CHAPTER 3

A Journey Toward Mutualist Teaching and Learning: A Collaborative Reflective Practice on Community Building and Democratic Classrooms

Joe Norris and Olenka Bilash

Introduction

Joe: So Olenka, it has been 22 years since we began our first collaborative writing (Norris & Bilash, 1993) about our attempt to create classrooms that enabled student voice (Freire, 1986). While not labeled as such at the time, might we now consider our teacher education courses democratic classrooms (Henderson, 2001; den Heyer, 2008)?

Olenka: Yes, classrooms in which students took responsibility for their own learning in preparation for them to teach in a mutualistic way when they became practicing teachers.

J. Norris (✉)
Dramatic Arts, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON, Canada

O. Bilash
Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada

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Joe: As Pinar (1975) claims, "Before we learn to teach in such a way, we must learn how to learn in such a way" (p. 412).

Olenka: Yes, we found some resisted the uncertainty that naturally occurs when the inclusion of student voice enters the classroom and we found ways to "lessen" and "lesson" their pain.

Joe: We also didn't label our teaching as mutualistic at that time, but in retrospect, we wanted to be this type of teacher (Maruyama, 1974) and encourage our students to do the same.

Olenka: Yes, becoming such a teacher has been a lifelong journey for me and I believe also for you.

Joe: Indeed, we both recognized early on in each other that we desired to create communities of learners in our classrooms, long before that term became popularized; ones, not of dependence or co-dependence, but of interdependence. Students, their peers and teachers blend their unique and different talents in support of one another.

Olenka: Yes, mutualism is a type of symbiosis. As Maruyama (1974) describes: "symbiosis does not mean sameness. In fact, differences are prerequisite for symbiosis. For example, plants convert carbon dioxide into oxygen by photosynthesis, while animals convert oxygen into carbon dioxide by metabolism. They do exactly the opposite. Yet they are symbiotic because of this difference" (p. 108).

Joe: And its value in both teaching/learning and research is that "Mutualists advocate heterogeneity. But this is not yet understood by others. Furthermore, many individualists see the universe as a zero-sum game: what someone gains is what someone else loses. Mutualists promote symbiosis, in which everybody gains at the same time and by virtue of diversity, not by virtue of conformity. This, too, is inadequately understood by others" (Maruyama, 1974, p. 112).

Olenka: Symbiosis runs deep. Because we are sentient and self-aware beings, we are cognizant of the effect of another's actions on us and ours on them.

Joe: Yes, we can either a) enter into an I-It way of being in which we can conceptualize the Other as a servant to meet our needs or a threat to our personage or b) we can take an I-Thou frame of mind, recognizing and respecting the I-ness of the Other (Buber, 1958).

Structurally, the hidden curriculum of schooling (Flinders, Noddings, & Thornton, 1986), the traditional teacher-student relationship and student-student relationships seems to perpetuate an I-It relationship of extrinsic need-motivating behaviors. Students work for the rewards, grades and the status and privileges that they bring.

Olenka: What Bourdieu (1985) calls social and cultural capital.

Joe: Here teachers are seen as mere obstacles to that. Peers regard themselves in competition for these seemingly limited resources ….

Olenka: … while we try to co-create a social and emotional order rooted in an I-Thou set of values. "Buber spoke for and to a generation skeptical of traditional beliefs and values and in search of a meaningful and responsible life … he advocated the sharing of deep convictions between persons in a manner which respected and encouraged individuality." (Scudder, 1968, p. 133)

Joe: Unlike a traditional expository essay, that first paper, like duoethnography (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012; Sawyer & Norris, 2013), was polyvocal.

Olenka: By making our voices explicit, we were exploring an I-Thou relationship.

Joe: A precursor to duoethnography.

Olenka: I think it was even more fluid and organic than expository writing! But unlike duoethnography, it did not have the "currere" perspective as we did not explore how we came to embrace mutualism as a key component of our pedagogies.

Both: Rather, our initial paper was a polyvocal conversation about the problematics of implementing a mutualist curriculum in our early years as teacher educators. In the spirit of duoethnography, we now seek more transtemporality in our conversation. We now look farther back.

So, in this new set of conversations, we first explore our beginnings—how we have come to believe what we do. Second, we reflect on our initial teaching—how we incorporated those beliefs into our teaching in elementary and secondary teaching prior to doctoral studies. Then we examine how the theory refined our beliefs and practices, influencing our early

university teaching. We will conclude with insights gleaned from this conversation and more recent teaching experiences that will inform our future practices. As a result, we will create a stronger argument for the implementation of a mutualist curriculum.

Beginning Learnings

Joe: When I was a practicing Catholic throughout my high school years, I walked four times as far as the local church to the specially arranged high school masses. The attraction was both the contemporary music and the dialogue homilies, with the latter being the major reason. After the readings, sometimes not from the Bible, but related to the scriptural themes, the priest would initiate a conversation and with hands raised, many of my peers and teachers would respond. While I did appreciate that I could speak, and did, I enjoyed listening to the multiple perspectives of all assembled. The interaction was like a collective mind, debating and re-informing itself. Perhaps in addition to being my first experience with a mutualist assembly, it also could be an early root of my interest in duoethnography.

Olenka: Yes, our experiences become the "data'" or "evidence" for our beliefs, and our conversations, the perturbations that yield holding on or transforming them.

In my adolescent years, we owned a small family restaurant along a five-mile strip of highway. Due to over enrollment in schools some students went to school in the mornings and others in the afternoons, starting earlier or staying later, respectively. I went to school in the afternoon and worked in the restaurant in the morning. One of my favorite coffee customers was Mr. L, a Dutchman who was found emaciated in Indonesia after WW2, rescued and taken back to the Netherlands. Later he married and with his wife and four children came to Canada. Coming from a bookless home and long before internet or social media, I saw him as both a walking encyclopedia and a wise man. He answered every question I ever asked and often asked me questions, too; his questions stretched me to see the world differently. He never judged

or criticized my responses, but rather, often responded with either a personal anecdote or another question. He opened doors of possibility for me, and without realizing it, encouraged me to accept the university scholarships many years later and become the first in my entire extended family not only to graduate from high school, but also to go university. He was a respectful, trusting, mutualist teacher for me.

Joe: Interesting that our examples come not from in-school experiences but from out-of-school ones. I find this sad. Your story reminds me of a summer playground program in Halifax in the 1960s. Besides the typical teeter-totters, swings, and hand-pushed merry-go-rounds, there were site-specific program leaders and others who travelled from playground to playground with craft and drama activities. As children, we got to know them and they got to know us. Usually they were high school students, while they were "old" in our eyes, they were not steeped in instructional strategies. Rather, we casually conversed on this and that.

