COURAGEOUS DIALOGUING VS. DISCUSSING INLATINA/O STUDIES CLASSES

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Abstract - William Isaacs' work on dialoguing, thinking and an approach on communication in business and life settings is coupled with Mariana Ortega's theory of multiplicitous of the in-between self, especially from a Latina feminist perspective. The research includes Cherríe Moraga's writings, 2000-2010, which deals with the Chicana identity, politics, and history.Her textwelcomes an innovative manner on how to relate to perspectives, using appropriate language while teaching the concepts offered by Moraga.

Keywords - Communication, Multiplicity, Intersectionality, Chicana, Moraga

In A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings, 2000-2010 (2011), Cherríe Moraga writes in chapter "The Warring Inside" (47-100) the combination of her perspective of self in regards to spirituality, sexuality, political events and family. Moraga, Chicana lesbian, political activist, scholar, dramaturge, and caretaker, discusses intersections, "that juncture where all the roads of our identity—gender, race, class, and sexuality — converge" (Moraga, 60). Those intersections are part of her multiplicitous self, a term that Mariana Ortega uses in her text In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self (2016). Ortega explains the multiplicitious self in terms of "being-in–worlds and being-between-worlds" (71) and states: "Recognition of the multiplicity of the self requires an understanding of the complex ways in which the self's various social identities intersect or intermesh, recognizing the manner in which different axes of oppression are intertwined, and considering this self's flexibility" (71). The course "Perspectives Chicana History," offered at the University of Wyoming (UW) in fall 2016, encompassed Moraga's text and relates the topics to Chicana happenings, and Unites States' 2016 elections and politics. In the class room the participants dialogue with others in order to understand the array of topics. From Native American and environmentalist supported actions, for example North Dakota Pipeline, to the future of Deferred Action for Children Arrivals (DACA), in short DACA students, all of which have been in news circulation since 2009, and still are, news reeling in today's United States'immigration headlines, debates and economic and environmentalist podiums. The course "Perspectives Chicana History," a title assigned by the Latina/o Studies Program, contributes to the diversity of the curriculum. UW, located 27 miles from the Colorado 287 road state border, is the only university in the state of Wyoming; local residents comprise 70.9% of student population, the ethnic minority population 9.7%, international students 4.6% and Colorado residents 10.7 % ("UW Fall Enrollment"). I maintain a conscientious diplomatic boundary of my vocabulary in my Latina/o Studies courses; most of my students are white. However, in the 400 level elective course, the students interact with a more commonly peer language in style and manner. Taking into consideration William Isaacs' work Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together: A Pioneering Approach to Communicating in Business and in Life (1999) in which the author explains the design of the book, we view the third part entitled "Predictive Intuition" proposing the following: "A way of anticipating and naming the forces that can undermine any conversation. These include a way of understanding different languages people speak, a framework for anticipating how people manage power, and an approach for detecting self-defeating patterns of action" (Isaacs 36). Isaacs explains that the way language is used in dialoguing is different than that of the discussion.

In my class, I understand discussion as individuals and members of class responding to instructor's comments and peers of the class as a whole. In contrast, I consider dialoguing as interaction among groups or partners commenting on the topic at hand for a few minutes and then sharing with the others in class group assessment. Isaacs states that "Discussion is about making a decision. Unlike dialogue, which seeks to open possibilities and see new options, discussion seeks closure and completion" (45) and that dialogue is "about exploring the nature of choice" and "evoking insight, which is a way of reordering our knowledge—particularly the taken-for-granted assumptions that people bring to the table" (45). However, the word discussion is rooted by decide, and literally means to "murder the alternative" (45). So, what do members of academic spaces do when analyzing the texts, that is, the various themes such as language, history, politic, race, gender, culture and geographical location of the literary genre, whether novel, vignettes, or as in the

mentioned Moragan collection, essays and poetry? Perhaps both discussion and dialoguing, at any given time, during the critical analysis; regardless, the prior knowledge and experience of each individual is taken into consideration, as well as the shift they may have in their personal values and development throughout the engaging semester material. Selecting the language used in the classroom is imperative, for the facilitator to create the safe and open communicative space enforced throughout the course gathering, especially when strong and firm opinions are expressed, and may be an unfamiliar, new, consciousness for participants listening.

