

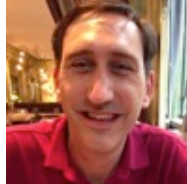


## Dialogic education for and from authorial agency

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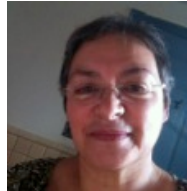
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### **Abstract**

*In this paper, we extend Bakhtin's ethical philosophical ideas to education and introduce a dialogic authorial agency espoused approach. We then consider this approach in opposition to the mainstream technological espoused approach, while focusing our contrasting analysis on student's authorial agency and critical dialogue. We argue that the technological approach assumes that the "skills" or "knowledge" are garnered in pursuit of preset curricular endpoints (i.e., curricular standards). Since the goals of the technological approach are divorced from the students' personal goals, values, and interests, they are incompatible and irreconcilable with what we idealize as the true goal of education, education for agency.*

*The authorial agency approach to education (Dialogic Education For and From Authorial Agency) emphasizes the unpredictable, improvisational, eventful, dialogic, personal, relational, transcending, and ontological nature of education. The authorial agency of the student and of the teacher are valued and recognized by all participants as the primary goal of education – supported by the school system and broader society. The approach defines education as a learner's leisurely pursuit of critical examination of the self, the life, and the world in critical dialogue. The purpose of authorial agency pedagogy is to facilitate this process by promoting students' agency and unique critical voices in socially desired practices – critical voices, recognized by the students themselves and others relevant to the particular practice(s). Ultimately, in the authorial education for and from authorial agency, students are led into investigating and testing their ideas and desires, assuming new responsibilities and developing new questions and concerns.*

*Finally, we describe and analyze the first author's partially successful and partially failing attempt to enact a dialogic authorial approach. It will allow the reader to both visualize and problematize a dialogic authorial approach. We will consider a case with a rich "e-paper trail" written by 11 undergraduate, pre-service teacher education students (mostly sophomores), and the instructor (Peter, the first author, pseudonym) in a course on cultural diversity.*

*The case focuses on the university students (future teachers) and their professor discussing several occasions that involved interactions between Peter and one minority child in an afterschool center. Our research questions in this empirical study were aimed at determining the successes, challenges, and failures of the dialogic authorial pedagogical approach and conditions for them.*

**Eugene Matusov** is a Professor of Education at the University of Delaware. He studied developmental psychology with Soviet researchers working in the Vygotskian paradigm and worked as a schoolteacher before immigrating to the United States. He uses sociocultural and Bakhtinian dialogic approaches to education. His recent books are: Matusov, E. & Brobst, J. (2013). *Radical experiment in dialogic pedagogy in higher education and its Centauric failure: Chronotopic analysis* and Matusov, E. (2009). *Journey into dialogic pedagogy*

**Mark P. Smith**, Ph.D. is a researcher interested in the role of dialogue in fostering student agency and the relevance of the educational environment for life. He has also worked full-time with international students an English as a second language teacher.

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



...a main trait of human reality is to transcend itself...  
(Boesch, 1993, p. 15)

## Dialogic education for and from authorial agency

The purpose of this article is to introduce, articulate, and discuss a new pedagogical approach: dialogic education for and from authorial agency (DEFFAA) and exemplify it in the field of teacher education. This approach is based on Mikhail M. Bakhtin's (1985-1975) ontological dialogic ethics that he developed working within literary studies (Bakhtin, 1986, 1993, 1999) and that has important implications for education. As far as we know, Bakhtin's ontological dialogic ethics has not yet been fully realized in education and teacher preparation. We, along with other colleagues, have aimed at translating Bakhtin's philosophical ideas in the field of education (Bibler, 2009; Dysthe, Bernhardt, & Esbjørn, 2013; Fecho, 2011; Lefstein & Snell, 2013; Lensmire, 1994, 1997; Lobok, 2001; Matusov, 2009; Sidorkin, 1999; Wegerif, 2007). This new approach to education is an extension of an authorial approach to teaching and learning developed by Matusov (2011a) inspired by Bakhtin's ontological dialogic ethics. We will define, compare, and contrast the dialogic education for and from authorial agency (Matusov, von Duyke, & Kayumova, 2016) to the technological approach (rooted in traditional models of teaching and learning) (Matusov, 2011a) by focusing on how these approaches promote or demote human agency in education. We chose a dichotomous<sup>1</sup> presentation of these two *espoused* educational approaches because our new pedagogical DEFFAA approach has emerged in dialogic and ideological opposition to the conventional approach. We are aware that these approaches can be more complexly described in terms of *theory-in-action*<sup>2</sup>, which guides the pedagogical practice of the practitioner, but analysis of this complexity is beyond the purpose of this conceptual paper.

### *Technological approach to education and its failure*

Elsewhere, Matusov (2011a) argues that both the mainstream conventional and even some innovative institutionalized education are shaped by a technological approach. This technological approach to education focuses on guiding students along some well- or ill-defined learning trajectory to arrive at preset curricular endpoints (i.e., educational standards, Ravitch, 1995). A technological approach requires the teachers to specify what their students "will know or able to do *by the end of a lesson*" (or a course, an academic term, a school career) (Taubman, 2009).

There are two major approaches within a technological educational framework. In an admittedly extreme *instructionalist* version of the technological approach common in many conventional schools, the students' learning trajectory is seen as well-defined through lock-step, fully scripted lessons. The teacher's instructional decisions are similarly guided by unilateral, universal, decontextualized scripts,

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that some reviewers and the editor of another journal asked to justify the use of dichotomous approach in our analysis. In our view, the unconditional opposition against a dichotomous analysis has become almost total in social science academia. We want to point out that the total opposition against any dichotomous analysis is self-contradictory and unsustainable because it creates a new dichotomy between "dichotomous" versus "non- dichotomous" analysis. In our view, it is much more useful to consider fruitful vs. non-fruitful dichotomous and non- dichotomous analysis in particular contexts. For example, it may be fruitful to develop dichotomy between slavery and free labor despite much complexity and nuances of particular cases when moral judgment is going to pass. Dichotomies can be very useful for contrasts and boundaries rooted in value judgments. On the other hand, it is true that dichotomies may prevent from considering nuances when value judgments are not very important or weak. A historical analysis of use of dichotomies and current total opposition to them in social sciences is overdue but outside of the scope of our paper. However, we urge reviews and editors not to censor or reject dichotomous analysis just because it is dichotomous. We are thankful to the editor who asked us to justify our position on a dichotomous analysis rather than demand to eliminate it.