I had a strong social justice orientation even way back then (perhaps to be elaborated in another study, albeit that I regard mutualism as having a social justice focus) and one "leader" recommended that I read *Animal Farm* (Orwell, 1965). I did and it still underpins how I frame my understanding of how groups function. I used it for my grade-six book report. The informal, timetable-less, agenda-less environment of the playground contributed to my formal curriculum in school. Summers were mutualist and classrooms were didactic. Being what I now know to be "interpersonal" intelligence (Gardner, 1983) or an extraverted style (Briggs-Myers, 1980), summer vacations, more than the school year, better addressed my natural learning disposition. Informal gatherings provided me with a much-needed way of being with people.

Olenka: I grew up in a large extended family. With eight aunts and uncles, each with numerous children and sometimes grandchildren, celebrating the seasonal holidays together as well as everyone's birthdays and anniversaries, we gathered at least once a week. Among us were an uncle who had had polio, another who lost his arm in a railway accident and a few singles who would often appear with new boyfriends or

girlfriends. I feel like I grew up in what would now be called an inclusive environment. Finding out what was happening in everyone's lives also made for a polyphony of voices and experiences … but also a family-community of curiosity and care in one another, support when things weren't going well or anyone needed help, and a feeling of belonging and being accepted no matter what. As with my siblings and cousins, I often slept over at an aunt's (and uncle's) after a day together and reunited with my family the next day.

Mutualism and I-Thou, though I did not know the names for these relationships, were fully integrated into my life. Later I learned academic perspectives on this (Maruyama, 1974). Maruyama (1974) offered this thought:

> Monopolisation is a psychological need in some persons to seek and depend on one truth, one right theory, one method which is supposed to be universally applicable, one god, one authority figure, etc. This need is particularly strong in cultures based on the nuclear family system, i.e., the system consisting of one father, one mother and their children. In these cultures children grow up with one main authority figure, one way of looking at things, etc. On the other hand, in cultures based on the extended family system, communal rearing of children, or a system of frequent exchange of children between families, there is less tendency to monopolarisation. In these cultures, the children grow up with diversified sources of emotional security, and are accustomed to many points of view, many ways of doing things, etc. (pp. 111–112)

Joe: Listening to your story, Olenka, I realize that while I profess the importance of both the home and work in people's lives, I don't really practice it as much as I encourage it. I tended to only look at my out-of-family experiences contributing to this duoethnography. Based upon your story, I recognize that I need to be more aware of my familiar roots.

I am the oldest of eight, four boys and four girls, and we also often had large family gatherings. But for me, there was mostly a separation by age; adults talked with adults and children with children. I was mostly privy to adult conversations as a spectator. I longed to "grow up" and enter their world. I also vowed that I would be more inclusive as an adult. Berne (1961) discusses Parent/Adult/Child relationships (p. 31)

and when I was first exposed to this theory in my undergraduate studies I also vowed to try to foster an adult-to-adult relationship with my potential children. It did have a major impact on my teaching, long before my exposure to Freire (1986), progressive education (Dewey, 1934) and the reconceptualists (Pinar, 1975). I taught Sunday school during my first year of university and genuinely tried to emulate the dialogic homilies that I had experienced and create conversations "with" the participants. I guess I consider mutualism to be an adult-to-adult relationship.

Olenka: I think that I was always treated as an adult and it may have taken me too many years to see that not all of my peers shared the same respect/responsibility of adulthood. For example, when I was in junior high school I was writing official letters for relatives whose level of English was not so strong. I also shopped and helped run the family restaurant and even attended parent-teacher interviews for my siblings. At that time, I was also invited by my junior high school to give a workshop to teachers, my first foray into professional development. This is perhaps why in my teaching I have such high expectations of my students.

The responsibilities that come in sharing daily life in an extended family may also explain why I so cherish (and need) a sense of community in my teaching. After all, courses require us to spend considerable time together, and I want that time to be meaningful. Community offers so many opportunities for learning and sharing, and for being given challenges alongside encouragement and support. When people can get to know one another they treat one another differently than they do in impersonal classrooms. Often I have students who had previously taken courses together but had never spoken to one another … My course evaluations always mention their appreciation of the community that emerged.

Joe: Olenka, thanks for the reminder that it is important for people to "get to know one another." Early in their work Joyce and Weil (1972) point out that in education, like medicine, there are both desired effects and side-effects. For me, as for many, schooling can be an alienating experience, hence my work with safe and caring schools (Norris, 1999). Part of the

hidden curriculum of schools is individualization in which students are silent, still and don't interact. According to personality type, extraverts think best with their mouth open; yet most instruction and almost all testing does not acknowledge this style. Seventy-five percent of our population does not find classrooms conducive to this natural disposition. A mutualistic style of teaching can address this imbalance and counteract some of the negative side-effects of silent, non-interactive classrooms. For me, it is an aim, in itself, yet, in a test-score-driven ethos, it is not even addressed.

Olenka: Community was important for me in my schooling years and hence it became important for me in my teaching. I remember taking the school bus for many years, being picked up along a stretch of highway where the wind might blow you over in the winter. And as welcome as the school bus was as a protector from the elements, it was also a daily liminal zone to the city school, where after I disembarked and connected with some of my city classmates, I knew I was still one of the "hicks" that rode the bus. Having to take the bus meant that I could not participate in after-school activities unless I found another way home. Some of the boys hitch-hiked but that was dangerous for the girls. I took in every noon-hour activity I could, belonging to clubs and participating in intramural sports, but while I embarked and disembarked the bus five days a week, to all of the city kids I was still one of the "hicks."

There were only about 100 students from grades 6–12 that rode the busses and we were dropped off at different schools in the city—a private elementary school run by nuns, a school for students in grade 6, one for those in grades 7–9 and one for those in grades 10–12. The worst part of this arrangement was that none of the schools fed into one another. This meant that every time the hicks changed schools they had to make new city friends. It wasn't surprising that most of them hung out with one another as they offered stability and sustainability. I rejected this constant moving around and when the school board made the decision to transfer us to different schools yet again I rebelled. My three siblings would each be

going to different schools again the following year, and these were not transition years.

After Mr. Morris, an avant garde history teacher, had arranged for a group of us to attend a school board meeting as well as interview a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) in grade 11, I developed a brief but first hand experience with elected officials and their decision-making process. So on the Tuesday of the school board vote, I, now in grade 12, attended the meeting and explained the various disadvantages of constantly changing schools: we could not become involved in student leadership because we never got to know one school or one population or establish a reputation for advocacy; we never had a chance to shed the label of "hicks"; we never had a chance to participate in extra-curricular activities … At the end of the meeting, I met with a few parents who had also attended the meeting and decided that we students would go on strike. That evening, through our telephone party lines, all local families became informed. On Wednesday morning, almost all 100 of us took the school bus to the school board offices, instead of the schools, and with our placards we protested, like those who belonged to primary service unions at the time. All of the parents supported this lost day of school in the final weeks of the school year, and maybe even appreciated that someone—a city girl who had moved to this community in junior high school—spoke up and spoke out for this injustice. We may have lost the vote, but we did voice our concerns and were heard … We were now conscientized hicks. And I was still awarded the school citizenship award.

