust in the process, and for igniting conversations that honor relationships, differences, and vulnerability. Much gratitude to Fred Piercy, Erika Grafsky, and Anisa Zvonkovic for their mentorship toward our writing, thinking, and growth as relationally minded and culturally attuned scholars.

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I (Ashmi) am extremely grateful for academic soulmate Hoa N. Nguyen for supporting my ambitious research propositions with thoughtful critique and walking this arduous book publishing path with me. When one has an exceptionally hard working, brilliant, and intellectually stimulating co-editor, mentor, and friend like Hoa, the book editing process becomes as enjoyable as the book itself. I will remember how you modeled kindness, compassion, and perspective-taking in word and action throughout the years. My friends Ragini Bharadwaj, for being my biggest cheerleader, critic, and guide; and Erika, ever thoughtful, encouraging, and critically questioning. Vikram, Nammy, and Zehen Thakur for a cherished time spent together with nourishing food, love, and stimulating

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out through the less-than-best. And finally, my feline friend, Chai, who kept me company during my work and taught me the importance of play, sound sleep, and living in the present moment.

Contents

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Eugene Aisenberg (he/him) completed PhD and MSW and is an associate professor at School of Social Work at the University of Washington (UW). He is the founding co-director of the UW Latino Center for Health, an interdisciplinary, community-centered research center focused on improving the health of Latinx communities through impactful research, policy, and practice. As a bicultural mental health researcher, he works to increase access to culturally responsive, evidence-based depression care to rural Latinx individuals. His publications include the areas of community violence, mental health, evidence-based practice, and health.

He also served as associate dean for Diversity and Student Affairs at the UW Graduate School from 2012 to 2019. He received the UW Distinguished Teaching Award in 2009.

Natalie Avalos (she/her) is an assistant professor in the Ethnic Studies department at the University of Colorado Boulder. She is an ethnographer of religion whose research and teaching focus on Native American and Indigenous religions in diaspora, healing historical trauma, and decolonization. She received her PhD in Religious Studies from the University of California at Santa Barbara with a special focus on Native American and Indigenous Religious Traditions and Tibetan Buddhism and is working on her manuscript titled "The Metaphysics of Decoloniality: Transnational Indigeneities and Religious Refusal." It argues that the resurgence of land-based logics in Native and Tibetan nations not only de-centers settler colonial claims to legitimate knowledge but also articulates new forms of sovereignty rooted in interdependent relations of power among all persons, human and other-than human. She is a Chicana of Apache descent, born and raised in the Bay Area.

Jasmine Baetz (she/her) has completed BA, BFA, and MFA and is a ceramics student and teacher. Jasmine Baetz has made things out of clay from a young age, and it remains her primary tool for making sense of the world. Her work encompasses community engagement, anti-racist pedagogy, and artistic practice. Her recent work foregrounds the frequently unacknowledged histories of minoritized students and their fight for educational equity at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She is Assistant Professor of Art at Coker University in Hartsville, South Carolina and is currently the Lincoln Visiting Artist in Ceramics at Scripps College and Claremont Graduate University.

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Albert Chan (he/him) was raised in Hong Kong, completed school in Bristol, and pursued university at Washington State University and McGill in Montreal with a Master's in Counselling Psychology. His work life has been a journey of dialogue across cultural boundaries. After working in Toronto for over 25 years, he studied theology and completed a doctorate in clinical psychology in Colorado. He is a clinical psychologist and marriage and family therapist. His employment includes head and professor of the School of Psychology, Gratia Christian College, and visiting professor at McGill University, Mongolia University of Science Technology, Beijing Normal University, and Lingnan University in Hong Kong. He also works at Maggie's Caring Centre, Tuen Mun Hospital, Tuen Mun, Hong Kong, as well as Family and Psychology Counseling Services, Oriental Speech Therapy Limited in Shenzhen, China. In 2021, he provided clinical services in China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Mongolia Republic, and Cambodia. He has authored a chapter in *Existential psychology, East West*. Vol. I and II, and a journal article, "Common Heroes: Positive and Narrative Approach to Male Cancer Survivors."

Jessica ChenFeng (she/her) has completed PhD, is licensed as a marriage and family therapist, and is associate professor of Medical Education and Associate Director of Physician Vitality at Loma Linda University Health, and an AAMFT-approved supervisor. Her research, writing, and clinical work center around socio-contextual issues such as gender and power, Asian American identity, and Christian spirituality. Most recently, she co-authored the book *Finding Your Voice as a Beginning Marriage and Family Therapist*. She identifies as a cisgender, heterosexual second-generation Taiwanese American liberative educator.

Justine D'Arrigo (Gender Queer) has completed PhD and is a full-time professor and internship coordinator in the Master's in Counseling Program at California State University San Bernardino. Their scholarly work, teaching pedagogy, and clinical interests are all informed by narrative, collaborative relational ways of being that center the socio-political contexts that shape meaning and experiences in our lives. Justine's writing and research attends mostly to queer experiences and issues of therapist power and accountability, specifically when navigating experiences of oppression and injustice with clients in therapy. Justine finds meaning in learning how to become more aware, educated, and active as a white citizen in a country and world that struggles tremendously with white supremacy and the systematic dehumanization of communities of color. From this, one of the

things they value spending their time doing is watching documentary films that raise awareness about environmental, social, and political issues.

Ashmi Desai (she/her) is assistant professor in Public Dialogue and Conflict Management at San Francisco State University Department of Communication Studies and also directs the Conflict Resolution Certificate there. Ashmi completed her PhD in Communication from the University of Colorado Boulder and finished her Master's in Development Communication from Gujarat University, India. Her teaching and research interests involve dialogic pedagogy; international and intercultural communication; conflict management tools and approaches; and representations of culture, home, and belonging. Ashmi's classes on dialogue and conflict resolution engage students in the discovery of self and the other through analysis of global and local struggles, story circles, relational leadership, and examination of systemic power and privilege. Ashmi completed her dialogue training from Public Conversations Project, Intercultural Development Institute and Community Boards. By centering community cultural wealth and dialogic approach in conversations, she aims to cultivate critical and transformative connections across divides.

Lana Kim (she/her) has completed PhD and is an associate professor and program director of the Marriage, Couple, and Family Therapy Program at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon. She is also a licensed marriage and family therapist and AAMFT-approved clinical supervisor at the Lewis & Clark Community Counseling Center. In her clinical work, she draws from narrative approaches and socio-emotional relationship therapy and is interested in the ways in which power, culture, and larger social contexts shape lived experience, relationships, problems, and the process of change in therapy. Her research interests include second-generation Asian-American families, parent-child relationships, culturally responsive MFT practices, clinical supervision, and medical family therapy and collaborative care practices.

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interaction between "religion" and "the modern" is derived from his being both a "Protestantism" practitioner and a social scientist researching religion via modern principles of rationality and self-reflection. His "Protestant self" and "social scientific researcher self" are constantly on debate and dialogue re-examining the assumptions, diagnoses, and prescriptions of both (Korean) Protestantism and (Western-centric) modern social science on the world.

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Martha Laughlin (she/her) is licensed as a marriage and family therapist and is a professor and program director for the family therapy master's degree program at Valdosta State University. She holds a master's degree in family therapy and social work and a PhD in family therapy. She teaches Batesonian systems theory and clinical practicum. Her articles on relational approaches to education, anger, creativity, and sexual abuse have appeared in many publications.

Jing Lin (she/her) has obtained a PhD and is Harold R. W. Benjamin Professor of International Education Policy at the University of Maryland. She received her doctoral degree from the University of Michigan. She is author of more than a dozen books, from educational reform in China to women teachers in Africa, to peace and sustainability education, and spirituality, religion, and education. Some of her books which have been published are as follows: *Love, Peace and Wisdom in Education: Vision for Education in the 21st Century*; *Educators as Peace Makers: Transforming Education for Global Peace*; *Spirituality, Religion, and Peace Education*; *Transformative Eco-Education for Human and Planetary Survival*; *Toward a spiritual research paradigm: Exploring New Ways of Knowing, Researching and Being*; and *Daoist Cultivation of Qi and Virtue for Life, Wisdom, and Learning*.

Belkys López (she/her) is a peacebuilding practitioner and researcher. She holds a master's degree from the University of Warwick in International Political Economy and a bachelor's degree in political science from Bryn Mawr College. She has worked in East Africa with local organizations and UN agencies for the past 15 years. In South Sudan, after witnessing the devastating toll of war on communities, she investigated trauma and its relationship to violent conflict and transitional justice. In 2016, she began working on trauma-informed peacebuilding programs in Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia. She led a study on the impact of trauma-informed resiliency on the prevention of violent extremism in Kenya and has previously published works on instability and transitional justice in South Sudan.

Kneo Mokgopa (they/them) holds a LLB and is a graduate of the Wilfred & Jules Kramer Law School at the University of Cape Town. They are currently writing their Master's in Rhetoric Studies at UCT on Human Rights and Africanist political movements and are the Advocacy Manager at the Nelson Mandela Foundation in Johannesburg, South Africa. Kneo has a regular column with the *Daily Maverick*, titled *Unthere*, and they host a podcast by the same name where they explore Southern African identity-making, history and sociopolitics.

Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda (he/him) has completed PhD, MSW, and MA and is principal of IDEALeadership LLC. He is Indian, born and raised in Kenya, before coming to the United States. He is a co-founder of University of Michigan's Program on Intergroup Relations and a co-developer of the intergroup dialogue model geared toward transforming intergroup conflicts into greater understanding and collaborations for equity and justice. He works with educational institutions, community organizations, and government agencies nationally and internationally. His work focuses on developing intergroup dialogue programs as well as equity-centered social healing, community resiliency, and leadership development programs. His articles on social science, social work, and education journals have appeared in many publications. He has co-authored books on intergroup dialogue practice, theory, and research.

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of cultural and sexual identity, international LGBTQ+ lived experiences, and cultural humility in family therapy and education. Hoa largely focuses on teaching and working with graduate family therapy students on how to facilitate and engage in transformative dialogues. In her classrooms, students are self-reflexive of their own levels of openness, resistance, and ways of approaching different ideas, perspectives, and people. Her hope is to cultivate critically conscious conversations that are globally aware, inclusive, and decolonizing.

Cheryl Nuñez (she/her) holds a PhD and is the vice president for Equity & Inclusion at Olympic College, in Bremerton, Washington, where she leads and promotes capacity-building to close equity gaps and enhance student success. She has long been committed to fostering student agency and organizing as catalysts for educational excellence and is deeply invested in supporting the efforts of system-impacted students to humanize and strengthen their institutions. She has held similar positions in higher education for 26 years, while advancing racial justice as a community-based organizer. She earned a bachelor's degree in English and American Literature and Language from Harvard University and a master's degree in Educational Foundations from the University of Cincinnati. She counts her parents as her greatest teachers, nurturing her identities as a Black woman and a freedom fighter.

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included planning and implementing cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue exchanges. She is a 2021 Ann C. Wylie Fellow Dissertation Recipient for her dissertational work which focuses on memory construction as a means for reconciliation and positive peacebuilding in post-genocide Cambodia. Her other research work includes oral history of Cuban Americans, the educational importance of Indigenous knowledge systems through ceremony and studying listening-centered peace work taking place in the Middle East. In addition, she is the intern for the National Coalition of Dialogue and Deliberation, an active member of the International Listening Association and the Global Listening Centre.

Kate Warner (she/her) is licensed as a marriage and family therapist, and is a professor and associate dean for the College of Education and Human Services at Valdosta State University. She holds a master's and PhD in Family Therapy. She has taught courses on foundations of family therapy, social constructionism, and postmodernism, as well as diversity and social justice. Her areas of expertise also include supervision of family therapists, grief, intimate partner and family violence, and hypnosis. She conducts and publishes research on family preservation, resilience, juvenile justice, sexual abuse, and working therapeutically with migrant farm workers. She is licensed in the state of Georgia as a family therapist and is an AAMFT-approved supervisor.

Elisabeth Esmiol Wilson (she/her) is licensed as a marriage and family therapist, and is an associate professor of Marriage and Family Therapy at Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington. She has a seminary degree in Spiritual Formation and Soul Care and obtained her MA and PhD in MFT from Loma Linda University. Her research focuses on couples' experiences of gender, power, and spirituality and on clinical training issues including attending to larger contextual issues. She is co-editor of the 2018 volume *Socially Just Religious and Spiritual Interventions: Ethical Uses of Therapeutic Power*. She is an AAMFT-approved supervisor, is an AASECT-certified sex therapist, and runs an active private practice focusing on sexual and spiritual issues. She identifies as a sex positive, cis gender, heterosexual wife, mother and stepmother, rooted in a progressive, contemplative Judeo-Christian spirituality, grappling with her white colonialist ancestry.

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PART I

The Value and Limits of Western Perspectives on Dialogue

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Beyond Borders, Labels, and Divides

Ashmi Desai and Hoa N. Nguyen

The Beginnings of This Book

Long before the pandemic, Hoa and I (Ashmi) sat across from each other in a Public Conversations Project (now Essential Partners) dialogue training in Boston. In the 2018 workshop titled "Dialogue Across Divides," along with a group of dialogue practitioners, we proposed community agreements for facilitating a dialogue between people in conflict. Common to most dialogue models, a conversational agreement/guideline, "Speak Only for Yourself and From Your Own Perspective," prompted an inquiry from us. We wondered how to make I-statements or speak for ourselves when that doesn't align with our cultural identity. Such cultural

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assumptions of self and perspective as individualized and independent of others seemed confusing.

We recall registering a hesitation about this agreement to the session facilitator by saying, "We know this agreement well and have proposed it to many groups while facilitating dialogue, but today as we sit on the other side as dialogue participants, we cannot bring ourselves to agree to it. This is because when we speak, we speak connected with our family, community, ancestors, and culturally-rooted beliefs. It is not possible to imagine ourselves as an isolated separate unit on many topics."

While the guideline's premise is to prevent speaking for others or generalizing one participant's belief to an entire group, we were interested in its application in communally-oriented cultures where self and perspective may be defined in relational, collectivistic ways. One of Hofstede's (2011) six dimensions of culture describes how the continuum of individualism-collectivism in different cultures impacts ideas of self, other, and relation. Our feeling was acknowledged in the session; however, the agreement/guideline remained as is. This thought stayed with us and over a five-hour conversation post the session, we considered how our full cultural selves can be represented in dialogue, and how the stories and voices of our ancestors negate the individuality embedded in the notion of an "I-statement."

Given this dissonance, we began to contemplate decentering Western approaches to dialogue and proposing culturally-rooted dialogic practices from a globally-informed lens. These ideas took the shape of a journal article about classroom dialogue (since both of us were educators). As we wrote the barebones of a journal article, we were pleasantly surprised to be offered a book contract by a publishing house acquisitions editor with whom we shared the idea in an exploratory meeting. After that, the conference of National Coalition of Dialogue and Deliberation sparked the book's beginnings and it found a home in Palgrave Macmillan soon after. It has been a fortuitous and satisfying journey finding our excellent contributors and sharing this volume with the rest of the world.

Context, Overview, and Significance

This book began in 2018, long before the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe, but was inevitably impacted by the massive shifts that have taken place since. In the midst of political and economic uncertainties, the COVID-19 pandemic became one of the largest global calamities,

causing destruction to tens of millions of people across the world. A yearning for dialogue and human connection deepened, as communities reached across the space of fear and unknowns for one another, in response to an era of isolation and physical distancing. Society came to a standstill with the banning of air travel in various countries, lockdowns and quarantines, remote work and social distancing policies in public settings, and photos capturing mountain lions wandering in the city and penguins on empty streets.

A significant disruption was taking place during this time. An unpredicted and urgent move to remote learning from in-person instruction across schools around the globe. Off and on for months, teachers, students, and academic staff woke up to phone and computer screens for interaction, teaching, and learning; something that changed the education landscape considerably. The world was on pause for a moment with the words "stay at home" echoing across the globe. We were forced to slow down and reckon with the state of our lives, our relationships, and ultimately ourselves (Lightman, 2020). We were propelled into a liminal space—a place of transition between what was and what will come. From the Latin root "limen" meaning "threshold," liminal space brings forth a sense of uncomfortableness and disorientation, as we wrestle with the ambiguous, in-between space of "pre-covid" and "post-covid."

It became imperative then to think of dialogue and pedagogy as pre-COVID and after. What challenges, lessons, and transformations may this moment bring? Can dialogic conversations happen during a global moment of power cuts, internet disconnections, social distancing, and an unprecedented level of human suffering and upheaval?

As Lightman (2020) notes, "With more quiet time, privacy, and stillness, we have an opportunity to think about who we are, as individuals and as a society." Within this liminal space came a powerful opportunity for creativity, innovation, and imagination. In facing our vulnerabilities and challenges during the pandemic, we could generate new ways of being together, incorporate new technologies in our lives, and transform our definitions of connection and community on a global scale. This book was completed during this transitionary period of both pause and panic, a context that enabled us to more fully contemplate our interconnections to one another.

A couple of chapters in this volume engage directly with and share early thoughts on the COVID context and remote learning conundrums. The rest weave crucial and relevant themes of power, cultural meanings,

(dis)connection, representation, suppression, erasure, activism, (anti)racism, community, healing, reconnecting, vulnerability, multiplicity, discord, among others that manifest in our lives.

Why Global Dialogue Perspectives in the Classroom?

The objective of this book is to illuminate global approaches to dialogic practice and facilitation for inclusive, authentic, and intersectional classroom conversations. Scholarship on dialogue has minimally focused on aspects of culture and power. Due to the lack of diverse representation within the field of dialogue, we hope to challenge individualistic, Eurocentric, and singular, monolithic notions of what dialogue is and should look like. While it is critical to refrain from essentializing or romanticizing non-Western cultural aspects, such as harmony or collectivism, we hope to open up spaces for cultural-rooted dialogic approaches that embody the communal and common spirit.

Defining Global

The term "global" holds multiple meanings. Global may refer to geographical spaces, varied representation of different cultural corners/perspectives of the world, or worldwide exchanges and connections between people and communities. In regard to physical geographical spaces, dialogues across the chapters unfold in several different locations—a sculpture building space in a university classroom, a Bible circle in a home/church, a South African book festival, a Kenyan trauma awareness and resilience program, dialogue groups in the Middle East and South Asia regions, and the psychology and therapy field in Hong Kong. These field spaces as context show how dialogue emerges and sustains.

In regard to representation of cultural perspectives worldwide, authors in this book draw from indigenous values and decolonizing practices, Chinese philosophical perspectives on complexifying the concept of harmony, Black queer counter narratives within a history of Apartheid and colonialism, Chicanx identities and community-building, relational practices that oppose Western notions of individualism, and systemic, ecological understandings of how relationships are organized. This book is a starting platform to explore the essence of dialogue embedded in different corners/cultures of the world.

"Global" transcends power, class, race, ethnicity, and culture issues unique to individual nation-states. It relates to media practices (e.g. infotainment, reality TV), human issues, and collective concerns (e.g. human rights, poverty, global climate change, pandemics, financial crises) that cut across nation-states. It stresses the commonality of issues which require collective action "all over the world," as well as in one's home country. Nothing has brought this home more than the coronavirus pandemic permeating every aspect of human life, revealing the globalized connections that undeniably exist around us. For instance, these global connections are accentuated in the shared experience of the pandemic, collective grief and loss, shifting to virtual means of contact, and centering social justice movements across the world, such as the Black Lives Matter protests, workforce, rent, and hunger strikes, and revolts against government and political corruption. More than ever, "global" also refers to a worldwide awareness of the commonality of issues requiring coalitions, collective action, and spaces for dialogue.

Cultivating Inclusive, Intersectional, and Authentic Conversations

The three concepts—intersectionality, authenticity, and inclusion—are guiding principles in dialogue and education. In this book, we hope to describe how they connect to global dialogic approaches and re-envision their interconnections in the final synthesis chapter.

Inclusion

We want to look at inclusion beyond "diversity" and "difference" as categories. Individualistic definitions of inclusion tend to focus on inviting isolated identities to the table (e.g. meeting the racial quota, or bringing in a male/female perspective), rather than problematizing the process in which we enact inclusion and exclusion. As we explore who or what is being excluded in classroom conversations, it involves first looking at dialogue culturally. Then, we begin to weigh in mythologies, values, community notions, and non-human perspectives. The process of creating our stories and sense-making of identity, which show up in storytelling and dialogue, but are not explicitly recognized (Ryan, 2006). By creating space for complex narratives, we shift to an inclusion process that weaves in people and their communities, rather than categories of difference.

Intersectionality

Here, we focus less on Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) multiple forms of oppression, but look instead at the cultural rendering of myths, stories, and morality, for a more complex undertaking. As Audre Lorde notes, there is no hierarchy to oppression, and thus it is important to avoid taking an additive or subtractive lens to intersectionality and quantifying experiences of privilege and oppression. The interactions between our experiences of privilege and oppression are interwoven in complicated ways. When describing revolutionary change, Lorde states the "the piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors' tactics, the oppressors' relationships" (2012, p. 115). Freire (1996) has also discussed this duality, referring to the internalized image and practices of the oppressor in the oppressed. We hope to break the social justice binaries of oppressor and oppressed which surface constantly in dialogue work.

Authenticity

Authentic is the buzzword of today; however, we focus on the Freirian notion of authenticity, which has to do with liberation from oppression, and Goffman's idea of moving away from a monolithic self to our authentic selves showing up in different contexts. Western notions of the individual self may suggest authenticity refers to coming to one's own truth about themselves and expressing that truth outwardly. If the self is understood as relational and changing, our conceptualization of authenticity also shifts to a relational authenticity where one has voice in a relationship and can embolden different authentic selves depending on the situation and context. Further, authenticity from a Freirian stance comes from (re) humanizing ourselves and others. In this sense, authenticity is not merely an isolated form of individual expression, but also a transformative, relational process of examining self and raising critical consciousness (Freire, 1996).

Step Forward, Step Back: Complicating Inclusion, Intersectionality, and Authenticity

One example that helps explore the complexity of the application of the concepts of inclusion, intersectionality, and authenticity within the current US context is the privilege walk activity. Below, we share a student's version of how privilege walk unfolded in a university class on leadership in the US:

Everyone takes a step back. The entire classroom of 30 with the teacher is standing on grass, a short walk from the regular class building space. The teacher reads out again, "If you grew up in an economically-disadvantaged or single-parent home, please take a step back." Some students look around uncomfortably, some are unclear about the prompt. Eventually, one student steps back. This goes on, "If you or your family never had to move due to financial inabilities, step forward." By now, some students are standing against the wall for support, some have sat down, and others are trying to figure out where this is leading. The teacher asks everyone to look around and note their positions from where they started. The teacher then asks, "What surprised you? What did you feel this didn't capture?" Two students standing next to each other say, "We are not surprised at all. We feel like we are constantly defined by race." Another peer comments, "I feel like people just look at me like a dumb person. My disability is never taken seriously and I'm not sure if this was the right place to talk about it." Another student says, "I have feelings of guilt and shame for taking so many steps forward, and it's made me very uncomfortable participating in this class." Yet another student adds, "I don't think gender and racial discrimination are equal," and "I feel like a fraud when stepping back or claiming an experience of oppression in that identity."

This vignette describes a student's reflection after completing the privilege walk classroom exercise. Privilege walk stems from Peggy McIntosh's (2003) concept of White privilege and is often used to identify student areas of privilege and facilitate a discussion on social identities and power. Ideally, after the privilege walk activity, students reflect on their identities, their privileges or lack of them, how the system may set them up to gain or lose in school and society, and how does one make sense of this while looking to others. All this helps work on aspects of intersectionality, authenticity, and inclusion.

Privilege walks can create an impactful moment of confronting our privilege. However, at times, students indicate discomfort coupled with guilt, shame, and perceived limited representation of themselves, which can shut down a conversation on identities and intersectionality. It may also perpetuate a divide between "us" and "them" and individualize experiences of privilege and marginalization, rather than connecting them to the larger, complex systems of inequity and power. Since the activity involves a stepwise process of moving forward or backward in relation to privilege, the understanding of privilege becomes additive and not multiplicative, as required for an understanding of intersectionality. In this way, privilege walks can contribute to increased awareness, but they can also be

devoid of fuller cultural stories and create unsafe environments where people feel excluded and forced to be authentic, rendering dialogue as not possible. This dilemma is shared by many classroom facilitators who have discontinued using the activity (Arao & Clemens, 2013). As educators, we are curious of how dialogue and social justice overlap and differ and ways in which individualistic, separatist views of diversity seeps into our teaching practices.

Overview of Key Dialogue Thinkers

Key dialogue theories are rooted in a study of self, other, and groups from an interdisciplinary lens in the communication field. Anderson et al. (2004) mentions the five key theorists central to dialogue, including Martin Buber, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jurgen Habermas, Mikhail Bakhtin, David Bohm, and Paolo Freire. A summary of all key theorists and their contributions follows (Table 1.1) after this paragraph.

Moving away from Socratic goals of communication, including the discovery of "truth" through logic and questioning, these thinkers explain dialogue as a process of listening, understanding, and exploration of self and other. Austrian-born Israeli Jewish philosopher Martin Buber approaches dialogue from a philosophical anthropology perspective where self is considered as a relational phenomenon.

Table 1.1 Key theorists and their contributions to dialogue

Theorists (no particular order)	*Key contributions related to dialogue*
Socrates	Discovery of "truth" through logic and questioning
Martin Buber	"I-Thou" one primary word, self as a relational phenomenon
Hans-Georg Gadamer	Humans read meaning, can lead to transformation into communion
Jurgen Habermas	Ideal speech situation for participatory democracy and citizenship
Mikhail Bakhtin	Polyvocality, goal is to establish responsive understanding
David Bohm	Interconnected participatory thinking, stream of meaning flowing between us and through us
Daniel Yankelovich	Tool for examining assumptions, decision making and democratic strength
Paolo Freire	Serves to transform education, humanize oppressor and oppressed through love, humility and faith

German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's approach highlighted understanding as a dialogic and reciprocal experience. Instead of a success of self-expression, Gadamer describes dialogue as "a transformation into communion in which we do not remain what we were" (p. 146). Jürgen Habermas's concept of an "ideal speech situation" presents possibilities where individuals can deliberate, debate, agree, and act when communication between individuals is governed by basic, implied rules. Russian literary and social critic Mikhail Bakhtin sees it as characterized by polyvocality—many voices, many choices, not a binary, which aims for synthesis/consensus, that is, multiple outcomes are possible.

American quantum physicist David Bohm meanwhile explored dialogue practice as interconnected participatory thinking. A process for people to come together to "think together" and move away from fragmentation, division, and toward balance. American public opinion specialist Daniel Yankelovich approaches dialogue as a tool for democratic strength to involve people in decision making processes. Brazilian educator Paolo Freire perceived dialogue as an existential necessity marked by love, humility, and faith (p. 34). Primarily for Freire, dialogue is focused on praxis and serves to transform education and empower the oppressed.

Dialogue didn't start with Buber or Bohm or any of the above theorists, but with many indigenous communities whose cultural notions don't get represented within dialogue textbooks. This book aims to build on the existing trajectory of dialogue ideas, through an exploration of the term "dialogue" in relation to other forms of communication with specific goals tied to the classroom. At the same time, it provides space to "othered" perspectives through a counter-cultural lens. Dialogue breaks the common sense notions of what is scientific and scholarly, and investigates deep-rooted notions about self and others in service of transformative classroom learning. We, as co-editors, hope to center practices that are decolonizing, by moving away from mainstream Western frameworks and leaning towards the lived and experienced approaches to dialogues from other cultural perspectives.

Social Location of Co-editors

Unequal power relations and in-betweenness are processes I (Ashmi) first contemplated within the classroom, while growing up in a Hindu lower-middle-class and -caste Indian family, and later as an international doctoral student, woman of color, and immigrant in the United States. I often

wondered: Why do some kids only talk with a few others, and sit separately? Why do teachers address and behave differently with different students? I started to notice how a lack of dialogue perpetuated the differences and suppressed rich opportunities for connection.

Transitioning to the United States, I realized much of these patterns of difference and division remained the same. With no assigned mentor, intellectual orienting, and reeling from culture shock, it was challenging to perform to a high doctoral standard in my first semester. This was an early introduction to deficit thinking and imposter syndrome in academia. After a long phase of trying to fit in as a scholar-teacher, adopting Western styling, and injecting teaching philosophy with ideas and plans from successful educators, I realized I could never be White or Eurocentric. "Imposter syndrome" was not an individualistic struggle I had to overcome, but rather an experience contextualized within an academic system that rewarded sameness and thus, in relation, Whiteness. My space was in-between cultures, identities, and contexts.

A question I have asked myself since: How can a marginalized student progress in my classroom without high-caste/race credentials, without education/language/skills gained through wealth or affluence and while being validated for their cultural capital? In my position at San Francisco State University, these thoughts have catalyzed this book and led to crafting a philosophy rooted in teachers and students as co-learners. It informs my pursuit of dialogic pedagogy, which has immense potential in co-creating inclusive, intersectional, and authentic environments within education. Considerations of decentering dialogue from Western assumptions and being truly culturally inclusive fascinate me as I continue my journey as a woman of color educator and international immigrant examining ideas of home, belonging, community, and culture in my scholarship.

Though born in Vietnam, I (Hoa) lived most of my life in the United States, where I was curious about the in-between spaces of being not quite Vietnamese and not quite American. The tag-on label of Vietnamese-American did not suffice. Much of my family's cultural values were the foundations upon which my understanding of self and relationships was conceived. In addition, as queer woman of color in a mixed orientation marriage, being in a space of liminal identities and queer erasure across intercultural contexts informed much of my work as a systemic therapist and educator. An example of this was my coming to understand how Eurocentric medical discourses in the nineteenth century influenced the pathologization of LGBTQ identities in colonization and post-reform

Vietnam, as well as the current erasure and generalizations of Vietnamese experiences and narratives in the United States.

Within my queer immigrant experience, I also held the status of being a US citizen, highly educated, and able-bodied person among other privileges. In my dissertation on "Coming In and Coming Out: Navigating the Spaces Between Cultural and Sexual Identity," which centered voices of LGBQ international students, I was challenged to explore the intersections of privilege, oppression, and power in the stories we tell, the stories told about us, and the stories that are untold and yet-to-be-told. In teaching courses on diversity and social justice in family therapy, I draw from these intersections in my experience and believe dialogue can unveil new stories and alternative narratives. Through personal and professional dialogic moments in my training as a family therapist, I started to (re)discover the merit of relational ways of thinking and being, culturally informed understandings of self and community, and dialogue as a catalyst for possibilities and transformations.

Mission Possible: Setting the Stage for Meaningful Dialogic Moments

The term "dialogue" is rooted in the Greek word *dialogos—dia* means "through" and *logos* means "word" or "meaning of the word" (Huang-Nissen, 1999). Dialogue has been likened to many things in this book: a mixed soup, chemical reaction, mosaic, quilt. There is no one way to think about a dialogic moment in time, neither do two dialogues ever look the same. And yet, what makes a dialogue possible can be very difficult to pinpoint. The possibility of dialogue is an enchanting, fascinating one, and given all the barriers, constraints, and challenges, some underlying elements may indicate how people find meaning and understanding individually and collectively.

Dialogue extends a space for multiple possibilities to convene in the flow of conversation and refrains from establishing one solution. Participants are not forced to accept others' beliefs, nor are they persuading others to adopt their worldview. Instead, dialogue challenges participants to truly listen, hear, and understand those who seemingly hold different or even polarized positions from them. This sets dialogue apart from other paradigms of communication in education such as debate and discussion (Nagda, 2019). In debate, two or more oppositional sides

defend their thinking and critique other different viewpoints with the goal of winning. In discussion, participants individually share their ideas with the goal of establishing clarity, conviction, and understanding on a topic at hand. In contrast to both of these methods, dialogue emphasizes collaboration rather than competition, complexities rather than clarity and is more interested in ambivalences (Nagda, 2019).

Hence, dialogue calls for critical reflection, questioning of our own viewpoints, and deepening our understanding and connections with people across differing perspectives, ideas, and life experiences. This reaching across divides, borders, and labels enables us to humanize one another. As such, dialogue is an ongoing, relational process, rather than a one-time intervention. The role of the facilitator is also critical in holding space for curious engagement and perspective taking. The facilitator structures the dialogue in ways that help participants listen to each other, sit with the uncomfortableness of engaging with and humanizing their "other," and practice humility and openness to making mistakes in the conversation.

The dialogic approach is thriving across fields of study and advancing as a transdisciplinary practice. Contributions to dialogue originate from various disciplines such as education, communication studies, dialogue and deliberation, conflict resolution, linguistics, media sciences, philosophy, psychology, family therapy, social work, sociology, anthropology, culture sciences, religious studies, economics, leadership, advocacy and social justice, and so on. An increasing number of scholars continue to develop and apply the theoretical underpinnings and practices of dialogue in their respective studies. In this book alone, contributors derive their dialogic knowledge and experience from the fields of intercultural and interreligious conflict resolution, ethnic and cultural studies, media sciences, art and art history, language and linguistics, literature, international studies and education policy, counseling and clinical psychology, couple and family therapy, social work, political science, and rhetoric studies.

Dialogues begin with the process of setting the format and guidelines in which participants will abide by. Within Eurocentric contexts, a general set of guidelines or conversational agreements are often used to create a platform for dialogue, such as using I-statements, speak one at a time, avoid interrupting others, honoring confidentiality, and listening to understand. These guidelines often serve as a space for which the boundaries and conversational rules are negotiated, discussed, and maintained. They are also situated within Western views of the dialogical process. Despite the best intentions, guidelines and models of dialogues have inherent

individualistic values and priorities, which can be limiting, exclusionary, and counterproductive to the dialogic goals. Instead these guidelines should shift the focus from individual morality and actions to relational accountability and shared responsibility in the spirit of the conversation (calling forth versus calling out). This further creates space for participants to share different experiences while connecting the theoretical underpinnings and learnings to real-world application. In addition, having a sense of the dialogue structure is helpful if participants are treating the conversation with care, rather than carefully. This shifts the participant's position in the dialogue to cultivate a culture of care and empathy, in contrast to a culture of rule-following and authority-obeying.

The purpose of this volume is to bring together fresh perspectives and unheard voices in the field of dialogue to enrich the classroom pedagogical practice. In doing so, the book showcases histories and ways of being from scholars from practitioners within and outside the US. Because the ideas are rooted in different geographies, languages, texts and meaning, the editors have honored the difference that comes through in reflective expression and at times, even in the articulation. Through the chapters, we have avoided a rigid uniformity in the unfolding of the chapters. Each chapter follows its own thematic flow while connecting with the larger themes of classroom pedagogy, social location and cultural rooting. In these narratives, authors have leaned into their own lexical choices to tell their stories better. Ultimately, the dialogues reflect the different micro verses within the same globe, and invite our thoughts on the similarity and differences embedded within our dialogical discourses.

When Not to Dialogue

To truly appreciate dialogue, it is equally important to understand what dialogue cannot and is not intended to achieve. No tool is appropriate in all circumstances. There are instances in which dialogue is not only challenging, but also non-conducive given the context at hand. While dialogue is a transformative and versatile tool for community understanding and change, certain conditions are necessary for creating and facilitating a dialogical process.

Facilitators and participants entering a dialogue need to recognize the goals, parameters, and limits of dialogue. Dialogue is not intended to seek evidence, answers, or conclusions. Within a dialogue, the goal is not to establish truth, find flaws and counter arguments, or solidify positions.

Rather, the goals of dialogue center on creating shared meanings and highlighting areas of ambivalence. Depending on the purpose of the conversation, dialogue may not be the most suitable approach and other tools can be utilized in lieu of or in conjunction with dialogue, such as education, advocacy, strategic leadership, and restorative justice.

The openness and readiness of participants is another condition for dialogical exchange. It is critical that those entering a dialogue understand the rationale and agree to make efforts toward a collaborative conversation. While there may be snags or challenges, participants are beginning the conversation with a mutual understanding to uphold the intentions of the dialogue. This allows participants to be curious about differences and reflect on areas of disagreement, using them as opportunities for learning, questioning, and complicating the topic. In addition, willingness to engage in the inner work and reflection when encountering our own discomfort and reactivity is a component of participant readiness. If participants are not yet ready to hold space for different beliefs and reflect on their own, their limited readiness may become an obstacle to the conversation.

Dialogue also needs to exist in the context of a communal process that is collaborative and relational. In dialogue, participants are challenged to suspend their personal, individual interests to care for the relationship between them and others, sharing responsibility for the dialogical process. Through a communal process, the group honors individual differences, while simultaneously responding to each person's position with respect and authentic interest.

Similarly, the facilitators' openness and attunement to the goals of dialogue is a necessary condition. Facilitators may face challenges unique to facilitating a dialogue, such as holding space for multiple viewpoints, ambivalence, and dualities. Setting the stage for dialogue is also important for facilitators to help ease participants into the process. In particular, facilitators may need experience and training to assist participants in sharing airtime space and convey empathy and openness, without trying to force the conversation toward a specific destination.

A context in which the threat of safety exists may impede space for open, authentic dialogue. An example is if the participant fears losing their job or facing a possible legal consequence if they were to speak up about their beliefs. Dialogue involves some risk of engaging in an uncomfortable, vulnerable position, uncertainty of disclosing one's thoughts and feelings, or fear of others' judgment. However, when the risk has

significant, enduring repercussions to the individuals' physical, social, and economic wellbeing outside of the dialogical space, participants' capacity to dialogue is inevitably impacted by these potential consequences.

Given that dialogue creates a platform for equal participation, a context of dominance and control counters the purpose of dialogue. In dialogue, power is shared, and no position is greater or superior to another. Dominance can occur only when we separate ourselves from others, by justifying how one group or individual can dominate over another. What if a privileged perspective drives the conversation? What happens when group members talk over or interrupt one another? Or the group reject the experience of a person who holds a marginalized identity because it does not fit with the larger narrative of that marginalized group? How can the facilitator arbitrate the shared power without exerting dominance in their position? Balancing dynamics of dominance and separation in dialogue can be complex.