<sup>2</sup> See the discussion of differences between "espoused theory" and "theory-in-action" in Argyris and Schön (1978). In short, the espoused theory involves declaration of the principles that the practitioner believes shapes his or her practice. In contrast, the theory-in-action involves patterns that actually guide the practitioner's actions. The espoused and in-action theories may have complex and diverse relations; they may match or not match each other, be compatible or incompatible with each other, and so on.

ideally tested by statistical, double-blind randomized research that is often referred to as “research-based best practices” (e.g., Hargreaves, 1996; Hunter & Hunter, 2004; Slavin & Madden, 2001).

By contrast, in a *constructivist*<sup>3</sup> version of the technological approach used in some innovative schools and classrooms, the students’ learning trajectories are often seen as ill-defined, but they all still reliably lead to preset curricular endpoints. These learning trajectories can be negotiated between the teacher and the students, usually requiring contextual, interactional, and often uniquely artistic teaching. Constructivist technological teachers thus often promote the students’ own learning activism, and collaboration between the teacher and the students, while the ultimate goal is still to arrive at the predictable conventional knowledge and skills preset by the teacher in advance. They try to “psychologize” and personalize the important curricular endpoints preset by the society (Brown & Campione, 1994; Dewey, 1956).

However, Matusov (2011a) insists that in whatever version (instructionalist or constructivist) it is found, a *technological approach to education* assumes that all students will and should arrive at the *preset* curricular endpoints. It is important to reiterate that learning trajectories to such preset curricular endpoints may be ill-defined; it could be that a teacher is not so much promoting a lock-step, scripted curriculum, but rather may have in mind certain preset “curricular standards” such as knowledge, skills, dispositions, or attitudes (Taubman, 2009). For example, a teacher may promote collaboration with students in the discussion of an interpersonal problem in a classroom, but may ultimately be most concerned with ensuring that a student takes away from this discussion the teachers’ preset definition of what a “bully” is and the teachers’ preset attitude that it is always wrong to “bully” someone (Smith, 2010). The students’ own subjectivities — students’ own interests, concerns, needs, inquiries, funds of knowledge, worldviews — are often either bracketed from the instruction or exploited often as “prior knowledge” or “misconceptions” in order to move the student to the preset curricular endpoints. Since the curricular endpoints are known in advance and determined outside the scope of the students’ affinities, desires, aspirations, goals, social emergent dynamics, contextual and ethical limitations, — this approach inhibits (and often diverts) students’ agencies in the targeted practices so the students stop seeing themselves as legitimate and eager participants (Hammer & Zee, 2006). Further, when endpoints of education are known in advance, any genuine dialogue in education is impossible (Matusov, 2007), making educational practice profoundly monologic. Indeed, since the espoused goal of conventional education is to make students’ consciousnesses and subjectivities predictably arrive at preset ready-made curricular endpoints (i.e., curricular standards) — predetermined truths known by the teachers, by the State, and/or by the conventional schooling system in advance, — genuine dialogue based on humanity and respect between the students and the teacher is impossible (Matusov, 2007).

However, the technological approach to education has remained ubiquitous to this day. It is not an accident that Bakhtin used examples of conventional schooling to illustrate his concept of extreme monologism (Matusov, 2009):

In an environment of ... [excessive] monologism the genuine interaction of consciousness is impossible and thus genuine dialogue is impossible as well. In essence ... [excessive monologism – the authors] knows only a single mode of cognitive interaction among consciousnesses: someone who knows and possesses the truth

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to stress here that not all constructivist pedagogical approaches are technological in their nature — not all of them insist on arriving at the curricular endpoints preset by teachers and/or by the State (see discussion of the diversity in constructivist approaches in Pegues, 2007; Phillips, 1995; Windschitl, 2002).

instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error; that is, it is the interaction of a teacher and a pupil, which, it follows, can be only a **pedagogical dialogue**<sup>4</sup> (Bakhtin, 1999, p. 81, emphasis is added).

In Bakhtin's analysis of Dostoevsky's literary masterpiece, *The Brothers Karamazov*, he argued that excessive monologism is employed to manipulate the consciousness of another person towards predetermined endpoints and, hence, to make the other predictable, calculable, and controllable. When this project is realized, the technological educational practice causes humiliation, disrespect, dehumanization, and denial of agency of another person:

Truth is unjust when it concerns the depths of *someone else's* personality.

The same motif sounds even more clearly, if in somewhat more complex form, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, in Alyosha's conversation with Liza about Captain Snegirev, who had trampled underfoot the money offered him. Having told the story, Alyosha analyzes Snegirev's emotional state and, as it were, *predetermines* his further behavior by *predicting* that next time he would without fail take the money. To this Liza replies:

. . . Listen, Alexey Fyodorovich. Isn't there in all our analysis – I mean your analysis . . . no, better call it ours – aren't we showing *contempt* for him, for that poor man – in *analyzing his soul like this*, as it were, *from above*, eh? In deciding so certainly that he will take the money? [SS IX, 271-72; *The Brothers Karamazov*, Book Five, I]

(Bakhtin, 1999, p. 60, the italics is original)

Based on this Bakhtinian point of view, conventional schools based on a technological espoused approach are humiliating, disrespecting, dehumanizing, and denying of the authorial agency of children.

This technological orientation proceeds not from a humble human plane but “from an above”, “the bird's or God's eye's” vista as if “the One who is Above” is 1) is morally better, 2) knows better what is good for a student, i.e., Benevolent Dictator, and 3) is all knowing, i.e., Expert#1. This technological approach positions the teacher to impose ready-made curricular endpoints on his/her pedagogical object (i.e., students), while at the same time releasing the One “from above” -- i.e., the designers of the curricular standards and tests -- from epistemological, moral, emotional, and/or ethical responsibility.

The proponents of a technological approach (e.g., Hirsch, 1996; Ogbu, 2003) would likely object to this Bakhtin-inspired characterization of their practice, arguing that they do not intend to rob students of their authorial agency. Rather, they want to empower the student's authorial agency by providing students with cultural capital (Delpit, 1995; Lareau & Weininger, 2003) — *a powerful toolkit of essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions* – thus empowering students to do whatever they wish to do in future after their education is over. It is not important for the students to be interested in the technological learning activities through which they are supposed to learn this toolkit. Rather, using economic terms, educational researchers Nilsson and Wihlborg (2011) have articulated the technological view that conventional school learning activities have an “exchange value” — value that other people may be interested — but not a “use value” — a self-consumed value. The learning activities are important as opportunities for the students to learn essential skills and knowledge, usually for their future lives, rather than to be consumed by the students as interesting or relevant to their own purposes here and now. For example, conventional school often teaches students to read in general as a universal skill – so they can read whatever they want in their future. School reading does not necessarily need to be interesting, relevant or important for the students except as a byproduct of learning more essential and universal reading skills and strategies.