Joe: A sense of agency is a strong theme running through this story and it seems to me that whether you were provided it or not, you took it. We both valued it in our schooling and later brought it into our teaching.

I was an urban kid and no "hicks" were bussed in. There was one point, however, when I had a similar outsider experience. I changed schools between grades four and five and from grades five through nine I felt like an outsider. Up until that point I took community for granted. I started school in kindergarten and progressed with my peers. We started on

an equal playing field. In grade 5, due to many longstanding relationships within the new school, I became the outsider. That and living on the periphery of the school district did little to facilitate my integration.

Suffice it to say that I looked forward to going to the one large high school in which all Catholic students fed (all non-Catholic students fed into another) and rid myself of the nickname "Nutty Norris." It would be an opportunity to rename myself in a new crowd, a fresh start. I only recognized that community was important to me after it had been absent.

Olenka: I hear the sting of that memory, Joe. School is home to many types of outsiders, and as such should provide a safe and inclusive environment—that is, a mutualistic one.

Joe: Reflecting upon grade 5 again, I just now recall a mutualistic experience in grade four. Sister Hugh Francis had us all draw undersea creatures and plant life. We cut them out and placed them on a bulletin board covered in blue paper. I stayed after school to help cover our collective mural with cellophane. I believe that every student felt a sense of ownership as we all had pieces in the mural. It contained our unique pieces united by a common theme. I can remember teachers bringing their classes to tour our artwork. We were proud of our collective creation. Perhaps it is no wonder that the theatrical form, playbuilding (Norris, 2009), that I employ, is known, in Canada, as Collective Creation (Berry & Reinbold, 1985; Christie, 1983; Filewod, 1982). Hmmm … Was this grade four experience my initiation into this art form?

Olenka: Tripp (1993) would call this a critical incident for you, a moment that you endowed with special emotional significance and brought about a major change in perspective. I must also give credit to some of my teachers for the values revealed in my own personal critical incidents in their classes. In retrospect, I see that theirs was an approach to creative problem solving and nurturing in us the confidence to act, almost as if they were always preparing us for the world we would much longer live in outside school than the more limited one we were immersed in. I have already mentioned Mr. Morris. He was what I now see as a radical teacher. He found

a place for the class, gave us a textbook and told us to create the course and let him know what we wanted to do. There were many classes in which it seemed like we were just "hanging out," but actually the small set of class members talked a lot and really got to know one another—as people … and eventually we created a structure (Prigogine & Nicolis, 1977) and made productive use of our time. The "free" space lead us to co-create our own approach to learning … and eventually we created personally meaningful projects and shared our discoveries. Was this akin to what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi would call "flow" (1990)?

Mr. Dueck, my grade 5–6 "major work" teacher and Mr. Morris both gave us exploratory time and rarely gave us marks. Instead, they instilled in us a sense of doing our best and seeing that as the reward, as what I would now call intrinsic motivation. And perhaps it is no surprise that my teaching and research focuses on "inner trust and self-belief as [being] as important as external acknowledgement" (Bilash & Shi, 2011, p. 72)

Initial Teaching

Joe: Olenka, what excites me about doing this duoethnography is that when we re-embarked on this study I did not believe that I would find an example of being taught in a mutualistic manner prior to my doctoral studies in curriculum theory. But, by looking further back, I did find that I taught and was taught in this way long before I ever knew the term. I am pleased that there were glimmers prior to the theory.

For example, I taught grade 9 English and drama for 10 years. The first day of classes every year I would ask the students to stand up and go to the back of the classroom, look at one another, look at the empty desks and choose the best place they thought they would learn. I reminded them that some work well with friends and some don't. Yes, I did back it up with the power of authority as I informed them that I would change the seating plan if it wasn't working. But I genuinely wanted them to make the decision. Seldom during those ten years did I change a student's chosen seat!

However, I might be delusional and/or naïve with my recollection. As Morrison (2008) points out,

> It should come as no surprise that students who have experienced this training, especially those students who have success in the "game" of schooling might resist changed rules that ask them to go against all they have been taught. Students who come from conventional education into classrooms or schools employing democratic practices will often feel uncomfortable with or even fearful of jeopardizing the only pattern of life they know (p. 50).

I must now question, was it really recognized as a move to independence/democracy by my students or was it just another act of compliance? Perhaps not all regarded it in the same manner as my intent but after writing this reflection I recalled a student at that time (circa 1983) posted a comment on my Facebook page in response to my posting "Principal Fires Security Guards, Hires Art Teachers to Save His School:"

> As I remember it, it was the way you taught 30 years ago. I can't remember you having to discipline. Encouragement to heighten our creativity was the goal. It gave students a great reward, a sense of accomplishment and greater self-esteem. Maybe it was just me. I thank you for that Joe Jellybean (nicknames that we gave ourselves). Sincerely, Kirk Keys (June 11, 2013).

The same principle governed going to the washroom. "If you need to go, go. However, if it is often or frequent, it is my obligation to question." Again, they were given the responsibility and took it. I find some rules and too many rules reinforce a parent-to-child relationship, maintaining dependence and control. Responsibility is learned from/through freedom.

Olenka: In my first year of teaching, I was asked to organize the elementary school Christmas concert. I set out to involve all of the students in a trip around the world to see how Christmas was practiced elsewhere—my multilingual and multicultural interests were strongly present even then. Each class in the K-6 school selected a country, and we co-created the skit, chose the music that would be sung, decided on costumes, prepared the sets and worked both within their classes and between classes to overcome challenges. At the staff meeting at the beginning of December I was asked to give a report about the plans for the concert, two weeks away, and explained the details and progress being made. I had an answer for every

question that was raised, except one: why weren't we doing what we always did? No one told me that in this small town there was a traditional way to run the concert, nor did I know to ask. The silence and stares were an assassination of the plan. Without discussion, or even a vote, I was "told" what the Christmas concert would be—a procession. The grade ones were the sheep, the grades two the shepherds …. Further, I had to tell all of the students about the change in plans. This was such a contrast to what I believed being a teacher would be like. New ideas were clearly not welcome, change was clearly a threat, outsiders were clearly incapable of being trusted.