Overview of Chapters

Part I: The Value and Limits of Western Perspectives on Dialogue

Introduction: Beyond Borders, Labels, and Divides
In our first chapter, we share how the idea of this book took birth and why its grounding in decentering Eurocentric philosophies for transformative conversations is relevant during the pandemic and after. The chapter also includes foundational thinking on dialogue that informs the theory and practice today, and extends those ideas to include meditations in three areas: inclusion, intersectionality, and authenticity. Finally, there is an overview of the 11 chapters and a synthesis that follows, which demonstrate with case studies or vignettes how to navigate complex conversations in the classroom.

Decolonizing the Classroom: Settler Colonialism, Knowledge Production, and Antiracism
Avalos, in this chapter, explains decolonized pedagogy as challenging racist ideologies and making power and Indigenous resistance and histories visible in academia and classrooms. A key starting point of applying this approach for students is to acknowledge and honor marginalized perspectives and epistemologies and practice self-reflection, question assumptions

while examining relationships of privilege and power. Through extensive referencing of indigenous and Native American scholarship, Avalos presents ways for students to develop their critical voices, become possible allies and better citizens.

Part II: Navigating Paradoxes and Multiplicity

Interfaith Dialogue: Managing Paradoxes
Based on extensive dialogues conducted between group members of different faiths in the Middle East, in this chapter, Abu-Nimer shares six key elements instrumental for creating effective dialogic encounters during long-term social conflict or crisis situations. Also instructive in this account is the unpacking of the paradoxes embedded in intercultural and asymmetrical power-driven conversations. Translating these critical insights into classroom learning holds immense potential for engaging diverse students by building connections between academic knowledge and complex contradictory ethnic histories and understandings.

Harmony: Essence and Applications to Dialogue
Chan chronicles the history, origins, and mythology around the Chinese cultural concept of harmony in this chapter and discusses the dangers of dialogic application when the conceptual meaning is distorted or "watered down." Through stories, examples, and case vignettes, Chan explains how true harmony is about holding individuality in tension with the collective and finding complementary understandings across differences. Harmony in dialogue can promote thoughtful considerations of freedom, peace, and heterogeneity across borders and contexts.

Not Transition, But Translation: A Dialogic Approach to "Differences" in a Korean Diasporic Evangelical Church
This chapter emerges from Kim's reflections on the experiences of creating authentic community relationships between believers and non-believers in a Korean Evangelical Protestant Bible Circle. According to Kim, subverting pre-existing power relations is essential for establishing lasting dialogic relations and cultivating a sense of belonging. Driven by an awareness of positionality and privilege, the chapter traces possibilities of cultivating communal belonging and bonding in the classroom through self-deprecatory jokes, unusual linguistic forms of address and sharing of food.

Part III: Between Rupture and Transformation

Los Seis de Boulder Sculpture Project: A Reflection on Dialogue and Community Building Through Art-Making
Can community sculpture making and dialogue address the erasure of Chicanx histories, trauma, and discrimination within a university setting? Baetz and Preciado answer this question while conducting dialogues across differences for the Los Seis de Boulder sculpture project in a ceramics studio. Through mosaic-puzzling and immersive conversations, the authors construct conversational bridges across time for remembering, healing, and reshaping traumatic narratives.

Writing Black Queers into Existence: A South African Model for Dialogue Among Oppressed Groups
This chapter documents a dialogic attempt to provide representation to Black Queer writers in South Africa, a community, which has been marginalized, shamed, and rendered invisible. Recognizing the structural barriers around participation of these groups, Mokgopa describes careful planning across stages of pre-dialogue, dialogue, and post-dialogue. Such a dialogue design made vulnerable contributions and transformative moments possible through conversations and creative arts.

Intergroup Dialogue for Social Healing: Creating Spaces of Collective Hope and Transformation
Proposing intergroup dialogue for social healing, this chapter draws on experiences from a community-based, trauma-informed peacebuilding program in Kenya for application to a classroom dialogue setting. Nagda and López present and elucidate what healing-centered engagement may look like in a post-conflict situation. Facilitated by storytelling and speaking individual truths in the collective, the approach lays down genuine and intersectional ways for building new relationships and restoring social fabric.

Experiential Ecological and Art-Based Practices for Reconnecting with Mother Earth and with Each Other
Dialogue coupled with eco-education can have far-reaching implications for understanding and combating environmental challenges. Rappeport and Lin draw on cultural and spiritual ideas to engage students in art-based practices, including creating art with music, self-portraits, storytelling, solo and collective artistic pieces, labyrinth walks, along with

conversations on religious and ethical beliefs on nature. These are experiential dialogue connecting the mind, body, and spirit for renewed connection and empathy between participants, others, and the ecosystem.

Part IV: Ongoing Dialogical Practice in Classrooms

Dialogic Learning in the Time of a Global Pandemic and Beyond
A group of diverse educators share their experiences of adapting dialogic teaching and learning to the digital shift caused by COVID-19 pandemic. Amid many challenges, the teachers were able to leverage online community building tools, incorporate digital storytelling practices and first-person narratives, and explore multiple identities of students and teachers within their home environments. The essays highlight the opportunity for social connection, critical consciousness, and innovation within the disruption in learning environments.

Relationality as a Way of Being: A Pedagogy of Classroom Conversations
Envisioning a relationship-oriented pedagogy, this chapter explains how such an approach can transform student-teacher and student-student relations based on sharing of power and allowing vulnerability and discomfort to guide conversations. Demonstrated through an example of a difficult class conversation around sexuality and religious beliefs, relational pedagogy can open dialogic space to explore hurt and collective responsibility.

Dialogue and Systems Theory: Teaching Public Conversations in Family Therapy
Within the context of a family therapy classroom, this chapter showcases how a systemic orientation combined with embodied learning can impart important lessons to re-humanize others and bridge differences. For students and practicing therapists, such dialogic teaching translates to an ethics of care, curiosity, and respect for different and othered identities and perspectives.

Honoring Culture, Holding Complexity: Synthesis and Emerging Possibilities in Dialogue
This chapter synthesizes the key points of all invited chapters and connects them to emerging ideas of power disruption, in-betweenness, and

relationality in a classroom setting. It also discusses how to conceptualize application of these approaches for anyone seeking to apply dialogue in their daily life. Some consideration will be given to rethinking a global context for dialogue followed by a note on barriers and challenges that can arise.

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CHAPTER 2

Decolonizing the Classroom: Settler Colonialism, Knowledge Production, and Antiracism

Natalie Avalos

As scholars and educators, it is critical for us to explore the racialized dimensions of knowledge production and its effects in the classroom. As a Chicana of Apache descent, I feel obligated to apply decolonial approaches to pedagogy. In an academic context, decolonization has come to mean challenging the racist ideologies that produce hierarchies of knowledge systems/worldviews and peoples. While there is no single perfect approach to decolonizing your pedagogy, it could mean interrogating our assumptions around what constitutes legitimate and rational knowledge in the academy. By analyzing the ways racialization continues to stratify peoples and resources, students are enabled to listen without judgment and are motivated to explore collective solutions to material inequities.

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I teach Native American and Indigenous studies. In my classes, I preface any literature on Native and Indigenous life with work that contextualizes the overlapping histories of colonialism that have produced what we now understand as Indigenous peoples. Indigenous knowledge systems were, until fairly recently, perceived by anthropologists as failed epistemology. Categorized as "animism," their views were framed as childish, superstitious, and clear evidence they lacked the rationality to govern themselves or lay legitimate claims to their own lands. These ideologies produced legal structures like the Doctrine of Discovery, a series of papal bulls that declared lands not inhabited by Christians open to seizure by right of "discovery" (theft), which became one of the most enduring tools of Indigenous dispossession. By acquainting students with a genealogy of how settler colonialism operates, contemporary Native life is made more legible.

Some Native peoples in the Americas refer to this land-base as Turtle Island, remarking that it rests on the back of a turtle, and, as others have said elsewhere, it is turtles all the way down. We can think of a decolonial pedagogy as de-naturalizing all the way down. Critical pedagogies explain how power operates as a diffuse network of ideologies and institutions, such as racism and the legal system (Denzin et al., 2008). Reframing critical and antiracist analytics with a settler colonial lens helps us understand how coloniality operates all around us—in "natural laws" and the social hierarchies they produce (Smith, 1999; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006). An Indigenist approach to pedagogy means deferring to Native peoples as the foremost experts of their own experience and knowledge systems (Kovach, 2009). It can be implemented by using critical readings by Native scholars or those that center the voices and views of Indigenous peoples.

The goal here is to denaturalize assumptions embedded in Western epistemology that position Indigenous knowledge—and by proxy Indigenous peoples' claims to land—as illegitimate (Tuck and Yang, 2012). In the process, students begin to recognize how the institutions we take for granted as inevitable, such as the U.S. and Mexican states, are socially constructed. They are also better able to see how racialization and power continue to shape the politics between peoples and places. Once students understand that the misreadings of non-Western religious traditions and peoples operated as a strategy for dispossession, they begin to question their own biases. A decolonial framework helps students understand that knowledge is not neutral and is generally shaped by

socio-political goals, as are their own beliefs. Once they understand how bias operates and become less attached to their own perspectives, they more easily develop a dialogic mindset of listening and reflection without judgment. They may even be eager to explore the possibility that these traditions have something legitimate to tell us about immaterial and material life.

Making Power Visible

In my Native American and Indigenous studies courses, my aim is to understand contemporary Indigenous life in relation to colonial histories. I employ both a decolonial approach and an Indigenist approach to these ends. As noted above, a decolonial approach makes the mechanisms of colonial power visible. It denaturalizes our assumptions about Indigenous peoples, such as why the Western world systematically dismissed Indigenous knowledge. In other words, one of my goals is to unpack the politics of this perception as a strategy of settler colonial power. Native-centered narratives often provide a more nuanced and tribally specific framework to understand sacred and interdependent relationships with land and spiritual power.

Students are sometimes reluctant to take the epistemologies of Indigenous peoples seriously. For instance, when Indigenous peoples frame plants, particularly medicinal plants, not only as persons but also teachers and relatives that provide the people with moral instructions, students are skeptical. Westerners have been trained to view the land as inert matter. This assumed materialism prevents us from seeing the natural relationships that exist all around us. Native-centered readings provide grounded examples that resist overly mystical interpretations of these relationships.

Lakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr., often discussed the Three Sisters: corn, beans, and squash, who are recognized by many tribes within U.S. borders to have a familial relationship that necessitates these sister plants be grown together. Empirical study has confirmed that their co-planting produces a natural nitrogen cycle that fertilizes the soil, preventing depletion. As students consider the ethical instructions provided by these three sisters, they better conceptualize what Indigenous peoples mean when they say they live in an interdependent relationship to the land and one another. For example, in my course Global Indigeneities: Religion and Resistance, we explore contemporary Indigenous movements for

sovereignty and environmental stewardship in the Americas, Oceania, and Asia. Initial readings provide a broad theoretical framework for understanding the unique, but often parallel strategies of settler colonialism, the religious traditions of the Indigenous communities dispossessed, followed by regional examples of resistance movements. Since there is so little popular media on these movements and peoples, students are often surprised to learn about their histories and continued resistance, but also how these peoples are often struggling to protect precious resources in order to feed and sustain their communities amid violent overdevelopment. Once students have the basic theoretical tools to understand racialization, missionization, scientism, natural law, and criminalization of Indigenous peoples/religion as mechanisms of settler colonialism, they are better prepared to understand Indigenous stewardship movements as a profound expression of sovereignty.

We then explore how overlapping histories of settler colonialism produce environmental crises through regional examples. By posing questions like "What is Indigenous stewardship? What might earth justice look like?" early on, we can later ask "What does it mean to understand the land—and its inhabitants—as sovereign?" Here, the objective is to understand how Indigenous philosophies of land/living serve as the political foundation for challenging settler dispossession. When Indigenous peoples continue to assert the land's sentience, they are critiquing the dominant assumptions that it is inert, a position that has historically been used to justify its exploitation. I structure regional examples to include readings on the specific social-political history of the people, their religious worldviews, and their movements for sovereignty. This material serves as a testimonial, situational accounts of land struggle that students are invited to witness without judgment, while simultaneously keeping the power differentials operating in each case in mind. For instance, a unit on Native North America may focus on Lakota water protectors at Standing Rock. The first-class reading will explore Lakota/Dakota religion/political history with the U.S., while the second reading will include a short ethnographic vignette and/or collection of news stories on the #NoDAPL movement at Standing Rock. The goal of dialogue here is to understand Indigenous perspectives and how they ethically inform Indigenous fights for survival.

The design and intention of decolonial approaches to dialogue are meant to incorporate elements of self-reflection, particularly the investigation of privilege and power. Students living in the U.S. and Canada likely

learned some historical contextualization of how these states were created but may know little about how colonial dispossession continues to impact Indigenous peoples today. Linking their everyday privileges directly to Indigenous dispossession and contextualizing that process in history help students situate themselves and others in the topics under consideration. The recognition of their own power supports the process of bearing witness with respect, but also compassion. Here decolonial pedagogy dovetails perfectly with goals of dialogue that ask students to deepen their understanding of power vis a vis Others. A decolonial approach emphasizes that there are real material outcomes to colonial power differentials; and they continue to persist through naturalized assumptions, but also through the dearth of data. As students cultivate a deeper awareness of self and their place in the world, they better understand why centering Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies in the classroom is necessary, disrupting dialogical patterns that are often permeated by colonial thought.

Decolonizing as Rehumanizing

I generally reserve five to fifteen minutes of class time to short documentaries, YouTube clips, and other forms of media about these environmental struggles in order to make the voices of those involved salient. If you are interested in doing any critical, decolonial pedagogy, centering the voices of those you are discussing and learning about is key. For instance, I might show a clip of "Mni Wiconi: The Stand at Standing Rock," a short documentary made by Divided Films, which interviews Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Chairman, David Archambault II, and other members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe on the fight for #NoDAPL. Presenting clips in class supports the goals of dialogue by humanizing racialized subjects and providing additional context for the human stakes of land struggles. Additionally, first-hand accounts resist the urge to fall back into discussion mode, in essence, the possibility of becoming too abstract by assuming an equal playing field of power between subjects. Here, Native peoples are more immediately understood as the experts of their experiences that should be listened to carefully, given their unique relationship with these places and history with similar challenges. Students are generally quite curious when hearing directly from those impacted and are better able to suspend assumptions they may have on the topic of pipelines or ecological

protection more largely. In essence, they are intuitively deferent to the power of testimony.

It is often the first time a student has actually seen and heard a Native person before, which can be powerfully instructive because they witness both their clarity of experience, but also their indictments of injustice. Students are forced to sit with the gravity of Indigenous dispossession as they engage in dialogue with one another about it in class, but also, on a deeper individual level, in their writing. This process of witnessing and deeply considering Indigenous views is most pedagogically effective in transforming them from spectators to possible allies. They note that these first-person testimonies are quite influential, sparking deep feelings, expressed in their writing, of disgust, shock, or even outrage that Indigenous dispossession continues so egregiously within the U.S. and beyond. Their own civic awareness deepens and maybe is even catalyzed as they become more acquainted with the ways settler dispossession operates.

Ethics and Positionality

At heart, my courses are about ethics, understanding Indigenous ethics—right relationships to land and community. When we take the time to think about the ethics of Others, it provides us with a space to consider our own—what kinds of responsibilities do we have to the land and one another? What kind of collective values do we need to assert right now? I have remarked to students (and colleagues) that we can learn so much from the moral breakdown of our political landscape. We can see it as an opportunity to see through the political performances, witness the most depraved human activity. Take stock. Then, collectively, choose to do something totally different. Lift our voices. Express dissent. Discontent. Our classrooms are the incubators for these dialogues. I provide an intellectual framework that is one part philosophy and one part anthropological survey with decolonial critiques constituting their creamy center.

Religious studies as a discipline has the flexibility to take an interdisciplinary approach to questions of meaning, the sacred, and ultimate concern. As we learn to use new antiracist analytics, we can better consider how religious lifeworlds intersect with material horrors in the present in positive and negative ways. My particular goal for the course described above is for students to learn enough about Indigenous stewardship that they better understand the overarching relationship between contemporary expressions of neocolonialism/neoliberalism and environmental

destruction. When they do, they may begin to advocate for intersectional forms of justice that center the wellbeing of the land, as they see how their own health and wellbeing are dependent on it.

Taking a decolonial approach seriously disrupts the stigma around Indigenous knowledge as "primitive" and irrational. I have noticed that when I am teaching about Buddhism, students are often enamored by its own reference to interdependence, an idea rooted in dependent arising, a philosophical framework that describes all phenomena as interconnected. My guess is that racialization works differently here. Our Orientalist conditioning allows us to consume the worldviews of the east as "exotic" and enchanting while still viable. Students are sometimes more dismissive of similar concepts rooted in Native America and other Indigenous communities because the stigma of their views as failed epistemology is more pronounced. If we want students to understand racism as structural, we have to make these epistemological assumptions legible. We have to illuminate how these perceptions structure the very way we think about the world and the Other. When students can deeply conceptualize how Others have become so deeply ontologically and structurally dispossessed through these assumptions, they can change the way they relate to the greater world.

An important exercise in making power visible is to teach about power from your own position. Complicate your positionality and relationship to power to your students. This will model how and why they should think about their own positionality, deepening the dialogic process of political introspection. To these ends, I assign a "Decolonial Autobiography" that asks them to think about their own relationship to power, access to resources, upward mobility, and so on in relation to land starting with the place(s) they have lived. When we think about the layers of the places we know and take for granted as "ours," we are confronted with each place's history of Indigenous dispossession in addition to its degree of violence. That violence still reverberates in the minds and hearts of the communities that exist at its margins. I have adapted it from multiple sources and it essentially asks students to answer the following questions in 600 words:

> Think about the land that you were born into. Imagine the land itself has many layers—what is its history? Who were its first inhabitants or peoples? Or even the many inhabitants that co-existed there? What is its colonial history? What is your position in relation to this colonial history? How do you and your family fit in this picture? When did they arrive to this land (if

known)? From where? Where do you live now? What is this place's history? What is your relationship to the colonial relations of power in this land?

While I do not ask students to share this information in class, I find that in their writing this assignment helped students to ground what we have learned about settler colonialism and white supremacy in a more deeply, personal way, in short, helping them understand how they may benefit from these structures, enriching the contextualization of these analytics. The deeper reflection on complicity allows them soberly bear witness to the chaos and violence over land dispossession that preceded their lives, yet continues.

They bring this new introspection to class dialogues, ranging from urgent calls for more comprehensive education on the subject, for instance, suggesting that Indigenous peoples' histories are taught with greater depth in grade school, to voicing their pain and discomfort in their complicity. Many are relieved to receive the tools to better understand these colonial legacies, but also more keenly empathetic to its impacts. Students realize that these issues are not abstract, they directly impact our lives in this continent collectively, and so become more invested in collective solutions. As classes end and we focus on strategizing around decolonization, these tools better equip students to join with Indigenous peoples as allies to re-envision what this looks like.

Re-envisioning a Better World

My ultimate goal in the classroom is to cultivate a space where students learn how power operates but also about how marginalized peoples take their power back; how they empower themselves through their ethics and religious lifeways. In the process, students may reflect on their own relationships to and possibilities for power. College students, even in their first couple of years, can easily become disillusioned and overwhelmed by the injustice they witness around them. They often feel powerless in the face of structural violence. They think that it is inevitable and will continue to eat and destroy everything in its path. They, like many in the U.S., feel powerless to effect change. Most of us have become estranged from the many processes of social change and equity making. Students do not see just how much power they actually have. Part of my job is to help them see their own power. To disrupt. To deconstruct. To reconstruct our social world. Teaching about relations of power can and should be linked to how

we as individuals have power to effect change. The "on the ground" narratives that make up a good portion of class material instruct on multiple levels. They provide examples of effective organizing, resistance, and sometimes remarkable change. They challenge the illusion that these structures are totalizing and inevitable by revealing that they're actually teetering, waiting to fall.

Part of what we are learning is how to be in the world in a nonviolent way. How do we share power? How do we share resources? How do we live ethically? The irony of living in a secular, religiously plural society is that religion becomes interiorized. It has become part of the personal and private sphere. We can believe whatever we wish in the privacy of our own homes. We can choose to attend any number of religious institutions or events. But we no longer have a common set of ethics. We have no coherent moral center. Our most vocal voices on the religious front most often veil the most hateful racist and sexist bigotry. So, we have become disillusioned about religion, we have lost hope that we can act morally, that we can act with integrity.

When we are seriously faced with the worst expressions of inhumanity on our political stage, as we are now, we are forced to make a decision. Will we be cynical and believe that we really are the Hobbesian beasts that would live brutishly to protect one's own interests or will we see the "helpers" those that choose to work together to solve problems. Who will I be in this arena of chaos? Who will I choose to align myself with? What is my responsibility to others who face injustice? How can I use my deepened analysis and clarified empathy to stand up to hate and bigotry in daily life? How does it feel to perceive agreement and disagreement on matters of power and privilege? How can I work toward understanding for yourself and others? How does it feel in your body when you are committed to equity and justice? When you act with honesty and integrity? These questions are part of a radical pedagogy because we need to radically rethink how we live. We need to evaluate the very core of our relationship to life and living. When we do, we will, collectively, manifest a better world.

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PART II

Navigating Paradoxes and Multiplicity

CHAPTER 3

Interfaith Dialogue: Managing Paradoxes

Mohammed Abu-Nimer

What Is Dialogue and Why?

Dialogical discourses and skills are widely needed around the globe. Building, institutional, group, and individual awareness and capacities to dialogically engage with those who are different from ourselves is a crucial element in conflict prevention and crisis intervention. Dialogue deals with cultural misperceptions and negative cultural assumptions that fuel negative attitudes and justify exclusion and discrimination.

Perceptions and misperceptions constitute a major factor in generating violent conflicts and sustaining dynamics of suspicion, distrust, fear, hopelessness, and helplessness. Despite the popular assumption held by many people in which only societies deeply divided and torn by violent conflicts are subject to such dynamics, deep-rooted racist and xenophobic antagonistic attitudes and sentiments against refugees, especially Muslims in certain European and North American settings, are instead part of the daily public discourse.

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Since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, ethnic and religious identities have emerged on the center stage of world politics. Often identity is described as a set of layers of awareness that the person accumulates over her/her life journey. These layers of consciousness vary in their priorities, sharpness, and focus (gender, religious, political ideology, race, ethnicity, etc.). Nevertheless, over time, humans have used identity politics to incite and sustain conflicts; once a conflict is in place, many peacebuilding tools are brought in place by either third parties to ease the tension and help find a resolution. In such a context, dialogue is one of discourses and tools utilized by third parties to build peace.

Fundamentally, the dialogue process is about building a container or a space for individuals and groups to critically examine their current and past perceptions and judgments of themselves, as well as to delve into difficult and painful issues in their relationship with the other. In addition, dialogues can help challenge misperceptions and negative assumptions that justify exclusion and discrimination. This process can gradually help in confronting fears of trusting the other and believing in the possibilities to find mutual ground and overcome animosities that are necessary to build and sustain peace.

"My learning journey of dialogue has a special value for me; I felt safe to delve deeper into difficult issues of stereotyping and deal with my misperceptions through dialogue principles and techniques."[1] Such a statement is what a dialogue facilitator hopes to happen with courageous participants in dialogue encounters. The chapter utilizes the experience of the author in facilitating and leading many dialogue groups in the Middle East and South Asia regions between 2013 and 2019. The facilitator of these dialogues, Palestinian-American, Mohammed Abu-Nimer earned a PhD in conflict analysis and resolution from George Mason University in 1993. He joined Guilford College peace and conflict program. Since 1997, he has been teaching at the Peace and Conflict Resolution program at the School of International Service, at American University in Washington. Since the mid-1990s, scholar-practitioner Abu-Nimer has specialized in identity-based conflicts (interreligious and interethnic conflicts) and facilitated conversations and trainings in many conflict contexts, such as Palestine, Israel, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Arab region, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and USA between community leaders, civil society groups; religious leaders, and policy makers.

A dialogical encounter is contrary to what many people think or describe, and it is not meeting the other. It is meeting oneself and

confronting our own negative images and biases of the other. In the encounter, we need the other to show us what we think and feel. The other becomes the mirror in which we examine our own feelings and ask risky questions that, otherwise, we will not ask if we are not forced to meet the other in a trusting environment. For example, in a dialogue setting, when two Iraqi participants from different faith groups encounter each other, they will have to confront each other's questions, fears, and perceptions about the causes of their homeland conflicts: Why is Iraq a war-torn country? Why can't we embrace our nation's diversity? Why do we not know much about each other's faith and ethnicity?

A dialogical encounter contains certain dynamics that facilitate a painful process of self-discovery, which has been prohibited or blocked (intentionally or unintentionally) by social agencies. The blocking of such a process is certainly done intentionally by most socialization agencies. A society with all its agencies has conspired against its members to prohibit and prevent everyone, especially children, from dialogically meeting the other. Being accused of betrayal or treason is just one of the potential consequences that a daring person can face from their own community (or even family).

The engagement in a dialogical encounter process requires that participants accept certain assumptions, including some that might contradict their own faith group's theological interpretations. The conditions for an effective dialogical encounter include six key elements briefly discussed in the following section.

First, it is critical to have **trust in other faith group members** to build a relationship based on honesty and transparency. In conflict areas, especially in contexts in which religious identities have been manipulated by the various sides to justify violence in the name of protecting one's own faith groups, it is highly challenging to take the risk of trusting members of the other faith. In a context like Israeli–Palestinian conflict, cultural misperceptions and stereotypes are deeply ingrained in the collective mind and psyche of the three Abrahamic groups. Thus, during the early stage of the first encounter, participants often admit to the following negative images: "Muslims cannot be trusted, they always side with each other in situations of violence; that is what their faith tells them. Don't you know about their brotherhood pact?!" "Jews will always stick together no matter what you do with them." "Christians only buy from each other. They cannot be trusted." Such statements are not exclusive to this region; for

example, in Sri Lanka, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, and Christian participants exchange such views when they meet for the first time.

The second dialogical encounter principle is rooted in the notion that we are all here for the **purpose of learning** about each other. Within most faith groups, learning about other religions is done through one's own clergy and religious agencies. In fact, there are whole systems or structures within faith groups that have evolved to specialize in teaching children and adults about the other faith groups and their religions. In Islam, for example, Daa'wa (spreading the word of Allah), which consists of comparing Islamic teaching to the teachings of other faith groups, is very central in persuading the individual to adopt the path of Islam. Similarly, the Evangelical missionary tradition has a practice that compares the Protestant teachings to Catholic teachings, or other faiths like Judaism and Buddhism (Augsburger & Abu-Nimer, 2009).

Thus, adopting the principle of being able to learn from others about one's own faith or others' faith(s) is a highly challenging practice. The dialogical encounter participants find themselves facing the following dilemmas: How do I deal with the information that was given to me about the other faith groups by my religious authorities? Who is right and who is wrong when the information is contradictory? Has anyone deceived me? Once the religious participant adopts the principle of learning through the encounter, the pressure of defending one's own story as was told by the rabbi, imam, priest, or Buddhist monk is re-lived.

The third dialogue encounter principle stresses the importance of **proper communication channels** and a venue that allows the religious and cultural meanings and codes to be interpreted accurately. Muslim participants have to listen fully and be able to articulate clearly their own perceptions of their Islamic spiritual and religious identity. In most cases, participants arrive at the encounter with a default communication system that is based on inter- and intra-religious defensive and offensive strategies of interaction. On many occasions when a Christian participant describes his perception of Islam and Muslims, the Muslim participants immediately assume the role of the traditional teacher who needs to "set the record straight" and make sure that the other speaker knows the "correct version of Islam." This dynamic repeats itself when Muslims describe Christianity or Judaism. Due to the negative historical collective memory and current interreligious conflict dynamics, the need to defend is deeply installed in the followers' minds. Thus, open communication is rarely deployed or utilized in the encounter. Facilitators are certainly needed to challenge

participants to apply critical thinking and verification processes to ensure that the old and default negative communication patterns are being replaced with newly and jointly agreed-upon communication methods. This verification process takes place through the encounter by posing questions such as: When you said … did you mean this…? Or this is what I understood from your message … is this what you meant to say?

Symmetry is another principle that ensures the effectiveness of the dialogical encounter. In the real world, individuals or members of a faith group are rarely in asymmetric relationships with each other. There are many examples of power asymmetries especially in contexts where a minority group is in dialogue with the dominant group. Such asymmetrical ties are reflected in daily social and cultural encounters. However, the dialogical encounter is based on the assumption that all members of the group are equal and have the same rights for expression and action. No priority is given to a member of the dominant faith group in society; on the contrary, often facilitators compensate for the external asymmetrical relations by empowering the faith minority groups throughout the encounter.

Symmetry is crucial for the dialogical encounter to affect issues of justice and grievances (Halabi, 2004). Faith groups will not feel comfortable if the encounter design reproduces the outside reality within the encounter and gives privileges to the dominant faith groups. Location can enhance perceptions of asymmetries when a dialogue is not held on neutral grounds. For example, in the Philippines dialogue venues are often decided or determined by the Christian groups and their agencies who organized the encounter, leaving Muslim participants frustrated. Even so, the dialogical encounter cannot entirely escape the asymmetric interreligious relations in the outside reality (Abu-Nimer & Lazarus, 2007).

However, the organizers of the encounter can be intentional in shifting the dynamics and constructing an environment that allows the minority faith groups to feel more empowered and the dominant majority to experience a dynamic of genuine equality. When the participant from the dominant faith group experiences and accepts the possibility for equal and symmetrical relations, their theological framework changes in a way to allow them to hold on to the newly constructed view of the other.

The fourth principle for dialogical encounters is related to the ability of the participants to **take risks** through the interreligious dialogue. Taking risk is an important step for each participant in the dialogical encounter. If participants do not take any risk in the interaction with other faith groups they are not able to learn beyond their comfort zone. Educational and

learning theories have already empirically established the principle that the zone of learning expands when the learner dares to ask questions and takes a risk in pursuing new information from other sources.

A genuine dialogical encounter will not only be focused on ritualistic presentation of the faith groups, but goes beyond that. It allows participants to pose questions that otherwise are not possible to rise in day-to-day life or interreligious interaction.

The fifth principle for dialogical encounter is the ability to engage with the other and with one's own faith group members and **discuss difficult theological and non-theological issues**. In many encounters, participants and organizers intentionally or unintentionally avoid dealing with difficult issues because of their fear of experiencing discomfort and pain. Also, others argue that it is better to focus on commonalities and avoid differences. However, avoiding difficult issues reduces the possibilities of building a deep and sustained trustful relationship. Their relationship will also be temporary or will not build enough resilience to withstand the political or security crisis. In fact, many dialogue groups have collapsed once violence escalated within or between their groups due to the lack of trust and lack of commitment.[2]

Tackling the hard issues means that the dialoguers in the interreligious encounters have allowed themselves to venture into the disputed areas that in the past had generated and will continue to generate distrust and suspicion between the members' faith groups. Obviously, delving into the difficult issues needs to be done gradually and facilitated professionally. For example, in Muslim and European dialogue groups issues such as historical crusade campaigns, colonialism, Palestinian issues, and Islamophobia are examples of challenging themes that have to be addressed in order to reach a level of trust and sense of honesty in the discussion. The above principles of interreligious encounters are applicable to other forms of encounters, too. Also this is not an exhaustive list of principles that can enhance interreligious encounters; however, they are central in shaping the process, design, and outcome of the dialogue.

Managing Dialogue Paradoxes

As mentioned above, there is an asymmetric power relation among participants in the dialogue due to their different realities, narratives, and histories with the conflict. As a result, they arrive at the dialogue with different motivations, which in part produce three primary areas of tension and

paradoxes for the dialogue's facilitators, convenors, and donors (Schoem & Hurtado, 2001).

Talking Versus Acting

Most participants from the minority groups or those who have less access to sources of political, social, or other forms of power tend to join dialogue groups mainly for changing systems and structures of deprivation. Thus, the success and failure of dialogical encounters for them are measured by **the willingness of the remaining participants to act in unilateral action and solidarity for such change**. Such a process or dynamic is often cited as a limitation of many interreligious dialogue or encounters; "these are talking shop encounters" is a statement repeated by many critics.

To walk the talk is an expectation that is often shared by participants in the initial interreligious dialogue encounter. Members of the different faith groups join the encounter because they are frustrated from their reality and the type of relationship their community has with the other faith groups and want to change. However, they soon realize that other members differ in their capacity, willingness, and awareness of what they can do and what needs to be done. Therefore, interreligious encounters become a platform for exploring what can be done together and separately to respond to the challenges facing the faith groups.

For those who seek immediate and even short-term action, this process often seems too slow and unfair. Facilitators keep repeating action cannot be a precondition for dialogue. The exclusive or overemphasis of emphasis on action puts pressure on those who are not ready to act and need a safe space to question, analyze, and reflect on the history and current reality of the relationship and system. The pressure for action from those in the group who are motivated by immediate need for change versus those who are interested in the process of learning and self-examination needs to be balanced by the facilitators.

Obviously, the orientation and the dialogue facilitators' views on the conflict and relationship can have serious implications on how this tension between these two forms of intervention (action versus talk). Serving the needs and expectations of the two groups is the ethical duty of the facilitator. The challenge of dealing with pressure of an action-oriented process is also reflected in the identification and assessment of the type of effective and acceptable actions to all members of the dialogue group.

Regardless of the nature of the action that has been agreed upon by the members within the encounter, it is essential that such action is jointly designed and implemented by the various faith groups in order to bind them to one another and advances the chances of sustained dialogue.

Individual Versus Collective Paradox

In a conflict dynamic setting, members of the dominant majority often refuse to see themselves as members of a collective group that benefits from an oppressive or discriminatory system. In interreligious and intercultural dialogue, the various components of the design (process, content, outputs and outcomes, and follow-up or sustainability) can be shaped to reflect the interveners and convenors perceptions of the relationship between the individual or collective frameworks. When the design is focused on individual framing, then the dynamics and outputs and measures of success become individualized and participants' responses are expected to reflect that. However, if the focus is on the collective aspect of the identity, the facilitators' questions and initiative proposed would target the structural arrangements that suppress the collective rights of the deprived groups. In the conflict dynamics setting, confronting the collective arrangements that sustain racial, patriarchal, or xenophobic systems becomes the target of the intervention.

The tension between the individual and collective framing of the dialogue design is reflected not only in the type of topics and ways in which the outcomes of the dialogue are measured, but also in the ways participants are encouraged to express their views. For example, facilitators who want to emphasize the individualization approach will insist on using the term "I," and discourage participants from using the terms "we." Hence, a Muslim European participant in a dialogue setting with Christians on European societies' reactions to religious and cultural differences is discouraged from saying "we the Muslims" and instead encouraged to say: "I am Mustafa faced problems in my city because I am Muslim."

The paradox is manifested when facilitators are framing the dialogue from an exclusively collective approach, especially when the design (topics, language, outcomes, follow-up, etc.) are mainly expressed through group identity. Delegitimizing the individual expressions of grievances, values, and interests becomes an obstacle for the dialogue. The risk of "reductionism of identities" in the dialogue exchange is a serious block that can face facilitators and convenors. For example, the identity of 1.7 billion Muslims

is often reduced to one single narrative presented in the interfaith dialogue setting as the "truth" or the only story that exists in the Muslim community.

Obviously, a balance between the collective and individual approaches is a necessary measure that convenors and facilitators have to apply or adopt in spite of the challenges of sorting out the appropriate resource allocations (timing, funds, content, questions, evaluation, etc.)

Content Versus Process

A third paradox or tension in the design of dialogue relates to the choice of the convenor and facilitator, a design that relays mainly on the use of content or process throughout the interactions.[3] The challenges associated with overemphasizing process or content in implementing dialogue is also connected to asymmetric power relations, but it also reflects the assumptions of the convenors and the facilitators about learning and change. For those who assume that change of attitudes and behaviors is mainly through additional external information and knowledge, their dialogue intervention mainly revolves around the introduction of facts, data, exemplars of success, and so on. However, those who assume that change of attitudes and behaviors is initiated and carried out through individual and collective experiences, their dialogue intervention mainly revolves around the participants' own experiences and knowledge without using any external learning stimulus.

The overuse of content deprives the participants from a deeper exploration of their mutual and own experiences and knowledge of the issue. In addition, it detracts from the focus on relationship building and might develop a certain reliance on external sources of information rather than developing participants' own ways of pursuing such information. However, one of the positive and functional aspects of introducing external content into the dialogue interaction, especially in deep-rooted and protracted conflict setting, is providing the participants who often have major distrust of the other group(s) with an opportunity to learn new information from an outside source, which they might not accept it from the members of the other groups.

Process-oriented dialogue heavily focuses on the experience and perceptions of the participants setting in the circle of the dialogue. Their personal and collective views, emotions, and values are the source of learning from and about the others in the group. Facilitators and convenors of a type of design assume that the participants have the knowledge and

capacity to learn and process their interaction to gain a deeper understanding and awareness of the conflict. The outcome of such interaction often produces a stronger bond of relationships among the participants and often strong commitment to act for change beyond the dialogue group setting. "How does the conflict affect you personally?" "Tell us your story with the conflict" "What prevents you from acting for peaceful change in your community?" are few examples of the type of questions that might stimulate process-oriented conversations.

Similar to dealing with the above two other dimensions of "talk versus action" and "Individual versus Collective," the relevant and appropriate balance between content and process in the dialogical design remains a challenging decision to be made by the convenors and facilitators based on many factors.