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<sup>4</sup> In this context, the term “dialogue” refers simply to social interaction (Matusov, 2009).

What students choose to read later in their future is up to the students themselves, as the conventional school does not interfere in students' future choices or impose on their future. Thus, the conventional school provides students with a "toolkit" of essential skills and knowledge (i.e., "cultural capital", cf. Hirsch) regardless of the specific, current and future desires and goals of the students. Even when the students' interests in reading are acknowledged and encouraged, these "emergent situational interests" and "sustained personal interests" are viewed not as good or important in themselves, but in terms of opportunities for teaching students universal reading skills. In essence, these educational researchers call for exploitation of the students' emergent and personal interests for such universal learning (Alexander, 2005). In this example, reading is viewed instrumentally, separate from its goal defined through the person's desires.

However, as Matusov (2011a) shows, the very notion of a tool (in the metaphor of toolkit of essential knowledge and skills) is heavily based on the desire of the person who uses the tool. This psychological concept of tool was developed by the German Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Köhler (1973) at the beginning of the 20th century in his studies of the mentality of apes. Köhler argued that the concept of tool is impossible without the concept of desire. Without the individual's desire, a tool, which mediates a desire, stops being a tool. Thus, without students' desires a tool cannot exist. Yet, students' desires are *usually* excluded by the technological approach to education (Taubman, 2009), except for a desire to please the teacher and/or parents, to reach or be on the top of the school-created standard of achievement (i.e. high GPA), and/or to achieve credentials for entering certain professions. In the technological approach, students' personal and authorial desires, goals, and problems are usually not legitimate aspects of schooling practice and are often subjected to severe suppression or exploitation by the school system, in its effort for unilateral control (Ben-Peretz, 2001). School systems concerned with this type of technological approach demand students' unconditional cooperation with teachers and the school authority. Therefore, the normal tool mediation of students' personal desire is transformed into tool mediation of students' wishes or needs to conform to, and satisfy the teacher (i.e. to *please the teacher* as one who is 'the deliverer of the system') who communicates how to arrive at the preset curricular endpoint, – another and distorted tool mediation all together (DePalma, Matusov, & Smith, 2009). This phenomenon is especially evident when students choose to act according to school procedures – what they think the teacher and/or school wants from them, – even in obvious contradiction to their own sense and experience (Boyer, 1983; Matusov, 2015b). Students are encouraged to suspend articulating their own concerns about the value of a task (e.g., "you'll need this information later" or "maybe we'll have time to discuss this more at the end of the unit"). In our view, this is arguably true even for a constructivist version of technological approach, because the curricular endpoints (e.g., curricular standards) are predetermined by the educational authorities or curriculum designers, completely disregarding students' ontological desires.

In schools governed by technological approach, students often learn to unconditionally obey, resist or ignore the teacher's demands, without getting caught and they learn to "smuggle in" their own interested learning (DePalma, et al., 2009). Students' authorial agency is thus usurped in such efforts, which often exist in parallel to the teachers' resistance to their students' desires, goals, and problems. The technologically-oriented teachers often desire not to engage students in subject matters in any depth either because of the teachers' own disinterest in the targeted academic subject or because they are afraid to lose their control over the lesson (so-called "off-script", Kennedy, 2005). In addition, conventional teachers often lack of depth about the subject matter. They are often concerned about control, time, and/or the targeted curricular standards that need to be "covered" by the lesson, which distract the teachers from authentic teaching (Kennedy, 2005; Matusov, 2009, 2011a; Smith, 2010). McNeil (1986) argues that many teachers in a technological approach teach "defensively," in that their primary effort is to

ensure student compliance by predictably arriving at the preset curricular endpoints and to prevent “disciplinary problems,” the potential student rebellion against teacher-unilateral or effort-consuming demands. Thus, they avoid going into subjects with students in depth. Ultimately, some teachers in a technological approach to education, despite their espoused teacher philosophy, are primarily concerned with “management” of students over teaching and guiding, to seek the “control of student resistances to the smooth flow of classroom work processes” (Carlson, 1992, p. 190). A similar concern has been expressed by Kennedy (2005), who noted that the primary fear of the teacher is for students to move “off-script,” away from the pre-planned endpoints. This may occur because conventional teachers are often not encouraged to seek or use their students’ cues as directions for curriculum development especially when working in traditional schooling systems under pressure and stress of the recent neoliberal educational reforms like the President Bush’s “No Child Left Behind” and/or the President Obama’s “The Race to the Top” (Matusov, 2011b; Soslau, 2012).

Thus, we judge that a technological approach fails to deliver its own promise of empowerment of students with a “toolkit” of essential ready-made knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes. This is evident in a so-called “lack of transfer” (when students can’t “apply” what was presumably “learned” to a new or unique situation) (Lave, 1988), academic disengagement and boredom (Yazzie-Mintz, 2006), shallow understanding (Boyer, 1983), use of pedagogical violence by teachers (Sidorkin, 2002), primacy of concerns of classroom management issues and teacher authority over engaging in academic subjects (McNeil, 1986), and so on (Matusov, 2009). We claim that agency-free technological education fails to empower the students’ authorial agency in the future – the goal that this type of education sets for itself in the idea of the powerful toolkit that empowers students to do what they want after education is over. We suspect that a technological pedagogical approach of the conventional schools is rooted in the need of the modern economy and institutions for workers who act like smart machines that can arrive at predictable preset outcomes or solve problems set by other people (Mitra, 2013; Zhao, 2009). We hypothesize that authorial successes of some students in technological education are achieved despite, rather than due to, an agency-free technological approach<sup>5</sup>.