I began the announcements about the new plan for the Christmas concert the next morning and by the end of the day everyone had been informed. The grades 5–6 students took it the hardest. They had been the most invested. They had waited since kindergarten in this small town to have their shining star in this concert. Was it a surprise when they came to school the following day with placards and claimed to go on strike? That two grade six students—the daughter of the principal and the principal's sister's son—organized it? I was proud of the students for looking at the world they lived in, knowing that they had rights, knowing that they had been over"power"ed and wronged, and took action. From this experience, I learned that sadly it was not the students who feared responsibility, it was the teachers who feared change.

And in retrospect or transtemporarily, I guess I could also say that this was my first introduction to resistance as a teacher, and the many challenges of social change.

Joe: History seems to have repeated itself as both student and teacher standing up to power is a dominant theme in your reflections, Olenka.

Olenka: Yes, each of our stories sheds light on the roots of each of our current practices, values and beliefs.

Joe: Luckily my projects as teacher met little resistance from administration and peers. One year I taught all junior high students (grades 7, 8 and 9) drama. It would make up 10 % of their first term English mark. I decided that I would keep anecdotal comments and give a summary during private conversations over recess and noon hour.

Students and I reviewed my notes, discussed future possibilities and came up with a grade that was mutually agreeable. Often, I would raise the grade saying that the conversation had given me optimism. It was a strong pedagogical occasion; however, I was exhausted and never did it again. Mutualism has its costs.

Olenka: As in many innovations, we face the challenge of sustainability! In mutualism, for me respect is paramount. And its foundation is trust. As an elementary, junior and senior high student I always felt that my ideas and comments were respected but I did not always sense that the voices of others were so willingly heard. Whenever I could I would try to weave into my comments what others had said—to be inclusive—but I felt the disparity from some of the teachers and didn't like it. When I started my first round of student teaching I was placed with a very senior teacher (he retired one year later). He was a competent man from whom I learned a lot but I always bemoaned the fact that he could not see why a student asked a question … For example, Billy, a bright curious little red-headed boy was a volcano of questions. I loved those questions—they demonstrated an active mind and real passion for learning. However, to Mr. X Billy seemed a nuisance. He was always shutting him down, often accusing him of being off topic. Why was it that I could see how Billy's questions connected to the topic; moreover, what Billy's question really was, but it seemed that Mr. X. could not?

Joe: Olenka, one of the tenets of duoethnography is difference and I am finding that difference can be defined in many ways. An initial reaction would be to consider that since we both embrace a mutualistic approach to teaching, a duoethnography could not be conducted. However, in our case we found, through transtemporality, stories of difference including rural/urban, gender, family/professional balance and elementary/secondary rhythms.

Olenka: Yes, Joe. Difference is inevitable. And now we turn to reflect on our roles as teacher educators over the last 20+ years. Again, while we both professed mutualism, our different subject areas placed a different set of demands on our classroom experiences.

University Teaching: The Early Years

Joe: One of Bill Pinar's descriptors of *currere* is that it is transtemporal. Duoethnography works the same way. What I am finding in our reflections on public school teaching is that we are using current theories to re-story previous experiences using a framework we didn't have when we co-wrote our first paper. When we look at our university teaching, it was informed by the theories that both of us had been exposed to during our doctoral studies.

Olenka: My experience teaching public school taught me that the system is not built for mutualism. Thus, we have to ease our teacher education students into the I-Thou responsibility and show them that this approach to teaching and learning is not only valuable, but valued.

Joe: First, let us return to that presented but unpublished paper as an historical artifact to remind us of some of the issues we experienced and how we reacted and responded to them.

Excerpt from that Paper

Olenka: *Joe' specialty was/is drama education.*

Joe: *Olenka's specialty was/is second language education.*

Olenka: *In some ways we represented the fringe elements of our department since our subjects were options in Alberta's secondary curriculum and not core.*

Joe: *We returned to a faculty that had encouraged critical reflection on educational issues and were eager to implement into practice some of the philosophy that the institution had given us.*

Olenka: *Joe and I first met at a lesson on how to use email, our first set of interactions were at Ed Sec 200 instructor's meetings.*

This meeting and the few that followed revealed to us the context in which we would teach, a context that ultimately contributed to our NEED for dialogue with one another.

Ed Sec 200 was a multi-section course taught primarily by graduate students and sessional instructors. In response to student feedback about lack of commonality within the sections, the Department had set the review of this course as a priority for the next few years.

Joe: *From our conversations, questions and challenges …*

Joe and Olenka: *…we left believing that we had found kindred spirits in each other.*

Olenka: *Our PhD programs at our alma mater had indoctrinated us; now was our alma mater ready and willing to listen to those same voices?*

Joe: *Dorothy Heathcote defines drama as people in a mess. Any mutualist classroom is bound to be messy as student voice will bring in many unanticipated variables that a teacher must juggle in order for a co-created curriculum to emerge. Eventually the paper* Dealing With the Pain of Mid-Wifing Uncertainty: How do We Lessen or Lesson the Pain? *evolved as a product of our understanding and articulation of our then-struggles.*

Olenka: "*Many of our conversations took place through the use of electronic mail (an innovation at that time) in addition to a few in-person meetings.*" (Norris & Bilash, 1993) *This was the first major reflection that I sent to Joe*:

Joe: *Hi Joe! I just completed a journal entry much of which I shall share with my students. I shall share some of the details of what sparked my entry and ask for your feedback.*

It all started. … at 1:30. I arrived in a GREAT mood, finally having organized many things and getting caught up in my marking—offering feedback. Then in my mail drawer was a memo telling me to order my own curriculum guides. WHEN? I wondered/fretted. I teach all day tomorrow and Friday, have a school visit planned Monday and teach, AND am being pressured by students to get these for the minor classes. I really FELT dumped on—from both admin and students. But, I let that go and started in to the class.

Within the final 6 minutes of class a student who was randomly selected by her group to have to present an activity on Monday (along with ALL students) came up—walked through the class to her group—and in a good volume said.

"*Oh I hate this. I had to do this in the summer and I hate it!*"

Olenka: *Now, this student has also been whispering in the class and handed in a reflection which was quite judgmental about teaching activities.*

Joe: *and not very open to*

Olenka: (*my perception*)

Joe: *even trying.*

Olenka: *I guess I snapped. I said to her, "If you don't like doing this activity why don't you trade with someone else in your group."*

Joe: *A negative attitude is sure to rub off on the other members of the group.*

Olenka: *She said:*

Joe: *"No, it's fine."*

Olenka: *shocked that I had heard her and responded to the comment.*
I feel a bit guilty. It's not what I said, but how I said it. I know that I turned red—I get like that when I'm ticked off. But I also feel that my comment was valid. I guess it's that my reaction was emotional instead of calm. (I should also add that I've been storing up my own frustration about a few other things with this class. The class runs from 3–5 and as of 4:30, several students begin glancing at the clock regularly every few minutes. Upon inquiring I was told that they had to catch a bus. I believe that to be true, but find it very distracting. I wonder how engaged they are if they are more concerned about leaving.) Look how much power I give away to a few students to shape my impression of (and thus, interaction with) the whole class!
Sorry that this is so mundane and not very insightful. Will return to my journal to dig deeper. Thanks for listening/reading!