Fear of dealing with emotional expressions of the individual and collective experiences often dissuades them from delving into the process domain question and stay with the use of external content to maintain a certain level of dialogical interaction. However, it should be noted that one can still be using content to simulate a dialogical exchange in a process-oriented design; for example, showing a film on slavery for an interracial dialogue group can be a powerful instrument to encourage participants to step out of their comfort zone and take risk by stating their own feelings and experiences with the system of white privileges in US context. To accomplish such a task, facilitators and conveners need to have the awareness and commitment to such dialogue design and go beyond the model of external content that can generate new cognitive knowledge and lead to attitudinal and behavioral change.

The three areas of tension or paradoxes in the dialogue design and its implications to interreligious and intercultural dialogue were briefly described above. Obviously, there are many other factors that affect the decision of the convenors and facilitators in dealing with the above tensions, such as ideology of the convenors and donors; level of awareness of the conflict dynamics and its power relations among the interveners; availability of resources; nature of the conflict or topics of the dialogue; and the background of the participants.

Nevertheless, the degrees of balance between these paradoxes have serious implications on the participants and their willingness to engage with each other during and after the dialogue experience. In fact, the outcome of this balance affects the image and credibility of the field of interethnic,

intercultural, and interreligious dialogue in general and in conflict areas in particular.

Beginning Thoughts for Interfaith Dialogue in Classrooms

In human history, societies and people have struggled to construct social systems that facilitate peaceful encounters. Nevertheless, there has always been a voice and a trace of knowledge and experience that pointed human beings toward dialogue and peaceful encounters with the other. Such a thread is also manifested in every faith group with common values of peace, mercy, love, and respect for human dignity. Building dialogical capacities through teaching and training is an essential component of building peace and restoring social fabric in deeply divided societies and post violent conflict processes. It is also needed as a preventive measure and a possible tool to contribute to social change in uncovering and confronting different forms of structural violence in the Northern Hemisphere context.

A strong culture of dialogical encounter is an effective social and psychological immunization tool that any society or agency can use to equip its members with skills to prevent religious-based violence, to enhance its capacity to resolve its conflicts peacefully constructively. A society that has an integrated culture of dialogical encounters within its system grants its members safe spaces to explore creative ways to respect diversity and view such diversity as a source of strength as opposed to the source of disunity and fragmentation. This chapter articulated basic principles that can be integrated into the interreligious encounter in classrooms to maximize its impact in transforming misperception and distrust in other faith into a more dialogical relationship. It also explored ways to identify the consequences and implications for dealing with three major paradoxes that every classroom dialogue design has to address, especially in an interreligious and interethnic conflict setting.

Considering all factors in the context of the interethnic and interreligious dialogue is a crucial step that can help convenors and facilitators construct a relevant and appropriate balance between content and process; action and talk; individual and collective. This analysis of such factors is a necessary step prior to any dialogue design, especially to avoid the stigma that the dialogue field has become another tool used by policymakers and religious agencies to justify inaction on structural issues.

Notes

1. An Iraqi participant providing feedback to the group after his five-day dialogue training (December 2019).
2. See research findings on Israeli–Palestinian dialogue groups after wars and Palestinian uprisings (Abu-Nimer, 1999; Abu-Nimer & Lazarus, 2007).
3. See more on the importance of process-oriented dialogue (Bohm, 1996).

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CHAPTER 4

Harmony: Essence and Applications to Dialogue

Albert Chan

Harmony is a Chinese concept which has attracted attention since the rise of China in the 1990s. In Chinese communities, harmony is a complex word full of meanings and wisdoms and used both positively and negatively. Harmony may describe an intimate relationship as a fine-tuned melody or may be used to yield loyalty to a family, organization, or nation without regard to individual opinions and rights. In this chapter, I am going to contextualize the usage of social harmony in modern times, by examining the wisdoms of Confucius, Laozi, and Buddha, philosophers who touched the psyche of the Chinese through centuries. The chapter also examines how the watered-down meanings of social harmony were employed for political gains by the emperors in history, how common folks make use of harmony for self-serving interests both positively and negatively, and the application of harmony in dialogue. Through this

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discussion and reflection, we need to be aware of all ideologies and the loss of meanings in our interpretations and applications, and the possible cultural differences between the East and the West.

Harmony Within: Reflecting on Social Location

I was born in Hong Kong and have lived in England, the United States, and Canada for over 30 years, spending most of my adult life in Western communities and returning to Hong Kong to teach since 2008. Living in Hong Kong makes me feel like I am already home, but sometimes I feel like I need to return to Canada where I developed my individual "self." Culture is an interesting entity; we all are contaminated by our culture unless we are careful and discerning with our critical lenses. In the depth of my Chinese psyche, I am yearning to be complete and in harmony with a collective order, a collective sense of psyche which Jung emphasized. But my adopted individual self keeps questioning the validity of my yearning as psychology trained me to be an individual entity, "self" having my own identity and self-esteem, nothing to do with others. My confusion of my born to collective self and adopted individual self has no difference from immigrants who have difficulties adjusting to a new culture and are confused with their culture of origins.

Having lived in both worlds—East and West—and exposed to different cultures and studies, I began studying sociology and humanities during my undergraduate study and later trained as a clinical psychologist and systemic family therapist. The juxtaposition of my training enables me to look at the world with a wider scope and from both an individualistic and systemic lens with in-between lenses. With my background in sociology, humanities, political science, psychology, and theology, I embrace multidimensional ways and from the in-between lenses.

During my graduate study at McGill in Counselling Psychology, I came across the concept of "cultural shock." When I returned to Hong Kong after a quarter of a century, my adopted individual self usually clashed with my born collective self, a reverse "cultural shock." I am not comfortable with both aspects of Canadian ways of living and aspects of oriental practices. Likewise, I am going to discuss my observations with my newfound concepts on "harmony" or "social harmony." I am going to use harmony and social harmony interchangeably. Social harmony is a unique oriental concept which is only frequently discussed from the political senses since China rises from the 1990s.

Our prejudices tend to interpret "social harmony" from a restricted perspective through the lenses of our culture and political stance. In addition, people using harmony from many facets and/or the original meaning of harmony are contaminated by contextual intentions, which are self-serving for political gains, and may only benefit oneself while or even oppressing others. Other common concepts like freedom also bear similar contextualized contamination.

My Stories of Social Harmony

In 2012–2013, I supervised a group of students in Shenzhen, China, and passed through a hotel named *Harmony*. The Chinese name is "Tien, De, Ren" hotel, which directly translates to "Heaven, Earth and Man," implying the coexistence of different cosmos nature. When I travel in China and see similar names in different provinces and cities throughout the country, I wonder, are Chinese yearning to be at peace and in harmony with the universe, or are we are part of the universe in a natural sense (Chan, 2009)?

I learned the expression of harmony in my childhood from my father, who wrote, "A harmonious family rises, an awful (conflictual) family with non-stop squabbling." I understood the meaning of harmony then as "don't argue with one another even though you are right, but for the family to remain harmonious, keep your opinions to yourself." This comment placed me on my life journey to keep my opinions to myself, only to avoid disturbing the peace, even though I felt being oppressed. This one-sided definition results in the potential abuse of power in the name of harmony. To give another example, I was laid off from a job after challenging the status quo. The senior management accused me of being disloyal to the workplace where we are supposed to be a family, suggesting that we needed to keep the line of harmony.

At the same time, social harmony in the family can be a heart-touching picture like an experience I saw in a Cambodian village. A family with parents and children were trying to catch a lizard. Like a team of basketball players, they worked cooperatively and impeccably to catch a frightened animal under the shades in the middle of a lazy summer afternoon. Similarly, during harvest time, farmers, old and young, work together, sweating in the field and getting the produce to the market; an image that touched many artists, in the East and West. In a cooperative team, each member does their best and complement each other's limitations. When the world of nations becomes conflictual under the COVID-19 pandemic

cloud, can the concept of harmony transform a genuine, heartfelt wish for peace and acceptance of each other's weaknesses and embrace the differences of others? This is also reflected in the following philosophical origins of harmony that address harmony under a larger scope of humanity.

Understanding the Cultural Origins of Harmony

Music is often used to describe harmony. In this definition, different tunes or musical instruments orchestrate a beautiful melody. One tune alone would not be able to create the melody and musical harmony. This implies that all individual musical instruments preserve their specific melodious notes while harmonizing with one another to create a unified song" (Chan, 2013, p. 5). In a relationship, harmony in a metaphorical sense suggests partners in a marital union complement one another by playing different roles (Chan, 2013). The Chinese agricultural based civilization has been through centuries of interval times of chaos and peace both internally and externally, as farmers, having the mother earth being at peace in harmony among "Tien, De, Ren" is crucial for the harvest. This harmonious order of the cosmos has been carved deep in the psyche of the Chinese culture.

Connecting Harmony to Dialogue

The founders of the Chinese three pillars of philosophies—"Confucianism, Taoism, and imported Buddhism"—were trying thoroughly to preserve the cosmos harmony in witnessing differences and conflicts among humans. All these three philosophies are promoting pacifism with love of humanity and respect of nature. They focus on humanity, human kindness, love of others, and self-preservation without competition. This frame of mind is similar to Buber's concept of the "I" and "Thou" (Buber, 1970). My existence truly depends on and reflects consistently by others' existence, and thus, we are existing together. An individualistic culture is rooted in the concept of "I am different from you" and my existence begins by recognizing my differences from others. Whereas the Chinese concept of "yin and yang" emphasizes the co-existence of both, not the difference. I suppose from the individualistic culture, one may be seeing the differences between "yin and yang" while from the collective culture, they emphasize the "togetherness" of "yin" and "yang" upon the differences we coexist. This is a useful frame for understanding harmony in

dialogue. In dialogue, participants can work to understand how an opposing perspective is a complement of their view. Rather than focusing on removing or beating down the other side, they can explore how the viewpoints can co-exist and see the togetherness of our differences, instead of overly focusing on the difference itself.

The Western philosophies focus on human's existence from the scientific rational tradition with the cornerstone of "I think, therefore I am." That puts the quest of human existence through "right and wrong," "just and unjust," and "good and bad" categories. However, the Eastern philosophies recognize human existence can be not only about "right and wrong," "just and unjust," and "good and bad," but about co-existence with harmony among many dimensions. Similarly, in dialogue, there are no clear "right/wrong" or "just/unjust" positions. There are only different positions in complementary and harmony with one another. Using this deepened understanding of harmony helps participants reframe opposition and differences as a representation of harmony and togetherness. Besides the rational existential tradition in the West, philosophers like Heidegger and Buber also propose that human existence is far from individualistic, but "togetherness." Therefore, being in harmony, dialogue, and learning to accept the differences is the essence of humanity and the existence of us.

Watered-Downed Practices of Harmony

In dialogue, a common misconception is to hold back from sharing one's ideas and thoughts in order to preserve harmony. This is indicative of a watered-down understanding of what true harmony is. For instance, while teaching in Hong Kong, I heard students always using the phrase "I'm a small potato." The phrase has a self-abasing meaning, such as "I am not smart," "My opinion is not important," or "I was told to be humble not to speak up." I was told by a Taiwanese student that some Taiwanese people simply keep their silence, believing that they are "nobody." These scenarios also apply to Chinese students, Chinese folks in general, and people across Asian cultures influenced by Chinese Confucianism. My students in Taiwan, Cambodia, Malaysia, Korea, and Japan all keep their silence and put more effort in following the leaders.

On one hand, following leaders and sacrificing individual opinion for the sake of the larger society can be beneficial. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, putting aside personal comfort for the greater

public health by following the governmental policies of social distancing and mask-wearing has helped reduce the spread and lethality of the pandemic. In contrast, countries that tend to accentuate individual rights, such as the United States, have observed more protests against having to abide by these public policies, adding to the spread of the pandemic. This demonstrates how sometimes life is not about individual rights, but about the relationship of "I and Thou" (Buber, 1970). In other words, how could we be in harmony with others, and how could we be in harmony with nature?

I find the phrase "I'm a small potato" disturbing. The deep psyche is that "harmony with others" meant not disturbing the peace in a relationship. As harmonious balance among people is important, Chinese people may shun themselves, hide their voices, and give up their rightful opinions, for the sake of being at peace with others. When someone shun themselves, they give away their right to speak up, which opens space and enables others to abuse their power. Lu (2004) noted a remarkable observation on Confucius's notion of harmony. He stated an educated respectful individual has the capacity to discern a harmonious relationship with others without losing one's individuality.

This also applies in the context of dialogue. Harmony in dialogue is not the absence or removal of one's individual opinion for the sake of the group. Students have hesitated to engage in genuine dialogue, opting to maintain the peace. Participants in a classroom dialogue can reflect on when they feel a conversational space embodies harmony without losing individuality. This can be encouraged by framing dialogue as a space for differences to harmoniously interact. The facilitator can also emphasize the importance of not feeling pressure to find common ground with one another. Participants can practice adding a different opinion or thought to the dialogue each time while with the phrase *yes and* to emphasize how the differing idea is not in opposition, but in conjunction with the previous stately idea. For instance, after student A notes, "I feel isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic…" student B adds, "…*and* I feel newly connected in unique ways with my peers in adapting to a virtual environment…," followed by student C's comment, "…*and* I am struggling to connect virtually without face-to-face interactions and gestures..." and onward. Our conversations are often laced with the language of *yes but* since we generally think of differing opinions as battling one another, but shifting this language can emphasize how our differences are necessary for constructing a harmonious balance.

In dialogue, using this watered-down concept of "harmony" forces others to be submissive, subdued and dissuades different opinions. For true harmony in dialogue, students do not need to think of themselves as small potatoes. Instead, the spirit of dialogue can be described by the Chinese folktale of the Stone Soup by Jon J. Muth, where three monks swayed a village to make a stone soup together by asking each person to contribute a different ingredient. While the villagers were initially hesitant to part with their food and resources, after each person added an ingredient—a few potatoes, some mushrooms, seasonings, and so on—the soup transformed into a tasty meal made possible only by their diverse contributions. Alone, each ingredient is one-dimensional, but together, the qualities and contributions of each ingredient balance one another by adding different notes of spice, tastes, and textures; it is the interaction between the different ingredients that form a complex, multifaceted experience for the villagers. Like the soup, dialogue is a culmination of bringing together different flavors and shared among the individuals of a group, to cultivate a sense of community and togetherness that is made possible only by their differences.

Freedom and Harmony

Freedom is the foundation of modern democracy of the West since the French Revolution. However, excessive freedom can be an excuse for narcissistic quests. I remember a book by Richard Bach, *Johnathon Livingstone Seagull*. I read it when I was in the teen. It was a heroic and self-motivated story of a seagull achieving godlike ability to fly. I was young and having all romantic notions of freedom and self-seeking esteem (Kwan et al., 2010). However, when I got older, May's notion of freedom echoed the resonance of harmony. According to May (1981), freedom is accountable to one's action, posited as destiny, the self-imposed choice, and limits. Similarly, Yalom talks about freedom in a context of a client confronting freedom experientially and responsibly. Greening (1992) comes the closest to describing freedom similar to the Chinese context by stating each of us have imitations in exercising freedom imposed by social and interpersonal context. Freedom in Chinese culture is collectively being exercised and shared for the bigger cause for all. Thus, freedom bears a responsibility not only to oneself but also to others.

This definition of freedom echoes many Chinese and Western philosophers' notions of existential harmonious relations: A-part-of/A-part-from

relationship. This freedom is not just about freedom for the self or self-expression, but for the existence of self, others, and our responsibility to self and others, and humanity. In dialogue, participants express their freedom of thought, but not excessively without the responsibility to self and others. Freedom and harmony go hand-in-hand. Within classrooms, the facilitator can ask students to reflect on how they wish to use their freedom to bear responsibility to self and others, and how they will use their freedom to hold space for harmony and dialogue.

Existential: A-Part-of/A-Part-from Relationship

In Martin Buber and Maurice Friedman's dialogical function of language, Buber states that "Basic words do not state something that might exist outside them; by being spoken they establish a mode of existence. Basic words are spoken with one's being. When one says You, the I of the word pair I-You is said too (Buber, 1970). The basic word I-You can only be spoken with one's whole being" (Buber, 1970, pp. 45–46).

Buber's existential dialogical meaning of the interpersonal being of I-You is echoed by Chinese concept of social harmony. The Chinese view recognizes an individual's existence is always in relation to others, infringing on and/or complementing the existence of others. However, Chinese's harmony requires more from an individual. In the Kuo Yu, Shih Po stated that:

> To ameliorate one thing with another is the meaning of harmony. The result is flourishing and growth and thereby creatures coming into existence. But supposing uniformity is supplemented by uniformity, nothing new can be produced. (Fung, 1962, p. 107)

The essence of harmony is not only the relational aspect of one person unfolding to another or a complementing relationship, but also, each party acts on the other as an impetus for the other to grow and become more. There is a survival sense of independence and interrelations, as well as the moral sense that the meaning of gratitude flows from one party to the other reciprocally, each wanting the other to be better, and in return the self is expanding. From a world pandemic crisis to climate change, nation to nation needs to collaborate cultivating a harmonious relationship to manage human existence in facing the demons that all nations have continuously cultivated by neglecting our common asset, our earth.

The Politics of Harmony

As human experiences are embedded in their culture, understanding culture is a necessary component of dialogue. However, culture evolves and the essence of the fine original cultural concepts are also evolving, like harmony. Our fore-fathers and mothers had cultivated universal values such as love of humanity, equality, respect of differences, and liberty to defend and preserve individual freedom in the West; in the East, values of psychosocial harmony which affects and constructs family structure, existential living (being alive), collective freedom, acceptance, and meaningfulness (Chan, 2009, 2013; Lin, 1938, 1948). Thousands of years with the evolution of our civilization, in our postmodern community, they thought that having an educated mind to cultivate self-discipline, and respect for community responsibility, harmony among humans of different social classes, genders, nations, and races will prevail. Have we?

Throughout history, there were stories of those in power and common folks who were corrupted by power, and consequently, they practice harmony that is being tainted for political gains. The meaning of harmony embracing unique individual differences with respect corrupted by self-interest which prevails others' interests is watered down. The meaning of "harmony" becomes a propaganda slogan to entice others to follow the authority. However, I do believe perhaps harmony among human individuals might be easier to achieve with love within a small group of kinship, but among larger groups and nations, usually governed by means of politics, power, and glory with diverse interest groups, harmony is extremely complex and difficult to achieve. Harmony can be misused in Chinese communities and lost in translation in the West. The meanings of "democracy" and "freedom" also lose their meanings when "democracy" and "freedom" are merely a slogan and propaganda for the ruled to conquer.

Hoffman et al. (2007) reflect that evil exists and religions and psychology point to the "selfishness and greed" and dehumanization process of individuals, respectively. Whether it is the East or the West, "harmony" is the Eastern wisdom while "democracy" is the Western wisdom to raise moral and educational awareness to counteract evils. Are we consciously practicing according to the true meanings of these wisdoms, or are we practicing the watered-down versions, allowing corruption to exist? Kissinger (2012), in his book *On China*, warns the rise of China will inevitably bring forward potential tensions between China and America. As a

"balance of power" theorist, his wishes are that leaders from both nations use their wisdom to handle their differences and find ways to preserve the common goal of world peace. Do we allow differences to exist while keeping the harmony of peace? Do we allow differences to exist while maintaining democracy for peace?

Harmony in Dialogical Pedagogy: Lessons Learned

When I was teaching at various universities, I found that students nowadays study for the sake of grades and scoring. Even at a liberal college, majors are constructed for students to obtain a degree effectively, not for cultivating minds with critical lenses. Students usually do not read books or articles, and syllabuses are merely tools for the accreditation process. I write this chapter to provide a framework for adopting a critical lens to understanding harmony, in contrast to prioritizing grades. I was curious about the various meanings of "harmony" both in origin and in dialogical applications. In searching for the meanings of harmony, I recognize we usually use concepts such as harmony, democracy, and freedom for our political gain and distort the original meaning.

After coming to understand the ancient wisdom of harmony, I truly appreciate the spirit of respect for and acceptance of the differences, and the desire for harmony despite the variation in our beliefs, which invokes the spirit of dialogue. The goal of true harmony is to appreciate and value differences while looking to complement each other in our co-existence, rather than looking at the differences to compete or homogenize. The individualistic worldview emphasizes differences and individual rights of the West and has been dominating the world through centuries, consequently setting the world on fire through colonization and conquest. Shall we re-examine this question for human existence: do we compete to win or cooperate for harmony and peace?

For dialogues in classrooms, it is worthwhile to examine the meanings and applications of harmony with critical thinking. Each student can interpret the meanings from different angles with personal and academic experience, including philosophical, theological, historical, political, sociological, cultural, and economical perspectives. Students could reflect on how they interpret harmony from their perspectives and how individuals approach the dialogue in the following dimensions:

(a) Are you contributing to the dialogue for your own benefit only, for the benefit of the group, and/or for the benefit of the class?
(b) What might you give up for the benefit of the dialogue? Will benefiting others and the dialogue also ultimately benefit oneself; what and how?
(c) Can harmony be applied as a universal or only a cultural value? If it is a culturally/regionally Asian concept, how might the concept be regarded or applicable in a Western context that endorses individual rights and freedom? In genuine harmony, would individual rights necessarily be compromised?

Finally, a gentle reminder that we are only human and far from being perfect. We need others to build up a better world. I have no answer to all these questions, but pose them as merely a starting point for dialogue.

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CHAPTER 5

Not Transition, But Translation: A Dialogic Approach to 'Differences' in a Korean Diasporic Evangelical Church

Seung Soo Kim

Korean Evangelicalism Intersected by Post-structuralist Interests

Difference as a Paradox

Difference is a paradox that keeps generating irreconcilable contradictions within Evangelical Protestantism. In the modern condition where, with the decline of traditional values and communities, individuals are increasingly encouraged and eager to find their authentic self and develop their individuality (Lindholm, 2008; Taylor, 1991), Evangelicalism has to domesticate and tolerate as many differences as possible to lead all these individuals to its sole, exclusive, and non-negotiable path of salvation of

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Jesus Christ. The paradox is vividly manifested when an Evangelical bible circle encounters embodied differences of individuals that are not commensurable to the signifier of 'Jesus Christ.' For instance, one can hardly conversate as a Marxist or a Feminist with other bible circle members in Korean Evangelical churches that have portrayed Marxists and Feminists as anti-Christ threatening liberal democracy and heterosexual norm. One of the reasons one could hardly find sexual and gender minorities in Korean Evangelical churches lies in the unfortunate fact that the churches have stigmatized being LGBTQ as the matter of sin, rather than that of difference. Under this circumstance, dialogic space could be constructed by the exclusion of different beings from the outset, if any, in the churches. Not all differences are accepted and open for negotiation despite the universalist project of Evangelicalism to save 'the whole world' in the name of Jesus Christ.

Discursive Boundary and Power Relations Preceding Dialogue

It should be noted that Evangelical Protestantism, in general, focused on disciplining its believers to have their spiritual eyes to discern between the unnegotiable sin and the negotiable difference in the modern era. The sermons, pastoral guidance, and institutionalized decision-making and practices of Korean Evangelical churches have always and already drawn the discursive boundary of what difference is open for conversation and negotiation and what is not.[1] To draw the discursive boundary of *what* can(not) be a topic of conversation and *who* can(not) be qualified for an equivalent member of the conversation is a political matter given that the boundary not only reflects but also produces power relations among different beings in the churches. However, for a bible circle leader conventionally disciplined in Evangelical Protestantism, such drawing of the boundary would be likely taken for granted as spiritual and pastoral guidance, necessary for its believers, that has nothing to do with power relations.

Serving a Korean Diasporic Community by Leading an Evangelical Bible Circle

Being exposed to post-structuralist thoughts during my MA at Yonsei University in South Korea (2008–2009) and trained to be a social scientist to explore religion as a scholarly object during my doctoral program in the United States (2011–2017), I came to be increasingly reflective and critical of my past experience of bible circles in the Calvinism-oriented Evangelical campus missionary group (2002–2008). In the missionary group, the differences of its relatively new members from Protestant normality were 'tolerated' in silence, rather than consciously discussed in dialogue, with a hope they would be assimilated into its old members who had already successfully internalized the normality after all. Thus, when my wife and I had an opportunity to be the bible circle leaders for graduate and postdoc students in a Korean diaspora church near the University of Colorado-Boulder (2015–2017), we came up with, more or less, a new understanding of what it means to be a bible circle leader and new practices of building dialogic relationships in and out of a bible circle.

In the circumstance where about a third of the Korean graduate students in the university regularly attended the church, it would be a suicidal act if we took care of only the members of our bible circle, especially given the public perception of Protestantism as a selfish and corrupt religious group back in South Korea. We understood the primary role of our bible circle as building a wholesome community of Korean diaspora students who had a nostalgic desire of experiencing and belonging to authentic communal relationships with other Koreans, rather than merely persuading the other two thirds into attending the church. Our idea was that (dialogic) relationship precedes dialogue: Mutually dependent and trustful relationships should be first established if we want to initiate a dialogue between believers and non-believers, between the church and the Korean diasporic community, to the extent the boundary between the two becomes blurred.

I did not explicitly teach how to facilitate dialogue and dialogic relationships among each other. My wife and I had rarely regarded the individuals in the bible circle and the Korean diasporic community as the same as students in the classroom-like setting.[2] What we wanted to have was not students, but friends (we were lonely as well!). As we learned from our friends, we expected them to learn something about dialogue and dialogic relationships from our habitualized practices of interacting with and

treating others. We had, more or less, an irrational and firm belief that they would learn dialogic relationships from, and even model, how we treated them and others in the community. This belief might be derived from our past experience in the Calvinist campus missionary group where leaders were expected to embody and show what they taught in their daily practices and habits.

Building Dialogic Relationships While Cracking Authoritarian Ones

Conversation does not occur in a vacuum. It is always and already held in power relations among those who converse. Or it might be enabled by excluding others from the relations that conversation occurs. Cultural studies and other social scientific knowledge helped me become more aware of not only power relations shaping and penetrating our daily life and conversation, but also our habitualized language uses, bodily practices, and social interactions, in and out of the bible circle, that sustain and reproduce the power relations. Consequently, in my understanding and experience, the most fundamental and convincing way to facilitate dialogue and dialogic relationship was to crack and subvert the pre-existing power relations surrounding me, and thus to disrupt authoritarian relationships that were hindering dialogic relationships and dialogue between me and others from the outset. Of course, *non-* or *less*-authoritarian relationships were not initiated instantly since my social position of being heterosexual, male, and senior already and always put me in the web of particular power relations between me and others in the Korean diasporic community. In addition, please note, I am using a negative prefix (i.e. *non-*) to define the way to build dialogic relationships. I could not simply create it without simultaneously *destructing* and *erasing* authoritarian elements in the pre-existing power relations that I hoped to turn into dialogic ones.

Self-Deprecating Humor to Subvert Power Relations

To build up dialogic relationships, my wife and I had to *crack* and *disrupt* the authoritarian relationships that were already prevalent and reproduced by our daily social interactions, language usage, and bodily practices, in the bible circle and the Korean diasporic community. One of the ways to

crack and subvert the power relations surrounding me was to make jokes about myself while twisting social expectations given to my social locations and roles in the Korean community. For instance, when I acquired no scholarship for two years, our family finances had to fully rely on my wife's cash jobs. I often made fun of myself being a heterosexual, Christian male husband who earned no money at all and thus absolutely failed to feed his family. In the daily interactions between me and my wife, they could see my wife being vocal and taking the lead-role and me listening to her and following her lead in a variety of circumstances where decisions should be made. Sometimes, it was an honest reflection of our relationship and some other times it was exaggerated for fun. It was dangerously fun since, by following my wife's lead and making fun of me not being able to make the social expectation given to my social position of being a heterosexual Christian male husband who is strongly expected to lead his wife and family economically and spiritually in Korean Evangelicalism, I was stating and showing that we do not have to follow the Evangelical gender ideology which presupposes an authoritarian relationship between the male asked to speak, teach, and lead, and the female to listen, be taught, and be led. And I was doing this as a bible circle leader usually seen as a model for others in Korean Evangelical churches.

Disrupting Seniority Built in Korean Language

In addition, I tried to disrupt particular power relations shaped by my being elder and senior in the Korean diasporic community consisting mostly of master and doctoral students in their 20s and 30s. Korean society has significantly valued and reproduced seniority. It is embedded and reproduced in daily social interactions, language usage, and bodily practices. Koreans are disciplined to bow to the people older or higher than them in a social hierarchy and always use respectful expressions for the people older or higher in every sentence they make. The respectful expressions are linguistically built in the Korean sentence structure. In Korean culture, we rarely use these respectful and formal expressions to those younger than or lower than us in the hierarchy. This means that Korean language culture tends to not only reflect but also reproduce the hierarchical (and often authoritarian) relationships between the older and the younger.

When being bound to such hierarchical language usage for the old and young in Korean language culture, it is extremely hard to build and

experience dialogic relationships. Whenever we make and speak a sentence in Korean, it is manifested that we are not equivalent to each other in the hierarchy. Despite this cultural context, I used formal and respectful expressions for everyone in the community, regardless of their age, against the conventional Korean practices of using them only for the elder. It was a sort of conscious practice to halt and disrupt the power relations and privileges that were working on the ideology of seniority and further to create more non-authoritarian relationships between younger members of the community and I.

Sharing Food, Chat, and Time

In the complex intersections and dynamics of social positionality depending on gender, age, sexuality, or even economic wealth, we are always caught up within power relations that are often hierarchical and authoritarian in certain cultural contexts. Using respectful expressions for everyone, regardless of age, and making fun of me being a heterosexual Christian husband economically incompetent were to disrupt the prior power relations of gender and seniority, on which non-authoritarian relationships should be re-built.

Meanwhile, regularly sharing food, time, and small chats with others was another way to build up more dialogic relationships with them. My wife and I usually invited several individuals, regardless of their (un)belief, to our home two or three times a week. We shared our food, drinks, good and bad news, concerns, and laughs with them. Consistently inviting people to our private space and sharing our meal with them, we were able to have more intimate and affectionate relationships with them. We learned and took this habit of invitation to one's home from the campus missionary group. The only difference from the missionary group would be that we rarely intended to lead them to any behavioral or ontological form of Protestant normality.

Every Friday night, the bible circle with several non-believers met up at our home as well. We often spent two hours at the longest to have dinner together and share countless small chats and jokes. Sometimes, especially on holidays, we prepared food together and went on picnics. Bible circle members also increasingly invited others to their homes. In the small Korean diasporic community of slightly less than 50 students and their families, there were invitations to one's private home almost every day. Whether or not one believed in Protestantism rarely divided us. It was

rather our different lifestyles, habits, and personalities that divided us sometimes. I considered these practices of sharing food, time, and chats as communal rituals that bonded us into trustful and intimate relationships which would help us endure each other's differences in time (not only in Judo-Christian tradition but also in Korean tradition, sharing and having food together has been a way to present, shape, and reproduce the collective sense of belonging and bonding).[3]

In the communal practices of sharing food, time, and chats, individuals were likely to feel and experience a sense of bonding and belonging even before they talked about their commonalities of university life. Chewing, chatting, and eating together, we opened up our ears, eyes, and hearts toward each other. Temporarily getting away from the time pressure that all of us had to go through with upcoming deadlines of numerous tasks and exams, we gradually slowed down our bodily rhythm and further synchronized ours with each other's rhythm. After sharing food and time, the bible circle led to a very short silent praying and then to sharing each other's daily life and reflection of the Bible text given on the day. This might be an instance where they felt the difference of Protestantism, but most non-believers easily followed the ritual of praying together. In our limited experience, to feel and experience a sense of bonding and belonging preceded dialogue and facilitated it despite the differences emerged in the bible circle.

Not Transition, But Translation

Sharing our labor, time, food, and church space with the whole Korean diasporic community for more than two years, the bible circle acquired significant recognition and trust from non-believers establishing what could be called dialogic relationships with them. Since many non-believers often visited our bible circle and more than half of the bible circle were not familiar with the Protestant faith in Jesus Christ, my wife and I came to see our primary role as *translating* between the two different webs of meaning that each group of Protestant believers and non-Christians shared, rather than *transiting* the non-Christians from the status of non-belief in Jesus Christ to that of belief in him. This implies that we more or less abandoned conventional Evangelical imaginary on salvation that arranges human beings in the hierarchical binary between believers who confess Jesus as their God/Savior/Lord and non-believers who do not.

Conventional Evangelical imaginary on the relationship between non-believers and believers is teleological given that it presents the 'salvation' of believers as the same destination that all non-believers should eventually head for. Thus, the relationship between the two groups is always narrated as the matter of 'transition': the transition from non-believers without salvation to believers with salvation. This 'transition' narrative built in conventional Evangelical imaginary on salvation precisely resembles the transition narrative underlying what Dipesh Chakrabarty in his influential *Provincializing Europe* (2000) terms 'historicism': the modern European idea of history in which all non-European countries are imagined to be heading for and transiting to the same destination of the development, modernization, and capitalism that Europe has first and already achieved. As the Evangelical idea of salvation submits the transition from non-belief in Jesus Christ to belief in him as the ultimate and universal goal of human being, the modern European idea of history presupposes the transition from the pre-modern stage to that of modernity as the general historical movement for not only Europe but also elsewhere. The transition narrative enables both Evangelical believers and Europe to say '"not yet" to somebody else' (ibid., p. 8).

Chakrabarty argues that, to get away from the Eurocentric idea of the universal historical transition, scholars should realize that cases of transition to capitalism are the 'translational' process as well, in which the cultural and linguistic categories of the non-European world are translated into the categories and self-thought of capitalist modernity. I found Chakrabarty's distinction between 'transition' and 'translation' very useful to newly imagining the relationships between non-believers and believers. Adopting the 'translation' perspective, my understanding of the relations between the two groups changed from vertical (hierarchical) relationships to horizontal ones. Distancing from the conventional Evangelical imaginary that arranged non-believers in the 'not-yet' and inferior position in the hierarchy, my wife and I were able to more fully embrace the life-world of non-believers while trying not to impose Protestant normality on them. And I believe it significantly helped the bible circle shape non- or less-authoritarian power relationships between its leaders and non-leaders, between its old members and newcomers, and between believers and non-believers.

Implications for Teaching in the Classroom Context

Reflecting on my experience of leading the bible circle and serving the Korean diasporic community, a few implications and suggestions come up in my mind for myself and other teachers who want to engage in dialogic relationship and dialogue in the classroom setting. First, some simple activities that the whole class could participate in together before starting the class might help students feel and experience a sense of bonding and belonging in the class. In the limited circumstances of the classroom, we could hardly share meals. However, sharing small treats and snacks with the whole class could be still applicable to the classroom setting. In this case, we could split the class into multiple groups of three or four students, and let them briefly share what they have gone through on the day before coming to the class while having the treats and snacks together. This might look time-consuming, but would eventually contribute to intensifying a communal sense of bonding and belonging in the class by repeatedly letting students open up their bodily senses to and focus their time and attention on each other throughout the semester. Further, the communal sense of bonding and belonging would facilitate dialogic relationships and dialogues in the class.

Second, building a dialogic relationship might require simultaneously cracking and subverting power relations surrounding educator and student. This implies that we should be sensitive to and critical of our social position and location that puts us within particular power relations that might hinder a dialogue regardless of our intention to create it. If I say I want to engage in dialogue with my younger students in the Korean cultural context, and I have no sensitivity to the ideology of seniority built in Korean language expression at all, you would have to say that I am either intellectually naïve or morally hypocritical. In other words, I am enjoying the privilege of being an elder while saying that I want to have a dialogic relationship with my students. As an educator, we need to be critically reflective of what are our privileges, what are the disadvantages that are produced by our social position in power relations, and how they hinder horizontal and dialogic relationships between us and students.

If you are likely privileged rather than disadvantaged, like myself in the former Korean diasporic community, by your gender, sexuality, race, and/or class, using self-deprecating humor is one effective way to disrupt and subvert power relations surrounding you. Such self-deprecating humor, if it is properly exercised, can not only make the relationships between you

and your students more horizontal and dialogic, but also encourage your students to also disrupt power relations surrounding them. For instance, making fun of myself for not being able to meet the social expectation given to the heterosexual male husband encouraged other Korean males who were in the same situation as mine to question the authoritarian male and female relationship underlying Korean Evangelical churches. If you show you can be comfortable with self-deprecating jokes that make you *vulnerable*, students likely find you more approachable, which can help you build dialogic relationships with them.

Lastly, as Evangelical Protestantism notices that its project of salvation can never be actualized and accomplished without building intimate and trustful relationships, we might have to get reminded that (dialogic) relationship precedes dialogue. A significant difference could be made if we understand what we are doing is fundamentally to build up horizontal, trustful, and dialogic relationships with our students, rather than simply to generate the targeted behavior of what we call 'dialogue.' This 'relationship' approach helps us realize that our daily small chats, interactions, and sharing food with students 'out of the classroom' actually contribute to building dialogic relationships and facilitating dialogue 'in the classroom-setting.' Even in the classroom-setting, whose time limit is obvious, we could be more generous, relaxed, and patient if we understand building a (dialogic) relationship takes time and effort. Dialogue cannot be made like instant food. We should not expect it to be shortly enabled in the first or second class of a semester. Dialogic relationship requires our long-enduring observation of, listening and talking to and caring for our students.

Notes

1. My conceptualization on the institutionalized practices of Korean Evangelical Protestantism setting up the boundary between the negotiable 'difference' and the unnegotiable 'sin' draws on Michel Foucault's discussion on discourse. Although it is a slippery notion as he admitted, it could be roughly defined as an institutionalized, regulated way of speaking or writing about people, ideas, things, and reality. Discourse sets up the boundary of what can be intelligibly thought and said about them and what cannot and that of who can tell the truth about them and who cannot (Foucault, 1972, 1978).
2. It would have been weird if we explicitly taught them how to facilitate dialogue since it had never been the main goal of Korean Evangelical Protestantism (whether diasporic or not) at both the institutional and the

doctrinal levels. Its primary aim has always been the conversion of a previously non-Christian individual to Christianity. And I think our bible circle acquired social recognition and trust in the community exactly because of our 'intended' disinterest in bringing non-believers to a church while trying to build and serve the Korean diasporic community.