### *Dialogical Education For and From Authorial Agency*

The DEFFAA approach to education with its focus on promotion of student agency in a critical dialogue is radically different from technological approaches to education. We argue that our notion of Dialogic Education For and From *Authorial Agency* (DEFFAA) – i.e., education focusing on promoting the student’s authorial agency in a critical dialogue as the main purpose of the teaching and learning practice, – is incompatible with having preset curricular endpoints (Taubman, 2009). The very notion of authorial agency<sup>6</sup> cannot be preset because it is inherently based on goal- and problem-defining processes<sup>7</sup>, creativity, unpredictability (Lobok, 2001), education-for-an-unknown-future, production of culture<sup>8</sup> (Berlyand, 2009; Bibler, 2009), novelty, surprise by the self and the others (Berlyand, 2009; Bibler, 2009; Matusov, 2009, 2011c; Miyazaki, 2007, July), freedom and legitimacy for non-participation (Greenberg, 1992; Neill, 1960), learning on-demand of the ongoing activities (rather than on-demand of the teacher or

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<sup>5</sup> Alternatively, a technological approach may unwillingly create oases of agency-based education in conventional teaching. More research is needed.

<sup>6</sup> Matusov and his colleagues (2016) discuss and contrast non-authorial notions of agency.

<sup>7</sup> This focus on goal and problem-*defining* processes can be contrasted with a more conventional focus on problem-*solving* (cf. Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999), which imply goals and problems firmly preset by others in advance and not negotiable with the student. These goals are usually set monologically and are pre-planned by the teacher.

<sup>8</sup> In contrast to education as reproduction of ready-made culture, education-for-well-unknown-past (or education for poorly foreseen future rooted in the past) involves students’ production of culture, culture making based on their here-and-now interests, needs, and inquiries.

tests), and contribution to self and others within and outside the school practices (Collins & Halverson, 2009).

### The dialogic concept of authorial agency

Matusov (2011a) has proposed an alternative, *authorial approach to education* based on recognition of the student's authorial agency as the central concern of education. He called it "an authorial approach" because both the teacher and the student are seen as unique authors of their guidance, learning, and education. Buchanan (1979) argued that a human being is different from all other animals in being "*artifactual*" – i.e., creating new cultural constraints that promote new desires and new subjectivities in his or her own new and not fully predictable being, "We are, and will be, at least in part, that which we make ourselves to be. We construct our own beings, again within limits. We are artifactual, as much like the pottery shards that the archaeologists dig up as like the animals whose fossils they also find" (pp. 94-95). Criticizing the existing economic models of education as "human capital", based on a technological approach focusing on well-defined preset curricular endpoints, Buchanan argued, "A good part of education can be modeled appropriately neither as capital investment nor as consumption of final services. Instead it must somehow be modeled as 'spending on becoming' – on becoming the person that we want to be rather than the one we think we might be if the spending is not made in this way" (p. 96). However, as he argued further in his paper, "we" (i.e., students, parents, society) do not know what *we want* of this new, becoming; "we" will become "we" as "we" reach this new becoming. Thus, Buchanan suggested, the goal of education should focus on opening opportunities for students for furthering their not fully known "becoming," and the new transcending of themselves, instead of any well-defined curricular endpoints, or ready-made curricular standards which are known in advance, as in a technological agency-free education.

Basing his definition of human authorial agency on scholarship by Spinoza, Bakhtin, Buchanan, Bateson, Argyris, Schön, Sidorkin, and Bibler, Matusov (2011a) abstracted the following crucial, but not exhaustive, aspects of authorial agency:

1. Person's transcendence of any preset, given, existing limits, expectations, and norms of a sociocultural practice (Bakhtin, 1993; Buchanan, 1979);
2. Recognition and validation of the underlining value of this transcendence by relevant others and the self (either positive and/or negative) (Buchanan, 1979);
3. Recognition of the cause of the transcendence in oneself, irreducible to anything else (*causa sui*) (Buchanan, 1979; Spinoza, White, & Stirling, 1910);
4. Personal and social responsibility for this transcendence and its recognition (i.e., requiring justification-response by others and the self, Bakhtin's insistence on "non-alibi-in-being") (Bakhtin, 1993; Buchanan, 1979)<sup>9</sup>;
5. Creation of a new definition of quality (i.e., what is good and bad) of the practice through this transcendence and its recognition – the criteria for quality do not fully preexist the deed of the agency (i.e., Aristotelian notion of *praxis* in contrast to *poiesis*, where the definition of the quality of the activity is preset) (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Aristotle, 2000; Bateson, 1987; Matusov & Hampel, 2008);
6. This transcendence and its recognition occur on a big, highly visible, scale that often requires special actions (i.e., the actions that are often referred as "self-actualization", see Maslow, 1943) as well as on a small, rather unnoticeable scale which penetrates even people's everyday routines and basic needs (Matusov,

<sup>9</sup> Buchanan (1979) wrote, "If individual man is to be free, he is to be held accountable, he is to be deemed responsible for his actions. But at the same time he is allowed to take credit for his achievement. Who can claim credit for results that could have been predicted from nature? From a knowledge of his genetic endowment or his social environment, or both? But once man is conceived in the image of an artifact, who constructs himself through his own choices, he sheds the animalistically determined path of existence laid out for him by the orthodox economists' model. A determined and programmed existence is replaced by the uncertain and exciting quest that life must be" (p. 110).



2011a);

7. The existing, ready-made, given culture provides the material for the person's transcendence of the practice and recognition of this transcendence by self and others (Buchanan, 1979);
8. Authorial agency exists and reveals itself through a person's acts of culture transformation<sup>10</sup>, culture making, and culture production (Berlyand, 2009; Bibler, 2009; Lobok, 2001);
9. Disagreement, mis- and non- understanding, non-participation, non-cooperation, and collision of participants' desires are birthmarks of authorial agency (Matusov, 1996, 2001, 2011c);
10. Authorial agency is unpredictable, ontological, unique, personal, and eventful (Bakhtin, 1993; Buchanan, 1979; Lobok, 2001; Matusov, 2009; Sidorkin, 1999);
11. The human nature reveals itself in the authorial agency.

In contrast to the above listed aspects of authorial agency, the focus of technological, agency-free or agency-exploitative approaches to education is on the reproduction of the given culture, arrival to an official agreement and consensus, and/or establishing standards of participation and human subjectivity. Such approaches, common for conventional institutionalized education, dehumanize people and suppress their agency. Creativity, originality, and uniqueness are not scarce properties of a small number of cultural, political, scientific, artistic, or economic elites, a very few innately gifted geniuses, and/or authorities; rather, creativity, originality and uniqueness are the essence of humanity, precious features of any human being both in his or her past, actuality, and future potentiality (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Grant, 2016; Matusov, 2011a; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). The perplexing issue for education here is the degree to which the recognition, value, scope, and promotion of human authorial agency leads us to envision diverse socially valuable practices for particular people. It could well be that this envisioning lies outside of the arena of institutionalized education, where there is little or no concern with pre-set curricular endpoints, and where there is greater recognition and value of the person's peripheral and full participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in valued societal practices<sup>11</sup>.