Joe: *This was my response to Olenka:*

Olenka: *I'm sorry, I disagree with your last statement. Yes, it is mundane but Ted Aoki has taught us to celebrate the mundane and that the mundane IS very INSIGHTFUL. Here is what I hear:*
(1) Some students have not learned how to learn yet and now they are asking us to teach them how to teach. The responsibility is overwhelming, they feel threatened by the change and resist.
(2) The resistance manifests itself in many ways and you along with your "sensitive" colleagues hear this and recognize that this is NOT a minor thing to be ignored but central to teacher education.
(3) I would question how that student will handle students who resist her. Seems like a very self-centered person to me. But how do we and should we teach self-de-centeredness?
(4) Emotions need to be brought back into the classroom. Then our classrooms become real. BUT this is scary as we have been conditioned to believe that our unreal classrooms are the real ones.

(5) *I honestly don't know what I would have done? At times I ignore and wait for the proper moment.*
(*which often never comes*),

Joe: *Sometimes I react as you have. I have a working paper on that one, something to build my next lecture around.*
(6) *We are getting to the "real" nuts and bolts of teacher education.*
Thanks for the sharing. In a collegial not a patronizing way, "Keep up the good work." What you are doing in my, perhaps misguided, thinking is moving to the humane classrooms that we all deserve.
Best wishes and thanks,
Joe

Olenka: *Paulo Freire reminds us to examine the ideological map of those with whom we work: what do we assume about them and what do they assume about us.*

Joe: *I heard Olenka discuss this concept at a Department meeting and from that moment I began to look at the many assumptions I brought into my classroom.*

Olenka: *These shaped the way we approached our students in Ed Sec 200 and continue into the present day. As each class emerged, we found we had from this theory created an unrealistic mindset of who our students were and why they were there.*

Joe: *I assumed that because most of them were young that they were open-minded and receptive to change. I found that some, not all, believed in a fixed universe and wanted me to give them THE answer, not more questions.*

Olenka: *I assumed that my students, whether they wanted to be teachers or not, wanted to learn, wanted to be at university in order to pursue learning. Instead, some were product oriented, not process oriented, and wanted solely the extrinsic reward of the parchment of completion in their hands.*

Joe: *Although they lived under the shadow of the upcoming four-week practicum and wanted formative feedback to help them succeed, they were also grade conscious and desired discrete criteria upon which their normative grades would be based. These were often in conflict with one another.*

Olenka: *In writing this paper what we found intriguing was that although Joe was not tacitly aware of his assumptions he had stated them all*

in the following passage. Quickmail correspondence to me from Joe, October 2, 1992, summed up many of our concerns.

Joe: *We live on the footbridge that we are also in the process of constructing. This is what I call curricular or collective knowledge. Personal and public knowledge meet and fuse in their own unique ways. Your students are changing and you are changing and together you are building a new place that Barone* (1990) *would call a practical Utopia.*

* * *

Olenka: In revisiting this piece, I am reminded of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) notion of line of Flight:

> Lines of flight are bolts of pent-up energy that break through the cracks in a system of control and shoot off on the diagonal. By the light of their passage, they reveal the open spaces beyond the limits of what exists. In a series of books written with the militant psychotherapist Felix Guattari (1930–1992), Deleuze linked human creativity to flight. It is our desire to escape the status quo that leads us to innovate. (Raynor, 2013, p. 1)

Before we continue, we provide the following word collage, articulating many of the voices we carried into our teaching:

Olenka	*Joe*
Empowerment	Student voice
Emergent curriculum	Forming-storming-norming-performing
Women's Ways of Knowing	I - Thou
Bill Pinar	Reconceptualists
Joe and Olenka: Technological, hermeneutic & critical paradigms	
Ted Hughes' notion of poetry	Madeline Grumet
Reflective practice	Ted Aoki
The icons of teaching	Lived world experience
The implicit	Progoff Intensive Journal Workshop
Krishnamurti	Fear
Socratic dialogue	Post-modernism
Olenka and Joe: Personal meaning	
Questioning the banking model (Freire)	Students as both producers and consumers
Antoinette Oberg	Celebrate the mundane
Write to learn	Knowing, doing and being

Olenka: Joe, do you remember how you presented the idea of a contract of seven?

Joe: I never agreed with the grading system at the University of Alberta, the then 9-point scale, while now the standardized 4-point scale with the same philosophy was/is one of rank. A predetermined average grade was determined with seven of nine (Star Trek, hmmm) being the expected average for fourth-year classes. Department chairs were known to return class final grades that deviated too much from this norm.

During my first year with the drama education majors, I remember having a discussion with my students regarding assessment, including an early piece by Ken Robinson (1977) called, "Can Drama be Assessed?" Grading was considered only a part of assessment and I was surprised at how many fourth year students did not realize that the grading system was not criterion based but included norm referencing. To maintain a 7 average grade, every grade of 9 needed one 5 or two 6's to balance it. Every 8 required a 6. Some were appalled that no one had ever explained that to them and many also questioned the grading system itself. As drama majors, who were used to teamwork and group grades, a number felt that it was contrary to the spirit of our subject area. I returned the next day with a possibility that we discussed extensively. I asked the class if they would be open to a contact grade of seven in which we "normed." It would be our collective responsibility for us all to help each excel. We discussed pros and cons, took a non-binding secret straw vote, redebated and made a final open vote. We also voted on the process of voting. It was also agreed that I would write a letter explaining the context of the grade that would include comments from them. It was also felt that potential employers, who valued "team-players," would look positively upon this. Every year the majors unanimously agreed. Most years the drama minors (less steeped in the subject milieu) did not. Comments on course evaluations indicated that they worked harder due to increased responsibility to their peers and that, for the most part, they felt a strong sense of community.

Olenka: Adopting the same contract in my second language methods courses, students reported that they had learned what striving for personal excellence meant.

Joe: Another of our differences, Olenka, is that while you have remained at the University of Alberta, I have been a tenured faculty member at three other institutions over, dare I say, the past twelve years. I am no longer in the U of A system of grading, and while there is some pressure to conform to institutionalized norms, these systems were more flexible. I have only contracted grades when I taught a summer graduate course at Mount Saint Vincent University. The contract was all A's. These students (practicing teachers) rose to the occasion and took calculated risks to explore different forms of undertaking assignments. Although my grading is sometimes questioned, I feel that I have worked hard to advocate that students don't try to guess what I want. I want to see them lost, confused, searching, trying to figure things out. "I don't care what you think, as long as you think," is an adage that I often use.