Concerning the classroom environment, we view what Isaacs mentions in "Architecture of the Invisible" the fourth part of his text that deals with the different forms that conversation takes depending on the setting, climate or "fields" in which the conversation takes place, relating the quality of setting in which our interactions occur and the adoption of a new model of leadership that could result (36-37). Not only do my students participate in the classroom, they also have the opportunity to produce a digital project which could be filmed anywhere and involve the cast members of their groups formed by their peers, but also campus participants and community members in Wyoming —Laramie specifically. When they interview other mates outside of the classroom that is when there is a shift in their vocabulary as they define what has been learned in the classroom to inform/teach/bring that topic to others and further investigate material from the texts relating it to the opinions of others, especially in a question/answer or dialogue type filming. In all cases, there is a teaching and learning experience and one virtue to uphold: Respect. Isaacs states "Treating the people around us with extraordinary respect means seeing them for the potential that they carry within them" or "Treat the person next to you as a teacher" (116-17). Respect means honoring boundaries and "looking for what is highest and best in a person and treating them as a mystery that you can never fully comprehend. They are part of a whole, and, in a very particular sense, a part of us" (117). In making an analogy, I state that the "they" are those paying to attend the institution, and the "us" would be those facilitating the education.So, our psychological space becomes the same when viewing the material.

Beyond literature and language of the text, the instructor relates psychologically on an epistemological level to the student, recognizing literary background, the, at least, mono o bilingual experience and the geographical location/s which the student may have experienced. The student may do the same for the course instructor who is the facilitator of the dialogues, discussions and conversations that academic growth entails. The conversations of a Latina/o Studies Course involve an understanding of the intersectionality, as mentioned in A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousnes. In section four, "The Price of Beans," Moraga regards gender, race and politics in the gay marriage campaign and two major political pitfalls. The first: "the national campaign for gay marriage is a predominately white, middle-class, single-issued liberal movement prompted by the sense of entitlement that class and race privilege afford. Although there are plenty of queers of color among its proponents, the campaign assumes identification with mainstream America that preferentially applies full citizenship rights to the ownership class" (178). The second major pitfall is that "same-sex marriage does not challenge the fact that marriage as an institution is normalized in our society, while other kinds of relationships and families continue to be marginalized" (178). The aforementioned is a warring that she presents to the readers —politicians, queer, people of color, Chicanas/os— and the participants engaging with the text and politics discuss/dialogue/analyze only to find that the learning and teaching method is a dialogue to be continued outside of the classroom walls into the community at large.

So, what does one expect when dialoguing or when applying the "predictive intuition"? The system, as Isaacs explains, can produce "a capacity to perceive and name what is happening as it is happening" and"to develop your intuition, not to become overly locked into the system itself" (181). I, as an instructor who acknowledges many perspectives, consider the system in an educational manner. How does one become an educator after completing the requirements, passing the bureaucratic maze, and graduating with the entitlement to educate in a higher institution? Continuing to view the second dimension of predictive intuition Isaacs states that it: "examines how hidden but powerful structures of interaction can neutralize dialogue, and how to begin to anticipate and overcome these" (182). This all results on how the group can think together, in small and large groups (183). The link between the dialogue practices and advocacy and inquiry is that action of speaking or advocating and displaying thought in a respectful and productive way (190). The four kinds of action that one could find in a learning setting, in any group, would be a person who moves, another who follows the mover —the first person— another who opposes them —mover and follower— and then the bystander who has been observing the entire situation "who has the advantage of having one foot in and one foot out of the circumstance" and provides perspective on the situation (193). Putting all the four practices that Isaacs states into action means "finding the gaps between what people intend to do and what they actually do" (187) and filling the gaps after the find constitutes a lot for a Latina —I, in particular, as the

presenter of this research —who has a much different experience than students in Wyoming. Then again, there are some students who understand, share with the instructor, me, a language that is other than English and thus, there is an understanding of cultural verbal expression. The gaps to be found are evident, such as one would think logically about a topic, however, react differently than the thought, thus, illogically; placing ethos, pathos in action regardless of logos. But to write the subject matter and relate it to the writer's world is the challenge. It is after the classroom interaction that students reflect and submit essays connecting text to personal and global issues. The language then is a written meditated one.

The notion of discussion versus dialogue is applied to material that may be hot topics, unwelcoming in some spaces, nevertheless, when instructing Latina/o Studies courses there are multiplicitious themes, issues found in United States history that must be addressed. The intersections that Cherríe Moraga mentions in her text is for all to meditated on no matter what generation. Although the read of A Xicana Codex of Changing Consciousness: Writings, 2000-2010 may be a bit infused with Spanish, after a bit of confusion or doubt concerning the language used, there is true understanding. As William Isaacs comments, "Doubt and confusion are the flaming swords at the gate of true understanding" (241), so too there must be some warring within the learner/teacher and sense of accomplishment when dialoguing and thus, preserving traditions, cultures and history. For Chicanas/os to accomplish the goal of presence, Latina/o Studies must be included in the curriculum, especially the University of Wyoming.

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