In contrast to a technological approach which sees meaning as pre-existent to engagement in education, Bakhtin (1986; 1999) argued that meaning making processes are essentially dialogical processes involving at least two consciousnesses: the addressing and the responding consciousness to the other. These two consciousnesses are opaque and non-transparent to each other: they are genuinely interested in what one asks and how the other replies (Matusov, 2015a). To emphasize this important fact, Matusov (2011c) has introduced a notion of *interaddressivity*, in which involving consciousnesses expect to be surprised by each other (and by themselves), and thus value and respect each other's authorial agency. In contrast, excessive finalizing, objectivizing, calculating, and/or manipulating of another person reduce or even suppress the human authorial agency of the other person (and sometimes the person's own agency if these actions are directed on the person's own self) (Matusov & Smith, 2007).

### **Dialogic authorial approach to education**

In the dialogic authorial espoused approach to education, the authorial agency of the student and the teacher is valued and recognized by the participants as the primary goal of education – first and foremost by the teacher (and supported by the school system). Matusov and his colleagues (Matusov, 2011a, 2015b; Matusov & Brobst, 2013; Matusov, von Duyke, & Han, 2012) argue that in a dialogic classroom a student's authorship can take two qualitatively distinct forms:

<sup>10</sup> As Hegel argued, an individual "cannot define the goal of his action until he has acted..." (cited in Leontiev, 1981, p. 62).

<sup>11</sup> However, there is still arguably a great need for standards-based participation in economy and bureaucratic institutionalized practices, at which technological agency-free education is directed. Increasing automatization, robotization, telecommunication, nanotechnology, and, computerization as well as outsourcing both blue and white collar standards-based jobs to China and India may soon decrease the demand for technological agency-free education in favor of agency-based education, DEFFAA (Kaku, 2011; Pink, 2005; Zhao, 2009).

1. *the student's responsive authorship*, in which the student provides creative, interested, and substantive responses to the teacher's assignments and questions (i.e., teacher's dialogic ontological provocations) – these students' responses transcend the teacher's expectations and surprise the participants (teacher and students), and
2. *the student self-generated authorship*, in which students initiate (individually or collectively) new projects, new inquiries, self-assignments, self-initiated readings and discussions (i.e., self-initiated academic assignments and self-committed long-term learning journeys) that they want to do and pursue.

The difference between these two forms of student authorship can be blurry due to their dialogic and agentive nature: the responsive authorship always has a self-generating aspect while the self-generating authorship is always responsive and addressive (Matusov, 2011a, 2015b; Matusov & Brobst, 2013).

Nevertheless, these two forms of student authorship establish their own qualities and can even be in contradiction to each other. Indeed, student self-generating authorship requires resources of time, space, materials, and even human resources out of the school (i.e., involvement of interested persons outside the classroom) to be free from teacher-initiated assignments and questions (Greenberg, 1992; Neill, 1960), while the student's responsive authorship heavily depends on the teacher's dialogic ontological provocations (Matusov, 2009). Matusov and Brobst (2013) speculate that these two forms of student authorship may constitute two developmental phases of student agency in a given social practice of students moving from responsive to self-generated authorship. Alternatively, the over-reliance on the teacher-initiated form of student agency may be based on the need for a student to be provoked to engage, a phenomenon, which arguably has been generated by the students' socialization within a traditional schooling model. The amount of time the student has been previously socialized into a traditional schooling model is related to the amount of time the student may need for de-socialization in conventional technological education, i.e., conventional technological school detoxification, – see the literature on the Free School (Holt, 1972), Summerhill (Neill, 1960, p. 3), homeschooling (Llewellyn, 1998, pp. 127-130), and Sudbury Valley School Model (Greenberg, 1992).

A dialogic authorial approach to education emphasizes the unpredictable, improvisational, eventful, dialogic, and ontological nature of education (Lobok, 2001; Matusov, 2009). Students tentatively arrive to their own undetermined, transitional curricular endpoints; these endpoints are not predicted by the teacher and by the students themselves. Students' desires, problems, interests, and goals are central in authorial education and their participation in socially desired practices is viewed by the teachers as legitimate, negotiable, creative, active, and peripheral. The legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is initially evident in the students' self-sustained "opinionship" (Matusov & von Duyke, 2010), not yet being bounded and engaged with diverse important opinions, evidence, and voices of others in the field (and beyond). However, with students' increasing participation, the peripheral nature of their participation becomes more and more questionable and contestable by the participants in the educational process and by relevant outsiders within an "internally persuasive discourse" (Bakhtin, 1991; Matusov & von Duyke, 2010). In such discourse, the students and other participants begin perceiving themselves as ever more full participants who legitimately author the practice; they are also recognized as such by relevant others. Learning occurrence, duration, and its content are not limited in time and space, or by guidance (Collins & Halverson, 2009). The purpose of authorial education, dialogic education for and from authorial agency (aka DEFFAA), is to promote the students' agency and unique voices in socially desired practices – voices which are recognized by the students' themselves and others relevant to the practice. However, we want to emphasize a contested nature of the "socially desired practice" notion – who, how, and what defines this social desirability of a practice remains and should always remain questionable, problematized, and negotiated in the society.

What can provide a source for promotion of authorial agency within authorial education are big dramatic dialogic events in which there is a collision of the participants' incompatible desires directed at each other (e.g., between the teacher and the students and among the students). The participants often want from each other what the other party does not want to do. Even in light of the fact that personal desires may have shared social, historical and cultural aspects, and the fact that these desires emerge through shared here-and-now experiences, the compatibility and synchronicity of diverse desires are not guaranteed.

In a technological approach to education, this collision of incompatible desires directed at each other is resolved monologically and unilaterally in favor of the teacher's (or the educational authority's) desire to make the student arrive at the curricular endpoints preset by the teacher. Thus, the student's incompatible learning desire is viewed as illegitimate, unless it happens to be in the exact concord with the teacher's desire that is often shaped or exacerbated by the state standards.