Olenka: For me, I have reached the point where I tell the students that I do have an expectation and that they are likely to want to know what it is because that's how a system functions. And my expectation, similar to yours, is that they are honest, honest with themselves. Honesty means thinking, conscientization (Freire, 1971), and action. It means searching inside for the source of a perturbation. It means using granularity to reach clarity. It means acknowledging the change or shift and being able to assess it—for their better and the better of their students. Only through such honesty can they grow as human beings and professionals, I say. And, of course, that intrinsic motivation is what drives them: discovery and self-discovery. Some embrace this more than others; some sooner than others. I once received a phone call from a former student at 11 a.m. one Sunday morning. She introduced herself and asked if I remembered her. I said that I did and asked how she was doing. She then explained the reason for her call: "I am calling to let you know that it happened." "Uh-huh" I replied with curiosity. "Yes, you said that one day I would get what we were doing in class and I do. It took me three years and I

had to have my own classroom to figure it out, but I figured it out. I want to thank you. You were always honest with us, and pushed us to our limits. We didn't always get it and we may have sometimes resisted, but you were right … and I wanted you to know. Thank you." "You're very welcome. Thank YOU for taking the time to let me know. This means a lot." And at that early time in my career as a teacher educator, it did mean a lot. I continued on the path that was guiding me from within, though I continued and continue to encounter resistance.

Joe: This connects with what we wrote about in our first paper on midwifing the pain. We recognized that some of our students experienced pain and we explored and created ways to "lessen" and/or "lesson" their pain. Recently, however, I've come to realize that there is/was also a transference. Their pain affected me, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively.

Olenka: Yes. Resistance and transference were/are hard to deal with at times. I was always grateful that you and I could chat about our lows, and share our highs on this journey!

Joe: Including now! Collegiality is vital.

Olenka: Do you remember Joseph Schwab's (1969) four commonplaces: student, teacher, milieu and content. Since we are interested in student transformation, we must necessarily examine not only ourselves, but also the place of milieu and content. I think that the mutualist milieu emerges from what we do in class and from the assignments. The assignments are given "value" (grades) and so they reveal our values. I have created a variety of group or team assignments, always with at least one individual component. I invest considerable time in planning them and planning how to introduce or scaffold them into instruction. I also plan classroom work and assignments such that everyone in the class, no matter its size, will have worked together with every other class member at least once by the end of the first week of classes. By 'knowing' one another, no one becomes invisible.

Joe: No space for a hick or nutty Norris.

Olenka: Attendance is usually 100 %. Chatter in hallways and during breaks is a healthy deepening of relationships. The students

work hard for and with one another. Their centre shifts from not wanting to let me down (for the reward of a grade) to not wanting to let one another down. And therein lies the heart of connection and community.

I think that we were the only two members of our Department to take this approach.

Joe: (*Aside*) Yet, my doctoral studies in that same department professed it.

Olenka: I used the contract grade for four to five years and found that it offered a healthy perturbation. I found that in not being totally comfortable about the idea and in having to vote and unanimously accept the option of the grade, the students became conscientized (Freire, 1971).

Olenka: During that time, in 1992, we reflected on the changes that we were already beginning to make and ended that paper with the following:

Joe: *Of course, adopting mutualistic teaching, like any change, offers new and different challenges: dealing with uncertainty; taking the extra time to talk, share frustrations and vote/decide; planning meaningful team assignments and class activities;*

Olenka: *I ask my students to move beyond reflection into action. From our collaborative reflective practice relationship, we have changed. The following are a few things we have done/changed as a result of our continuing conversations.*

Joe: *I am trying to be less fearful of my students' pain and with that removal of fear I am better able to assist them in the continuing educational process of rebirth.*

Olenka: *I am more respectful of the place my students are, more conscious of the pain and more patient with their pain in crossing the paradigm bridge. I am more sensitive to their needs and cravings. Our curriculum is less emergent and some of the assignments I give have more explicit "criteria." Perhaps a reflection of the pressures of a culture of research and the competition of individualization.*

Joe: *I have begun to listen to all of the voices in my classroom, not just the negative ones. I allow myself to resonate and celebrate with the positive voices.*

Olenka: *I am more passionate about uncertainty, explicitly labeling it for and with my students: I have a vision of living together with*

a group of students. We move to seeing and living in a world of infinite possibility.

Joe: *I have greatly reduced the writing and reading of journals. I find that carrying 24 students' explicit voices is heavy enough. Adding implicit voices is "too" heavy of a load.*

Olenka: *I let spirit into the classroom—what Heidegger* (1975) *called "human spirit" that otherwise gets fragmented into intellect, will, heart and sense. I no longer feel a "need" to defend the different ways of knowing. I can "be" with them and share …*

Joe: *I make uncertainty and ambiguity explicit. Through a playful celebration of "unbounded" questions I try to model the pleasure of "not knowing."*

Olenka: *I respect the time students need for "silent incubation" and do not take responsibility or hold guilt for still births. Prior to this I always felt that it was MY fault—I didn't work hard enough, I didn't do enough …*

Joe: *I try to face their anxiety with acceptance and love. I remind them that they are just beginning, that learning to teach is a never ending process, that they can't expect one course or one semester to do it all.*

Olenka: *I keep the diet and stress levels of the class "healthy": fewer reflections, more collaboration, and mostly more honesty. I hug the males less and the women more.*

Joe: *I hug a lot of people but in these political times, unfortunately not many students.*

Olenka: *I acknowledge the exhaustion of giving birth. It is hard work and we must celebrate the new life created in our shared journey.*

Joe: *Besides midwiving uncertainty in our students, midwiving our students' continual transformative births and rebirths, we midwived each other.*

Olenka: And that summarizes the underpinnings of how we have tried to live/teach for the past two decades. Where are we now?

Current University Teaching

Joe: So Olenka, it has been over 30 years for each of us as teachers and over 22 since our collective journey began. We chose to dwell in the quest, the question, asking, "How do we teach citizenship, community and mutuality while

simultaneously teaching our subject areas"? Henderson (1992) and Weizenbaum (1984) would consider this an unbounded question, one that has no single answer, if any. Rather it calls us to action.

We've been able to teach at many different institutions

Olenka: Both as visiting scholars and sessionals, and Joe also in tenure track positions.

Joe: Over the years we have gained some confidence with a stronger academic base to explain, defend and integrate mutualism comfortably and past experiences that inform present practice. Still, we experience the natural struggles of establishing I-Thou relationships with Others.