3. Ji Yoon Ryu, my dear friend who joined the Korean diasporic church and bible circle at that time in Boulder as well, has kindly pointed out that 'sharing food and time was not only about building a sense of bonding and belonging.' She says that 'it also made the bible circle members appreciate the bible circle leader's sacrifice and dedication; Given that all the doctorate and master students were in lack of time and finance, the leader's sharing of his food, time, and money made them trust and follow his leadership.' She also adds that the three ways to build up dialogical relationships 'pretty well worked for building a sense of security as well; The bible circle members felt safe and secure believing, no matter what they said, they would not be alienated or excluded.'

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PART III

Between Rupture and Transformation

CHAPTER 6

Los Seis de Boulder Sculpture Project: A Reflection on Dialogue and Community Building Through Art-Making

Jasmine Baetz and Gladys Preciado

Los Seis de Boulder Sculpture Project was a community effort to install a sculpture on the University of Colorado, Boulder (CU) campus in front of Temporary Building 1 (TB-1) (Figs. 6.1 and 6.2). In 2019, students and community members created a sculpture with portraits of six Chicanx student activists who were killed near the campus while demanding continued educational opportunity programs during the 1970s. The sculpture project was facilitated by Jasmine Baetz and Gladys Preciado, alongside Celina Jara Tovar, CU alum and then-BFA student in Psychology and Art Practice, Lupe Avalos, Engineering Management MA student and then-BA alum in Technology, Arts & Media, and Ciprie Ramos, a current student at the Community College of Denver. Hundreds of people participated in the planning and creation of the sculpture project,

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Fig. 6.1 *Los Seis de Boulder* sculpture: Portraits of Neva Romero, Florencio Granado, Heriberto Terán, Francisco Dougherty, Una Jaakola, and Reyes Martínez. (Photos courtesy of Jasmine Baetz)

primarily in the context of community-making days. This chapter focuses on and honors the work of community and dialogue fostered in the space. Using Gloria Anzaldúa's interlaced theories of *conocimiento* (knowledge) and *nepantla* (the in-between) and Huang-Nissen's dialogic principles, we theorize the community-making days as providing an appropriate space for students, staff, faculty, non-students, alumni, and members of the Chicanx community to piece together a distorted history through dialogue and art-making.

Los Seis de Boulder were six Chicanx student activists who died in May 1974 during weeks-long occupation of TB-1, in which they demanded

Fig. 6.2 *Los Seis de Boulder* sculpture: Portraits of Neva Romero, Florencio Granado, Heriberto Terán, Francisco Dougherty, Una Jaakola, and Reyes Martínez. (Photos courtesy of Jasmine Baetz)

continued funding and growth for the Educational Opportunity Programs, which brought minority students to campus beginning in 1968. The occupation was one action in a series of events in which United Mexican American Students (UMAS) self-advocated in response to administrative ambivalence and outright damage, including withholding financial aid checks, mass student expulsions, and removal of program leadership.

On May 27, 1974, Neva Romero, one of the first students to occupy TB-1, and CU Boulder alums Una Jaakola and Reyes Martínez, were

killed in a car bomb at Chautauqua Park. On May 28, UMAS students and supporters met at TB-1 to mourn their deaths. CU alum and poet Heriberto Terán read a poem in their honor, and CU alum and former UMAS president Florencio Granado gave a speech. On May 29, Terán and Granado, and Francisco Dougherty, were killed in a car bomb in a parking lot near 28th and Canyon, which also severely injured Antonio Alcantar. The circumstances surrounding their deaths were never adequately investigated, and the cases were never solved. The occupation of TB-1 concluded on May 30, the morning following the second bombing, when university administrators agreed to the demands of the students; only after six of their peers were killed. This urgent and traumatic history has been all but erased from the narrative of CU Boulder, and is held in the collective memory of the UMAS student organization and MEXA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanx de Aztlán).

We begin with a sharing of our social locations which impact our relational practices, including dialogue. As a first-generation daughter of Mexican immigrants, Preciado identifies as Chicana and is working on radical self-love and collective liberation through her work and daily practices. Preciado recognizes the importance of Chicanx identity and the struggle that generations before her underwent for her right to equal education. However, she challenges the misogynistic and racist tendencies toward other people of color still found within the community. She is committed to rigorous interrogation of Chicanx identity in its capacity for shielding internalized white supremacy and resultant racism and machismo culture. Preciado is adamant about identifying and combating settler-colonial values in any community as a liberatory practice, and prioritizing reclamation of aspects of identity that have been ripped away by white supremacy and colonialism. To further dismantle white supremacy, she is committed to de-centering whiteness in art education by practicing an anti-racist and liberatory pedagogy that builds on frameworks from scholars like Paulo Freire and bell hooks. The teaching strategies Preciado utilizes center students as contributors of knowledge and democratizes the classroom space, allowing students to feel empowered by realizing that their voice matters.

Baetz is a woman of color whose mother immigrated from India to North America as a child. Her father is Canadian; descendant of settlers who occupied Indigenous lands with their arrival from England and Germany five generations ago. She was raised in the cultural and religious context of her mother's family, owing to her mother's refusal to abide by

the racialized and gendered exclusion that expels (or, at best, condemns) women who partner out of the community, and their children. This community, the Parsis of India, consider themselves an ethnic minority, descendants of Zoroastrians fleeing religious persecution in Persia some 1400 years ago. Appeals to the necessity of ethnic purity in the community (and the tiresome denial of the community's exogamy, still somehow prevalent in an age of DNA testing and mixed results), are a form of enduring white supremacy. These circumstances, compounded with the confusion that comes with contested affiliation, and physical removal from the arena in which these social conditions originate (India), lead Baetz to appreciate the disputed discourses around Chicanx identity and belonging. Chicanx theorization and inquiry into mixed race identity and belonging help her understand her own mixture of identities. In this chapter, co-authors Preciado and Baetz speak as "we," speaking together in our reflection on the project. We have chosen to use the term *Chicanx* to describe groups of Chicanx/a/o people, both contemporary and past, and preserve the term *The Chicano Movement* to describe historical movement work.

Background and Literature

To understand the project for *Los Seis de Boulder* and the dialogic space around it, Chicanx histories and erasure must be seen. To serve its capitalist interests, during the early 1900s, the United States promoted immigration, especially from Mexico. The United States invaded and claimed Mexican land with the 1848 signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Colonized people in the region were given American citizenship if they renounced Mexican citizenship, a crucial point in understanding the complex, contingent, contested identities of Mexican people in the United States (Cisneros, 2014). Many Indigenous communities of this region, including Utes, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Kiowa, and Apaches, were displaced and killed by American expansion (Aldama, 2011). These migrations, of both people and the border, form the backdrop upon which identity is a contested space owing to both white discrimination against Mexican communities and internalized discrimination within Mexican communities (Rodriguez-Domínguez, 2005, p. 72).

In Colorado, violent discrimination against Mexican-Americans encouraged preservation of culture and a sense of community and belonging. By 1930, organizations formed to influence legislation, protect civil rights, and protest assimilation (Sandoval, 2011). The Chicano Movement of the

Southwest was concerned with the war draft, electoral process, farm workers' rights, education, housing, and land rights, and often worked in coalition with the American Indian Movement (Freedom Archives, 2017).

The 1960s saw antiwar activism, the Poor People's March on Washington, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and international student uprisings in 1968 (Muñoz, 2007). This organizing provided a site for first-generation Mexican Americans and others to forge a cultural and political identity within The Chicano Movement, which Juan Gómez-Quiñones and Irene Vásquez (2014) define as a series of actions and alliances: "[d]uring these points of intersection, individuals and groups formed an identifiable coalescence of action, a dynamic and, at times, a volatile body that we can refer to, in sum, as the Chicana and Chicano movement" (xxv).

Chicanx organizing is so "complex, controversial, and contemporary that the wish for a definitive history may never be realized" (Sandoval, 2011, p. 242). Within this complexity, Chicanx activism laid bare the structures of dominant society; in *Symbols of Resistance*, Priscilla Falcón calls The Chicano Movement "the demasking of the state" (Freedom Archives, 2017, 1:02:46). The Chicanx movement continues to be a revealing of power and structure. In response, its impact, history, and relevance are continuously obfuscated by dominant (white) accounts of it. In Boulder, the Chicanx movement was significant owing to Denver's proximity and the university's thriving Educational Opportunity Programs (EOPs). The movement suffered the killings of many leaders, including *Los Seis*, UMAS EOP's assistant director, Ricardo Falcón (39:49-48:28), and Luis Jr. Martinez (11:55-18:39) and Carlos Zapata (1:01:29-10:02:32) whose killings are also discussed in the *Symbols of Resistance* documentary.

In 2011, Professor Elisa Facio described how her students "had no knowledge of CU Boulder's arduous struggle to develop a program of Chicana and Chicano studies and to recruit Chicana and Chicano students. Even more disheartening was the lack of noteworthy political and educational information regarding Los Seis de Boulder" (p. 349). Upon learning this history, students eagerly engaged with it, countering the university's erasure of one of the bloodiest Chicano movements in any North American university.

We will next work toward an understanding of Chicanx identity. Sociocultural critic Ruben Angel reminds us: "language should be reflexive […] I also have other people around me who use different articulations and

that also helps me figure out what are the best ways to communicate" (Pacheco Soto, 2019). Celina Jara Tovar, one of the students who led the sculpture project, defines the shifting, never-static definition of Chicanx identity:

> I use Xicanx. The first X is to reclaim the Indigenous Nahuatl language. I personally use Xicana, because I identify as a cisgender female, but I use Xicanx interchangably, to identify the movement or acknowledge groups of people. The x at the end is to make space for gender non-conforming or non-binary Xicanx people who don't identify with the a, o, or @. The difficulty in discourse around Chicanx identity is generational and gendered, to me, Xicanx disrupts that and demands that discourse be made.
>
> Xicanx people are a product of colonization, so as we talk about decolonizing ourselves, and connecting to our Indigenous roots, we still remain mestizo, or mestizx [a mixture of Indigenous and Spanish blood]. For those of us who are further from those Indigenous roots, who have not lived on reservations or have direct lived experiences within the Indigenous communities in Mexico, it gets complicated to claim this indigeneity. In seeking to decolonize, we recolonize at the same time, as we claim or take space and culture of people who live closer to their Indigenous lineages.
>
> For me, it's a cultural identity, a word to describe the meshing of the cultures within me. I identify as Xicana because I am a mixture of cultures and bloodlines. I'm also a first generation Mexicana-Americana, and historically, Chicano is often ascribed to people like me whose parents are Mexican immigrants with children born or raised in the US. So we're in a hyphenated space, not completely US, not completely Mexico, and we're living in-between, and we may hold privilege that fluctuates in either context. It's important to validate everyone's ways of identifying, Chicana, Chicano, Chican@, Chicanx, Xicanx, and so on. There isn't one way that is "correct," it's based on personal experience, and one's generation. I am Xicana Mexicana-Americana, daughter of Mexican immigrants.

This reflects our interest in participants and facilitators taking on meaning and identity for themselves, both outside colonial notions of identity, and within understanding colonial definitions impacting us even as we reject them. With Celina's testimony, we embrace knowledge production outside of traditional academic citation, celebration, and tension in claiming connections to Indigenous identity, reflection on generational affinities and disagreements, and variable terms and definitions found in and around Chicanx identity.

Overview of Concept and Theory

In articulating a theory of dialogue in relation to Chicanx identity and historical memory, we begin with our observation that Indigenous practices are routinely appropriated into dialogue work. There is scarce academic literature examining the ways Indigenous thought and practice are subsumed into dialogic practice with inadequate or absent citation. Even in Sally Huang-Nissen's (1999) excellent chapter defining the principles of dialogue from cross-cultural perspectives, she begins and frames the definition through the words of a white male American scientist, David Bohm; though she later shares Bohm's acknowledgment of dialogue used by ancient Greeks, Indigenous people, and Quakers. Occasionally, Indigenous practices are named and positioned in relation to Western research, for example, in Fredericks et al.'s (2011) use of *yarning* (a cultural form of relational conversation that encompasses respect, protocol, and engagement) in participatory action research, which they acknowledge as a contemporary form of Indigenous practice. More often, however, we see academic theorizations of dialogue and studies of talking circles, dialogue circles, and sharing circles failing to mention any origin or affiliation with Indigenous ways of knowing and communicating. The absence of such acknowledgment in theorizations of dialogue, and research and reflection into origins of dialogic practice, is troubling, and a perpetuation of colonial ownership over traditional Indigenous ways and practices.

That said, dialogic practices are ubiquitous in Chicanx communities, relationships, and identity-formation. As we remember from Celina's definition, Chicanx identity claims indigeneity, and so it follows that deliberative and deep communication practices that we associate with Indigenous practice would exist within some Chicanx ways of life. Chicanx dialogue dwells in the complexity of identity, and has the potential to foreground and center the presence of Indigenous thought while acknowledging its erasure, even from within. To explore the idea of Chicanx dialogue, we will highlight two concepts from Chicanx feminisms, particularly the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa: *conocimiento*, knowledge, and *nepantla*, the in-between. Frameworks of *conocimiento* and *nepantla* prove useful in creating dialogue that centers Chicanx students and histories, as shown in Fernández and Gamero's (2018) use of Anzaldúa's thought to generate student *testimonios* that promote healing and resistance from colonial forms of knowledge and oppression.

Discussion of Ideas

During the four *community sculpture-making days*, dialogue was employed to create space and understanding around the difficult history of *Los Seis*, and to articulate the goals and details of the sculpture project and design. Community voice and community building were prioritized in making the sculpture, and it was created in collaboration with a community of mostly Chicanx identifying individuals, in coalition with non-Chicanx identifying individuals. The materials and processes involved in creating six mosaic compositions allowed for unique opportunities for skill sharing, individual focus within a large undertaking, and development of rich material metaphors that lent to more dialogue. In this section, we will speak to the usefulness of Gloria Anzalúda's interwoven theories of *conocimiento* and *nepantla*, concluding with related principles from Huang-Nissen's account of dialogue.

Anzaldúa (2015) might describe the killings of *Los Seis* as *un choque*, *un arrebato* (a shock, a rupture) in 1974. The shock created *nepantla*, a space between the way things were and an unknown future, a space of transition, a space where realities clash (p. 17). This trauma was then fragmented and buried by the forces of white supremacy at CU Boulder, causing *deconocimiento*: numbness, anger, and disillusionment (p. 19). While destruction can shock us out of the familiar and force a confrontation with our *desconocimientos* (p. 16), this did not happen at CU Boulder around *Los Seis* since the killings were dismissed and buried. This history is preserved by UMAS y MEXA, student activists, and professors who care to teach it. Within and without the forces and patterns that work to keep this event buried, we strove to create the conditions for knowing this history, and sought for the project to be created by a collective community, and ultimately be placed in a public space on campus.

Activists and artists can facilitate *conocimiento*: mediating transitions, helping to make the crossings, and guiding transformative process (p. 17). *Conocimiento* leads to insights, understandings, realizations, courage, and "the motivation to engage in concrete ways with the potential to bring us into compassionate interactions" (p. 19). Almost fifty years after the bombings, a room full of *artistas, activistas y communidad* walked a path of *conocimiento* through the sculpture project. The dialogic practices that took place resided within *conocimiento* because they allowed for searching, inquiring, and healing consciousness. On the fortieth anniversary of the deaths of *Los Seis*, Priscilla Falcón described the occasion: "The state

underestimates the power of history, and history rarely stays put in a forgotten, disconnected past. And that is the door we have opened today" (Freedom Archives, 2017, 0:01:43). At that gathering, the loss of *Los Seis* was re-lived and revealed, and we sought to do the same within dialogic and tactile space.

Anzaldúa's theorizations of *conocimiento* and *nepantla* align with and extend Huang-Nissen's (1999) conditions and guidelines of dialogue, which we can apply to the project. When participants entered the room, we suggested they sit next to someone and ask them to share the task at hand, shed potential hierarchical roles, and *act as colleagues*. The repetitive task of making and placing small tiles *created an empty space*, opening participants to new perspectives. With flexible goals for our artistic production, these workshops were an opportunity to hear what others would like the sculpture to do and be, and we cultivated an atmosphere of openness, *listening without judgment*, *suspending assumptions*, and *postponing agendas and goals*. We *focused on learning* with speakers who countered the university's erasure of this history, and provided formal and informal opportunities for *inquiry and reflection*. In creating part of a larger piece, participants had time and space for *self-observation*. With a topic as traumatic and unresolved as the deaths of *Los Seis*, it was important to promote empathy for one another's experiences. The material metaphor of multiple pieces coming together to form a narrative and portrait meant *differences were respected and valued*. The sculpture and its creation are vehicles to demonstrate how differences can exist and work together. However, we intentionally invited participants who wouldn't embody the kind of differences that would negate the project at hand.

Case Scenario

We aimed to facilitate dialogue between people who might not otherwise be in a room together. There was intergenerational dialogue between current Chicanx students and alumni who participated in the 1974 occupation of TB-1, intercultural dialogue between Chicanx and non-Chicanx participants, and dialogue between people with different affiliations with CU Boulder. The deliberative space allowed participants to navigate the lingering trauma caused by the killings of *Los Seis*. Countering the pressure to keep this history buried, family, friends, students, alumni, professors, and staff came together to collectively engage in dialogue through the process of making the sculpture. The ceramics studio, usually a controlled

space reserved for current students, became a flexible and safe space as we invited people with shared goals and frameworks to work on the sculpture, and collectively heal the wound marked by the deaths of *Los Seis*. Each table was a different workstation and potential site for art-making as a part of this dialogue process: hand building tiles, mold-making tiles, and mosaic-puzzling. Participants were free to walk up to any table to work on the sculpture. The repetitive processes in making the sculpture allowed participants to reflect alone or together. Perspectives and stories were shared, piecing together this fragmented history. We liken it to Anzaldúa's (2015) process of restructuring and reframing, a process of making and unmaking: "There is never any resolution, just the process of healing" (p. 20). Shifts in narrative are not just a form of self-nurturing; they have the potential to change reality. Anzaldúa concludes: "We revise reality by altering our consensual agreements about what is real, what is just and fair. We can trans-shape reality by changing our perspectives and perceptions. By choosing a different future, we bring it into being" (p. 21). Our collective creation and was an opportunity to transform the narrative about *Los Seis de Boulder* (Fig. 6.3).

Fig. 6.3 Participants puzzling mosaic tiles. (Photo courtesy of Lauren Click)

During each community-making day, the room engaged in group dialogue. We began by going around the room and introducing ourselves, then invited anyone to share any thoughts about the project or the history of *Los Seis*. This created an atmosphere of openness and listening. On our first day, Deborah Espinosa, a close friend to some of *Los Seis* who occupied TB-1 in 1974, spoke of the histories of Chicanx students at Boulder, the sculpture project, and the current political climate. This opened up space to anyone who wanted to share their thoughts. Facilitators spoke about progress with funding and other administrative aspects of the sculpture, and discussed the content, design, and intentions of the finished sculpture.

Implications for Teaching and Practice

In addition to teaching Art History at a community college, Preciado teaches art of the ancestral Americas for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to students in the Los Angeles School District, of which Latinx children make up approximately 74%. She remembers teachers carelessly regurgitating a distorted version of her culture back to her while growing up, and knows it is vital to teach this material accurately and sensitively. Preciado employs a dialogic format, forming a circle with students to pass around objects. Rather than lecturing, she facilitates while the children lead the conversation. Together, they create an empty space that allows for new perspectives through inquiry-based learning. She explains that information is scarce so there are no right or wrong answers, motivating everyone to participate, share their thoughts, and listen without judgment. Each student shares initial thoughts, and together they interpret the object based on their observations. When students share perspectives from different cultural backgrounds that not everyone agrees upon, she reminds them that when engaging with material outside their own culture it is crucial to set aside their own cultural lens to fully understand the material at hand. Preciado validates any reaction or interpretation and values differences in experience, especially interested in interpretations that come from lived understanding. By implementing some visual thinking strategies and paraphrasing observations, Preciado validates their contributions. Students then sit in a circle and reflect on what they learned while making art inspired by the objects they studied from the ancestral Americas. Preciado walks around, asking what they are making and how it relates to the content they learned, encouraging students to inquire and reflect.

When art is embedded into dialogic practice, it provides an opening to discover new shared meanings and build genuine relationships. The dialogue that took place during community-making days allowed participants to safely share different perspectives and thoughts about the history of *Los Seis* while working toward the shared goal of finishing the sculpture. We theorized the dialogue fostered in this space with Anzaldúa's theories of *conocimiento* and *nepantla*, as well as Huang-Nissens's dialogic principles. The bombings were *un choque* within the Chicanx community which created *nepantla*. The trauma caused disarray, and the history was fragmented and buried by white supremacist frameworks. The numbness and disillusionment resulting from this trauma are categorized as *desconocimiento*. The project leads, or *neptantleras*, facilitated a path to *conocimiento*. *Artistas, activistas, y communidad* walked a path of *conocimiento* through creating the sculpture forty-five years after the bombings. Through dialogue, the ceramics studio was transformed into a space of healing and reflection. As Anzaldúa (2015) says: "Let's use art and imagination to discover how we feel and think and to help us respond to the world" (p. 21). In this deliberate in-between space, we collectively find our footing and see resolution and balance even as it does not exist in other places of our lives.

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CHAPTER 7

Writing Black Queers into Existence: A South African Model for Dialogue Among Oppressed Groups

Kneo Mokgopa

The recognition and representation of queer people in South Africa is a promising conversation on the South African public agenda today. It is supported by national and international dedicated times of awareness such as Pride months, National Coming Out Day, Agender Pride Day, Bisexual Awareness Week, HIV Long-Term Survivors Awareness Day, International Transgender Day of Visibility, and many others. However, in many contexts, discourse and other political action and advocacy centered around Black queerness are sometimes seen as a competing interest to social movements and causes with more leverage and visibility, such as Black liberation, women's liberation movements, or Lesbian and Gay advocacy. If not seen as a competing interest, it is explicitly ignored and erased as a nonissue, not warranting any concern or action. 'Intersectionality' as a lens to approach the interpretation and contemplation of oppression has been eagerly adopted as a much-needed resource by which to make a case

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for Black queer people, illustrating the kinds of language deficiencies and epistemic injustice that Black queer people suffer in South Africa (Fricker, 2007).

Cultural workers have preserved and nourished platforms through which to make the experiences of Black queerness more visible, spaces and scenes where Black queer people can be recognized, grieved, celebrated, validated, seen, and saved. Here, one thinks of the works of Fela Gucci and Desire Marea, Maneo Mohale, Andy Mkosi, Kopano Maroga, Angel Valerio, Langa Mavuso, Zanele Muholi, and Nonzuzo Gxekwa, to name a few. The creative arts have contested the apparent invisibility of Black queerness and insisted upon the perspective that Black queer people exist and that there is an urgent need for their recognition and protection.

To respond to the need for Black queer visibility through dialogue and activism, on 29 June 2019, the Open Book Festival, in collaboration with cocreatePoetica and the Nelson Mandela Foundation, hosted a workshop titled 'Writing Black Queers into Existence' facilitated by myself, Kneo Mokgopa. We believed that, by hosting a workshop exploring and meditating on the experiences of Black queer people that placed literary and other artistic mediums as compelling and capable resources to respond to the oppression of Black queer people, participants could explore and (co) create narratives that contest Black queer invisibility. In establishing a platform for dialogue, it was important to acknowledge and address the ramifications of the context in which the participants exist and the participants' experiences of structural violence, powerlessness, voicelessness, and social death. We knew that Black queer people often struggle to access spaces that discuss their liberation because of the kinds of inequality South Africa suffers from and that Black people are overrepresented in the chronic poverty statistics of the country.

As a cultural worker and communications and advocacy manager at the Nelson Mandela Foundation in Cape Town, South Africa, the author Kneo Mokgopa was part of the organizing of this dialogue event. They facilitated the conversational space and bore witness to the process of creating narratives among the invited Black queer poets. This event was of particular significance to the author as it connected their passion and study of African identity systems as a master's student in Rhetoric Studies at the University of Cape Town. They continue to write, dialogue, and publish material related to this subject across platforms.

We believed that by accommodating possible solutions for the participants' disempowering experiences, both subjective and structural—both

feelings unwanted in sophisticated and previously White areas as well as being economically disempowered from being able to travel to the workshop *and* feeling as though one belongs—we would be able to host a compelling, effective, and fruitful dialogue that would generate (experimental) grammars for Black queer people to articulate their experiences, contest narratives that erase them and thrust Black queer people into existence.

Our approach employed a narrative design of the journey participants would take in attending the workshop and attempted to resolve the imbalances of power and equalize access to opportunity. This is to say, we concerned ourselves with the journey participants would take from hearing about it, RSVP, gaining prior knowledge to feel competent in the discussions, transport to the venue, breakfast and lunch, have their identity acknowledged and welcomed as well as their journey back home. We found that such a narrative design of dialogue environment which was abundantly concerned with the wellbeing of its participants allowed participants to present their highest selves and produced a compelling, fruitful, and effective dialogue.

We were fortunate to have a comfortable budget with which to address as many of our participants' needs as reasonably possible. However, such an approach can be pursued with less budget by employing strategies such as hosting dialogue within expected participant's more immediate environments, asking participants to bring lunch to share with the group and hosting a publicly viewable guest list on Google Drive or Facebook to encourage participants who may be anxious about who else may be coming.

In this chapter, I hope to show how historical and lived vectors of oppression participate in the creation of Black queer invisibility and social death, demonstrate the necessity and appropriateness of the workshop we hosted, show how the workshop's design provided the kind of environment that enabled participants to meaningfully participate in the workshop and (co)create resources to write Black queer people into existence, and lastly advocate for this model of dialogue design to be used in other contexts where participants are known to suffer gross inequality, invisibility, powerlessness, and social death.

South African Black Queer Death Economy

The South African Black queer death economy describes the necropolitics that surround Black queers and produce social death in them. This economy spans matrices of scientific, religious and political beliefs, socioeconomic forces, legislative forces, and many other forces. Below, I briefly scan the historical legislation that the Apartheid government used to oppress Black and queer people.

After the discovery of diamonds in the 1860s, the British Imperial government embarked on the project of turning African (Black) bodies into agents of cheap labor to meet the demands of the White-owned farms and mines. In the Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes passed the Glen Grey Act of 1894 to coerce Black people into labor reserves such as hostels and the urban slums, taxing all African men ten shillings should they fail to work outside of their district for at least three months in a year. It was a tax for being a Black male capable of physical labor who did not work for a White person. The ambition was to satisfy the demand for cheap labor by penalizing Black men for not working for White employers.

The Glen Grey Act was the beginning of a compendium of laws that forcibly moved and removed Black bodies to turn them into agents of labor. These laws include the Native Land Act Laws and Native Urban Areas Act, the Native Service Contract Act, the Representation of Native Act, and the Group Areas Act.

The Native's Land Act of 1913 was a landmark piece of legislation that would provide robust momentum for the disenfranchisement and alienation of Black people in South Africa. Under its provisions, Black people in South Africa (who represent about 80% of the population) were relegated to occupying less than 10% of the available land in South Africa whereas White people, making up about 20% of the population, would occupy over 90% of the available land. The Native Land Act, as well as other landmark pieces of Apartheid legislation and policy, established a world for Black people and another for White people.

Years later, the sentiment that Black people do not belong in South Africa continues to be a compelling source of social death in Black people—feelings of alienation, displacement, and second-class citizenship are a common sentiment expressed in political movements and protests. Through these laws, otherwise independent Black Africans were turned into migrant laborers living in labor reserves cum homelands.[1]

> *Between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labor, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses. No human contact, but relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production.*
>
> *My turn to state an equation: colonization = 'thingification.'* (Césaire, 2000)

The *Immorality Act* was an act of parliament that was first passed in 1927 and was intended to regulate sexual relations between races (O'Malley, n.d.). It functioned as the legislative mechanism to produce and police heteronormative whiteness. It is remembered and archived as a piece of legislation that forbade "extra-marital carnal intercourse … between Whites and Africans" (O'Malley, n.d.). However, it always prohibited sex work and the 1969 amendment (*Immorality Amendment Act 57 of 1969, South African Government*, n.d.) also stated that 'A male person who commits with another male person at a party any act which is calculated to stimulate sexual passion or to give sexual gratification, shall be guilty of an offence.' It also made it an offence to manufacture and/or sell articles 'intended to be used to perform an *unnatural* sexual act.'

The Apartheid regime was anxiously obsessed with securing White supremacy, cartesian delineations of space, persons, and all aspects of social life as well as the 'thingification' of persons categorized as Black. The cascading amendments of the Immorality Act policed Drag performance, public displays of queer affection, same-sex sex, sex toys, sex work, and sex between White people and any other person not considered White (Carolin, 2017). The Immorality Act legislated the idealized mythology of Whiteness; it draconically and paternalistically policed how such Whiteness ought to behave through the omnipotent apparatus of the totalitarian Apartheid state.

The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is a globally celebrated document for its progressive reforms pertaining to queerness. The Bill of Rights contained in Chapter 2 make it unlawful for any person in any context to unfairly discriminate against a person on one of the listed or analogous grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). The constitutional dispensation, in

theory, creates a far more open and inclusive society; however, no constitution is self-executing. The execution of the constitution through legislation and policy enactments has been slow and less forthcoming as it could be. Despite having such a progressive constitution, Black queers in South Africa still face discrimination and violence from the state and the societies in which they live.

Dialogue in South Africa

The word 'dialogue' has no widely accepted and stable definition. Its meaning can be, and is, fiercely contested—for instance, among certain student formations in South Africa. Today, it is identified as at best a meaningless talk-shop space and at worst a liberal instrument of oppression.

The Nelson Mandela Foundation uses the word in a very specific way, drawing deeply on the legacy of its Founder to give it particular, if not unique, semantic significance. An intensive commissioned study in 2007 (including consultations with Mr. Mandela) provided a strong legacy underpinning to institutional praxis. Two decades of institutional experience with dialogical processes has honed the Foundation's conceptual and methodological instruments. By 'dialogue' the Foundation means the convening of spaces safe enough for meaningful and effective negotiation of sustainable solutions to critical social problems (Harris & Katuu, 2019). This includes roundtable discussions, panel discussions, one-on-one conversations as well as workshops.

Narrative Design

The workshop took place via the collaboration between the Open Book Festival, #cocreatePoetica and the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The Open Book Festival is an annual Literary Festival that takes place in Cape Town. Its vision is to become a truly international festival that attracts top writers and an audience from around the world, a fantastic showcase of the best of South African writing and to make a significant and sustainable contribution to our future by building a love of reading and books among the youth of Cape Town. The Nelson Mandela Foundation is a 'not for profit' civil society organization that was founded by Nelson Mandela in 1999 after he stepped down from the office of the presidency. The Nelson Mandela Foundation focuses its work on contributing to the making of just societies by mobilizing the legacy of Nelson Mandela, providing

public access to information on his life and times, and convening dialogue on critical social issues.

Together we decided to host a workshop titled 'Writing Black Queers in Existence.' Our intention was to participate in the cultivation of new and emerging writers on the South African literary horizons. We believed that of particular priority was the cultivation and support of Black queer writers who have historically been marginalized and invisibilized in the contemporary South African national identity and in liberatory movements for equality and justice. We were also sensitive to the reality that Black queer South Africans are some of the most disempowered and dehumanized groups in South Africa, representing people whose gender and sexual identities are regarded as anormative, immoral, unnatural, Western, and taboo while also being overrepresented in statistical groups described as 'chronically poor' (McKaiser, 2012).

We were abundantly concerned with the accessibility and the efficacy of the workshop and, as such, designed the workshop in such a way so as to challenge the structural and subjective inaccessibility of the workshop. Such considerations include concern for the sensation of safety in the conversation, the sense of comfort to make contributions to the discussion, not being concerned about food as well as their physical security. The strategy we adopted to respond to these considerations, we called a 'narrative design,' a term we adopted from marketing and public relations strategies and extended into the dialogue design itself.

In essence, our narrative design attempted to understand the experiences of potential participants and used this understanding to design the dialogue such that it appropriately responded to the needs of the participants—from a marketing perspective to the dialogue platform itself.

Our narrative design first concerned how a potential participant may first hear about the workshop. Based on this consideration, we placed sponsored and targeted social media posts and captioned them in such a way that even a potential participant using the free version of Facebook would still be able to understand what the envisioned workshop would be about. A series of LGBTQI Advocacy Groups helped market the workshop by sharing the invitation.

Secondly, we created an RSVP form online that would be low on data consumption. The RSVP form asked the following: (a) name, (b) pronouns, (c) email/phone number, (d) the taxi fare for reimbursement, (e) dietary requirements, and (f) what the participant hopes to gain from the workshop. The RSVP form was used to communicate potentially sensitive

information from the participants to the organizers and allowed for flexibility in how participants chose to answer with many questions allowing for written answers as opposed to checking a predetermined box. This communicated the workshop's concern for the participant wellbeing.

Thirdly, we prepared a publicly accessible Google Drive link where participants could access content related to the themes of the discussion. We hoped that participants who would not otherwise feel confident in participating in the discussion could use the Drive to gain prior knowledge of the central themes of the workshop and feel empowered and safe enough to contribute on that basis.

The well-categorized Drive contained a couple of academic readings, multiple poems, newspaper clippings, and videos that explored the complexities, multiplicities, and experience of Black queerness. The Drive is still active and available to participants to draw on for whatever purpose they feel is relevant.[2]

As described in the RSVP form, the workshop also helped offset whatever transport costs participants may incur. We also provided coffee or tea with a muffin to all participants that arrived in the morning and later supplied individually ordered meals. Lastly, we chose a fitting venue for the workshop because it is on the main road and accessible via public transport in a suburb called Mowbray, close to Cape Town city center where minibus taxis, buses, and trains all have depots. All considered, the narrative a participant would go on was designed to include as many moments where participants' hardships were addressed in such a way that created a deep sense of belonging, independence, autonomy, and power for participants.

The workshop was not advertised as for the exclusive participation by Black and/or queer people; however, the workshop was framed as a space where Black queer people would be centered. That given, an overwhelming majority of participants were themselves Black and queer. Considering the participant's social and economic disadvantage, we chose a space that would be most central to most target participants and tried to ensure that no participant would be unable to attend for reasons related to inequality. This involved reimbursing participants transport fare and making breakfast and lunch available at no cost to the participants. Our participants were encouraged to co-create the space as described below and help create a sense of belonging in the space to contest the experience of Otherness and alienation structurally produced by the South African Black queer death economy.

The Workshop

The workshop had two main objectives. The first was to explore the radical and revolutionary possibilities of literary practice. We wondered, what contribution can be written or spoken work make to the liberatory movements in which they find themselves—and if so, what are the limitations of that contribution? The second was to explore the liberatory possibilities of written and spoken literary practice for Black queer people themselves—and if so, what are the limitations of those possibilities. Our narrative design extended into designing the mechanics of the dialogue and solved for participants disempowering experiences such as shame, hunger, and a lack of money. From the RSVP form to the program of the workshop, we endeavored to place the experiences of participants at the center of how the dialogue platform was created. The workshop was hosted by Faye Kabila-Kagwa from the Open Book Festival and myself, Kneo Mokgopa, from the Nelson Mandela Foundation.

The workshop had a program that was designed by Faye and myself but was allowed to deviate from this in consultation with participants' needs and interests. Faye and I facilitated the conversation by providing prompts and allowed participants to unpack, interrogate, and explore the prompts to arrive at their own conclusions on the subject.

After general introductions, an introduction to space and housekeeping, we agreed on terms of reference with each participant describing how they would like to be addressed and state their pronouns if they wanted to. The workshop began with a short introduction to the terms of reference for the workshop through a discussion on the works of Judith Butler, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Audre Lorde, and others. We discussed our experiences being Black and queer, our challenges and experiences of oppression but also our achievements and our experiences of 'magic.'

The next part of the workshop focused more closely on literary practice. We considered the ways and which poetry and literature have made contributions to the fight against Apartheid and how other kinds of cultural practice such as music, visual art, theater, and others have contributed to nourishing and otherwise support political movements in South Africa and other parts of the world. We also discussed politics and literature, *Negritude*, West African music, nonstandard English, the usefulness of slang and neologisms, the reckless power of Black Twitter, and other aspects of culture, Blackness, and queer politics. We did this first by listening to readings and recitals of works prepared for the workshop and later

watched and read works suggested by participants. After each piece, we engaged in conversation about the piece, its meaning from an aesthetic perspective—its technical structure, its grammars and cadences—as well as from the resonance it left with us—how it was able to express and articulate a particular experience associated to Blackness and/or queerness.

We encouraged participants to participate in whatever way they felt comfortable—whether by sharing to the broader group in open discussion, by writing their reflections, by suggesting and offering provocations to the group and by creating literary works based on the discussion. Because the workshop spanned theoretical, political, and creative perspectives, an overwhelming majority of participants found an area where they felt confident and comfortable expressing themselves.

One of the most profound reflections from the workshop came from Viwe Tafeni, who was reflecting on Koleka Putuma's poem *Water*. In it, Koleka describes a train of acts of racism done against Black people who have come to the beach and interpierces it with the word 'Black.' Viwe's reflection was that the word Black functioned as though it were a part of speech. Viwe's reflection explored dimensions of the construction of Blackness and its presence as language.

During the break, participants were encouraged to write something to present to the workshop after the break; whether it be poetry, a short story, and more. When we returned, participants shared their pieces. One participant took their break in a separate room and used it to record a short film where they recited the poem, danced, and posed on the screen.[33] Thereafter, participants and conveners were invited to give feedback on the dialogue over video recording in the space.