In contrast, the success<sup>12</sup> of dialogic authorial education is always unfinalized, interpretative, and potentially contested. In other words, the definition of "good education" and "the quality of education" is a part of education itself, focusing on dialogic testing of students' conflicting alternative ideas and desires (see the notion of "*praxis of praxis*," in Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2012). The definition of "good education" is rooted in the emergent resolution of this conflict of the participants' incompatible desires directed at each other (and the desires of observers who judge the success). Even more, dialogic authorial education defines itself within this collision of desires. In essence, authorial education cannot be sanitized from conflict and controversy; it may be messy, uncertain, unpredictable, and its outcomes are contestable (Smith, 2010) – but these collisions and controversies are viewed as legitimate and often addressed through democratic processes of decision making (Greenberg, 1992; Neill, 1960). Ultimately, in the dialogic education for and from authorial agency, the student is led into testing ideas, assuming new responsibilities and developing new questions and concerns from their participation in socially desired practices. In turn, the student is brought closer to new sources of support and guidance within the classroom and in the outside community.

### ***Testing the dialogic authorial approach***

In this section, we briefly consider five common challenges to the DEFFAA. We see these five challenges as the most acute for DEFFAA. Of course, these are not the only challenges to the DEFFAA; however, we limit our exploration for the scope of this paper. Our purpose is to allow for diverse voices from the literature on democratic education to intersect with DEFFAA, a thought experiment, which provides important opportunities for dialogically testing the ideas in our approach.

#### **Where is learning of the existing culture in DEFFAA?**

Conventionally, education is viewed as reproduction of the ready-made culture and preparation for the future making of culture. Some educators are concerned that the dialogic authorial approach does not promote learning of what is given — i.e., the ready-made culture for the students. Thus, for example, Adler (1982) argues that students should first learn (for them) new material and new information through a traditional pedagogy of lecturing, demonstrations, and assignments; only after they reach familiarity with the new material should a critical Socratic dialogue be applied. These educators view dialogic and/or authorial approaches (in combination or separate) as complementary to a traditional pedagogy of

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<sup>12</sup> Applying economic analysis of "use value" and "exchange value" to learning, Nilsson and Wihlborg (2011) argue that the notion of "success" as a finalized and well-defined category is not compatible with genuine education (of what Matusov defines as "authorial education").

transmission of knowledge or socialization in the existing ready-made culture. In their view, the goal of dialogic and/or authorial approaches is to deepen understanding of the ready-made culture and to prepare the students to transcend it.

Our main objection against these approaches is ethical. Authorial agency — transcendence of the given — is the essence of human being. Any postponement of this essential feature of being constitutes violence against a basic human right. The given is also constantly learned through its transcendence. Probably the best illustration of this process is how babies learn their native language. Babies always use language agentively, for their unique and personal goals in their unique contexts. Socialization in the conventionality of their native language occurs within this process through their communicative failures and successes and through guiding corrections by others (Lock, 1980). In contrast to teaching language in conventional schools, babies do not first learn the forms, norms and conventions of a language, and only after learning these forms, go about filling such conventional words with their own agentive personal meanings. Rather, the existing cultural forms, norms, facts, concepts, culture, etc. may and do become a part of student's dialogic testing of their own and others' positions, ideas, solutions, dilemmas, desires, etc. In other words, the so called "given" in dialogic authorial education is fully present, re-animated, problematized and deconstructed in the scope of the dialogic testing of ideas, rather than based upon a pre-set endpoint.

#### What is wrong with non-dialogic authorial approaches?

As far as we know, there are two major non-dialogic authorial approaches. One is rooted in the Democratic School Movement (Greenberg, 1992; Holt, 1972; Neill, 1960). It focuses on creating a democratic school society — "a scaled down democratic society" (Rietmulder, 2009) — in private schools and promoting autodidactic, voluntary education among students. This approach downplays the quality of and approaches to teaching, and instead heavily relies on the students' own learning activism promoted by the democratic and voluntary nature of the school society. In agreement with the Democratic School Movement, we think that students should be involved in self-governance and making decisions about their own education. Defining education as *praxis of praxis*, where students should explore and define values of their own education, we agree that educational practice must be democratized<sup>13</sup>. However, in our assessment of this non-dialogic authorial approach, while critical dialogue seems to occur in these schools on a systematic basis, it is limited to issues of interpersonal relations (often conflict resolution), self-governance, and to availability of alternative ideas and positions in the community<sup>14</sup>. By contrast, in our view, this approach does not significantly commit to giving students systematic guidance and opportunities for critical dialogue on the students' academic activities. In our observations, a technological pedagogical approach often highly penetrates academic activities in these schools. We suspect that students' and their parents' (and teachers'?) concerns about fitting into instrumentality of the broader society may shape their academic pedagogy.

Another common non-dialogic authorial approach can be called the "Romantic social justice" approach. It focuses on inspiring the students for some important social justice causes and channels their agentive creativity to explore and approach these causes. This approach has a very strong ontological, passionate, activist, and agentive character in contrast with alienated conventional education. However, critical dialogue within this approach may only sporadically occur, and it would be highly limited to the achievement of the cause and the "right thinking" associated with that cause. Critical challenging of this

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<sup>13</sup> Currently, we consider adding another capital D to our acronym: Democratic Dialogic Education For and From Authorial Agency (DDEFFAA).

<sup>14</sup> There seems to be a concern with the teacher imposing guidance on the students by suggesting students to study alternative ideas outside of the community when students do not initiate this move on their own.

cause may lead to violence, ostracism, expulsion, and so on. Good examples of such an approach are the Communard Movements in the Soviet Union (Makarenko, 1973; Sidorkin, 1995) and Ron Jones' pedagogical experiment in Palo Alto, California in the late 1960s (Jones, 1972). In our view, with strict curbing of critical dialogue by violently taking certain issues out of discussion, this approach often promotes totalitarianism (C. Becker, Gansel, & Thorwarth, 2011; Caskey, 1979).

### Can dialogic authorial approach be scaled up? Is it desirable?

Could the dialogic authorial approach be brought to the schools on a large scale? Can education actively promote students' authorial agency in socially desired practices when students' desires, goals, interests, creativity, diversity, and problems are welcome in the classroom by the teacher not as tools of manipulation for the preset curricular endpoints, as some innovative educators want to do, but rather as central for educational processes? This is a good and important question. In our view, the answer is no, not within the current educational institutions nor within the current societal economic, political and social outlook. In our view, in the current need-based economy with its heavy reliance on machine-like human labor, there are huge pressures to technologize education in order to produce laborers who act like smart machines. In this broader socioeconomic and cultural context, education is largely organized as survival experience for the students through series of summative assessments and credentials. Currently, a dialogic authorial approach is possible on a very limited scale, as small oases supported by local liberal conditions and by enthusiastic activism of its participants. Nevertheless, we think that is important to try to create these oases for a dialogic authorial approach to promote human potential and to experiment and develop it for upcoming societal changes (see below).