Olenka: I continue to seek ways to reveal the taken-for-granted for my students and myself. As society changes I need to stay abreast of my youthful students' experiences and expectations. So, I have developed new strategies to do so. I think that we need to help students question what education is and means and how that is reflected or plays out in the education system. What I seek is the way in to this question. For example, in much of my intercultural work, whether with visiting teachers to Canada or with teachers abroad, I ask people to identify what a "good student" is and means in their culture. I often ask them to compare this to other notions of a good student elsewhere. For example, I recently taught in Brazil where I asked the students to describe a good student in Brazil. Although I could compare this to the Canadian notion, they could not. So, instead, we watched the BBC—National Geographic film called *The First Grader*. Filmed in Kenya, and based on a true story, it takes the viewer into a colonial classroom, not unlike ones I have seen in Cameroon and South Africa. This enabled students to create a Venn diagram comparing two types of education. In talking about what they saw in the film they were simultaneously describing Brazilian education.

What really struck me was the prominent place of democracy and negotiation in our interactions. At home, we are constantly striving for student input—and that is at the core of our mutualist directions. In Brazil, however, I found a more collectively minded society. The first few classes of a course consist of two types of negotiations: when the break times

would be and what the assignments would be. For each hour of class students are entitled to a ten-minute break. So, in one of the courses I was taking, the scheduled times of 9–11 were negotiated as 9:20 to 11. In another, scheduled for 15–17 h, we began at 15 h and ended at 16:40. In the course I taught, students requested 19–21:30.

Joe: I have started using the term "negotiated spaces." In a class that I took with Ted Aoki in 1988, he claimed good teaching is leading from behind. I attend to facial expressions, body gestures, and invite students to interrupt and redirect. We debate and take votes. Just this year I changed the last quarter of a full year course based upon what I call "topic fatigue," detected, partially, by the energy in the room. The play that we wrote and presented on mental health was requested by others but I could tell that while a few were excited to continue, a number were not. We openly discussed this and I shifted directions and a change in assignments (with votes). I jokingly tell my students that they "tell me where to go." This relates completely to your story. The agenda of the course is a mutualist one in that both teacher and students direct and redirect. It's not just about time, topic or assignment; it's about influence, who exercised it and to what extent.

Olenka: In my past instruction in Canada I felt that negotiating due dates of assignments or even assignments themselves sometimes gave the impression of an unorganized instructor, or of one who could not pace and manage time well, rather than recognition that when an instructor offers a new assignment for the first time, there will necessarily be uncertainty about it—its goals, process, grading … I would applaud an instructor who was trying new approaches as signs of growth and development. In Brazil, negotiation is "natural," it is built into the habitus (Bourdieu, 1985). Interestingly enough, I was never told any of the rules or practices of instruction at university in Brazil. But now, unlike when I was a beginning teacher in a new town, I knew to ask dozens of questions to figure out how the system worked. I asked every professor I met as well as every student, how many and what their assignments were. I did not judge these assignments or their nature; rather, I used the information to help me to figure out what my students would be expecting.

Joe: Yes, negotiated spaces are bound to be "unorganized." They are emergent and plans will change. Aoki (2005) claims that teaching is living in the natural zone of tensionality between the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as lived. While flexibility can be applauded, the hegemony of a prescriptive curriculum with pre-established outcomes reigns. I remember the first question on a course evaluation at the University of Alberta asked something about organization and preparation. Some students reported difficulty with that one since while they valued the messiness of negotiated spaces, a low score on that question would indicate a problem that was not existent, just the opposite. The axiological ideology embedded in the question was one of teacher control.

Olenka: Frankly, the course outline formats have fallen totally under the neo-liberal agenda. They have become increasingly more controlled and totally sterile. Every one must be sent in for approval—"and they're all made out of ticky-tacky and they all look just the same" as put by Malvina Reynolds in her 1962 hit *Little Boxes*. However, I am again reminded of Prigogine and Nicolis (1977), Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and Deleuze and Guattari (1980) who in different ways, but as contemporaries, all brought creativity and structure into question. I continue to look for cracks in the system, challenge them in practice (the lines of flight), reflect upon them with students, and revise, remorph them into mutualist spaces. Students still talk about the value of community, but more and more frequently about inspiration.

What does it mean to be inspired—in "spirit"? Being open to the world as Scheler (1961) points out is the presence in human beings of "spirit" as a center of action. The term spirit and the ancient terms *ruach*, *pneuma*, *spiritus* and *prana* all imply drive, power, and energy. "In spirit," we take action on injustices. When we are connected to our spiritual being, we are "in spirit." I think that our students—our society—are craving that place of spirit. So, in my teaching I create space for silence, for meditations, for connections to nature …. and raise more issues of injustice… I sign off my emails with Rumi meditations, Irish blessings, proverbs in many languages and from around the world. This works well with my second language and intercultural subject area.

Joe: Olenka, like you, I also address identity more explicitly as well as a playful questioning of its importance. Early in my career I would meet students in the hallway before their first class with me. Using teacher in role, I would welcome them to the educational system on the planet Tralfamadore (See Norris, in press for full description). Using Maxine Greene's (1973) concept of "teacher as stranger" invited them to become anthropologically strange. Over the years as my teaching assignments changed, I found that this was, most often, not a good fit. I continually invented new activities.

Three years ago I was asked to devise a companion piece to our main stage production of *The Blue Room* (Hare, 1998). Upon reading the script, I found that the phrase, "What's your name?" kept reappearing and I designed my first class using this theme as the focal point. As an ice-breaker, I asked students to individually create two play-lists from the following, favorite movies, songs, books, TV shows, sports and the list could go on. Then they get in groups of two and share what they wrote. This leads to strong personal disclosure and a very low-risk level. Then they each choose one that they think others in the class may share, whether or not it is on their play-lists. One-by-one something is spoken and those in the class who affiliate yell, BINGO.

Now that the groups of two had somewhat "bonded" through the sharing of personal stories, I asked them to brainstorm a number of scenarios in which one might be asked her/his name. From the brainstorming, they choose one. Each group of two presents twice. The rest of the class listen with eyes closed to the first one and after the five-second scene, we discuss what we heard. There are a variety of appropriate perspectives, reinforcing the acceptance of diversity of opinion. They repeat the scene, this time with the audience members' eyes open. More analysis ensues and we begin to enter a democratic, cooperative learning environment.

I feel lucky to teach a subject area in which team- and community-building are expected. Feedback from members of this class indicated that they appreciated this opening, even more so later when we moved to more personal disclosure that were relevant to the devised play.

Olenka: Luck?

Joe: Good point. I believe one of the major reasons that I chose drama was due to interpersonal interactions. You?