Application to the Classroom

This model of dialogue is applicable to the classroom environment. In summary the model is based on an abundant concern for the wellbeing of participants. It pursues this concern by attempting to understand that historical, structural, and lived experiences of participants investigate the forces of oppression and discrimination that may affect participants' ability to meaningfully engage in the dialogue and bring their 'highest selves' to the dialogue.

To give effect to this model, we created a narrative design that would center participants' experience at every point of the project. Such a narrative design could be followed in the classroom by investigating the context

in which participants exist as well as the consequences of this context to the dialogue. For instance, if the dialogue was targeted to investigate bullying in primary schools, one may research the socioeconomic, political, and other structural causes for bullying in the school and solve for them in the context of the dialogue. This may include ensuring that social inequality is contested in the dialogue by having a dress code of a particular color to help less noticeably wealthy participants from feeling inferior, catering the dialogue, or asking participants to anonymously bring and share food for the dialogue. The dialogue may set rules for engagement to guard against certain voices from dominating the space, rules for responding to engagements from peers that would prevent mocking or undermining participant's contributions as well as a guide on the language most desirable for the dialogue in such a way that victims would not be revictimized in the space. The program may include meditation and yoga to both physically engage younger participants who may get restless and emotionally engage participants who may be severely triggered by the discussion. Lastly, the classroom may co create an anti-bullying policy to ensure the safety of participants after the dialogue.

The significance and contribution of such a model for effective dialogue are presented below in the context of our dialogue.

Findings and Conclusion

The reason that compelled us to design the dialogue in these terms was that participants who are overwhelmed by shame do not make successful dialogue participants. It is our understanding that the intergenerational trauma of colonialism and Apartheid—the experiences of racism, homophobia, transphobia, and Black queerphobia—have all created an environment in which Black queer people, and Black queer women in particular, are agents of shame. This is to say that Black queer people in South Africa's experience of shame have the ability to create hostile, defensive, meagre, timid, and/or hysterical discourses as opposed to participatory, vulnerable, effective, and constructive dialogue.

To challenge participants' experience of shame, we endeavored to create a context in which participants felt equal, like they belong and safe enough to allow themselves to make vulnerable contributions in the workshop. We tried to do this by addressing the material aspects of shame by making sure anybody who wanted to attend could attend, by supplying all necessary resources for the dialogue and set out to ensure as far as possible

that all participants had everything they needed materially to participate. We believed that, by solving for the material aspects of shame, subjective experiences of shame would also be challenged within participants. Subjective experiences of shame span from physiological experiences that prevent effective dialogue such as hunger, discomfort, dehydration, and others to non-physiological experiences of shame such as a lack of confidence, fear, rumination, and others. These considerations were particularly important to make considering the targeted participants of the workshop are Black queer people which means these are people who have been historically disadvantaged and oppressed, people who live with constant shame and othering.

During the dialogue, we saw participants come in excited to participate. We believe this was due to the journey participants had undertaken thus far. The marketing and RSVP journey signaled to them that the workshop was a space for them, a space that would contest their historic disadvantage and oppression, that would honor their pronouns and ensure that their material needs would be met. We believe that the energy with which participants came to the workshop was connected to the ways in which participants were honored up until that point. As opposed to shame, participants exhibited signs that they felt safe in the space created for them. We saw this from the general exuberance of participants, how they walked into the space, how they excitedly introduced themselves to each other, and how receptive they were to the context more generally.

Because participants felt seen and safe, they could allow themselves to be vulnerable enough to make contributions to the dialogue. Vulnerable, sincere, and constructive participation is critical for an effective dialogue, especially in a country as fragmented and unequal as South Africa.

We also found that participants showed signs of belonging in the space and in the dialogue. By belonging, we mean that participants showed signs that they felt centered in the context and environment, that they did not consider themselves or their needs as peripheral or unimportant. Participants displayed signs of belonging in many ways including suggesting we switch for the workshop. The room originally identified for the workshop was similar to a conferencing room with chairs and desks in the body of the room and a projector screen and separate desk at the head of the room. Participants felt comfortable enough to ask that we switch rooms to the sunnier and better lit kitchen area where we could be warmed by the sun and sit closer together.

If the participants did not feel like they belonged in the space, it seems unlikely that they would have so dramatically reorganized the terms and context of the dialogue but would have rather sat in discomfort, seeing their needs as insignificant and trivial. It seems unlikely that participants would prioritize their need for comfort if they did not feel like they belonged in the space.

Because participants felt that they belonged in the space, they could legitimately cocreate the terms of the workshop and prioritize their ability to feel comfortable and make other contributions. By co-creating the space and prioritizing their needs, participants could focus on the workshop and engage fully with the dialogue in ways they would not have been able to if they did not feel as though they belonged. Two of the participants—Masechaba Khoza and Star Zwane—shared that the dialogue caused a disruption of knowledge in terms of what makes sense and what doesn't while providing a rare transformative space for storytelling from a Black and queer lens.

With this dialogue, we were able to address the issue of erasure of Black queer writers in South Africa. This was enabled through artistic practice as a mode of transformation, sense making, remembering, self-determination, and healing. It is not only still possible, but rather it is a matter of urgency that Black queer people access, make use of, and expand creative expression as a means by which to combat oppression alongside other instruments and strategies of resistance.

Notes

1. The term 'Homeland' was deployed as a revisionist attempt to establish the Bantustan system as appropriate and constituted by concern for the wellbeing of Black people.
2. The Drive can be found here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1aH7ZRM1aNYSiKAgZHQ1bnwZhuZMIKzPC
3. This piece can be accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBn0uAGCj4E&ab_channel=CyanPeppah

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CHAPTER 8

Intergroup Dialogue for Social Healing: Creating Spaces of Collective Hope and Transformation

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Dialogue *about* and *across* differences, particularly intergroup dialogue (IGD), is considered an effective educational approach to promote learning about social conflict and social change. The demonstrated outcomes of increasing understanding of identities and inequalities, building positive relationships across differences, and developing collaborations for individual and social actions are desired competencies for participatory citizenship in diverse societies (Gurin et al., 2013). The IGD foci are aligned with goals of social justice education that highlight unequal power relations of domination and subordination to inform a vision of social justice—physical and psychological safety, equitable distribution of opportunities and resources, and participation in democratic processes (Bell, 2016). However, there has been negligible discussion of intergroup

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dialogue for social healing—a weaving of the social fabric of peoples, institutions, and societies for greater individual and collective well-being—which is an area of great importance globally for nations and communities rebuilding from violent conflicts, systemic inequities, and enduring community adversities.

In this chapter, we draw on experiences from a community-based, trauma-informed peacebuilding program to inform classroom dialogues. We first define trauma-informed peacebuilding, briefly describe an exemplary program, and highlight findings from field research. We then distinguish trauma-informed approaches from healing-centered engagement and offer three propositions to transform dialogues across differences from social justice education to social healing–centered engagement. We conclude with an articulation of spaces and practices for social healing–centered engagement in classroom dialogues.

Trauma-Informed Peacebuilding and Social Healing

Trauma-informed peacebuilding treats trauma as a critical variable in conflict transformation and postconflict social cohesion. Trauma is often associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the mind's response to extreme distress which gives rise to physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms. Trauma is also used as shorthand for violent or devastating events. Thus, it is not simply limited to individuals who manifest PTSD symptoms; it can be experienced collectively and can affect community well-being, identity, attitudes, and behaviors over generations. Trauma-informed peacebuilding, therefore, addresses trauma symptoms and the structural, social, and political inequities that result in conflict. It acknowledges that (a) traumatic events, conditions and structures have multi-level effects on individuals, groups, and communities; (b) unaddressed trauma perpetuates cycles of conflict and violence; (c) addressing the root levels of conflict, rather than resolving or managing conflicts, is important to build peace; (d) dialogue is imperative to foster social cohesion and healing, and (e) community resiliency is necessary for sustained peace and justice (Lederach, 2005; López et al., 2019).

An Exemplar of a Trauma-Informed Peacebuilding Program

Kumekucha, a Kiswahili word meaning "It's a new dawn," is a Kenyan version of Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) (Botcharova, 1988; Yoder, 2005). The program was implemented in

communities experiencing complex historic and persistent trauma—war, violent extremism, and poverty—which in turn resulted in high prevalence of substance abuse, sexual and gender-based violence, and sexually transmitted diseases. *Kumekucha* engaged local community members in small learning groups. The curriculum covered the neuroscience of stress and trauma as well as biopsychosocial effects of trauma, life stories of adversities and resilience, self-regulation practices, cycles of violence, and community healing practices (Yoder-Maina et al., 2017). The first author, an Indian man born and raised in Kenya, headed the multiracial curriculum and pedagogy team of the program. His experiences of growing up in a diverse-yet-divided society marked by the dynamics of colonization that separated Africans, Indians, and Europeans influence his personal and professional commitments. Having developed intergroup dialogue as a conflict engagement approach in the United States, he saw clear applicability of the pedagogy for the community-based program. Intergroup dialogue principles and practices were integrated into the program to inform a collective, community-centered, capacity-building approach distinct from predominantly individual-oriented mental health or macro-oriented international aid and policy approaches.

The second author, an Afro-Latinx Dominican-American woman, headed the research and evaluation of the program. Based on extensive experiences in international peace development, most recently with the United Nations in South Sudan, she saw trauma-informed approaches as the crucial difference between successes or failures for sustainable peace. Research on *Kumekucha* showed that participants developed healthier ways to alleviate stress, reduced PTSD symptoms, built stronger trust, and increased community engagement. Participants shared how novel it was to listen to others' stories of trauma and to be able to speak their truth for the first time. Rather than feeling isolated due to perceived blame by others or self-imposed shame, participants reported a sense of connection through the mutuality of acceptance and empowerment (López et al., 2019).

The experiences of communities in Kenya are not unlike much of what occurs in the United States. The social protests against systemic racism, sparked by the police killing of George Floyd and many other Black men and women, intersecting with the coronavirus pandemic have revealed historic and persistent racial inequalities in the United States. Discrimination, food insecurity, violence, police brutality, mass incarceration, homelessness, poor schools, and lack of access to basic public services are perduring problems in the United States. These societal stressors create traumatizing conditions that call for interventions to address the chronic violence.

Toward Social Healing

Because trauma is equated with PTSD, trauma healing conjures up notions of long-term psychological and psychiatric intervention. Ginwright (2018) has visioned a radical shift from solely trauma-informed care to healing-centered engagement, whereby (a) healing is political, not clinical; (b) healing is culturally grounded and has to do with restoration of identity and sense of collective belonging; (c) healing is asset driven, focusing on wellness that we want, not symptoms we want to suppress; and (d) the healers themselves need healing and sustained support. Healing can thus happen in spaces dedicated to recognizing the individual and collective impact of adversities, to restoring and building new social relationships in the community, *and* to generating individual and collective empowerment for social change.

Personal and social healing involve undoing the body, mind, and soul ravages of inequalities and conflicts on individuals and communities respectively. Personal healing, in the context of community, involves a reconstitution of individual identity (both personal and social identities) in ways that recognize the negative impact of systems of violence on individuals and that enable greater social engagement. Social healing involves a reweaving of the social fabric, embodied in social relationships and social institutions, that is often torn apart or fragmented because of violence and conflict. Personal and social healing thus are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, as King (2018) reflects on her lived experiences and community-based research on recovery and healing in post-genocide Rwanda, true healing can happen only when people and communities heal together. Finding a language and voice for one's stories, having those stories held with care in community, honoring private emotions publicly, and feeling collective hope are all dimensions of social healing.

Intergroup Dialogue for Social Healing

How can classroom-based dialogues shift from social justice education to social healing–centered engagement? We first offer three propositions, and then discuss spaces and practices to promote the social healing potential of dialogue about and across differences.

Proposition 1: Understanding Intergroup Conflict Through the Lens of Collective Trauma and Transformation

Conflicts in intergroup dialogue defined by social identities and group-based inequities (such as racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia) are contextualized in structural hegemonies (white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism, heteronormativity, and more), but rarely are they conceptualized as collective trauma. A collective trauma lens—historical trauma, colonization, slavery, internment, genocide, ethnic cleansing, hate crimes, and systemic oppression—brings into focus the toxic, insidious, invisible, and intergenerational nature and impact of these injustices. Racism, through a trauma lens, is described thus:

> Racial trauma, a form of race-based stress, refers to People of Color and Indigenous individuals' (POCI) reactions to dangerous events and real or perceived experiences of racial discrimination. Such experiences may include threats of harm and injury, humiliating and shaming events, and witnessing racial discrimination toward other POCI. Although similar to posttraumatic stress disorder, racial trauma is unique in that it involves ongoing individual and collective injuries due to exposure and reexposure to race-based stress. (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019, p. 1)

Structural, historical, and everyday inequities contribute to social toxicity that negatively impact community and individual survival, health, and well-being. The social toxins erode the very social institutions and protective factors that individuals and communities have developed.

A collective trauma lens in particular, and a trauma lens in general, help us understand the physical, emotional, psychological, and physiological impact on individuals and communities (Hester, 2016), even those who may not be direct victims. Fellow group members, while not individually harmed, may experience vicarious trauma as well as real threat to their own well-being. Perpetrators and members of the identity groups that perpetrators represent may also experience participation-induced or perpetrator trauma (MacNair, 2015). For example, survivors and perpetrators of the genocide in Rwanda carried silence and hidden narratives about the impact of the genocide (King, 2014). Similarly, Tutu (2014), as chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, commented on the impact of apartheid on White Afrikaner perpetrators:

> In dehumanizing others, they are themselves dehumanized. Perhaps oppression dehumanizes the oppressor as much as, if not more than, the oppressed. They need each other to become truly free, to become human. We can be human only in fellowship, in community. (p. 400)

Efforts aimed at social healing in communities, therefore, need to understand the impact of trauma on all members of the community while simultaneously recognizing that the experiences or effects of trauma for survivors, bystanders, and perpetrators are not the same. Yet, this differential impact of collective trauma on survivors and perpetrators can show up through fear, avoidance, mistrust of the "other," and subtle or explicit violence (Menakem, 2017).

Proposition 2: Understanding the Triune Brain and Neuroplasticity

The human brain is often referred to as the triune brain, constituted of three major parts (Siegel, 2010). The basest form is the reptilian or survival brain that controls our responses to feelings of threat and danger by activating survival responses—fight, flight, or freeze. Next is the limbic or emotional brain, which is our first responder to stress. The most developed part of our brain, the rational brain (prefrontal cortex and neocortex), sets humans apart from other mammals and enables higher-order executive functioning—learning, decision-making, planning, analyzing, and innovating.

Understanding the triune brain sheds light on its states and needs in intergroup contact situations. Distress and anxiety, signaling perceived threat, in intergroup situations will likely activate survival responses of aggressive or passive communicative engagement that are likely not dialogic. Emotions are likely aroused as well in intergroup situations—fear, uncertainty, anticipation, anger, sadness—that signal need for building connection and trust. The implication for promoting productive intergroup dialogue then is to reduce threat and survival responses, and to increase learning and whole brain thinking. To do this, connection and emotional regulation, functions of the emotional brain, are critical. Connection can provide safety, and safety in turn can enhance connections through sharing, vulnerability, and risk-taking. Safety then is not a prerequisite to engagement in intergroup dialogue but can be built through regulating emotions and building relationships. Building safety in

connection, and regulating discomfort, however, is crucial to promote engagement in dialogue across differences.

The brain sciences also give insight into the malleability of brains. "Neuroplasticity refers to the brain's ability to grow and form new neuronal connections and the circuits between nerve cells within the brain" (Rutstein, 2019, p. 2). Individual (e.g. mindfulness and breathing) and collective (e.g. storytelling, group meditations, singing, and dancing) practices, and other forms of rituals, are some examples of regulating stress. With continued and reinforced positive experiences, fear and stress-based responses can shift to insight and connectedness. For example, instead of differences being perceived as threat and activating the neural pathway from the amygdala to the brain stem, cultural storytelling and storylistening can enhance a sense of safety and connection that can help build new neural pathways from the amygdala to prefrontal cortex or neocortex.

Proposition 3: Understanding Polyvagal Theory to Activate Social Engagement

Polyvagal theory asserts that the vagus nerve, originating at the base of the brain, is a multi-level system that serves as the conduit for body to brain connections (Porges, 2017). The most ancient part of the vagus nerve is the dorsal vagal complex of the parasympathetic branch that controls daily biological functions—heart rate, respiration, and digestion. The next to develop was the sympathetic branch that mobilizes us to respond to danger. The newest to develop, and unique to mammals, is the ventral vagal complex part of the parasympathetic branch that enables social engagement. Three lessons from polyvagal theory are important for healing-centered engagement.

First, the insightful work on polyvagal theory has illuminated the idea of neuroception, that is the automatic scanning beyond the conscious level that our nervous systems do to detect threat or safety. In response to threat, the autonomic nervous system can go into hypoarousal or hyperarousal mode, both controlled by the brain stem. When hypo-aroused, our parasympathetic nervous system is activated and propels shutdown mode, likely freezing, withdrawal, numbness, and depression. In contrast, when hyperaroused, the sympathetic nervous system is activated and promotes a more active survival stance—fight or flight—that may involve increased anxiety, fear, rage, panic, irritability, and general emotional

volatility. Thus, individuals and communities that have suffered from violence and group-based trauma may be primed to respond for self-protection—fight, flight, or freeze. However, when our nervous system detects safety, our social engagement system is activated and promotes connection—emotional relating, bonding, and attaching—and a sense of calmness, presence, empathy, and compassion.

Second, Porges clarified that safety is not merely the removal of threat but giving up defenses (relaxing in our bodies and being calm with others) so as to promote growth, restoration, and increased capacity to engage with others (Mulcahy, 2015). Even with removal of external threat, a sense of internal defensiveness, hypervigilance, and mistrust may still exist in the nervous system and contribute to dysregulation—a sense of being emotionally triggered, and not having a sense of control over one's thoughts and actions. In contrast, self-regulation is a sense of internal balance and control of thoughts, emotions and actions that can help facilitate social engagement. Courage refers to suspending internal defenses, even if temporarily. Thus it is not necessarily letting go of fear but challenging the restrictive control that fear has on one's thoughts and behaviors. Thriving, that is enhancing social connection and accessing higher-order thinking, therefore involves making the shift from dysregulation to self-regulation.

Third, sensations and emotions are an important part of dysregulation, self-regulation, and social engagement. Polyvagal theory's attunement to the physiological sensations can help with self-regulation. Tuning into body sensations and emotions, acknowledging and naming them, takes control away from emotions and can activate more rational brain thinking. Unacknowledged feelings or unprocessed emotions are likely to have greater power over survival or instinctual behaviors, but regulated emotions can open newer pathways of social engagement. Thus, emotional regulation does not mean feeling only positive affect; it means developing greater awareness of feelings and emotions, their situatedness in social structures, and their influence on interpersonal and intergroup relationships.

Spaces and Practices for Social Healing–Centered Engagement in Classroom Dialogues

The three propositions discussed above—understanding collective trauma, understanding the triune brain, and understanding polyvagal theory—inform ways to shift dialogue about and across differences toward social healing–centered engagement in classroom dialogues. Building individual and collective

resiliency, neuroplasticity and rewiring the brain, and enhancing social engagement through safety and connection are lessons we carry forward. We conceptualize three layered spaces for engagement and learning that can work together to promote social healing.

Safe(r) Space

Huxley (2010), in direct reference to conflict engagement and reconciliation, defines safe space as:

> a fundamental requirement for authentic and meaningful dialogue in diverse groups. … The perceived safety of an environment will have a direct impact on the ease with which relationships are formed and their sustainability.

The community-based trauma healing program, like intergroup dialogue, is not intended to be a place for individual or group therapy. Facilitators are not necessarily trained as mental health practitioners. Furthermore, issues of trauma are not always easy to talk about and participants may not always want to retell their experiences of trauma. For trauma healing, participants are not required to narrate or relive their stories of trauma unless they so choose. Instead, the primary focus is on participants talking about the impact of trauma on their lives currently and ways in which they have exercised resilience. Facilitators must create a safe and inclusive space, and to support participation from everyone out of their own choosing so that they do not feel forced to share their experiences. By laying a foundation of dialogue as enabling communication breakthroughs, facilitators convey a sense of safety through invitation and inclusion of all voices in the group. A challenge in dialogue across differences is the ability to safely share or access first-hand experiences to connect to issues of power, unearned privilege, oppression, and empowerment. While storytelling and story listening are powerful learning experiences in social justice education, there remains a challenge regarding the differential weight of personal narratives of members of target groups and privileged groups. This can lead to skewed dynamics in intergroup dialogue and the problematic burden, for example, of educating the privileged group that targeted groups often sense. Third-person narratives based on artwork can allow an entry point into more personal engagement. Participants can be invited to choose or depict particular images that they want to engage with relation to relevant concepts (such as systemic oppression and liberation). Stories can then become substance for reflection, inquiry, and dialogue.

Holding Space

"Holding space means that we are willing to walk alongside another in whatever journey they're on, without judging them, making them feel inadequate, trying to fix them, or trying to impact the outcome" (Plett, 2019). By holding space, facilitators and participants can nurture and honor connectivity in the group. Such connectivity may be evident when participants are moved by others' acts of courage that compel them to share their own private stories, sometimes for the first time, despite the accumulated fear. The connectivity may be present when a participant's sharing reflects other participants' stories, or one participant's sharing deepens risk-taking and sharing from other participants.

Holding space shows an intentionality to social engagement and communicative connection in the context of social inequalities. Table 8.1 contrasts facilitator and participant behaviors that contribute to collectively holding space versus behaviors that are disruptive and fracture relationships among participants (Nagda & Mundia, 2017).

Table 8.1 Comparing holding space and disruptive space

Holding space and connecting behaviors	*Disruptive space and disconnecting behaviors*
• Being fully present and attentive	• Being distracted, fidgety, and inattentive
• Being open to others, suspending one's biases and judgments	• Being closed or distanced, prejudiced against and judging others
• Listening actively and responding appropriately to individual stories	• Having continuous inner chatter, mentally checking out, interrupting others, or shifting focus away from storyteller
• Responding by reflecting back content and feelings, conveying emotional empathy	• Reacting to discount the story, analyzing, offering alternative explanations, giving advice
• Clarifying assumptions through inquiry	• Jumping to conclusions based on one's own (mis)information and biases
• Asking open-ended questions for greater understanding	• Asking close-ended questions, interrogative, and information-fishing
• Sharing one's own experiences to join and support while keeping attention on the original storyteller	• Centering one's own story, displacing original storyteller
• Equalizing sharing opportunities and space for all participants	• Letting some participants dominate, giving more attention to certain participants
• Voicing themes shared in stories (emotions and impact) and summarizing common and distinct aspects.	• Interrupting stories, summarizing only dominant theme(s) without noting differences, shifting agenda

Facilitators need not only to pay keen attention to intentionally modeling and fostering connective behaviors, but to intervene constructively when the flow of dialogue is disrupted through unconscious, subtle, or explicit acts of disconnection. Pausing the dialogue for individual reflection, such as "What are you thinking and feeling right now?" or "What did you observe and how are you affected by this interaction?" can then be brought into the collective space for critical and collective reflection, and redefining and recommitting to holding the collective space.

Transformative Space

Ultimately, social healing means transforming brokenness to greater wholeness as individuals, communities, and societies. It involves reconstituting personal and group identities, intergroup relationships, and community engagement. Kenyan peacebuilder Dekha Ibrahim Abdi (2011) reflected on her own journey of transformation:

> To transform one's own woundedness is one thing, to transform that of others and of the society requires collective wisdom. I have learned two key ingredients: the ability to take risks and the ability to have hope and faith in the face of difficulty. This process, in my experience, contributes to the growth of the individual and institutions, from being actors in the conflict to becoming resources for peace.

Social healing–oriented transformation can enable individuals and communities to pivot from fear-based internal and external divisions that keep systems of inequalities in place to courageous connections for collective struggles and hopes for liberation. "Critical hope rests not on a foundation solely of sacrifice but of wholeness. Especially for communities at the margins, we must prioritize our individual and community well-being while moving beyond simply coping and managing" (Bishundat et al., 2018, p. 100).

Trauma-informed approaches often ask participants to reflect on "Who am I?" as a point of reflection on the impact of trauma on identity. In healing-centered dialogues, however, participants expand the question to "Who do I dream to be?" and "Who am I becoming?" to capture the potency of transforming the impact of systems of oppression and privilege to grow into new identities (King, 2014). By breaking free of cycles of violence and building community resiliency, the questions grow into

"Who are we becoming?" "What is our calling to social justice and collective liberation?" and "How do we harness the power-within of ourselves and power-with of our relationships for collective liberation and justice for all?"

Final Thoughts

At the heart of Ginwright's (2018) challenge to the underlying principles of trauma-informed care is that such care is apolitical and decontextualized. It privileges individual coping rather than promoting social healing and empowerment. The catalytic value of intergroup dialogue principles and practices—building relationships, understanding identities and inequalities, and creating individual and community change—to transform trauma-informed approaches to healing-centered engagement is clear. Conversely, understanding systems of inequality as collective trauma, discerning the impact of trauma on brain states and needs, and mobilizing social engagement functions of our neurophysiological systems can transform dialogues about and across differences as vehicles for social healing.

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CHAPTER 9

Experiential Ecological and Art-Based Practices for Reconnecting with Mother Earth and with Each Other

Annie Rappeport and Jing Lin

Disconnection with Nature and Its Detriments: The Problems Facing Our World Today

Modernity, characterized by the dominance of scientific thinking and an urbanized, technologically dependent world has created much separation in our heart, mind, and spirit between us and our home planet (Louv, 2019; Van Boeckel, 2015). The lack of contact with nature fuels fear for nature to be perceived as dangerous and wild. Dismissiveness of creative

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and contemplative activities as being only of value to a few deemed the most talented or noteworthy of time fosters separation of people from the healing and renewing benefits of artistic expression. Mental barriers caused by separation from nature are coupled with a competitive society, wherein a strong sense of isolation prevails among people who yearn to find an outlet that will help our deeply buried emotions to be processed and wounds to be healed.

In our post-industrialization era, individuals are physically separated from nature for most of their days in workspaces completely closed in and often devoid of light; daily routines are such that screens are viewed far more than the sky or trees. If we choose, we may disengage and tune out any message or voice we do not wish to hear or see. As we continue to close off aspects of ourselves, we add to our inner turmoil. The physical and virtual infrastructures in the workplace and communities have created isolation. Silos emerge that are detrimental to individual and community health. Manifesting everywhere are trends toward increasing mental health threats due to feelings of loneliness. Further, we are seeing trends toward polarization and like-group mentalities as people self-divide and create echo chambers. What may exacerbate or mitigate these trends is the shared global experience currently occurring as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some initial observations are showing that there are increased levels of loneliness and isolation with the fluctuating freedoms surrounding movement and physical contact. Yet there may be some silver linings as some have increased time to connect with family members and we are seeing gestures of compassion at the small community and international scale. The ideological polarization is lessening in some areas and heightening in others but time, inquiry, and analysis may add to our collective understanding of why the effects appear to vary widely around the world.

The normalized social behaviors both pre- and post-pandemic are taking a toll as we may be entering the most technology-reliant period we have yet to experience in our human history. Speaking through our thumbs, as we do in one of the most common modes of communication—texting—we see a loss of intimate human connection to nature, and often with each other. These trends are not inconsequential. We are now seeing more and more of what Louv (2006) identifies as nature-deficit disorder. Nature-deficit disorder can be summarized as the negative consequences of an unbalanced lifestyle whereby people young and old are indoors nearly all of the time and forgetting or actively avoiding experiences in nature. Louv (2006) specifically focuses on the impact on children and

how this trend, which he believes, is influenced by a fear of nature and the convenience of indoor forms of learning and entertainment. The loss of a relationship with the ecosystem can result in forms of sensory deprivation and less connection with our shared home. This in turn can lead to more ignorance about key parts of our worldly experience and ultimately a cross-generational numbness and loss of wisdom.

To counter these "deficits" require effective and profound reconnection with nature and encouragement to reconnect with our inner creativity and imagination. Through visual and performing arts alongside a variety of mindful and contemplative practices, we can facilitate communication—communication that is intentional, open, and curiosity based. This is the kind of communication the best dialogues are composed of with an ability to rekindle care, compassion, and a true life-long reconnection with the environment. Experience fused with meaningful listening and dialogue, including inner dialogue, can create the space to fully realize our potential to connect with our inner selves, each other, and the world. More specifically, our perspective is that if dialogue is imbued with ecological, artistic, and spiritual experience, the progress can be more authentic and memorable.

From Separation to Connection Through Arts and Dialogues: An Urgent Call

Our precious world faces tremendous environmental threats that are multiplying in magnitude as we forget the core of our beings—our spiritual, creative, and naturally rooted selves. The Earth is our lifeboat, but too much of our education and culture has encouraged separation from what sustains us. Instead of teaching that we are *a part of* our planet, too often we educate being *apart* from our planet with our default training to control and exploit our natural world. The latter being one of many consequences of a society built upon conquest and yielding power. While being taught to control and exploit nature, we are simultaneously taught to fear others as life is portrayed as a competitive game for the limited "natural resources." These taught fears predominantly stem from anthropocentric ideologies. Anthropocentrism as an ideology creates and sustains a tension between humanity and non-human nature—a tension that inflates the human ego as superior while paradoxically scaring humans to fear the "wild" nature world (Boddice, 2011). This fear fosters a desire to further

separate and control rather than understand and sustain. We, as a global society, have allowed ourselves to forget our literal and figurative roots grounded in the ecological web of life and our interconnected ways of being. Remembering requires connection to our inner selves and with each other through creative means. Much can be learned and restored from the wisdom found throughout the Indigenous wisdoms around the world.

Before the age of industrialization and mechanization, most people directly interacted with the natural environment on a daily basis. However, industrial development compounded by the innovations and growth in technology have removed much of the need for humans to directly work with nature for subsistence for many parts of the world. Along with the anthropocentric interpretation of Abrahamic religions about our roles in the world, industrialization brought about an identity change where humanity diverged from perceiving themselves as a humble part of the ecosystem to a new identity where humanity rose above the rest of the ecosystem (White, 1967). The appeal of the shiny, new, and convenient is understandable. The temptation is great given our values to be ambitious, competitive, productive, and progressive. Nevertheless, ignoring the costs of this lost connection is detrimental for all.

We take the environment and natural resources for granted (Nimmo, 2011), opting for the myth of an earth with infinite resources than the reality of finite resources (Hartmann, 2004; Orr, 2004). The imbalances caused by human actions have already caused some irreversible damages at escalating impacts alongside the increased capabilities of technology (White, 1967). For one of many concrete examples, a study with 1360 scientists from 95 countries found, “Because of human demand for food, fresh water, timber, fiber, and fuel, more land has been claimed for agriculture in the last 60 years than in the 18th and 19th centuries combined” (Radford, 2005). Immediate and increased interdisciplinary interventions are needed to slow the damage and hopefully rebuild our sense of being as part of the ecosystem once more. If the dominant anthropocentric ideologies remain unchanged, we all will suffer in multiple fronts. As the Earth goes, so goes the human species.

Humans have an innate ability and desire to connect in loving and empathetic means with one another and with nature. Dialogues are, and continue to be, a central tool for humans to build bridges that allow for these connections. By unlearning our like-group loyalties and relearning interconnectedness we may yet stop catastrophic human conflicts and turn the tides of total, irreversible environmental destruction.

Arts and Fostering of Imagination and Creativities

Lin (2006) proclaims we need eco-education which would transform the dominant twenty-first-century educational paradigms. This form of new education is founded on an appreciation for the ecosystem and a reverent understanding of the natural world "as an extension of ourselves" (p. 71). In arts education, students can be taught through spoken instructions as well as through artistic practice as to how to be creative problem solvers. Perhaps the most transformative aspect of the arts is through building meaningful relationships between the human community with the natural world, and in turn transforming the key perspectives that frame the human perception of the world. This can be done through a combination of intentional dialogue with artistic experience and contemplative practices (Lin et al., 2019).

Louv (2006) also asserts the need for experience and creativity as a means to "activate our senses and to feel "fully alive"" (p. 57). Another iteration of the issues is found in Bai (2009), who argues that we need to have experience of "interbeing" with nature to fight the "psychic numbness" that is plaguing our human consciousness. Arts can manifest our innate abilities to connect the physical with the spiritual, the outer with the inner. Arts can build awareness and mindfulness. Arts have been used to enhance awareness of the environment (Van Boeckel, 2015). Arts can build intimate bridges between spirits, touching the most sacred part of our core essence. In short, arts break down boundaries not only among people but also between humans and nature.

The need to reconnect our minds with our creative spirits and bodies is embraced in the work of Macy and Brown (1998), Van Boeckel (2015), and Griffin (1989). Macy and Brown's (1998) work uses foundations from Buddhism and the arts for mindful and reconnecting dialogues to build our relationships across divides with our fellow humans as well as nature. Van Boeckel, an environmental arts educator, beautifully expresses how art and nature study can be brought together in activities that "ignite" one's "fascination and curiosity centered in an increased awareness of their own bodies and interactions with the natural world" (p. 801). Griffin (1989) teaches the importance of reconnecting emotions with thoughts as a way to give our thinking meaning. She also echoes the need for reconnection to nature; however, she proposes reconnection necessitates our letting go of the fear and desire to control. These ideas, we find, are key to holding successful dialogues that help people to listen and seek common ground rather than seeking to control others.

Combining Arts- and/or Eco-based Experiences to Crystalize Thoughtful and Meaningful Dialogues: First-Hand Experiences

Through affirming wisdom in our world's cultural and spiritual traditions, and by connecting the arts and ecological education, multiple techniques can be employed for effective dialogues for sustainability and peace. Both authors have first-hand experiences seeing the benefits of combining eco- and/or arts-based experiences to catalyze thoughtful and meaningful dialogue. In the following sections, each author will provide examples of their experiences and benefits felt by the participants of the dialogue experiences. These sections will be written in first-person story format in an effort to make the examples more concrete and relatable to fellow dialogue facilitators. These stories demonstrate successful methods of application.

Annie's Story

My first structured dialogues were centered around difficult topics related to interpersonal relationships across identity differences. The goal of the dialogues was to build an inclusive community based on empathy and respect. The format of these dialogues was structured with a non-student moderator. The "rules" laid out beforehand aimed to facilitate listening, respect, and a sense of equality. There was an emphasis on how we could continue to practice dialogue skills after the formal "difficult dialogue" event. Although the dialogue was effective and transformative, it felt as though more could be done for participants to further connect with the people sitting around the table. These included activities that would enhance our connection beyond spoken words and listening.

As a performing arts undergraduate student, I began to see synergies between artistic expression and dialogue as a way to discover commonalities that fortify a level of respect and empathy needed for thoughtful and productive conversations. Later, as a graduate student, I was fortunate enough to be matched with the role of Coordinator for the Art and Learning Center at the University of Maryland. At the same time, I was taking a course with my advisor (and co-author), Dr. Jing Lin, about Ecological Ethics and Education. I became captivated by the possibilities of creating enhanced dialogue experiences that would utilize nature experiences and artistic expression. My own intersectional identities found a

transformative space in dialogue spheres, including opportunities for interfaith conversations and talks about disability and chronic illness.

My model collected, blended, and adapted materials I found across disciplines and practice. I created an intentional sequential design where participants first enter a space with calming and rhythmic music with no lyrics. This music is chosen as to release the mind from thinking with words and to open up thinking through tactile and visual expression. The participants are asked to remain silent and to refrain from introducing themselves to one another and to simply create art with the materials in front of them. Directions to respond to the music via drawing, origami, sculpting, or writing are given. Sometimes questions are also left on the tables to begin to focus the mind on how the music is impacting their emotional and physical states of being. After a period of time of listening and expressing in non-verbal ways, the participants are asked to share how the experience (usually 10–15 minutes) felt. The dialogue afterward has revealed that the practice is impactful and effective. The feelings shared by participants are telling. Participants relay a sense of relaxation, attuning to one's inner self, feeling freedom through art, feeling happy and that the experience in a way healed or rejuvenated their emotional and/or physical being. Sometimes, anxiety is also expressed with participants uneasy about not having explicit instructions of expectation or a feeling of being not talented in the arts. These feelings, when shared, are met with support and encouragement by the strangers now turned empathizers at their table.

This first activity sets a tone. A tone to go inward before going outward. A time of freedom to express individually while in a group but not with the group. This is followed by another arts-based activity that begins the bridging between people at the table who still know very little about each other that would differentiate themselves. The "knowns" at this stage are the realization of commonality in enjoying artistic expression, relaxation, freedom, and listening. Empathy has already taken seed as well as a reconnection to one's inner self.

The next activity is, again, artistic. It asks each participant to do a self-portrait within a simple, given outline (I recommend multiple options of outlines to maximize inclusivity.) This activity was inspired by art therapy practitioners. The focus of the portrait is to convey what and who the participant loves in whatever way one chooses. Some participants are abstract in their approach, while others draw concrete objects and people. The exercise begins to show individuality of each participant to the group while still focusing on common values and ways of being. Often the

portraits show family, pets, friends, and hobbies. When asked to share these aspects with the group, the human commonality was known prior to any ideology. This aided in building empathy and unity which, in turn, promoted a sense of respect. During the sharing period, an observer would see many smiles as one participant points to a drawing of their cat near their heart. If one continues to listen, tears are evoked as another participant shares that the colors they used in their artwork represents a loved one who passed away. These deep human connections are made through open sharing and empathetic listening. Participants enter the second activity more open and tuned into their inner selves. They are reconnecting to their inner self and are primed for connecting in a meaningful way with their peers going through the same experience (Figs. 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3).