1. The Greek word "school" originally meant "leisure."<sup>15</sup> Conventional schools do not provide leisure for the students even when they shelter students from labor and provide resources to satisfy their basic needs. All of the person's basic needs and necessities (including physical and mental health) are satisfied now and in the future without the person involved in labor, chores, or assignment-based education,
2. there is no social and psychological stigma for the person of not being involved in labor,
3. there are no anxieties about the present and the future, and
4. there is enough social and material support for the person's leisure activities. We define "leisure" as an opportunity for a person's self-actualization when:

In contrast, guided by a technological approach, conventional school occupies and colonizes the students' time with imposed assignments. In conventional schools, students do what other people ask them to do and not what they decide to do on their own. In contrast, in a dialogic authorial approach, education is defined as a leisurely pursuit of the critical examination of the self, life, and world in a critical dialogue.

The good news for a dialogic authorial approach seems to be that the modern economy has been experiencing a radical change for the first time in the history of humanity, in which an agency-based economy, society, and education could perhaps become possible. Here are these trends. First, more and more emerging smart machines are replacing the jobs where humans work like smart machines (Frey & Osborne, 2013). Second, labor activity in turn gradually becomes more like *praxis*, where goals and the quality of activity emerge, and less like *poiesis*, where goals and the definition of the activity pre-exist of the activity itself. Third, the need for authorial labor based on the human agentive creativity increases (Zhao, 2009). Fourth, for the first time in the history of humanity, the need for human's involvement in economy — i.e., labor — drops, 47% of total US employment "could be automated...over the next decade

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<sup>15</sup> It is not an accident that the concept and practice of school-as-leisure emerged in a slavery-based society in Ancient Greece, where full-time leisure was available for the few at expense of the many.

or two” (Frey & Osborne, 2013, p. 44). All these trends may create conditions (but not the determination!) for the emergence of a leisure- and agency-based society that may require a dialogic authorial approach to education. At the same time, we warn that this transition process can be very painful producing technological unemployment. Also, the need for authorial labor may also be co-opted by neoliberal capitalist endeavors, producing youth as portfolios (Gee, Lankshear, & Hull, 1996).

### **Will non-imposing education work?**

Except the Democratic School Movement, all other institutional education seems to be imposing on the students to force them to study, what to study, how to study, and with whom to study. Even Democratic Schools are often embedded in the regime of mandatory education and needs-based society that puts pressures on individual students, their parents, and the teachers to conform to technological demands (e.g., college admission, graduation credentials). Finally, there is a reasonable concern of whether people in a leisure-based society will voluntarily commit to their education — any education however it is defined. Would education become an endeavor for very few herds? Would not a majority of people choose to entertain themselves instead as it happens in many unemployed people (Appelbaum, 2014)? Of course, as we defined the notion of leisure above, an unemployed worker may rarely experience leisure being raised and living in a needs-based society. Nevertheless, in our view, this is a valid concern and an empirical question to investigate<sup>16</sup>.

### **What is the relationship between a dialogic authorial espoused approach and other espoused educational approaches?**

Again, with exception of the Democratic School Movement, almost all other educational approaches try to be monopolistic. They often try to convince the public and the state to impose their vision of education on all the students, teachers, and educational institutions. To some degree, it makes sense since they all are convinced in their own vision of education as being better, if not more correct, than other educational approaches.

In addition to being visionary, like all other approaches that claim that their own particular vision of education is better than all others, dialogic authorial approach is also inherently pluralistic (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2011). Its liberal pluralism — support of all other educational approaches for existence — is rooted in its insistence that education is *praxis of praxis* (Matusov & Marjanovic-Shane, 2012). This means that the students have legitimate right to explore and define their own education as a part of the education itself. Ironically, a diversity of educational approaches, which fight with each other, could be necessary for a dialogic authorial approach to bloom.

The following case study helps us articulate what we mean by the authorial approach to education and engage in an empirical discussion of the DEFFAA challenges described above.

### ***Sequestering agency: “How can we make Devon do what we want him to do?”***

In the previous, mostly theoretical, sections, we conceptualized the dialogic authorial approach to education, focusing on engaging students in critical examination of the self, the life, and the world. The purpose of this article is to describe and analyze the first author’s partially successful and partially failing attempt to enact a dialogic authorial approach. It will allow the reader to both visualize and problematize a dialogic authorial approach. We will consider a case with a rich “e-paper trail” written by 11 undergraduate, pre-service teacher education students (mostly sophomores), and the instructor (Peter,

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<sup>16</sup> One way to address this important inquiry indirectly is to do a historical analysis of whether and how people used leisure in slavery-based or aristocratic societies.

the first author, pseudonym) in a course on cultural diversity. The case focuses on the university students (future teachers) and their professor discussing several occasions that involved interactions between Peter and one minority child in an afterschool center. Our research questions in this empirical study were aimed at determining the successes, challenges, and failures of the dialogic authorial pedagogical approach and conditions for them.

### **Background: Purpose of Peter's college course**

The goal of the Diversity in Community Contexts course was for preservice teachers – mostly middle class, white and suburban females – to learn how to build good relations with mostly Latino/a minority urban working class children. The class included a 9-week practicum (twice a week for 1.5 hours) at a Local Community Center (LCC) in a mid-Atlantic U.S. city (for more description of the course and its practices, see Matusov, 2009).

Unlike what could be experienced in a traditional school practicum, the afterschool site where the program was located had an open-ended structure, in which children and preservice teachers have opportunities to engage in activities, which are of interest to the children and where children can reveal their strengths (Matusov & Smith, 2011).<sup>17</sup> The course thus aimed to provide opportunities to the future teachers (12 female, 1 male) to engage with the children in playing games, conducting technology and art projects, and so on. The class also provided a safe learning environment for both university students and afterschool minority children. If our university students did something pedagogically insensitive with the children, the children had a legitimate right to move away from these students (in contrast to their schools). The teaching curriculum of the class was constituted by the instructor's (Peter's) dialogic provocations around the preplanned list of topics and by emergent issues at the practicum that both the instructor and the students brought to the class and web discussions weekly mini-projects and the final project for the class.