Olenka: Here's how I broach the need for mutualism in second language classrooms. First, we have built-in linguistic diversity, with everyone in the class speaking at least one additional and different language from many of the others. Second, because most have travelled abroad and/or live or have lived in another language-culture, they have experienced and have some awareness and feeling of difference. My challenge is to harness the difference as something to be valued. It is thus easy to use UNESCO's vision of a plurilingual society instead of conforming to Canada's hierarchy of languages, created through or in the absence of certain policies. In this way instead of students seeing their SL as being in competition with the other ones spoken in the class, and thus them being in competition with their peers, we explore the merits of learning any second language and the value of speaking many. We thus build cross-language groups who work together to prepare posters, brochures, videos, and displays at an advocacy fair. Everyone promotes the value of learning another language and also contributes personal stories about the benefits each has had from learning a particular language. This brings a variety of values into the fore and broadens the discussion to an awareness of the Canadian habitus and its underlying values and beliefs …. and that values and beliefs differ in other parts of the world. Such conversations about values, interpreted through our Canadian lenses, can open up discussions about issues such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, power, and globalization.

Joe: I recall a story from you about a student who claimed that he knew all of the names of the fish in the aquarium and I questioned whether he knew all of his peers' names. It seems that you and I value community for a variety of reasons. Does this ideology underpin the way we teach? Perhaps, yes, but not any more so than the ideology of those who value the curriculum of the isolated individual in a didactic classroom. Both have bias. What I can say is that a large number of my students both in class and on course evaluations also appreciate

the sense of community that I create. So obviously they feel a lack.

So, I now use the play-list activity as an ice-breaker with great success. Tuckman (1965) discusses four stages in group development: forming, storming, norming and performing. I am convinced that a) "storming" is natural and healthy and its understanding is vital to negotiated spaces and b) the stronger we "form" at the beginning, the better we will weather the storms as we make collective decisions. Such activities can build a strong foundation. I truly believe that we practice citizenship skills in drama classrooms (Norris, 2001).

But there will always be storms. I laugh at some of the comments that I made to you in our 1992 emails. They seem prophetic as I still struggle after all these years.

Olenka: Me too. There is neither a formula nor an easy path to overcoming resistance, to achieving a vision. It's more like we just continue to work towards it, driven by our agency to uncover and discover something about ourselves, about people, about our world.

Joe: In a recent year I had a very negative student who resisted often.

Olenka: As you said earlier, "*A negative attitude is sure to rub off on the other members of the group.*"

Joe: And I also said, *I honestly don't know what I would have done? At times I ignore and wait for the proper moment.*

On one occasion early in the year I saw this student prior to class and I excitedly stated that we would be extending the last lesson on improvisation. S/he immediately chimed in, "I hate that type of improv." I was taken aback. Do I confront? Do I yield? How do I create a negotiated space where clearly there is no room for negotiation?

Olenka: And?

Joe: I changed the warm-up. Later in a reflection assignment s/he indicated that s/he appreciated that I listened and adapted to her/his response. Still, I was scarred at that moment and as a teacher I believe that s/he was not yet ready to hear another perspective on the incident. That day, s/he thanked me and I responded that we needed some give and take and I might return to the planned lesson in the future.

I confess that I designed the rest of the year in the shadow of that incident. My fear of this person's negativity, that I was certain that it would be sure to spread if I didn't placate it, influenced my practice.

Perhaps this was a good thing as I addressed her/his present needs. But, in doing so, did I ignore the needs of others? Regardless, I found this a tough class to teach and entered each lesson sensitive to some negative undercurrent.

But it didn't show. One student commented on how easily I adapted to the needs of the class. S/he stated on a reflective assignment:

In observing Joe throughout this course it was eye opening to see what it takes to be overall a great teacher. I have observed that delicate balance is essential; *you need to be caring*, *yet productive*, *compassionate*, *yet fair*, *sensitive*, *yet maintain authority*, *and observant*, *yet accurately to those observations. Joe mastered the balance in each situation*, *and I was in awe of such control and comfortable ease*.

And another stated:

However, *none of that would have been successful if we had not created such a strong sense of community beforehand. I appreciated that Norris took all of our suggestions and considered them*, *especially when it came time to change tracks completely in the course. Norris was never perceived as an authoritative figure* (*respectfully*, *yes*) *but he was seen as a friend as well*, *one that we could share private information with and know no judgment will arise. Moreover*, *he taught us the importance of creating more* "*I-thou*" *relationships with people*, *being more kind and considerate on their feelings*, *opposed to* "*I-it*" *where you are doing things to strictly benefit yourself. Going back to my future*, *I feel as though the skills as well as the trust and comfort we built in the classroom …* (*Student assignment*, *circa 2014*)

They and others, including the negative student, seemed to appreciate how I, along with them, created and maintained a mutualist classroom. What they did not see was the angst and trepidation I had coming to many classes. Balance is not easy to achieve. Some information I don't share as I live between tact and honesty. I discuss with my students my meanings of private, personal and public. Public is what everyone can

readily and easily know, like names, et cetera. Private is what no one else knows and personal are things you don't mind sharing, depending upon the degree of trust.

While post-class comments are affirming, the experience is often painful at the time. Sometimes I need a midwife.

Olenka: Indeed! Humbling, too. I remember the course I took with Paulo Freire during my doctoral studies. I had been long familiar with his writings and we had to read a considerable volume before he arrived. At that time my understanding of "dialogue" had a strong temporal sense. That is, WE would have as much time to be heard by him as he would to be heard by us. What in fact happened was one person posed a question that took 10–30 seconds and he answered in 30–70 minutes. This disparity of time puzzled me—it was for me a critical incident. BUT from this I have now come to see that giving voice does not necessarily mean that the students do all of the talking. Giving them the space to ask THEIR sincere questions is giving them voice and answering their questions with compassion also gives them voice.

Joe: And we have learned when to speak and when to be silent, recognizing that sometimes what we say may inhibit their necessary explorations. As the adage goes, "It's alright to be nervous but never let them see you sweat." At times, we suffer in silence as we nurture their growth.

Olenka: I have always found metaphors a helpful conceptual tool (Lakoff & Johnsen, 1980). Not only do I use them a lot in my teaching, but also in my own reflections. For example, a long time ago I saw my teacher self as a gardener (looking for the appropriate soil, humidity and sunlight for each flower-learner); later as a sculptor (like Michelangelo removing the marble to find David within); another time a bit like the sergeant at boot camp—tough but loving; then as a midwife; today, I am not sure … maybe a geologist—looking for the gemstones of the mind? As Picasso (1975) said: "*It would be very interesting to record photographically, not the stages of a painting, but its metamorphoses. One would see perhaps by what course a mind finds its way toward the crystallization of its dream*." I think that this paper has crystallized images of our own process of realizing our dream of mutualist teaching.

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