The third activity in the workshop further builds connections to branch from working to listen and empathize to working together toward a common goal. This third activity represents how a diverse community can come together to create something whole and beautiful for all. Each person creates an individual part that goes into a larger artistic piece. Without

Fig. 9.1 Example "Self-Portraits" (A Recurring Pattern Was the Inclusion of a Heart)

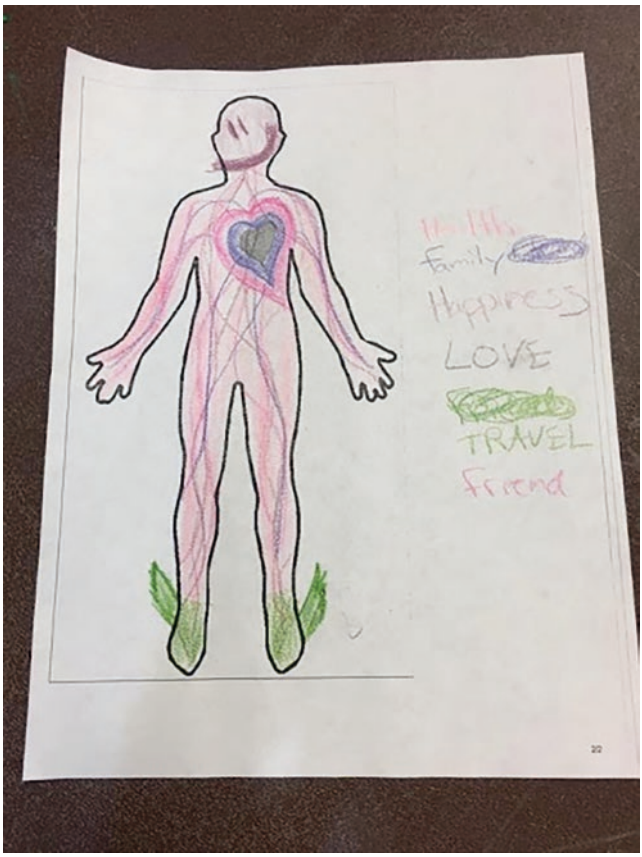

Fig. 9.2 Example "Self-Portraits" (A Recurring Pattern Was the Inclusion of a Heart)

self- or external judgment, a work of beauty is created. Support emerges for those who less than an hour ago were strangers that were guarded and self-conscious. By the end of the experience, we have conversations which are rooted in the love of fellow humans and in the shared experience of creative expression. This final exercise is also used to point out how a community can quickly bond to work together toward a common goal. I assert this is because at our core, we realize we are all connected. As Wilson (2008) shares from the Indigenous paradigm, "Every individual thing that

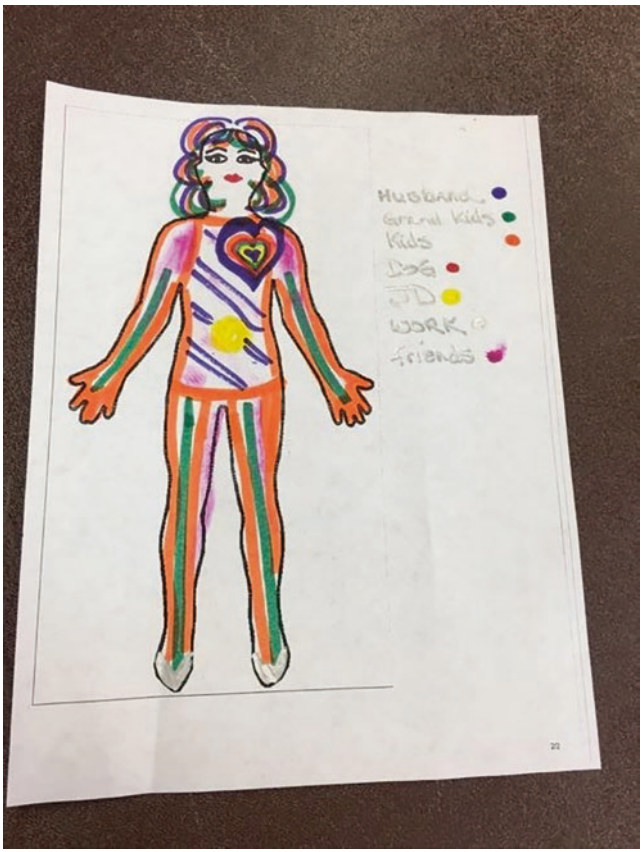

Fig. 9.3 Example "Self-Portraits" (A Recurring Pattern Was the Inclusion of a Heart)

you see around you is really just a huge knot—a point where thousands and millions of relationships come together … we could not be without being in a relationship with everything that surrounds us and is within us" (p. 76). This image captures what I hope those who participate realize by the third activity in the sequence. I have led these exercises together as a single session multiple times to catalyze productive dialogues. My hope is that by sharing this model, it may be further adapted and replicated to connect members of communities who are currently unconnected.

I have, in separate instances, used activities that tap into imaginative storytelling to enhance dialogues about the past and future of our environment. I use eco-experiences and recollections of experiences to reconnect participants with an admiration and empathy for the ecosystem. In these dialogues, I have primarily borrowed from, combined, and customized concepts and activities from Macy and Brown (1998), Neal (2016), and from activities I learned in a sustainable architecture course with Dr. Julie Gabrielli. By inviting participants to engage in rituals that acknowledge pain for the planet, feelings of connection and empathy toward the Earth are enabled and nurtured. These activities include ritual to express sorrow and to grieve for the planetary destruction that participants have witnessed or are aware of. This is followed by activities that ask participants to think beyond the known reality into an imagined future. This is done through pretending, like we do often when we are children. This facilitates a transformation of perspectives. A shift using the acknowledged pain and anger to fuel positive change. A shift from feeling afraid and helpless to hopeful and empowered. The second activity requires imagination and engaging in pairs. Each person plays an active role. One person is the "present human" and the other is the "future human." The scenario is one where the planet Earth reversed destruction and became restored over a couple hundred years. The two characters interview one another. The present human asks the future human how the world was healed, and this churns creative ideas that speak to the challenges of the present. The future human asks the present human what it is like to live in a world with so much conflict and environmental destruction which allows for creative thinking on how to express compelling narratives that inspire positive environmental change.

Jing's Story

We often pay little attention to nature while they are trying to speak with us. But with mindfulness and presence, we can build deep connections. In a graduate class on ecological ethics and education, I urged students to mindfully interact with nature every week and report back. By mindful interaction, I mean students slow down, be present to nature, paying attention to nature and heeding their voices. I urge them to use their senses and open their hearts. Students reported they started to have conversations with the trees in their front yard, which previously they have never paid attention to; as they slowed down on their walk on the busy

streets to work, they found trees, flowers, and grass that have been accompanying them all along and that nature is right near them but they have not noticed; before they rushed to shopping, students did mindfulness practice and realized their inner dialogues about consuming have often been based on habits rather than needs. This kind of inner dialogue with nature fosters a new sense of interbeing re-animating nature as fellow co-habitants of the Earth.

In one of my other courses, I took the students to do a labyrinth walk, and afterward we had dialogue as we sat on the benches on the side of the labyrinth. Students indicated they heard nature much more clearly through the walk, feeling the earth underneath their feet, hearing the chirping of birds, feeling the fresh air on their face, conversing with the stone in their hand, and they felt a very strong connection to nature and themselves. They felt they also walked into their deeper self while they were feeling their innermost being with Mother nature. The labyrinth becomes a living art form for them connecting their inner being with nature.

In one session of my ecological ethics and education class, students usually study various religious beliefs about nature. We go from the highly anthropocentric religions like the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to the more nature-centered religions such as Hinduism, Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Indigenous spirituality, and Jainism. Then, we use the scenario of killing a chicken or a goat to feed a hungry human being to illustrate our ethical choices based on the different religious perspectives. The choice made revolves around the value of a human's life versus the value of other species' life, and the contrast of beliefs in various religions about equanimity of all existence and compassion. The conversation then extends into the zoos we have, the circus practices where animals are beaten or electrified to comply to do shows, to the massive scale meat industry where many are able and willingly engage in horrible and cruel practices. We watch videos and images which usually have a major impact on the class (such as taking out animal organs for medicine), making all involved in the conversation looking inadvertently within our own conscience as a species, and realizing how mainstream culture is so deeply entrenched in anthropocentric views while those cultures that treat nature as equal and intelligent are often denigrated and have suffered near extinction.

In another class session on contemplative inquiries and holistic education, I use a peace dance to demonstrate transforming violence into peace.

The dance involves two dancers, one aggressively provoking and attacking, while the other artfully and persistently turns the violent moves such as fist fights into a love sign, engaging each other in dialogues and mutual endeavors through dance moves. Eventually, the persistence of the peace maker activates the innate kindness of the other person and dance moves become synchronized and engaging. This act shows that dance is a form of non-verbal dialogue having the potential of connecting people by blending their energy and creating mutual existence. This shows arts can build bridges among people and work as therapy. All of these attempts aim at effectively connecting our body, mind, heart, and spirit, kindling imagination and sharpened awareness, ultimately fostering compassion and care for nature and for each other through a new sense of "interbeing" (Bai, 2009).

Implications for Teaching and Practice

We can strive for connection to nature through and with art no matter our immediate surroundings. Dialogues with a holistic and experiential approach can be an essential tool to achieving what Grande (2004) says, "By realizing we are a part of nature, even if we live abstracted, decontextualized lives in major cities, we can gather a holistic sense of purpose in our lives that would be otherwise regulated to distraction, delusion and distempered life" (p. xx). On this journey, we have shared a few glimpses into the demonstrated potential of experiential reconnective practices as part of a dialogue experience. These stories show how incorporation of mindful, creative, and eco-based experiences add to the meaning, memorability, and impact of dialogue. Dialogue is at its best when it is part of a larger experience that evokes empathy and respect. These experiences can aid "spiritual and psychological maturation" (Louv, 2019) that enables us to reconnect with non-human sentient beings and the ecosystem in what Louv calls "beautiful acts"—acts that go beyond a sense of moral obligation and into the realm of a loving relationship. By incorporating experiences, the dialogue is enhanced and can have a longer impact in the heart and memory of the participant. As described, art and nature reconnecting practices are found to be effective in healing and one very needed type of healing is reconciliation. Reconciliation is often centered around dialogues and interactions between communities that have tension and disagreement.

By creating these thoughtful experiences centered upon connection and empathy, we have demonstrated ways of building bridges of the heart. This is vital in our increasingly polarized society and under the environmental threats that are endangering all of the earth's species. As art continues to mold life and vice versa Kac (2015) reminds us how there are now technologies that help us see even more commonalities, for instance, through infrared. We all glow. We all radiate. As educators and facilitators of dialogue, we can be thoughtful in designing an entire dialogue experience that expands the traditional models of dialogues in formal and informal settings and helps students realize their spark—their glow. Through creating a fusion of reconnecting with nature, artistic activity, and dialogue, we can help create a fuller and more impactful and memorable experience of interconnection, one that attends to the inner self and as well as our relationships with our families, friends, community members, and our ecosystem. These experiences, when carefully planned, can help with dialogues that in other scenarios are found to be ridden with tension, misconceptions, and defensiveness. These experiences can give the great gift of hope to lead us to freedom from our inner and communal fear and bring forth a love of self, each other, and the ecosystem.

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PART IV

Ongoing Dialogical Practice in Classrooms

CHAPTER 10

Dialogic Learning in the Time of a Global Pandemic and Beyond

Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, Annie Rappeport, Régine Uwibereyeho King, Hortensia R. Barrios, Cheryl Nuñez, and Eugene Aisenberg

A book dedicated to dialogue at a time when formal and informal educational spaces are affected by COVID-19 would be incomplete without reflections on what this historic moment means for dialogue educators now and in the future. This chapter is a collection of reflections from diverse educators on the opportunities and challenges arising out of moving from mostly in-person, on-site learning to virtual teaching and

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learning. The first author conceived the vision of the overall chapter, convened the contributors, and provided coherence across the essays through editorial feedback. The essay authors have contributed equally to the chapter, and their co-authorship is aligned with the order of the essays in the chapter. The first three essays focus on dialogic educators' insights on responding to a dramatically changed and changing learning environment by leveraging the social and institutional power of their positions. Annie Rappeport reflects on shifting course midstream with deep empathy for her students and fostering a continued connective learning environment with digital tools. Régine U. King and Hortensia Barrios share their experiences recalibrating previously planned courses and facilitating critical dialogues through meaning-making of place and stories. Cheryl Nuñez narrates her innovative offering of virtual intergroup dialogue to mobilize student leader voices for institutional change at a time when students would otherwise be disengaged from their employment at the college. In the final essay, Eugene Aisenberg and Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda weave themes across the first three essays and identify underlying factors of connection, consciousness, and change that inform newer forms of learning and delivery of dialogic education now and in the future.

Making the Best of Disrupted Space: Dialogue as Bonding Experience

Reflections by Annie Rappeport

No one wants a public health crisis to befall our world. Yet, crises at a global scale like COVID-19 can provide silver linings locally by waking us up to needs we have become dulled to over time. The disruptions for college students manifested in loss of routine, and loss of access to services

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and activities that are possible only in person. However, there were tangible and intangible positive impacts felt by our community and class. Our undergraduate class on international relations, in particular, bonded strongly during the crisis; our conversations grew organically and with empathy throughout the semester.

As a Graduate Teaching Assistant, I am both a student and an employee of the university. Straddling these two worlds presented its own unique perspective as I learned with my fellow students and colleagues how to navigate our new normal. We balanced wanting to ensure academic rigor while demonstrating compassion during a crisis. We were often tossed into the fray without much training or guidance. For a novice teacher, the precarity of having my first teaching evaluations coincide with a global crisis felt especially acute.

Multiple Modalities for Virtual Co-Learning

Engaging students in open dialogue creates an ideal co-learning environment, which can be further enhanced by including students in shaping course content and leading discussions (Freire, 2018; Galtung & Ikeda, 1995; Shor & Freire, 1987). These techniques open minds and hearts to awareness, inquiry, and transformation. I leaned heavily into these values to innovate our international studies class during the spring 2020 semester. I let my students know I was a resource throughout the transitions and challenged us as a group to change our syllabus to be responsive to the world around us. We continued to listen to each other and to the fluctuating world around us as we stayed nimble yet committed to our learning.

We combined multiple mediums that helped facilitate dialogue during, before, and after the virtual gatherings. As with most decisions relating to the class adapting during the crisis, I asked the students how they would like to maintain connection. They unanimously asked for a class GroupMe chat which we set up for questions and ideas. The GroupMe chat became a less formal and quick way to connect between classes, to ask questions and show support in our community. It allowed students to connect one-on-one or in small groups. When needed, they could also ask me questions one-on-one or publicly for the whole class.

During our talks we concurred that we were experiencing what would become a defining moment in global history. We collectively decided to address the strong connections between current events and the original focus of our class on international relations. We did not want to proceed with our class agenda in a way that denied or ignored the world around us. We created a shared Google Doc where all questions were welcomed

about the pandemic in international contexts. This document blossomed with dozens of questions ranging from public health and economics to legal, human rights, and environmental aspects. Students posed thoughtful questions that we then addressed in two class sections that we converted in response to current events. This process of collective digital engagement was fulfilling, and we decided to do more.

With our continually growing awareness, we decided building a repository of our reflections at this time through practices found in oral history would be especially meaningful. We developed a virtual oral history wall format on the Padlet platform, a visually engaging modality to post photos, multimedia, and comments in a fashion resembling a bulletin board wall. Students interacted with each other's posts and real-time updates via reactions and comments. Students enjoyed having a choice of prompts and great flexibility on what they could choose to share with their peers. The platform has remained accessible as an oral history time capsule for our community to return to even after the class has finished.

Student Reflections

Bender (2003) asks, "Is it possible for a class that does not occupy spatial coordinates to still generate a feeling of place?" Students' experiences convey that the answer to this question is beyond a simple yes or no. Students speak to elements that comprise not just any place, but specifically a dialogic place. Students invariably conveyed a sense of loss, of "missing" people, presence, and interactions of in-person learning. One student expressed how "everything is so distant online" and another shared that they "miss the presence of people." These students and their peers went on to note that technological interruptions add to the unnatural and inorganic feeling of virtual space. One student noted that silences can feel even more awkward and, depending on size of the class and whether or not videos are on, non-verbal cues may be harder to detect or just simply missing entirely. These considerations of class size and video requirements necessitate important discussions related to accessibility, privacy, and efficacy of virtual synchronous learning. Not everything about the shift is negative which students also identified and readily shared.

Our virtual space proved to be a place where many students were able to feel more at ease. A few of the more introverted students began to speak up more. Students noted how, in general, it can actually be easier to see and hear everyone in the space. "Virtual dialogues are allowing me to see each and every person in my discussions. Before, there would be

people that I never even knew were in my class." Another student discussed the effect of being able to look at many people react at once rather than being limited to viewing just the person speaking in person, "I like how I can see everyone's reactions to what someone says … Seeing people's reactions make discussions more interesting." Another student noted the benefit of being able to "relax" while having access to information on their laptop to help back their arguments (usually we do not allow laptops and cellphones as disruptions in face-to-face discussion sections). They further noted that our platform felt like a decent substitute because "we acknowledge the presence of others in our Socratic style seminar … It still feels distant, but it feels connected too." There is much to learn from the pandemic with regard to classroom teaching and learning, and we hope some things will not "go back to normal" because a new normal may be better than the old.

An overall resonating sentiment among students was gratitude. Perhaps because of our course focus on international relations over time, our students did not take our access to technology for granted. They fully realized that our ability to continue learning online in ways that we can often easily see and hear each other is a privilege. One student summarized this feeling:

> Despite all of the grievances I may have with the virtual format, I understand that we are fortunate and privileged to be able to continue our conversations with each other. Knowing that the digital format may not be feasible for everyone … and for those few hours I spend in front of a camera I get at least a semblance of the outside social interaction that I miss.

Personal Reflection

For me, this time with myself as a new pedagogue has meant reflecting on how my personal lived experiences influence my teaching philosophy and style. I constantly navigate invisible chronic illness which has been a part of my reality for the last ten years. I am well acquainted with life-threatening unknowns being constant companions; I have lived physically limited not only to a home but to a bed for days, weeks, or months at a time. I can never escape my body, but this part of my life has led me to be more compassionate and creative. My experiences made me both empathetic and sensitive to how sudden long periods of isolation from the "real world" can feel and how to cope through creativity. Right now, more than ever,

we as teachers need to show our students how to listen, reflect, and think in ways that are critical and transformative.

Will Teaching Online Become the New Normal? Some Reflections

Reflections by Dr. Régine Uwibereyeho King & Hortensia R. Barrios

In early 2020, COVID-19 forced many countries into a lockdown. Countries that could afford it moved to digital platforms for general communication, meetings, teaching, and learning. These new realities challenged educators, including us, to critically rethink how to best teach and engage dialogue on widespread concerns about social injustices brought to the public eye by COVID-19. Black Lives Matter movements that followed the killing of George Floyd accentuated preexisting injustices particularly in affordability and ability to use digital means to meet basic needs, including education (Alsop & Hoeg, 2020; Rapanta et al., 2020). We demonstrate how we engaged critical dialogue in our own work.

Pivoting to Online Dialogic Learning

The first author of the essay, Régine Uwibereyeho King, is a Black Associate Professor in social work. She pivoted an entire social justice course from an intensive one-week residency to a fully online format, including weekly synchronous and asynchronous sessions. This course critically examines historical and structural injustices along with theories and applications of social justice for students starting their master's social work degree. She applied her facilitation skills to model critical conversations in the online zoom classroom. Two techniques helped the primary author create an online classroom atmosphere of critical dialogue. The first was the intentional use of the acknowledgment of Indigenous lands during each synchronous session. Students residing in different parts of Canada volunteered to lead this practice on a rotational basis. It was the first time this instructor adopted it as a ritual starting each zoom class, both as a decolonizing way of the digital space (Garneau, 2018) and as a meditative acknowledgment that grounded all attendees. This practice brought the digitally distanced students together for critical conversations. The second technique was regular emails sharing current news and invitations to

events related to local and global injustices. Emails also became handy in responding to students' anxieties regarding assignments, grades, and group dynamics during asynchronous sessions. Regular communication seemed to create a sense of urgency and continuity between synchronous and asynchronous sessions. Students appeared to critically consider and apply the same communicative approach in their asynchronous discussions and responses to the instructor's requests of feedback. This mirroring allowed students to express concerns and to have them addressed in more timely manners. Regular emails ensured some sense of continuity.

The second author of the essay, Hortensia Barrios, is a sociolinguist and digital storytelling practitioner who recently completed her master's degree in Languages, Linguistics, Literatures, and Cultures. Amid the pandemic, she engaged students through narrative and digital resources (University of Calgary) and K-12 teachers (2020 Historias Americanas Summer Institute, University of Texas) in reflecting on language attitudes and learning innovative teaching modalities that enhance understandings of local and national citizenship, respectively. The combination of narrative inquiry, structured interaction, and personal storytelling in both courses created a space for deep reflections connecting individual experiences with larger social issues. Intentional listening and sharing of perspectives and experiences within and across social identity groups contributed to deep reflection and learning. Intentional listening, fostered through establishing basic rules of interactions for online discussions, called on students to be respectful of one another and fully present their ideas without interruptions. Additionally, they focused on the speaker—on their words, phrasing, and especially verbal and nonverbal cues—and strived for self-awareness of their own biases and perceptions about the discussion topics. It was the responsibility of every participating person to guarantee a safe space in which to listen and be listened to.

Due to the nature of digital storytelling, instructor-students' interactions already mismatched traditional classroom dynamics. Digital storytelling was used in the classroom centered on specific themes of the course. For example, students engaged in freewriting exercises about their experiences of a theme under study, or their impressions from other digital stories selected to foster discussion, or on the form and format of the shared stories. Students shared their writing in discussion and received feedback from other classmates. These activities facilitated writing scripts that were first-person narratives of lived experiences of participants. Story circle process was used to bring the freewriting exercises to a collective discussion.

As students shared and listened to each other's stories and provided feedback, the stories acquired social meaning. The use of facilitation techniques to foster and support intentional listening became more poignant than ever. A revision of practices included regular check-ins at the start of each class, sharing of experiences, and feedback situating students in the current political, social, ideological, and technological unrest. These regular check-ins fostered discussions on the effects of privilege and inequalities and actions needed to bring about change. The instructor also reconsidered the workload and deadlines for course requirements and provided support to students via individual emails or zoom chats.

Lessons, Reflections, and Dilemmas

Educational scholars are divided about critical dialogues on social justice issues through online teaching. Some believe that recent global circumstances have stimulated conversations that could lead to social change creating connections between classroom learning and larger narratives that affect local and global communities (Alsop & Hoeg, 2020). Online dialogue certainly has the potential to establish self-other relationships and collective responsibilities for redressing inequalities and promoting social justice (Nagda & Maxwell, 2011). However, other educators fear that embracing digital platforms will only increase social inequalities. They are concerned about online education becoming a fertile ground for neoliberalist tactics that will commodify education and increase divisions and inequalities by restricting access to education for people with limited resources and limited access to technology (Kobayashi et al., 2014; Wegerif, 2013).

We, like other scholars, found online teaching to be a "double-edged sword" (Kilner et al., 2019, p. 111) that provides enhanced opportunities to learn certain skills (Holloway & Jöns, 2012), while simultaneously creating significant obstacles for learning and teaching dynamics (Wegerif, 2013). We both adapted quite well to online teaching. However, we cannot underestimate the time and energy it took to define new ways to engage critical conversations in online teaching. Time remained a consistent limitation to the extent and depth of discussions. We remained mindful of existing inequalities, keeping in mind disadvantaged students. Educators scheduling and delivering online courses should be mindful of time constraints when working with students who present learning barriers.

The size of the class can also negatively affect dialogic practices. As observed by the second author, working with ten students in one group created opportunities for building trust and creating a network for mutual support. Even though the breakout room features of zoom allowed us to form small groups of students (5–10 students) in which to continue dialogical practices, it required more preparation regarding leadership and reporting on activities of the small groups. The student leader was responsible for guiding the discussion in breakout rooms with prompts that varied depending on the content of the topic. Some instructors prefer to visit some or all breakout rooms during the small group dialogue time. We found that entering the breakout rooms seemed to change the small group dynamics; group members wanted to update the instructor, or jumped to the occasion to ask questions that they could not ask in the large group, at times not related to the small group exercise.

The setting was another important factor in digital learning and conversations. Students who live in remote areas with limited internet speed, or those who shared their living space with young children or multiple family members or lacked flexibility at work, found it difficult to engage during critical online conversations. We allowed students to keep their video and microphones off and engage through the chat box.

In conclusion, we found the online classes to be engaging when we focused on critical dialogue and minimized lecturing. Students who lack time and motivation to do self-directed learning through readings and individual reflections, along with limiting cultural and socio-economic factors, may gain less from online learning. Educational institutions moving quickly to full online teaching should be reminded of equity issues, and intentionally work to enhance access and exercise flexibility in course materials, delivery, and evaluation.

Fostering Student Voice and Dialogic Agency in the Virtual Environment

Reflections by Cheryl Nuñez

Community colleges provide educational access to a larger share of historically marginalized students of color than whites or Asians (Community College Research Center, n.d.), but graduate them at lower rates (Shapiro et al., 2017). If they are to fulfill their mission of education, transfer, and

workforce development, community colleges must close racial equity gaps in the attainment of high-value postsecondary credentials. Toward that end, the Washington state system of community and technical colleges has been allocated legislative funding to implement Guided Pathways, an institutional framework for streamlining and strengthening the student experience, with a focus on closing equity gaps. To its credit, the state's Guided Pathways Advisory Committee has articulated this charge in bold strokes, calling for equity-minded organizational change, a commitment to racial and social equity, and the engagement of all stakeholders, including students, in systemic change.

As Vice President for Equity and Inclusion at Olympic College (OC), a community college in Bremerton, Washington, I firmly believe that such change is impossible without the leadership of students who are most negatively impacted by equity gaps. As an African American woman who has benefited from such leadership development, I know that fostering their agency for positive social change can strengthen their learning and ensure the pathways they choose function in the interests of their communities. In early spring 2020, following the implementation of COVID-19 social distancing requirements, gathering students' voices on Guided Pathways reforms seemed unduly challenging. Paradoxically, however, the transition to remote, predominantly asynchronous, learning provided an opportunity to bring together student employees who could no longer work on campus and to leverage their leadership for institutional equity. A four-week, virtual Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) became the ideal vehicle for this work.

Research has shown IGD to be effective in fostering students' understanding of their own and others' social identities in the context of systemic power and privilege, their ability to communicate about and across differences, and their commitments to positive social change. In my experience, it is also a powerful vehicle for helping students connect academic theory to their real-world experiences. With support and funding from the College's Guided Pathways Leadership Team and Office of Multicultural Services, and with the encouragement of student employment supervisors, 17 racially diverse students were recruited to participate in the dialogue. IGD co-founder Dr. Ratnesh Nagda, who had previously trained me and other campus stakeholders in the methodology, co-facilitated the dialogue with me. For each of four weeks in May, the students participated in a three-hour dialogue session, engaged individually with readings and videos, and met for an hour in small-group Social Justice Collaboratives.

Each Collaborative focused on a different aspect of the journey to and through college: pre-college and first-year transition, learning inside the classroom, learning outside the classroom, or academic, personal, and financial support. In relation to these themes, the students triangulated their identity-based experiences with disaggregated student outcomes data to craft their own institutional vision statements.

The students emphasized the importance of faculty members having a holistic understanding of their experiences outside and inside the classroom: "Being a mom, auntie, student, working—that's a lot to take on … I feel the college and teachers need to look deeper into our situations." While they had ample praise for many teachers, the students agreed that some would benefit from mentoring to serve students more equitably and effectively. Thus, beyond mere technical solutions such as more resources and information, the students envisioned institutional policies and practices that, like intergroup dialogue, humanize them.

Students discussed the importance of college education for career and economic mobility and noted the especial value of educational experiences like IGD as preparation for social justice leadership. A student in the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program astutely observed, "Earning a college degree can help students land a higher-paying job, but that's not the only reason why it's important. [College] is also a place to expand the student's horizons and to learn about the student's self and the world around." Another student framed a similar thought in the form of a vision statement for the College: "OC graduates will know how to and be able to apply their academic concentration to their fields, as well as be able to make meaningful connections with those in their communities to make positive change." An active student leader articulated his vision in similarly idealistic terms: "OC is where students feel brave to talk about and engage the relevant issues of today's society that matter most to our most vulnerable communities, to our society, and to our world." In the last session, he shared the life-changing realization that while his emerging critical consciousness had helped him discover and use his voice, IGD had helped him learn and practice listening as an equally important leadership tool for mobilizing others.

The timing of the IGD during the global COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges and opportunities. The virtual environment offered no refuge from material inequality. Several students experienced connectivity issues, leading one who was participating from outside the United States to withdraw, and others to experience intermittent audio and visual

disruptions. In addition, the complications of sharing space with household members who were also working and learning from home forced some to participate from the privacy of their cars. On the other hand, engaging in the dialogue from their home environments seemed to strengthen connections between the participants' lives at school and at home. For instance, a single mother who has faced numerous barriers, including homelessness, said she was proud to model her participation in the IGD for her son, a high school senior: "He watches me and sees that I am going to keep on moving." Moreover, the relative isolation and stress of physical distancing seemed to make the students more appreciative of the opportunity to build meaningful social connections with each other, albeit virtually. Despite, or perhaps because of, the unprecedented disruptions to their normative college experiences, they were able to reimagine a more equitable, "new normal" for OC.

Notwithstanding the challenges of the viral pandemic, the work of racial equity and racial justice cannot wait. Indeed, the disproportionate ravages of COVID-19 on communities of color heightens its urgency. So, too, does the memory of George Floyd, who died at the hands of the police on the last day of the IGD, and so many other African Americans before and since who have suffered the same fate. There is no more important time for deep and sustained connection through dialogue and collective action to confront the deadly pandemic many refuse to acknowledge, one that robs too many citizens of equitable life chances and chokes the country of its full potential. As global crises leave no doubt that "we are tied in a single garment of destiny," I am proud to work with students who have the vision to imagine equity and justice and foster the ties of mutuality with which to bring them about (Rieder, 2014).

Virtual yet Real Connection, Consciousness, and Change

Reflections by Dr. Eugene Aisenberg & Dr. Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda

As practitioners and teachers-learners of dialogue, we did not have a choice but to let go or at least hold lightly our skepticism about the possibility and transformative power of dialogue in virtual settings. Can we foster inclusivity and deep engagement? What do safer and braver spaces look

like? How will we read non-verbal cues, offer non-verbal support and encouragement to learners? Can we remain accountable to promoting equity and not reproduce inequities in the virtual commons? These questions may reflect a hunger for a return to the "normal," but educators also challenge us to rethink the "old normal" with its endemic inequalities and divisions that have enduring negative consequences for many learners:

> The pandemic is giving us an opportunity to make a pivot that we should have made long ago … we are realizing what we should have known all along: that you can't widget your way to powerful learning, that relationships are critical for learning, that students' interests need to be stimulated and their selves need to be recognized. (Mehta, 2020)

As college- and community-based educators of color, we too pivoted our courses and trainings to virtual environments. Informed by our own experiences, we draw on insights from the preceding essays to discern the meaning and pedagogical considerations for relationships as central to deeper learning engagement during and after the pandemic.

Social Connection as Antidote to Physical Distancing

The three essays provide examples of salient opportunities to engage and empower students as co-creators of learning environments grounded in respectful and dialogic learning practices. The educators rightfully recognize that our new context requires responsive engagement—shifting, pivoting, and adapting—with intentionality in connective communication. The actively facilitated and attuned acts of dialogue—listening, voicing, reflective silence, and inquiring—aim to foster vulnerability and authenticity. These dialogic actions make possible for each person to feel included and connected so as to share their experiences, biases, uncertainties, and wisdom. They illuminate the importance of creating common groundings, responding thoughtfully to common and diverse perspectives, and addressing institutional and structural racism and inequities.

A pivoting pedagogical strategy was to incorporate what are popularly referenced as mindfulness activities like ritualized openings—such as shared moments of silence, land acknowledgments, learning reflection, or pair-shares—that allow participants to become more present with themselves and each other. As a consequence, these openings can foster deeper personal and political meaning-making in virtual spaces. Learners feel supported in choosing to be vulnerable and authentic. The gratitude, clearly

expressed by Rappeport's student, was not just a singular experience of each participant but generative in deepening meaningful connection in the virtual classroom.

Like rituals, communication forums between class sessions—discussion boards or small group meetings—strengthen a sense of predictability and continuity. This practice of engaged virtual interaction clearly demands more of the instructor in terms of time and availability. However, as Barrios reflected, this investment of time and self conveys educator presence, responsiveness, and commitment to deeper learning.

Contexts as Content for Critical Consciousness

While the mass transition to virtual learning was precipitated by the pandemic, the virtual space became an important medium for raising critical consciousness of systemic inequalities. By connecting classroom learning to real-world experiences and major global events, including the Black Lives Matter Movement and political unrest, participants experienced meaningful, growthful, and empowering learning. The boundaries of the classroom and real world were overturned: the previously virtual (current events engaged in the physical classroom) became more real, and what was taken-for-granted as real (onsite, in-person learning) became virtual. Students were not merely consumers of content or passive spectators of PowerPoint and YouTube presentations but active shapers of learning and impact in their larger context.

The realness of felt dialogic connection in the virtual environment paralleled and contrasted with the realness and impact of compounding inequalities and societal divisions. Whereas the coronavirus pandemic has illuminated existing disparities and inequities not just related to health but also to educational access and experiences, the connective environment allowed learners to collectively interrogate intersectionalities of race, class, and other group-based inequalities in the health, education, and occupational arenas. In particular, King and Barrios emphasize the importance to consider and address the unequal access and engagement in virtual learning due to lack of access to the internet, or due to caregiving responsibilities for small children or other family members.

These essays reveal that well-facilitated pedagogical experiences like intergroup dialogue are critical not only to engage differences in class but also to use these very skills in responding to societal challenges. For example, a participant in Nunez's intergroup dialogue offering remarked on a fundamental shift in recognizing that *listening to others* rather than *talking*

at others was an important leadership tool. The essayists consistently reveal that collective meaning making takes on increased urgency during the pandemic with its unprecedented and long-lasting upheaval of routines and familiar practices of socializing and connecting, lingering uncertainties, and profound personal and communal losses.

Disruption as a Call for Innovative Change, Not Interruption

The essayists engaged in important parallel processes in innovating their offerings. They did not simply move their coursework from in-person to virtual learning, but they drew on the power of their life experiences and position in the academy to enrich student learning and action. As graduate students, tenured faculty, or vice president, they maximized the potential within their sphere of influence to empower students' own agency. The educators intentionally connected the relational learning to active change responsibilities—be it with their fellow classmates and families, in their physical locations, and in institutional practices and policies.

Educators acknowledge the importance of balancing support and challenge for deeper engagement and learning—supporting students' strengths while encouraging learning outside the comfort zone without evoking a sense of panic. The essayists recognized the resiliency in students and helped reframe personal sufferings into collective concerns by fostering critical consciousness. They emboldened students as changemakers whose listening, voices, and actions were critical not only in just making it through the pandemic but to making the most of what we are called to do precisely because of the pandemic. As Nuñez notes in her essay earlier in the chapter, "fostering students' agency for positive social change can strengthen their learning and ensure that the pathways they choose function in the interests of their communities."

The power of modeling and *in vivo* changemaking cannot be understated. Drawing on personal lived experiences as a source of empathy, using dialogue in virtual settings to challenge social disconnection, and shifting from lectures to facilitating critical dialogue all countered the "old normal." The engaged learning and dialogue skills in virtual space permeated the learners' real lives with their families and communities. Involving learners in institutional change broke the cycles of exclusion by bringing voices of those most affected by inequalities to lead advocacy for equity.

Conclusion

Might the connective power of dialogue *about* and *across* differences be even more imperative in these times of disrupted learning and relations? The three essays affirm that educators can indeed foster connective bonds among students *and* bridge the lived context of the present to historic and persisting systemic inequalities in virtual learning environments. Notwithstanding the challenges of physical distancing, the work of racial equity and racial justice must continue during and long after the pandemic. Indeed, the disproportionate negative impact of COVID-19 on communities of color and the racial disparities in access to vaccinations adds to the layers of collective trauma of racialized violence and heightens the urgency for social justice. Educators and students alike can reckon with the historical moment that calls for sustained momentum for equity and justice to define a "new normal."

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CHAPTER 11

Relationality as a Way of Being: A Pedagogy of Classroom Conversations

Lana Kim, Justine D'Arrigo, Jessica ChenFeng, and Elisabeth Esmiol Wilson

More Than Individual Consciousness Raising

The integration of theoretical paradigms like critical theory in family therapy curriculum has helped create awareness about socio-contextual issues, structural inequities, and the ways in which intersectional identities

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(including but not limited to race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and disability status) relate to power, privilege, and oppression. This has been crucial for individual consciousness raising and helping family therapy students examine the effects of these societal constructs in their own and others' lives (Almeida et al., 2008). We have also become more socially responsible practitioners, cognizant of the ways in which therapy theories have marginalized non-dominant groups to the ideas and standards of the dominant center.

In efforts to help challenge and dismantle systemic inequities and work toward social justice, dialogues in family therapy classrooms often critically address complex social issues from a structuralist perspective of power (Monk et al., 2008). While these conversations are ripe with the potential to be generative, the tendency can be for students to self-protect, feel silenced, become oppositional, or cede to academic and performative social pressures to appear knowledgeable about social justice ideology. Furthermore, there are dominant discourses in our western culture about what social justice work is and "how it should be done" that tend to focus at the individual level and can be unwittingly colonizing.

For example, there have been strong appeals to use one's voice to resist, call out microaggressions, challenge oppressive actions, and take active steps toward self-accountability for one's unearned privilege. These approaches focus on individual actions to disrupt systems of power. Students may assume that this is how to "do" social justice if instructors do not also teach and model relational alternatives. While it is important to name and interrupt systems of oppression, there are a myriad of options for how we can engage in social justice dialogues, and the context within which it happens is important for us to consider. What we hope to offer comes from how we have learned to be as couple and family therapists: *centered around relationships* and socioculturally *attuned* (Knudson-Martin et al., 2019) *to others and self*.

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Beyond a Structural Understanding of Power

As educators that intentionally employ a relationship-directed teaching approach, our definition and experience of power in the classroom depart from humanist and structuralist perspectives of power as described by Monk et al. (2008). From a liberal *humanist perspective*, power is garnered by individuals based upon ability to work hard, gain merit, and contribute to a capitalistic society. For those who hold both greater and lesser societal privilege, the language of power can breed a sense of competition that robs all of the ability to connect and relate as we vie for what we have been taught is a limited resource. This dynamic is exacerbated by the tendency in western cultures to value and preserve the "I" self above relational orientations that are perceived to maintain connection at the expense of one's sense of personal power. In contrast, our unique communities of origin (e.g. our affirming, progressive Religious faith communities and our ethnic and cultural contexts) orient us to holding space for mutual relationships in classroom conversations around social justice.

In contrast, *a structuralist view* of power ties power to embedded social structures rather than to individuals. Many social justice movements enlist this perspective with people seen as disadvantaged by social class, gendered, and racial identities and as having only the degree of power that social structures afford them. As with the humanist perspective, power becomes a limited resource which is gained in competition. It is seen through an economic lens and treated as a finite commodity that those who occupy dominant positions have and those in subjugated positions do not. This perspective could leave some powerless to the social condition in which they are born with little control to change it. Conversely, some remain in unquestioned positions of power. When we reduce our conversations in classrooms to individualistic frameworks that revolve primarily around a structural understanding of power, we can get hyper-focused on challenging the status quo, and paradoxically, our efforts to challenge it actually unintentionally maintain it.

A *poststructuralist view* of power sees power as being a part of everyday life. It can be concentrated in certain places at times, and everyone is always participating in relations of power as a flexible discursive experience. Power is used to exert influence upon the actions of others (Foucault, 1982). Power is not seen as bad or good, but cannot be separated from our language, experiences, meanings, and discourses. From this perspective we can focus more intentionally on which kinds of power relations are

ethical ones, by examining the effects and consequences of our actions. This poststructuralist view of power enables a different teaching pedagogy that creates room for us as academics to enact an orientation to others, rooted in and sustained by our spirituality and collectivist values.

Literature Review: Relationally Oriented Pedagogy

While a growing body of literature addresses pedagogy oriented to diversity and social justice in family therapy and related fields, we will highlight literature that speaks to relationally oriented pedagogy. Structured approaches from the field of social work, such as the Critical Consciousness model (CC model) developed by Kang and O'Neill (2018), emphasize relationship and the instructor's role in attuning to self and students. These approaches propose that there are both intra- (e.g. tuning in to self) and interpersonal processes (e.g. noticing, reflecting, naming, and discussing power dynamics) that instructors must facilitate in order to help students stay present with the content and process and be able to cultivate self-awareness, reflexivity, and critical reflection (O'Neill, 2015).

Literature on the instructor's way of being in the classroom suggests that when instructors are welcoming, nurturing, curious, empathic, and respectful, they help create learning environments similar to therapeutic contexts, providing the potential for transformative conversations to occur (Nixon et al., 2010). McDowell et al. (2003) discuss the facilitative nature of instructor self-disclosure in conversations about racism, and Nixon et al. (2010) propose the value of instructors modeling what it looks like to acknowledge one's mistakes, misconceptions, and ignorance.

The literature also reports that pedagogical practices which are intentional about community building (Nixon, 2005) are most conducive for conversations across difference. This style centers the wisdom from African American scholars who note the importance of creating a sense of unity among learners (hooks, 1994; Nixon, 2005). This context promotes sharing and hearing one another's personal stories about the ways that societal "isms" play out in their lives, which promotes personal growth (McDowell et al., 2003). We draw on our spiritual, ethnic, and cultural experiences to create our relational pedagogical perspective that emphasizes a sense of unity, as opposed to more western notions of individualism.

Students start to change their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors when they learn relationally how to take in the experiences of those different from them. Transformation occurs when one is able to challenge or

confront their thoughts and beliefs in a way that creates cognitive dissonance (Kiselica, 1999). However, being challenged or confronted can incite defensiveness and alienation if not done in the context of relationships. Therefore, genuine respect and collaboration (Korin, 1994; McGoldrick et al., 1999), as well as time and space to reflect and think (McDowell et al., 2003) are necessary elements of critical conversations. Therapeutic relationships that facilitate change must value each person's voice, be affirming, and honor differences. This invites trust and encourages emotional vulnerability and conversational risks.

Toward a Relationally Directed Pedagogy

While individual consciousness raising and accountability work have been important aspects of social justice practice, we propose that our ability to transform our social world lies in our relational capacities. In classroom spaces where learners are colleagues seeking to learn and grow, an approach that harnesses the power of relationship to enact change may be the most constructive and sustainable. Contexts where each person can feel valued and cared for are ones that enable us to practice humility, learn to be vulnerable with one another, and remain open to change. This compels us to orient differently to power, shifting from an individual process to a relational process.

In our approach to teaching, we center relationships and collaboration, which values each person in the conversation and what they bring to the classroom. We draw upon two articles about relationally focused processes to support our approach. Tuttle et al. (2012) speak to the idea of parenting as a relationship, and Knudson-Martin and Huenergardt (2010) discuss relational processes in couples work. While these are not pedagogical frameworks, both emphasize the importance of mutuality in relationships through specific and intentional relational practices that stand against individualistic ideas of responsibility.

Approaching conversations about social and political issues in the classroom from a relationship-directed stance shifts traditional/hierarchical ideas of the teacher-student relationship. Western education has emphasized the power over relationships where the teacher is all knowing and the student is not yet enlightened. Paulo Freire (1970) articulates this as the banking approach to education, which does not hold space for relational partnership in the classroom. Freire (1970) contends that in order to "undermine the power of oppression and serve the cause of liberation,"

both in and out of the classroom, we must hold partnership with students as central to this task. Taking a relational turn in our pedagogical practices is one way to decolonize the classroom and decenter western European ideas that have been privileged in academic institutions.

Connecting Ideas to Classroom Dialogue Practices

A relationally directed pedagogy needs to attend to power in classroom dialogue, and we propose this can be done through relationships. This means that as instructors, we center relationality while staying conscious of the larger contextual issues and structural power dynamics at play. Our pedagogical framework subscribes to the notion of "power with" (VeneKlasen & Miller, 2007) and assumes that power can be shared from varying positionalities through the ways we construct and negotiate it in our immediate classroom contexts. To do this, we are intentional about promoting relational connection and mutual support between all members in the classroom.

We focus on process rather than outcome, and model sociocultural attunement (Knudson-Martin et al., 2019) to the experiences of both self and other. We also model how to use mental flexibility and emotional reflexivity (Garcia, Kosutic, & McDowell, 2015) to both honor one's own experience (Watts-Jones, 2010) and affirm others' needs. It is particularly important for students to witness instructors do this in moments of conflict. Therefore, we use these moments to show students that centering relationships in dialogue can start with seeking to "get" where others are coming from and attending to their needs, instead of prioritizing one's own experiences and perspectives first. We do not view this as an act of subjugation, but rather as a sequence in the process toward sharing power through relationship. We acknowledge the vulnerability that dialogues about difference can evoke. Therefore, we actively convey our care, value, and respect for each person as a way to welcome and invite people to lean into discomfort. We also encourage honesty and humility (McDowell et al., 2003), by intentionally acknowledging our own mistakes. Being accountable in relationships is one impact that the four of us authors have experienced being socialized as women, and we have intentionally privileged this relational stance.

Specific aspects of our social locations shape our approach to relationality in the classroom. I (Lana) draw on my second-generation, Korean Canadian identity and the generational, matriarchal legacies from

my immigrant grandmother, mother, and aunts, where benevolent hierarchy and community were concurrently modeled. I (Justine) am a white person who was socialized within the larger context of white supremacy, which inclines me toward western individualism where relational responsibility is not always an explicit value. However, I heavily draw upon my experience as a queer person in the world, which for me has been an experience of not being visible unless I privilege relational ways of being that help others hold me in the middle space I inhabit as a gender queer person. I (Jessica) draw on my second-generation Taiwanese American close-knit family, lifelong Asian American sisterhood, and ever-transforming Christian spirituality (there have been many iterations of this). I (Elisabeth) draw on my upbringing as a white woman in a multicultural, Hawaiian/Asian American context of extended "hanai" family, and on my spiritual journey toward a more inclusive, mystical, affirming practice of Christianity that acknowledges oppression as well as liberation is possible within a religious framework. Together the four of us draw on the relationships we have created with each other across difference, rooted in mutual respect for our shared social justice and systemic theoretical underpinnings. The following case scenario will illustrate our relationship-directed pedagogy in action.

Case Scenario

I (Elisabeth, a white, heterosexual, cisgender female professor) teach a sex therapy course to second-year graduate MFT students each spring. One spring I worked with a group of students holding particularly polarized sexual values, informed by different political and religious views. At midsemester I met with Nina (all names changed), a biracial Latina, Black, nonbinary, queer, pagan, single parent in their mid-20s, who expressed that they'd been deeply hurt by students such as Brooke, a white, cisgender, married mother of five in her mid-40s, and devout member of a conservative branch of Christianity.

Nina told me, "You're not seeing it but there's a growing divide in class between students like me and students like Brooke. We're feeling judged for who we are and our 'lack' of sexual values." *I could immediately feel a pull toward becoming defensive, and noticing this I breathed and slowed myself down. I admitted to myself that I had missed this, and then felt a pull toward becoming embarrassed and shutting down. Again, I breathed slowly and gave myself permission to make mistakes and repair.* "Nina, thank you

for sharing this with me. I'm so sorry you've felt judged in class and that I haven't caught these moments. Can you tell me more about how this has been for you in particular?" *By being gentle with myself and knowing I could process later the extent of my own responsibility in missing this classroom divide, I could access my genuine desire to validate and attune to Nina's experience.* Nina described feeling better after our talk but asked, "Can you still address this divide and all the hurt in class?" *I felt scared of what this would open in class. I breathed and sensed there was also an opportunity here for relational healing.* I asked Nina, "Yes, and can we start with the conversation we just had, with you sharing your hurt and me validating your experience, in front of the class?" Nina agreed.

In the next class I set up a fishbowl, with all the students in chairs forming a large circle surrounding a smaller circle in the middle. Nina and I sat together in the smaller circle. I began, "Today we are going to honor one student's experience and invite anyone willing to join the conversation. Our goal is to understand each other across differences, to listen and share experiences, and to take responsibility for any pain we have caused." *Feeling the adrenaline in my body, I took a deep slow breath, acknowledged my nervousness, and reminded myself that I trust in the possibility of repairing relationships.* Nina began to share their pain of not having me catch some of the hurtful student comments in class. I listened and validated as they shared several specific examples. Silently the students around us observed.

I then took responsibility for my part in Nina's pain. "Nina, I hear your feeling marginalized and dismissed by certain religious discourses isn't new for you. But the fact that I, a white, religious, cisgender woman, didn't catch some of the hurtful comments in my role as professor, really hurt that I wasn't there for you. I acknowledge that it was my responsibility to do so and that by missing these comments I added to your hurt." *I could feel myself playing it safe. I felt scared to be more vulnerable yet didn't want to miss an opportunity to really connect with Nina.* "What you don't know Nina is that for years my religious beliefs were directly oppressive to you, and I was not supportive of gay marriage. I'm sorry." *I could see Nina's surprise and felt hopeful Nina could feel my attempt to convey respect to her. I also felt afraid of alienating Brooke and others like her.* "It's been a long journey for me to come to a new affirming theology while still understanding and loving my old friends who hold different views." *I hoped that Brooke could hear how much I value maintaining my friendships across difference and could still feel room for her in this classroom.* Nina said, "I don't

know if I'm ready to love someone who believes I'm wrong for who I am. I'm still feeling really hurt." I said, "That makes a lot of sense to me, Nina."

With Nina's permission, I then extended an invitation for students to join us. "I'm wondering if anyone wants to join me in taking responsibility for how we've hurt Nina?" *I felt it was important to align myself as one who had hurt Nina so I could support students who might want to apologize.* From the larger circle Brooke started to share. *I felt myself wanting to ask Brooke to follow the fishbowl rules and sit with me and Nina. I took a breath. I could feel Brooke's bravery and her need to stay outside for now.* "Nina," said Brooke, "I know I said some of those hurtful things. But I didn't mean to hurt you." *I knew I needed to catch Brooke's defensiveness while also acknowledging her courage in breaking the hurtful silence.* "Brooke," I said, "thank you for your courage in acknowledging Nina's pain. I'm wondering if you can try to center Nina's pain and hold her experience as more important than your own at this moment." Brooke tried again, "Nina, listening to you I feel like I better understand how my faith impacts you, and especially my membership in a religious denomination that says your way of life is sinful." Nina responded, "I know your religion is really important to you Brooke. It's just really hard that everyday I'm living the reality of a life that's judged as wrong." "I don't think I ever saw how hurtful that is," said Brooke.

After witnessing Nina and Brooke talk, a few other students from the wider circle both expressed hurt and took responsibility. I felt that the "growing divide" Nina had described shifted into a space of more mutual expression and growing attunement. Reflecting on what happened in class that day, I see the results of relationship-directed teaching. As scary as it was, I was able to attune to students collectively (Nina and Brooke in particular), share myself as a person with needs and feelings, encourage a mutual expression of feelings (between Nina and Brooke), and support students in learning to attune to each other especially across difference (Tuttle et al., 2012). Students from that cohort continued to refer back to "that class" as a turning point toward relational connection and a deeper understanding of how to make space to attune to others.

Implications for Teaching and Practice

We believe it is significant that our ideas about a relationally directed pedagogy have emerged not only from our years of clinical work and teaching and supervising MFT students, but also from our friendship. As we have

moved toward an increasing understanding of power as relational, we have been influenced by different streams including poststructuralism, eastern collectivism, and spirituality. Listening to each other across our own differences has deepened our understanding of this relational pedagogy and has been a rich part of our own growth as educators. Our commitment and invitation are to increasingly center relationships in our teaching by:

- Deconstructing dominant discourses around power to see everyone as holding inherent value and worth
- Attuning to own needs and feelings while attuning to students' needs and feelings
- Recognizing the privilege as instructor of holding and orchestrating space and modeling presence
- Facilitating students in mutual attunement and expression of their needs and feelings
- Reflecting together on the byproducts of growth and learning that emerge from connecting in mutually vulnerable, relational dialogue

The relationships we build both in and outside of the classroom are pivotal to our ongoing learning and growth. As we make space for more time to talk, interact, listen, and learn from one another, we are building trust with one another. This foundation of trust in real relational connections enables the kind of learning we believe promotes the dismantling of systemic inequities necessary for social justice.

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CHAPTER 12

Dialogue and Systems Theory: Teaching Public Conversations in Family Therapy

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In western societal contexts, cultural values such as individualism and positivistic truth are privileged. Educational institutions subsequently become contexts for socializing students to focus on logic, facts, and having the "right" answers. Therefore, by the time students educated in the United States reach graduate school, they have been well enculturated to perform these cultural ethics in classroom space. We often see discussion regarded as debate. When we see students take a "knowing" posture rather than seek to understand different perspectives, we surmise that these may be functions of cultural socialization and academic training. In fact,

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beginning family therapy students may assume that these culturally legitimized ways of interacting are institutional expectations. However, as marriage and family therapy (MFT) educators and systemic thinkers, we value more relational ways of being in the learning context because this undergirds relationally oriented, clinical practice. Yet, we have found that it takes intentional effort to help most students learn and cultivate these skills.

The Public Conversations Project dialogues facilitate constructive conversations through listening, hearing, and understanding differing perspectives. These dialogues invite persons to adopt a relational stance that promotes curiosity, and we see it as an approach that decenters individualistic ways of being. Therefore, we thought that this could be used in the classroom to help students embrace differences and develop a more relational approach to engaging in dialogue. In this chapter, we will use systems theory as a conceptual framework for dialogue, discuss our rationale for using dialogue to set a context where students learn to embrace diversity and difference, and describe how we integrate these ideas in our course curriculum to provide students with an experiential opportunity to practice relational dialogue.

Reflecting on Our Social Locations as Family Therapy Educators

I (Kate) learned about a method for facilitating dialogue on divisive issues called the Public Conversations Project (PCP) (Chasin et al., 1996) and began embedding this practice of dialogue in our MFT program's Foundations of Family Therapy course. Our students simultaneously take the Systems Theory course as they learn about PCP, which provides a strong foundation for connecting systemic ethics and relational dialogue. I (Martha) teach the Systems Theory course, informed by my interest in and emphasis on systemic ethics and creative thinking in therapy. Both of us (Kate and Martha) draw from our experiences as white women who are married and raising an African-American son in the deep south. At the intersection of our privileged status as white people and marginalized status as gay people, we recognize the complexities of people's lived experiences and how regional context influences the dialogical space. I (Lana) subsequently taught the Foundations of Family Therapy course and, later in this chapter, describe a case example from one of the PCP dialogues in my class. My interest in relational dialogue is informed by my experiences

as a second-generation Korean Canadian with generational, matriarchal legacies where benevolent hierarchy and relational ways of being were concurrently modeled. I (Hoa) currently teach the PCP course and draw from my Vietnamese immigrant family history of rebuilding home and navigating intercultural spaces in the United States. Our (Kate, Martha, Lana, and Hoa) varied experiences of teaching dialogue and shared interest in systemic ideas inform the integration of dialogue in our program and the writing of this chapter.

Theoretical Framework

PCP was started by Laura Chasin (1936–2015), a family therapist who, with colleagues, created a method of conducting constructive conversations aimed at avoiding combative- or debate-oriented dialogue. Such dialogues pit opposing sides against one another and often result in verbal or physical violence. Chasin's PCP was rooted in family systems therapeutic methods and goals.[1] What follows is a discussion of the close relationship that exists between systems theory, often called systems thinking, and the conversational structure of PCP.

Reductionistic Thinking

Most current science is based on reductionistic, also called linear or causal thinking, which derives from and follows tenets established during the Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by scientists such as Galileo, Newton, Copernicus, and Descartes. Reductionism—breaking wholes down into their constituent parts and analyzing their smallest parts in order to see complex phenomena—was the thinking that guided scientific practice, which has reached profound and far-reaching conclusions in physics, medicine, and biology as well as produced astounding technology in communications, space exploration, education, and many other fields. Since Descartes, we have explored and learned about nature from a mechanistic point of view, seeing and thinking causally and analytically.

Systems Thinking

Then, in the 1940s, systems thinking quietly appeared on the scene. Systemic thinkers began to see that we, nature, the planet are parts of

larger interrelated and interdependent systems and the parts that make up wholes do not, in fact, give us a complete picture of the whole because there are properties in wholes that cannot be found in their parts (Bateson, 2000). Capra (1982) illustrates this notion when he observes that none of the parts of a sugar molecule—the carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen atoms—taste sweet. Sweetness arises from the specific relationship between these 12 carbons, 22 hydrogens, and 11 oxygen atoms. In other words, the property, sweetness, is found only when these atoms are in relationship to one another.

How Change Occurs in the Relational World

As Aristotle noted, the whole is greater than the sum of their parts. Given this qualitative difference between part and whole relations, it is a given then that the ways change occurs is also qualitatively different between the worlds of physics and information (substance and form). Therapists, parents, teachers, and other change agents are singularly unable to facilitate change in their clients, children, and students by physical force. In a relational world, change is not possible through force since there are no "things." There are only abstractions such as meaning, pattern, form, relationship, communication, and information. A therapist cannot reach inside her client, grab a thing called depression, and fling it away. She cannot "make" her client feel better. In the relational world, change is not quickly "caused" but rather generated, often gradually over time, as a function of language exchange that provokes new ways of seeing, thinking, and understanding. Furthermore, only one tool is available to those wishing to facilitate change in another: Words—the stuff of language and communication.

When Words Become Objects

But what happens when words, abstractions from the non-material world, are used as if they are material objects? Even though therapists want to be helpful, when they assume that the principles that inform change in the physical world are the same principles that inform change in the interactional world, then their words become attempts to separate clients from their problems (Flemons, 1991, 2002). Such therapists strive to convince, reason with, reprimand, scold, or lecture clients into change. Whether gentle or combative, such efforts are underpinned by the same separative

epistemology: That clients are like machines, and words can be wielded like mechanic's tools to wrench out a problem.

The Systemic Nature of PCP

When a thorn is removed from the lion's paw, the lion does, indeed, feel better. But human problems are problems of relationship—a client and his or her problem are not two "items" that can be separated any more than two sides of a coin can be separated one from the other. When words are wielded as though they are hammers and chisels, or even tweezers and cotton, the therapist (teacher, parent) seeking change may often find that the recipient of his or her words will either harden in resistance or collapse into passive submission. Words used as verbal force (whether gentle or attacking) to move another to a new position opinion or understanding by lecturing, persuading, scolding, threatening, cajoling, or shaming will not achieve higher-order change and may find that the only change wrought is injury to the relationship itself.

We can now see how a systemic orientation obtains in the connective, non-combative, non-purposive structure of PCP conversations. The conversational structure is specifically designed to avoid wrestling people's opinions, values, or biases from them. A PCP conversation is without any purposive attempt to change minds.

Further, the PCP dialogue structure invites people to fully speak their minds, safe from injurious comment, debate, or argument. The established set of questions invites speakers to describe the personal context within which their beliefs are embedded, so beliefs and values are offered by speakers as personal rather than political. PCP structures for listening, so that people have a chance of leaving the conversation with the invaluable experience of having been heard, which is not possible in debate.

Both systems theory and PCP are connective—rather than divisive or separative—ways of thinking. Systems theory views the world as complex systems of wholes and parts that interweave with other complex systems of wholes and parts. Similarly, the PCP process seeks to find both the connection of shared values between opponents and the differences between those who share a view (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997).

Positions can be retained but without the stridency or violence of debate. This means that each person may leave a PCP conversation still convinced of his or her own position, but they also leave with an experience that another's idea, seemingly opposite to their own, may also make

sense. Intransigent opinion becomes contextually complex, as black and white becomes gray, and intractability opens to thoughtfulness. This is the beginning of systemic change. In this way, PCP can be usefully seen as systems theory in action.

Teaching *How* to Value Diversity

Those who train family therapists have long struggled with finding ways to impart to their students the value of appreciating difference and how to avoid colonizing therapeutic practices that ask clients to conform to normative ideas about how to behave, feel, and live in the world. Like many of our colleagues, our goals for teaching and training therapists include introducing students to the rewarding benefits of a genuinely curious stance toward clients. Valuing the vastly different ways people live out their cultures, value systems and beliefs has been core to our discipline. We strive to train our students to become curious about differences rather than oppositional to differences. But it is one thing to wish to instill a value for diversity and inclusion and quite another to teach aspiring therapists how to occupy that worldview. The difficulty comes in learning the skills connected with developing a posture of curiosity rather than certainty and finding ways to genuinely embrace difference without abandoning one's own worldview.

Teaching our students the Public Conversations Process provides a scaffold to the skills—the intellectual and relational muscles—they will need to embrace and value diversity. It provides embodied learning that helps them both deeply appreciate their understanding of the world and simultaneously appreciate worldviews that are very different from the beliefs and perspectives that they hold dear. Part of the therapeutic skill students learn when they can hold and value differing ideas about a strongly held conviction is how to manage multiplicity. They learn how to understand why their clients may be doing things that do not intuitively make sense to them. For instance, why a woman might keep having an affair, or why a person of color may be afraid to call the police, or why a religious belief might make the believer choose a particular course of action. As teachers of therapists, we believe that the more our student therapists can embrace multiplicity, the better they can help their clients navigate their way to a resolution that best fits the client's construction of the world. We do not want our students imposing a wished-for outcome that is rooted in the norms of the therapist; we want our graduates to help

clients achieve their goals without the client being required to adopt the values and norms of their therapist. In short, we never want therapy to be a colonizing process, and to achieve that, therapists-in-training need to learn the inherent value of diversity.

Our diversity lab immerses students in contexts where they negotiate encounters with difference and cultivate the ability to humanize and value diverse experiences. We help students develop ways to encounter differences that both deepen and enliven their relationship with their own values and worldview and simultaneously embrace a worldview that is very different from their own—perhaps even diametrically opposed. Through participation in the PCP dialogues students have embodied learning—discovering how to actively examine and comfortably inhabit their values and beliefs so that they can afford to allow in and embrace the values of diverse others—those whose worldviews might otherwise serve as a challenge to the personhood of the therapist.

When we introduce the Public Conversations Project students, we do not tell them that we are doing so to help them value diversity, or to increase their appreciation of difference. And, in fact, we are not doing so. We teach our students the skills learned though the public conversation process because we share the understanding that the best therapists are those that can see the world from multiple perspectives, specifically, those who can see the world through the lens of their client's experience. As it happens, the capacity to understand and appreciate the world from multiple perspectives is consonant with valuing diversity.

Beliefs Cannot Be Mandated

We've found that you cannot simply tell students that they must value difference and cherish diversity. You cannot mandate a therapist-in-training to become a more tolerant loving person. It is the case for any value or belief, you cannot simply command someone to spontaneously adopt a conviction. Rather, you must provide an opportunity for them to evaluate what they are being asked to adopt and help them find their unique path to reject or assimilate the idea. Embracing a value, like the value of diversity, is not something a person can do simply because they are told that it is the right and just thing to do.

Instructing students to value diversity and to cherish difference is a bit like instructing a person to love opera, to truly and deeply enjoy the artistry of opera. A few students will hear opera and immediately fall in love

as its beauty is felt; it will make perfect sense for them. But for many, perhaps those who have musical tastes rooted in rap or klezmer or gospel music, opera will sound foreign—even dysmorphic—nothing like the experience of the music they love and know so well. So how do you help someone bridge that gap? One way would be to play the most beautiful, widely loved operatic pieces and provide detailed explanations about how the opera they are hearing is a cultural treasure. Or perhaps you could play them a piece that is technically perfect, so difficult that it is nearly impossible to achieve, or listen to a world-renowned diva's coloratura that is considered the gold standard for singers of opera. But, for many of us, this education is not going to be sufficient to instill a love of opera.

Most approaches to teaching students about diversity and difference amount to just that: We enjoin students to value diversity, we explain carefully why it is the right thing to do, we elucidate why it is crucial to improving the world. We offer proof by illustrating the devastating effects of injustice and we demonstrate the ways that intolerance harms people and cultures. For many, this education, even when convincing, does not help students develop a countenance that allows them to encounter difference and diversity in ways that are relational, connected, and appreciative of otherness. At best, students who have been schooled in cultural competence and instructed to value diversity merely because it is the "right thing to do" will carefully govern their behavior and guard their words in a vigilant effort to convey that they are good and accepting people. At worst, students feel shame because deep down they do not experience difference and diversity in the ways they imagine they should when they encounter people who challenge their ideas about what is normal and relatable.

And, of course, there is the very worst outcome of all, students who reject the value of diversity because they cannot find a structure to accommodate the differences they encounter—they cannot find a way to value themselves while also valuing the worldview of someone who occupies a very different set of beliefs.

Trusting the Integrity of Student's Wisdom About Themselves

We share the understanding that each student's journey to becoming a systemically informed relational therapist cannot be the result of a cascading series of epistemological, practical, theoretical, or ethical mandates. We do not impose our interpretation of how they should act. Instead, we are curious about the creative ways our clients will find to combine our

conversations with their wisdom about what is best for them. We want them to be enriched by our conversations, not colonized.

It Could Have Been Different: Realizing That All Beliefs Are Shaped by Experience

We start with this premise: You need to know yourself well in order to understand others.

Rather than attempting value neutrality, which distances therapists and researchers from the lives and experiences of clients (Fife & Whiting, 2007), participation in PCP dialogues helps students clarify their own value positions. Therapists' values may not be explicit in a therapy session but are often revealed by the tone and tenor of therapists' contributions to the therapeutic dialogue. One aspect of the Public Conversation Process asks students to think through how they came to hold one of their strongly held beliefs, for instance, the belief that abortion is wrong. They are asked to share with the group experiences or influences that shaped how they came to hold the belief that abortion is wrong. The process also gives them the opportunity to learn about their colleagues' life experiences that lead them to a different conclusion. Then, students practice asking follow-up questions to one another from a place of curiosity. Through this experiential learning, students discover that their ideas and beliefs are rooted in particular life experiences. When they share how their life has shaped them and how their beliefs are the expression of their lived experiences, it is a relatively short step to understand that other people with other experiences have been shaped differently.

Embracing the Gray Areas: Sometimes the Edges of Beliefs Get Blurry

Part of the process asks participants to describe any gray areas they may have about the belief under discussion. They are invited to share places in their belief where they are less sure or have some uncertainty. For instance, in the case of abortion, it has not been unusual for students who firmly believe that abortion is immoral to be less certain in the cases where a pregnancy is the result of incest or a rape. Through this exploration, students become aware of the ambiguity within some of their own value stances, and they have the rare opportunity to listen to colleagues describe their own uncertainties about a particular belief. Students experience in an

embodied way that not all issues are neatly and easily pigeonholed into convenient boxes, even when they are strongly and deeply held.

As the semester progresses, students repeatedly experience what it is like to sit among differing ideas and beliefs without invalidating each other. They begin to incorporate the understanding that one does not have to give up their convictions in order to value and appreciate people who hold different beliefs. This ability to embrace the worldview of others is core to the work of family therapists, or, as Doherty and Boss (1991) challenge us, "to move from agreement at the theoretical level about the pervasiveness of value positions to the more difficult process of self-examination and the dialogue necessary to examine our values" (p. 611).

A PCP Case Example: "Jeremy"

One of the key lessons we have found that MFT students take away from the PCP conversations into their clinical training is a keener understanding of curiosity and how to practice it. They learn to differentiate between what it means to "do therapy" and "how to be a therapist." Jeremy, one student who participated in fishbowl style PCP conversations from week to week, shared an "aha" moment he experienced as an observer of the small group conversation for that particular week. The conversation followed the structured PCP outlined protocol, and it had reached the point in the process where participants are invited to ask questions out of curiosity to one another.

Jeremy found himself focused on one participant whose posture suggested that she was struggling to engage with voices that differed from hers. Jeremy noticed that even though she thought she was asking curious questions and listening to move from a place of unintentional "othering," she was struggling to cross that bridge. As he watched, he internally acknowledged that there were many moments where he got caught in that same place of assumed curiosity. As he wondered what might be getting in his classmate's way, he realized that curiosity cannot be manufactured. For Jeremy, this meant that practicing curiosity was not just about intentional action; it was about having genuine interest to understand another's experience through their lens, not one's own. He realized that when curiosity is genuinely present, it invites a relational posture of connection which stimulates a desire between conversational partners to know and be known.

In a follow-up conversation with Jeremy after he had been practicing family therapy for four years, the authors asked him whether his

experience with PCP conversations and learning about cultivating a curious spirit had any influence on his practice. He stated that it had indeed influenced a self-reflexive stance whereby he developed a practice of routinely thinking about the questions he asked in therapy as he asked them and reflectively assessing what he wanted to know more about, what he thought his clients would want him to ask, and what he would need to ask in order to know how to be helpful. He also saw the value of allowing his curiosity to actively inform how he engaged in the therapeutic dialogue, and the reciprocal response it generated.

Practicing a Curious Posture: A Key Element in Dialogue

No one life experience or one conclusion is more valued or more correct than their own. All beliefs are treated as equally valid. It is important to note that in our years of teaching the public conversations process, we have rarely, if ever, had to state this explicitly. When each participant is encouraged to ask "curious questions" about the life experiences that have been offered by others in their group, these questions are not allowed to be rhetorical in nature, or any kind of an attempt to persuade the person being questioned into changing or re-thinking their position. The questions must be rooted in a genuine curiosity that is intended to help the questioner deepen their understanding about how the experiences they have described by their classmate helped them come to hold a strongly held conviction. This helps therapists-in-training cultivate the skills necessary to respectfully inquire about the differing values and stances of others.

Implications for Teaching Dialogue in Therapy Education

Since 2008, we have been implementing the Public Conversations Project (PCP) in our family therapy program. Rooted in practices that bridge differences and re-humanize perceived "others," PCP finds its home in our program as the foundation in which therapists can begin to work with others. The PCP project reflects a program-wide philosophy that humans are both the same and different, that good therapists look for and value both, and that relationships—therapeutic and non-therapeutic—require ongoing ways of listening and respecting both. Faculty and students

practice this principle in their relationships with one another, beyond the walls of the classroom. By embedding these ideas throughout our curriculum and training at VSU we are able to bring the practice of PCP values into our day-to-day interactions.

Note

1. Essential Partners, formerly The Public Conversations Project, is designed to shift relationships, building the communication skills and trust needed to make action possible and collaboration sustainable.

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CHAPTER 13

Honoring Culture, Holding Complexity: Synthesis and Emerging Possibilities in Dialogue

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The genesis of the book was to critically reflect on long-standing traditions of dialogue and to imagine more global, cultural rooted approaches to dialogic practice and facilitation in the classroom. The introductory chapter, like most intentional dialogue sessions, set the groundwork with an elucidation of the core principles of dialogue—inclusion, intersectionality,

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and authenticity. We invited the readers to keep these principles in mind while reading the diverse set of contributions from authors spanning the globe, grounded in multiple disciplines, situating dialogue practices in different contexts, and approaching dialogue from scholar, practitioner, and/or activist orientations.

In this concluding chapter, we reflect, rethink, and refine our beginning contemplations of inclusion, intersectionality, and authenticity in dialogue in light of the wisdom gathered from the diverse contributions to this book. We overlay these contemplations with three key themes emerging across the chapters:

- Power disruption
- Relationality
- In-betweenness

We then consider how each theme catalyzes a shift in dialogue, accentuates a dimension of culture, and presents implications for dialogue in the classroom. Inclusion, intersectionality, and authenticity are discussed as relevant in each theme. Finally, we conclude with key considerations for continuing and transforming future dialogue practices and a call for living dialogically.

Translating Inclusion, Intersectionality, and Authenticity for a Global Classroom

As we reflect expansively across the contributions, we find ourselves returning to the original principles framing the book—inclusion, intersectionality, and authenticity—with new insights and questions. We introduce the sphere of global dialogue as an overarching synthesis of the key themes of power disruption, relationality, and in-betweenness in relation to the principles of inclusion, intersectionality, and authenticity, which we further expound on below. Figure 13.1 depicts the sphere of dialogue to illustrate the interconnections of these themes and highlights the processes crucial to facilitate dialogue from global, culturally minded perspectives. The sphere itself is a symbolic representation that encompass all aspects of dialogue, including the facilitators, participants, community, and culture of any given dialogic context. In this figure, dialogue is both the process and product, surrounding the sphere, and dialogue is also the axis upon which the earth rotates. The axis is constantly shifting and in motion due to complexities of climate, earth's water and weight

Fig. 13.1 The sphere of global dialogue. (Image courtesy of Ai Nguyen)

distribution, emphasizing how dialogic practices can guide conversations, but cannot account for all the involved interactive relations and processes within an ecosphere.

Inclusion, intersectionality, and authenticity are parallel processes that circle around the globe. These are the foundational aspirations of dialogue practices; when fostered with intentionality, they can increase our capacity to engage creative solutions to vexing social problems. Yet, their meaning and manifestation in dialogue depend on its context, culture, community, facilitators, and participants. Even though shown as parallel lines, their effect may be multiplied or undermined in their practices in the different contexts.

Since the impetus of our global approach to dialogue decenters Eurocentrism, what makes it so are the ways in which power disruption, relationality, and in-betweenness are incorporated in dialogue. These themes, shown as orbits around the globe, are interconnected, rather than separate or sequential. For instance, attempts to challenge and transform power relations involve ongoing relationship building, defining

community, and envisioning justice. Conversely, relational practices also need to reckon with the influence of power, privilege, and marginalization on the different constellations of relationships. This tension between power disruption, as we term it, and relationality parallels the critical-dialogic tensions identified specifically in intergroup dialogues (Maoz, 2011; Nagda, 2006; Nagda & Gurin, 2013). This tension can be dialectical and engaged productively. In-betweenness offers this possibility to hold power disruption and relationality in tandem by generating space for paradox, multiplicity, and co-existing dualities.

Power Disruption

As a core element in the conversation design and practice, power is a source of systemic inequalities, a constituent in the positionalities of privilege and oppression, and manifests in dialogic interactions. Especially in contexts of systemic inequities, power disruption serves as both a goal and a process of engaging in a dialogic endeavor. All aspects of the dialogue—topic, space, participant identity, facilitation, among others—are aligned to taking into account privilege and marginalization. Through continuous engagement toward making the invisible visible and the visible complex, there is a goal to disrupt colonial power and ways of understanding. For instance, in decolonizing the classroom (Chap. 2) Avalos approaches power disruption by changing the students' perceptions and relationship to indigenous knowledge. By having students recognize their privileges and biases shaped through Western epistemology, locate selves and others in the class topics on indigenous dispossession, and question what constitutes valid and invalid knowledge about indigenous cultures and narratives, Avalos shows how knowledge is shaped politically and strategies of settler colonialism operate to dismiss Indigenous traditions.

Decentering Eurocentrism and Universal

At the core of this global dialogical endeavor is to decolonize through approaches that are socially just, anti-racist, and resistance-oriented. Avalos explains (Chap. 2):

> decolonization has come to mean challenging the racist ideologies that produce hierarchies of knowledge systems/worldviews and peoples. While there is no single perfect approach to decolonizing your pedagogy, it could

> mean interrogating our assumptions around what constitutes legitimate and rational knowledge in the academy.

In the classroom, then, decolonizing may mean connecting our writing and expression to who we are, who and where we come from, our ancestry, the foods we eat, the songs, the strengths we find in our communities, recognizing the humanizing and dehumanizing sides of us, acknowledging the humanized and dehumanized sides of ourselves, as well as allowing us to be ourselves in relation to others.

Throughout the book, the decolonizing motivation of dialogue is unpacked in multiple ways, but the underlying thread emphasizes unlearning or decentering Eurocentrism and incorporating community and cultural wealth as well as time-tested traditions of community organizing. Authors reference such decentering thematically as denaturalizing assumptions in Western epistemology (Chap. 12), reconnecting to nature and spiritual selves (Chap. 9), letting go of the "I" in favor of relational orientations (Chap. 1), prioritizing collective instead of individualistic frameworks for understanding power (Chap. 11), and de-emphasizing hierarchical power relations and expert knowledge in favor of horizontal partnerships (Chap. 5). In the chapter on dialogue and systems theory (Chap. 12), Warner et al. critique the reductionistic, mechanistic, and linear thinking derived from Scientific Revolution, indicative of Euro-centric epistemology that views the world from a lens of separation. They propose dialogue embodies a systemic orientation that sees the world in terms of connection and interconnections.

Centering Community Cultural Wealth

The centering of community and culture comes across via the emphasis on the relational and restoring, providing space and representation to history, cultural wisdom, and people's voices. Conceptually, the idea of "community cultural wealth" comes from Yosso's (2005) critical race theory work to challenge the notion of the deficit view of the communities of color, and instead focus the lens on the aspirational, social, navigational, linguistic, resistant, and familial capital underrepresented or marginalized groups possess (p. 82). It builds on and shows the limits of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural capital defined as "accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society" (p. 76). Instead of categorizing marginalized communities as lacking, which would impede their success and integration

in the classrooms, Yosso proposes that people from marginalized communities have a unique toolkit to survive and resist oppression. Through this lens, it is possible to create diverse strengths rather than cultural barriers, and to plan for accessibility and inclusion with different groups of people. Within dialogue, the intentional and sustained acts of people seeking to understand others and to appreciate differences greatly enhance community-building and courageous engagement of difficult conversations.

Cultural wealth does not emerge in a conversational vacuum. Years of colonization have rendered identities, ways of knowing, histories, and peoples invisible, erased, powerless, and/or voiceless in the communicative context. Dialogue then can be a (re)humanizing project surfacing and validating contested stories, deconstructing oppression, and connecting the individual to the community. Narratives that provide representation surface the invisible, help uncover struggles for liberation, tackle discrimination, and contribute to memory-building and critical consciousness around key issues. In the classroom, whether the focus is on environmental crisis (Chap. 9), the global pandemic (Chap. 10), therapy (Chap. 12), and/or other significant matters related to the marginalized, adopting a community cultural wealth lens honors the non-Western or non-Eurocentric knowledge as resourceful and desirable. It also shows how these assumptions embedded in education and research are colonial framing and need careful examination. If a conscious effort to decolonize is not part of the dialogue process, the social justice and/or change making goals will be subverted.

Challenging Racism and Developing Anti-Racist Pedagogies

Racist ideologies create legitimacy of knowledge production, which provides rules to interpret what's rational and natural in the hierarchy of understanding. Either it involves invalidating conceptual frameworks based in indigenous and marginalized belief systems or idealizing or misrepresenting them for appropriation or consumption. Challenging racism then, on the one hand, involves questioning of assumptions/stereotypes/single stories, and, on the other hand, cultivating deep listening, care without judgment and interruptions or evidence-based rebuttals.

Power disruption marks a shift, a process of moving from dominance to empowerment writ large. Be it from colonization to decolonization, trauma and erasure to healing, dehumanizing to rehumanizing, or shame to acceptance and visibility, these processes connote an intentional,

supported movement from naïve consciousness to critical consciousness with conjoint processes or shedding the old and growing anew. These processes evolve over time, acknowledging the need for multiple cognitive, affective, and behavioral change.

Throughout the chapters, authors explore aspects of unequal power relations and disruption in matters of queer black lives (Chap. 7), Chicanx identity (Chap. 6), interfaith conflict (Chap. 3), post-conflict trauma and hurt (Chap. 8), as well as re-connection with nature and being (Chap. 9). The dialogue topics in this volume are not indiscriminate topics, but are intentional, defining aspects of contributor identities and experiences within the larger socio-political framework of racism and colonialism. Here, the personal is political and hence, dialogic engagement becomes a risk-taking endeavor of making the self vulnerable, and opening it to examination and the possibility of connection through anti-racist practices.

What this power-affirming and disruptive work can accomplish is some imperceptible shift in our shared understanding of who we are and how we exist in relation to others, as well as whose voices/narratives are missing or not being heard in the classroom. For instance, a dialogue on indigenous history without including indigenous voices and stories from within the community may risk reinforcing a colonial lens in the conversation. An active reflection on the unfolding process can then connect how dialogue surfaces and disrupts these unequal power structures.

Relationality

In dialogue, there is a simultaneous effort to engage with self and others; the relational focus of dialogue is geared toward fostering, sustaining, or recreating bonds among people who may or may not know each other or to be with each other. Relationality recognizes the fissures and fractures of old and new power arrangements, and invites participants to imagine power-sharing for enduring connections. In a classroom, this manifests when a cis-gender Christian heterosexual teacher (Chap. 11) attempts to open up space to dialogue about the hurt caused to a student of a single, biracial, non-binary, and pagan identity. Addressing this hurt and dismissal seeks to assign responsibility for oppression and erasure of identity within the learning process while creating a meaningful reflection moment for the teacher, student, and the entire class about the impact of dominant religious discourses on those present. Eventually, it helps students and teachers "attune" in a different way than in a traditional hierarchical relation, which may happen in a conventional classroom setting.

Rehumanizing Through Community and Connection

Dialogue can be experienced as a rehumanizing and deeply transformative space through intentional community-building and a felt sense of connectedness. In the community sculpture making dialogue (Chap. 6), Baetz and Preciado surface a silenced history of oppression, trauma, and suffering inflicted by the deaths of Los Seis de Boulder, Chicanx activists who were killed on University of Colorado Boulder campus while demanding continued educational opportunity programs during the 1970s. Through the dialogue, the university space where these painful oppressive incidents took place could be reclaimed as a healing space where the racist acts were denounced, and moments of reflection and transformation fostered hope for the community. Further, in witnessing and considering Indigenous views within a classroom focusing on decolonizing approaches, Avalos (Chap. 2) presents the potential to transform students from passive observers to aware and emotionally engaged allies. Warner et al. (Chap. 12) also highlight the catalytic power of relationality for developing a genuine orientation toward justice. They describe how beliefs cannot be mandated, but by providing opportunities to understand and cherish *how* the social world shapes our beliefs, students can cultivate the ability to humanize and authentically value diverse experiences.

Dialogue is foundational to community-based trauma and post-conflict social healing. Nagda and Lopez (Chap. 8) show how the *Kumekucha* (a Kiswahili word for "it's a new dawn") program positions storytelling in small learning groups within Kenyan communities for people in post-conflict settings to be seen and heard for personal and collective healing. Such an approach foregrounds experiences and shifting identities of oppressors and oppressed with a renewed connection and trust for the "other."

Meanwhile, Rappeport and Lin (Chap. 9) propose a transformative moment in reconnecting humans with nature through an arts-based dialogue and experiences. Through walks, music, peace dance, self-portraits, engagement with religious beliefs on nature and rituals to acknowledge environmental damage, dialogues are proposed to be impactful, healing, and reconciliatory. The dialogue space is imagined not simply as an oasis of healing in the midst of dehumanizing (oppressive) realities, but also as a catalyst to build capacity to exact change on those very realities.

Cultural Humility and Relational Ethics

Relationality is a key component of cultivating dialogic states of communication and/or teaching. Many of the authors who foreground relational practice contrast dialogue with debate as a form of egalitarian communication and interaction. Whether it is in the classroom or in the community and in contrast to banking education or authoritarian organizing, dialogue works toward creating a more inclusive and participatory space of engagement. Inherent in culturally attuned relational practices is the notion of cultural humility, defined as a lifelong commitment to learning about others and critical reflection of cultural experiences and realities (Tervalon & Murray-García, 1998). For instance, Kim et al. (Chap. 11) show that relationally directed pedagogy enables the practice of relational virtues of humility, vulnerability, and openness to change. In contrast to Western individualism, relational practices center on listening, flexibility, critical reflection, and cultural humility. Warner et al. (Chap. 12) also emphasize developing a posture of curiosity toward cultural diversity. Relational practices are inherently embedded within a cultural practice—one that elevates our responsiveness and attunement to others, relationships, and community. Relationality necessitates an ethical stance that illuminates the relationship, replacing a "care for self" and "care for other" with "a care for the relationship."

Facilitator Positionality, Self-Reflexivity, and Vulnerability

Previous literature has discussed how becoming an effective facilitator of conversations in educational settings requires more than good intentions (Landreman, 2013). Even knowledge of the gap between intention and impact does not necessarily always translate into sensitive, thoughtful, and social justice–driven facilitation. In different chapters, the authors contemplate the many meanings of a facilitator philosophy, orientation, ideology, and/or approach to dialogue. Some key aspects to effective facilitation are defined in facilitator behavior like being vulnerable, self-reflexive, awareness of one's own biases and assumptions on a given topic along with disclosure of social location for a more effective dialogue.

Across the different book chapters, authors link their dialogue practice with their own background and identity. Often called social location and/or positionality, many facilitators in the dialogue field spend considerable time unpacking the social and political context that creates their identity in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and ability status. Knowledge and self-awareness of social location help anticipate what kind of questions are

meaningful to the facilitator, and what kind of responses it may elicit from the participants, based on their identities, and any ambiguities in and barriers to the dialogue conversation. For example, Kim et al. (Chap. 11) demonstrates the excruciating process where a teacher-facilitator puts self under scrutiny in front of the classroom. Through this painful process, the class attempts to consider addressing the existing divide and trying to form deeper understanding about each other. Similarly, Chan (Chap. 4) shares his perspective of an educator and experiences and struggles with the diluted interpretations of the term "harmony." From his father to employer, everyone proposed a version of harmony geared solely toward maintaining peace. When Chan had to leave his job for challenging the status quo, it prompted a strong reflection about how harmony can be more than conflict avoidance where individual and collective identity is based on complementing each other's strengths and limitations.

In the Los Seis de Boulder Sculpture project, co-authors Preciado and Baetz share their personal stories of oppression in their positionality (Chap. 6), and how they relate to the complex discourses of Chicanx identity and belonging. Preciado's Xicana identity is connected to being a first-generation daughter of Mexican immigrants while Baetz narrates being raised in an Indian ethnic minority community, which valued purity, thus legitimizing racialized and gendered exclusion of her mother. These deeply personal revelations center the facilitator motivations within the larger aspirations of the dialogue project and generate relational space between them and the participants to navigate trauma, pain, and find ways for collective community building.

In-Betweenness

Within the inclusive and authentic conversational space of dialogue, one may be able to see more clearly the complexity of social life—the multiple coexisting, competing, and shifting aspects of self and others. Whether it is the imagining of the one (self) and whole (communal), lived positionalities of both privilege and oppression, knowing and not knowing, belief and unbelief, pain and agency, absence and presence through the digital in a pandemic or the many in-betweens that mark complexities of identity, space, power, and knowledge show up in dialogue. Acknowledging the in-betweenness can be scary and yet empowering. It grounds our realities in the conversations of history connected to present rather than disconnected or single truths that may mislead or misrepresent.

Paradoxes and Dialectics

An aspect of in-betweenness is that of dialectics or what Abu-Nimer terms as *paradoxes*—seemingly opposite phenomena that involve choices with costs and opportunities. Authors highlight the dilemmas of individual-collective, I-we, talk-action, content-process, and process-outcome(product) that greatly influence the design and goals of dialogic approaches. Rather than an either-or or all-nothing approach, dialectics invite us to engage in the space in-between to find creative possibilities. There are no recipes or easy answers to follow but grappling with the dilemma allows for real and courageous engagement with uncertainty, discernment of the distinctiveness of each aspect, and exploration of creative possibilities emergent in the dialogic (mutually influential) connecting place.

For instance, Chan (Chap. 4) poses critical questions about the paradox of harmony and freedom within East-West epistemologies, suggesting that neither can truly exist without the other. He further discusses how individualistic culture views the enduring yin-yang philosophy from a place of difference, rather than the togetherness, and the "dots" in the yin-yang indicate the intense interactions between two dualities; in other words, a seed of the yin coexists in the yang, and conversely. Holding in-betweenness and not forcing an either/or choice enable us to engage the paradoxes. In this sense, dialogue is a meeting place to struggle with the complexities of paradoxes and the catalysis of emergent insights. In the chapter on dialogic learning during a global pandemic (Chap. 10), authors highlight the paradox of how working remotely brought student employees together, exemplifying how as uncomfortable as they can be, and the times of felt disconnection can give rise to moments of and opportunities for connection. As Magee (2019) says: "We need to be willing to be uncomfortable long enough for real understanding to emerge, and to work at it long enough for real change to happen" (p. 122).

Cultural Complexities and Contradictions

Anchored in a culturallyrooted understanding, dialogue may acquire a deeper focus that holds both complexities and contradictions. The binary, universal, and Euro-centric gives way to diverse storytelling where people's wisdom takes center stage and there is a questioning of truths and/or histories told from a monolithic perspective. Within conversations, it mobilizes power to define and the language to resist and fight inequality and unjust power structures. For example, Mokgopa narrates in the

chapter on writing black queers into existence (Chap. 7), cultural work and cultural workers can make erased history visible, create spaces and narratives that honor the invisible, and provide space for counter narratives to exist. In particular, within South Africa, performance art and literature have a noted space in the fight against Apartheid and nurturing the complexities of black queer identity and expression.

Chan (Chap. 4) also unpacks the contradictions of harmony from Chinese philosophical perspectives. Far from a complete agreement or lack of discord, whether in music or in mythology, harmony is possible by finding the complementary among the differences. Chan gives the example of the yin and yang, and how their union emphasizes a collective togetherness built on difference. Within the context of bible circles, Kim (Chap. 5) mentions that creating dialogue can be about movement, not just meaningful moments. Integrating cultural practices like yoga, meditation, and sharing food builds communal experiences and translates into physical and emotional engagement as necessary pre-conditions to intersectional and authentic conversations. Prominently, breaking bread together, the cultural and communal rituals of sharing food, space, conversation and time enable connection, and belonging, and help facilitate a kind of kinship that doesn't develop with just any daily conversation.

It is imperative to avoid valorizing or romanticizing culture when we consider its value or contribution to dialogue specifically to decenter Euro-centric understandings. Culture is an amalgamation of beliefs, faith, and lived practices and also misconceptions that serve a specific purpose for communities. In the case of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the culturally rooted misconceptions fuel the need for self-defense and lack of trust and make it harder to accomplish a meaningful dialogue. Some instances of cultural complexity and contradictions show the facilitation of hegemonic discourses where subversion may or may not be possible. In the case of Korean bible circles, Evangelical Protestantism decides the boundaries between difference and sin. Rooted in cultural religiosity, the church practices undergird the conversations to reproduce power relations among different people associated with the church. This impacts conversations and decisions on what's negotiable and acceptable in terms of diversity. Another culturally rooted matter is related to hierarchy in Korean language where respectful expressions are reserved for senior or elder members of the community. This has material effects on the kind of dialogue possible, and Kim's approach to dialogue outlines how subversion and resistance to cultural rootedness may be desirable in such cases. Finally,

faith-based philosophies underlined some dialogic approaches, highlighting opportunities to adopt dialogue to further religious and spiritual conversations and facilitate interreligious and interfaith dialogue.

Bearing Witness and Holding Space

Within the different dialogue perspectives in the book, there is an emphasis on process and outcome of the facilitation, through thoughtful design, holding space for complex stories and truths to emerge, building in moments of interconnection, and allowing the group to define their thoughts in their own language to one another. Bearing witness in psychology refers to dealing with traumatic experiences. According to Pikiewicz (2013) it is "a valuable way to process an experience, to obtain empathy and support, to lighten our emotional load via sharing it with the witness, and to obtain catharsis." Facilitators and participants play a role in witnessing the stories untold. Hence, the way they listen in dialogue is deepened beyond merely active listening or registering what they have heard. Bearing witness carries with it a special care for honoring the sufferings and joys, rise and falls, as well as everything in-between a person and community's story.

In Avalos's decolonized classroom (Chap. 2), students bear witness to stories of Native persons, sometimes hearing it for the very first time, and getting first-hand clarity about injustice and violence surrounding the land where the classroom is built. Such a process of witnessing can be unsettling and also transformative in generating empathy and allyship among students for the Indigenous community. Meanwhile in Kenya's community-based trauma healing program, Nagda and Lopez (Chap. 8) share how facilitators bear witness to third-person narratives. In the aftermath of conflict, narrating personal experiences of trauma is not possible and in such cases, the community is able to do story sharing and listening through artwork and visuals.

In the South African context, Mokgopa (Chap. 7) narrates the intricate process of inviting black queer writers who have historically been marginalized. It is not enough to bear witness to the narratives of erasure and invisibility, but also necessary to address aspects of shame, othering, disempowerment, and resulting poverty conditions that surround these writers and their existence. The dialogue facilitator here accomplishes the work of creating a space where the historic injustices are addressed, black queer identities honored, and also making sure material needs are met, in order for the open sharing and listening to take place.

The global perspective to facilitate dialogic conversations also highlights aspects of decolonizing self and other, re-imagining and transforming relationships, and paying attention to how power operates in spaces, complex identities, and the impact of words. Rappeport et al. (Chap. 10) describe how holding space for narratives creates relational accountability and engenders new possibilities in virtual settings. Through the practice of ritualized openings in the classroom, which included shared moments of silence, land acknowledgments, learning reflections, storytelling and/or pair-shares, the teacher-facilitator grounded the class in matters of social justice central to their own identities and also held space for deeper conversations on socio-political crisis to emerge.

The emergent themes of power disruption, relationality, and in-betweenness across the chapters enrich our understanding of ways to understand, create, and support inclusive, intersectional, and authentic connections in classroom dialogues. Each on their own adds to the dialogue process. Yet, it is their multiplicative potential that can truly expand and deepen dialogues. We explore these interconnections further below as a means of holding the globe of dialogue holistically.

Holding the Globe of Dialogue as Whole

Inclusivity in dialogue often refers simply to including all the voices, identities, and perspectives of people in the room. Equal participation is often set as a ground rule for dialogue. Inclusion in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) classrooms also refers to everyone's capacity to meaningfully participate in the learning environments. Alternatively, inclusion is often defined by what is excluded in knowledge and relationships. All communities have some agreed-upon values and norms, which may define what it means to belong, and paradoxically what is not belonging as well. In this sense, inclusion is relationally defined. For instance, to dialogue on environmental justice, voices that refuse to acknowledge or want to speak on the topic may be excluded or lack participation.

The question arises: for impactful dialogue, what does it mean for the classroom to be embedded in the community of diverse-yet-stratified members? Through this book, we explore inclusion as allowing delegitimized cultural wealth, heritage, ancestral voices, and othered communities to be seen as valuable, authentic, and powerful. Inclusive dialogues allow for traditionally excluded, marginalized voices to come into recognition, shifting the power dynamics inherent in our process of deciding whom/what to include/exclude. Thus, intentional inclusive practices are

one way to disrupt power and decenter dominant narratives. Inclusion (along with authenticity and intersectionality) may foster accountability, mutuality, and co-liberation, commitments to finding points of connection and resistance in the midst of inequality, dehumanization, and collective trauma. Further, inclusion and exclusion exist as a paradox and exclusion is a necessary complement for inclusion to exist. For example, to facilitate inclusive dialogue, it is necessary to exclude oppressive dialogue, and a "free speech-at-all-cost" can actually hinder inclusivity (Garcia et al., 2020). The tensions between inclusion-exclusion processes serve as another exemplar for the theme of in-betweenness in dialogue.

In regard to intersectionality, two possibilities emerge from the chapter narratives. One is the cultural rendering of truths and stories from relational and communal perspectives that challenge hegemonic ideals. Relationality is a useful lens to see how expressions of intersectional identity can coalesce into a heightened awareness of community and belonging. Often, marginalized first-person stories become windows into alternative intergenerational values and truths, providing meaningful connections across differences. Intersectionality can give space to the intergenerational values people carry with them and in turn disrupting the power relations and dominant ideologies within dialogue. Cultivating an intersectional awareness then helps renew erased ties or even address ruptures within a classroom. Two, breaking binaries can foster a more complex understanding of oppressions, oppressor and oppressed, and multiple identities embedded with the matrix of domination. Intersectional moments eschew binary states of being and locate people in-between truths, realities, identities, and exchanges, all of which are part of struggles for liberation. So, apart from acknowledging differences between and within groups, it enables people to be and do many seemingly contradictory things at the same time. It can mean being in trauma and healing at the same time as Baetz and Preciado experience within the Los Seis de Boulder Sculpture project (Chap. 6), and Nagda and Lopéz's social healing approach in Kenya (Chap. 8). Further, it can mean being a believer and non-believer of Protestantism as Kim describes in the bible circle conversations (Chap. 5). Dealing with these dialogue states and emotions may bring a different kind of awareness of self, other, and the larger sociopolitical dynamics implicating us all. The rich and ambiguous in-between spaces help counter the reductive binaries of oppressors and oppressed, or the schema of villain and hero, perpetrator and victim through which conflict tends to be conceptualized. Through this countering, one may be

able to consider reconnection possibilities across divided communities, which couldn't have been imagined earlier.

Intersectionality converges with the strong and significant theme of in-betweenness in dialogue. In-betweenness allows for us to engage productively with the dialectic tension of power disruption and relationality. In-betweenness as a concept is not new to border and migration studies (Emami, 2018), or in postcolonial cultural studies where it may be referred to as "hybridity" and "third space" (Rutherford, 1990). At a time of global strife, divisions, and suffering, in-betweenness in dialogue can offer some ambiguous, contrasting, conflicting, and overlapping situations, conditions, and physical and mental states. These spaces eschew binary positions or states of being, and instead nurture duality and multiplicity necessary for transition and coping, and ultimately facilitate communication for intersectional empowering connections. For Israel-Palestine dialogues (Chap. 3), in-betweenness holds promise for participants to make sense of differing narratives, their own multiple roles within the oppressive history of the region as well as fractured relationships to faith, home, family, community, culture, and institutions of faith, which have been constantly defined through the lens of conflict.

As a relational, intersectional process, authenticity also takes time and develops within a space of in-betweenness, when there is a break from the accepted order or a loss of certainty, with possibility for ambivalence and renewed meaning-making to occur.

What is an authentic self? According to Ibarra (2015), there is no one true authentic self as we have many selves in the different social roles we play; authenticity and self-disclosure are complicated as we don't always reveal what we feel, and finally, our values continue to evolve as per context and situations. Authenticity is often seen as a call to be one's whole self, but also often defined as an individual trait or quality. When authenticity is contextualized in power relations, participants from privileged backgrounds conceive of authentic engagement as not wanting to be politically correct and being able to say what they want. For members of less privileged groups, authenticity may be tied to expression of group identities and cultural strengths without having to "fit in" or subscribe to Whiteness, all as a form of resistance and representation.

Chapters in this volume underscore a more relational view of authenticity akin to Freirian critical consciousness co-created in dialogue or a relational approach to share power and build communal trust. For some, authenticity emerges from unlearning Eurocentrism, sharing power and

facilitating representation, and giving space to erased identities and contested stories. For others, authenticity emerges, in reconnecting with nature or with community and others as well as seeing the possibilities of remote and technologically enabled connections during crisis. For dialogue interactants from marginalized groups, relational authenticity is not merely a one-dimensional take of self, but an intersectional, where communities can process a place to be seen and heard in their own right and in their own voice with ownership of their narratives. For dialogue participants from privileged groups, authentic engagement then involves expressing blindspots, acknowledging lack of awareness of experiences different from our own, and genuinely working toward unveiling the invisible ways the mask of Whiteness has operated in their lives (Ross, 2008).

Dialogue is not easy and this is why all our conversations are or cannot be dialogic. In seeking a holistic understanding of the globe of dialogue, we see ways in which the themes of power disruption, relationality, and in-betweenness in inclusive, intersectional, and authentic dialogues may also explain why dialogue can fall apart. We explore these barriers and impediments to dialogue next.

Barrier and Impediments to Dialogue

The more meaningful dialogue conversations thrive in the unknown, complex, and unchartered waters, which ask of its facilitators and participants patience, open-mindedness, restraint, and some suspension of judgment. In these situations, the participants attempt to refrain from absolutes, single stories and allow complex identities and contradictory moralities. All of this is not naturally learned behavior and can lead to difficulties or breakdown in dialogue. Thus, we reflect on the following potential barriers of context, trauma, polarization, and shame.

The context and conditions within which a dialogue takes place define and circumscribe its possibilities. In other words, a dialogue may not be limitless or without constraints because of the context and conditions that enable it. One sees this translates in a dialogue when despite a stated intention to disrupt power, be inclusive, and orient conversations toward relationship building, certain dialogue settings are not able to provide space for expressions and/or identities outside their realm. For example, in Kim's Korean diasporic church bible circle (Chap. 5), while there is much focus on horizontalizing power relations, dialogues on sexuality and gender are not centered due to faith-based reasons. Similarly, in Abu-Nimer's interfaith dialogues (Chap. 3), without a readiness to participate and listen

to disputed histories and collective memory of events, it is not possible for any dialogic encounter to take place. Similarly, Kim et al.'s relational classroom (Chap. 11) can provide dialogic possibilities only to those who are willing to deconstruct dominant discourses, examine assumptions, and be attuned to others' feelings and needs.

Across cultures, additional limitations of understanding and application arise, as illustrated in Chan's explanation of how harmony (Chap. 4) is often mistaken for compliance rather than nurturing complementary differences. According to Chan, political misuse of the term in China and lost meaning in translation in the West lead to dialogues which seek harmony, but do not achieve it. Many things need to align for a dialogue to be fruitful for power disruption, and without enough attention to context and conditions, there will be boundaries impeding the participants from realizing their full relational and connective potential.

Additionally, across contexts and cultures, self-disclosure and truth telling can be an extremely ambitious endeavor. Especially in the public setting of a dialogue, revelations may be shaped into the versions of stories we would like to tell others, or may be heavily reliant on arbitrary memories of events. Truth telling to others and ourselves and disclosing contradictory selves are not natural habits in our daily lives, and for them to occur naturally in a dialogue is desirable but not highly probable. For instance, Piliavsky (2013) questions the possibility of a public sphere or dialogue moment in rural India where secrecy and exclusion enable genuine political conversations.

Trauma and polarization can also interrupt dialogue. In both cases, there is a need for comfort, safe space, and care emerging from the similar and familiar. In polarization, participants seek comfort, commonality, and familiarity. Beliefs are reinforced and maintained in our efforts to avoid the discomfort and uncertainty associated with new and different perspectives. The very same echo chamber regulates and solidifies the relationship between our polarized self and the other. Similarly, in traumatic conditions, it may be difficult to be open-minded or consider another perspective. Trauma can create a sense of disconnection to ourselves and others and hinder a person's capacity for expression, empathy, and emotional connectedness, which are critical components of dialogue. Difficult conversations may be delayed as a form of coping in the aftermath of trauma. At the same time, dialogue can foster opportunities for reconnection and posttraumatic growth in the face of adversity. In the community context, dialogue can also honor and transform historical and collective trauma.

Finally, shame may cast a shadow that overrides an open and vulnerable engagement in the process of dialogue. As a powerful emotion, shame may become globalized in a person's experience of themselves and accentuate personal fears of rejection, judgment, and ostracization. Internalizing shame creates painful experiences of self-blame and unworthiness, leading us to distance ourselves from others. As noted in Mokgopa's chapter on writing black queers into existence, shame can sometimes hinder dialogue through physiological and psychological influences. They also contextualize shame in the intergenerational trauma of colonialism and Apartheid, highlighting belonging, safety, and equity as antidotes for changing the context that breeds shame. Dialogue presents an opportunity to give voice and permission for participants to contend with shame and address the underlying societal forces that perpetuate shame. The invitation to not only permit, but to offer understanding and empathy for our painful experiences of shame can dispel the need to defend and open doors to engage human connection and belongingness in dialogue.

Looking Ahead: Enduring and Critical Prospective Reflections

Much like the process of dialogue, the breakthrough insights across the chapters come through deep listening, reflection, and continued inquiry. Sometimes the emergent questions yield answers, and at other times, the emergent questions themselves are new insights. As we gather the wisdom represented in the contributions, we offer a forward-looking vision that helps provide guideposts for continued context-specific, culturally rooted, and creative use of dialogue in the classroom.

Rethinking a Global Context for Dialogue

Dialogue can allow us to broaden our local understanding to the global context. Paradoxically, the global context can help develop and intensify our awareness of the local. The COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent health and economic crises, highlighted our global interconnectedness as well as revealed historic and enduring inequities across countries and within our local communities. The centrality and challenge of human connectedness in almost every aspect of our lives—in multigenerational families, multiracial schools and colleges, interdisciplinary collaborations,

multinational companies, transnational communities, and local and global social justice movements—were made starkly visible in a drastically changing world. Most pointedly, the use of technology and digital means has opened up innovative opportunities for dialogue across localities and national boundaries. Digital dialogue has yielded new modes of participation, reshaped virtual communities, and illuminated collaborative possibilities to address the existing disparities in terms of race, class, health, education, and occupation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also heightened awareness of intersecting global issues, such as health inequities, food insecurity and injustice, climate change and environmental awareness, gender violence and discrimination, LGBTQ rights, displacement of refugees' families and anti-immigrant sentiments, as well as child marriages, trafficking, labor, and exploitation. These humanitarian crises serve as a backdrop for the continued imperative for systemic and structural social justice that pervades every aspect of individual and community life. Hence, dialogue as a means and goal for social connectedness across difference, and social justice as a means and goal for addressing differential life outcomes, must be conjoint endeavors in mobilizing collective change globally.

Generations of activists and dialogic thinkers, both young and old, may wrestle with an urgency for change fueled by a sense of scarcity in time and resources. Urgency at times may run counter to dialogue which prioritizes surfacing and grappling with multiple perspectives, asking questions and re-examining positions, and building collective visions and solutions. Speaker and activist Bayo Akomolafe shares an African saying: "The times are urgent; let us slow down." In urgency, Bayo explains, we may engage in old patterns and miss potential resources in the rush, hastiness, and panic. In a similar vein, dialogue within the context of global activism reinforces the peril of creating a movement without intention, building leadership without inclusivity, and enacting actions without reflection on and dialogue about the consequences for those systematically marginalized. Urgency to dialogue and slowing down to build collective action are important complements in the realm of local-global justice.

A Call for Coalitions Across Differences

As we recognize the importance of relationality in dialogue, we acknowledge the continued need for coalitions across differences (especially differences borne out of social identities) in the field of dialogue. While power

disruption is central to the justice-oriented dialogue project, singular binaries between the oppressed and oppressor can be blurred; instead, intersectionality needs to be brought into clearer focus and complicated at the same time. A relational approach to intersectionality, accentuating deep empathy and respect for complexity and contradiction, can help us grapple with questions to imagine possibilities rather than competing interests: How can intersectionality help forge alliances? How can intersectionality be leveraged for collective liberation and justice?

Furthermore, consideration of intersectionality of social positionalities with personal and professional identities can expand our capacities to imagine sustained social change efforts in multiple contexts that promote personal and community well-being. Relational practices of critical empathy can connect our past, present, and future to enable pathways for cultivating intergenerational wisdom, accentuate the voices of the ancestors, and reimagine decoloniality. For instance, Everyday Democracy organization facilitators Matthew Sagacity Walker and Malana Rogers-Bursen conducted a dialogue titled "Wakanda Forever: An Intergenerational Equity Framework" (2018) at the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD) using the intergenerational wisdom from each of the characters from the Hollywood film *Black Panther*. Drawing on an intergenerational wisdom framework using equitable decision making, intergenerational learning, addressing structural racism, collective leadership, and sustainability, their workshop projected forth a creative, reimagined future through Afro-futurist dialogue. In the field of dialogue, speculative relational practices can be a powerful tool for developing relationships and coalitions.

Insights on Honoring Silence and the Unspoken

A substantial gap exists in addressing silence and nonverbal forms of expression in dialogue. Western approaches to dialogue focus on verbal communication, potentially neglecting the use of silence for reflection, deepened understanding of self and others, or as dialogic expression itself. In debate, silence is used to gain an advantage over an opponent, whereas in dialogue, silence can be honored and harnessed. Tarja Väyrynen (2011) explores this radically different entry point to dialogue in work at the intersections of conflict resolution and dialogue. Moving beyond the mistaken notion of silence as a lack or breakdown in communication, Vayrynen draws on examples from multiple contexts to show how silence is a form

of expression. In India and Somalia, for example, male dominance of historic narratives where violence experienced by women is often untold or silenced in tales of war and strife. In China, there is a significant role of silence in experiencing truth and transformation and cultivating people of a higher purpose. In the case of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, silence signifies agency where rituals and symbolism in mourning/resistance sites enable a new kind of community building and imagination. In this way, the non-verbal or the absence of the spoken word presents a multitude of meanings, which may not fit a singular understanding of dialogue as a speech act.

Creating space for a pause or breath in dialogue invites others in and signals a time for reflection. For instance, silence is utilized in Rappeport and Lin's art-based ecological practices where participants create art without speaking or introducing themselves to engage in listening and expressing in nonverbal ways. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic brought forth a moment of silence as the world stopped in its tracks, clearing a space for introspection of self, relationships, and our place in society. Arguably, this pause worldwide catalyzed many dialogic innovations and connections, and thus, we may find opportunities to re-envision what we want to be *waiting in* instead of merely *waiting for* a "new norm" post-covid.

Similar to silence, nonverbal ways of communicating merit further exploration in dialogue. Research has consistently found that a significant part of meaning and communication is nonverbal (Guerrero & Floyd, 2006). In addition, Tracy and Robles (2013) show how our cultural backgrounds heavily influence how we interpret and communicate through nonverbal dialogue, including gestures, body positioning, facial expressions, eye gaze, conversational distance, haptics or touch, appearance, and paralinguistics such as volume or tone of voice (p. 108). This was a challenge apparent in the online dialogues facilitated during the COVID-19 pandemic, where we collectively yearned for connections that are cultivated through face-to-face interactions. Virtual interactions, while allowing for accessibility and creative means to connection, may not always offer entries to nonverbal methods of communication. It is not difficult to envision how important our body, posture, gestures, and tone of voice are in conveying the message we hope to deliver. Scholars have proposed the embodied nature of dialogue, self, and culture (Gergen & Hersted, 2016), which denotes the body as an instrument through which we speak, construct identity, and relate to others.

The use of aesthetic forms of dialogue opens up possibilities for honoring the silence and unspoken. Dialogue through use of the arts is a growing area of interest. Art is an expression, instrument, and invitation for dialogue. In her article "The Art of Democracy," Romney (2003) mentions noteworthy ways dialogue has been integrated into arts through theatre production, involving "one-on-one dialogues between the artists and millionaires, minimum wage workers, and people in between these economic extremes" (p. 16). There is much innovation in the ways arts have been mobilized for dialogue about social justice issues. Rappeport and Lin's art-based dialogue (Chap. 9) for reconnecting to Mother Earth demonstrates the use of art to generate imagination and develop ecological consciousness. Baetz and Preciado's Los Seis de Boulder sculpture project (Chap. 6) allows for dialogue and community-building through creating portraits to honor the loss of six Chicanx activists. Mokgopa's "Writing Black Queers into Existence" workshop (Chap. 7) utilized literary practices to engage South African writers in dialogue. Art and other aesthetic modes of expression, such as dance, theater, music, poetry, and visual storytelling, transcend traditional spoken forms of communication; they can provide alternative methods of expression, facilitate multi-sensory, connecting across cultures, combat linguistic inequities and cognitive disabilities, and facilitate multi-sensory appreciation and connecting across cultures.

Expanding our understanding of what makes dialogue inclusive, intersectional, and authentic through an honest grappling with power disruption, relationality, and in-betweenness opens up newer challenges and possibilities for us to grapple with. In doing so, we can move beyond dialogue as simply good communication and good teaching to an active, sustained, and dynamic decolonizing and social change project.

Living Dialogically

The chapters in this volume demonstrate the very real possibilities and challenges of infusing dialogue as a way of life in the classroom, community, and larger social world. Living dialogically means we, as social human beings, are in a continuous, circular flow between initiating our responses and responding to others' expressions (Seikkula, 2011). Yet, as social beings embedded in networks of relationships, we do not act as autonomous entities but as people influenced by histories, social systems, and community affiliations. When these histories are rife with violence, and

social systems are built on unequal power hierarchies or a sense of positive community identity available only to some people, the social relations among people need to honor these realities while forging different and socially just futures.

The imperative for living dialogically then is about cultivating interconnectedness that brings about greater social and collective justice. Indeed, each contribution in this volume has taken on the challenge of countering systemic dominance and violence—legacies of colonization, cultural supremacy, intergroup conflicts—that explicitly or implicitly exclude individuals and groups, perpetuate othering, and impact internalized sense of self and community. Most profoundly, we are struck by how the authors engage with differing and divergent perspectives concepts in framing and validating their practices. These perspectives, in turn, influence how they engage participants in dialogue. If we consider power disruptions, relationality, and in-betweenness as key aspects of fostering real dialogue, then not recognizing or paying attention to these matters can be a substantial limitation to having a fruitful social change–driven dialogue. The authors connect classroom dialogue to larger efforts for equity and justice through individual and collective capacity building, personal and social healing, and community mobilization for action. Be it in direct or indirect ways, and in the classroom or also connected to the community, the authors grapple with the multi-layered possibilities that dialogue offers as an end unto itself, as a bridge of healing and reconciliation among peoples, and as a catalyst for larger social change.

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[1] Note: Page numbers followed by 'n' refer to notes.

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