Each semester the preservice teachers generated unique, recursive-through-the-semester “hot topics” (the students' term) that generated heated discussion and were considered by the students as the most important, memorable, and consequential for them personally and/or professionally. In this particular class one of these hot topics was the university students' discussion of Devon, an African American 7-year old boy from the Center. 11 out of the 13 total students chose to comment about Devon on the class forum (Webtalk, N=40 entries) or in their weekly mini-projects (MP, N=7 entries) and insisted on discussion of this boy during several university-class meetings. Although the class requirement involved a minimum of 2 Webtalk postings per week on student-selected topic relevant to the course, some students made more than 2 postings per week. The weekly mini-projects often involved guided explorations of the topics, discussed in the class and students' reflective fieldnotes about their work at LCC. There were more oral discussions of Devon in the class and outside of the class, some of which the professor likely could not access. One particular preservice teacher, John, made 10 entries about Devon and centered his 18-page (not counting 32-page appendixes) final project on Devon. Devon had appeared at the Center only recently and Peter had not known him prior to that semester.

The emphasis here on “hot topics” is based on a dialogic authorial approach, which prioritizes investigation of an emerging dialogic pedagogical event, issue, or dilemma which provokes replies. The thread of discussions in response to the event is then investigated through the students' and teachers'

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<sup>17</sup> Such an organization runs counter to the trend for afterschool programs for minority, low-income youth to be increasing structured like technological schooling (e.g., homework help and structured, skills-based lessons) (Halpern, 2002).

related webpostings<sup>18</sup>, assignments and class discussions. In the case study below, all webpostings and class assignments throughout the semester that were related to Devon were analyzed. Like in a verbal dialogue, a webposting about Devon might emerge in reply to threads or posts which did not immediately have to do with Devon. The degree to which a thread discusses Devon was based on the judgment of the instructor researcher-participant.

### Data presentation and analysis

Below we provide lengthy quotes from the students and the instructor in order for a reader to not only understand the students' intellectual understandings but also to hear their ontological voices grounded in the participants' desires. The methodology blends the traditions of self-study (Tidwell, Heston, & Fitzgerald, 2009) and participatory action research (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Data were collected from all participants in the case and the instructor carefully examined his own practice. Rather than using an *a priori* or open coding method, the researchers examined the text holistically as a complete narrative. A single event was used to illustrate the conjectures in the findings.

### The flow of the events and our analysis

It became apparent to us that the students had diverse ambivalent attitudes toward Devon, based on the instructor-researchers' assessment of the students' attitude in their webpostings, and student discussion about Devon in the class. On the one hand, Devon strongly attracted them with his sincerity, energy, spontaneity, ingenuity, interest in them, enthusiasm, openness, and non-conformism; on the other hand, the students were also strongly repelled by his non-cooperation, aggression, violence, freedom, unilateralism, non-participation, resistance, and suspicion of manipulation. It is notable that Devon attracted their attention, as based in their unprovoked decision to choose to discuss Devon on the discussion forum and in class assignments from the very beginning of their participation at the Center. These postings also reflected the preservice teachers' affection for Devon, and the degree to which they attempted to build relations with him. A striking ambivalence is apparent in the student postings; several voices are apparent in the postings, in that the students give their own valuation of Devon, and also refer to what they have heard or expect others to think of Devon:<sup>19</sup>

Someone mentioned the other day that Devon was hard to work with. He is. However, I hung out with him the other day for most of the time we were at the LCC and I thought he was a lot of fun to be around. The way he cares about his doll [that he carries around the Center with him] is, I think, admirable in a society where that is constantly being ridiculed [because of its gender stereotypes]. Instead of mocking him, I tried to take the doll seriously and I think that caught him off guard a little bit. I believe that he just needs someone to hang out with, so that's what I'm going to do. I have had experience in the past with kids that are typically labeled as "problem kids" and I have found that once they start to trust you and know that you aren't going to hate them if they mess up, they start to listen to you more. I think by gaining kids trust at the LCC, we can guide them so much more than by just coming in and playing a game with them (Alexia, MP, 3/16/2006<sup>20</sup>).

I've been making Devon my little project. He's a rambunctious kid, who means well, but he can often be rude and uncontrollable. He is often disrespectful and a supervisor there has told me the same thing. I'm going to try to shadow him as much as I can and guide him. I'll lead through example and I'll attempt to use the

<sup>18</sup> Webpostings were a particularly useful form of data since students and teachers responded to each other's postings on a discussion forum, engaging in extensive asynchronous dialogue on "hot topics" during the course. Multiple replies were generated on these topics, and topics regularly shifted in meaning and direction through participation in the forum.

<sup>19</sup> Any punctuation, grammar, and misspellings are preserved from the original texts to preserve voices of the participants and the informal and relaxed atmosphere of the class online communication.

<sup>20</sup> First week of the practicum.



collaborative approach. I'm the one initiating this guidance. [S]ince I'm still working with him, I don't have much to report on him. He is starting to warm up to me though, because when we were playing soccer he asked me to join. Despite the fact that he thinks I'm "the mean one" I think we'll have a good time together. I'm sure I'll learn from him just as he'll learn from me. [I've] found that I don't like how rude many of the kids are. They often don't respect each other and will call each other names. I'm not sure if its a little kid thing, a cultural thing, or what. I just don't like it. [But] Devon... he's mine (John, MP, 3/16/2006).

As noted in the postings above, Devon attracted the students both in strongly positive and strongly negative ways, and discussion of him generated much interest (as seen in the number of replies about him and references to others' voices within the individual students' postings themselves). In the last posting above, John, the only male student in the class, made Devon his "little project." Later, Peter renamed it as "a project for collaboration" for the preservice teachers to learn how to collaborate with Devon. In our judgment, this renaming was the beginning of Peter's dialogic ontological provocation for his students to consider an alternative to their search for effective manipulation of Devon. However, the students seemed to define this project technologically with the goal to make Devon comply with their unilateral demands. This was evident in how one of the students formulated it in a class discussion, in her question to the professor, "How can we make Devon do what we want him to do (but without using physical violence)?"

We see two important stories in this case based on two conflicts of incompatible desires directed at each other. The first story in the case is about the unfolding relations between university students and Devon in their pedagogical desire, incompatible with Devon's own, to domesticate him, to make him predictable, controllable, and safe for them (as seen especially in the postings above by Alexia and John). The second story is about the relationship between the professor and his students. Peter's own pedagogical desire, incompatible with his students' ones, was to introduce a dialogic authorial approach to his undergraduate students in their relations with Devon as an alternative to a technological approach. Such dramatic collisions between the students' and teachers' desires might become a source for promotion of authorial agency. Still, Peter's goal was not to convert the students into a dialogic authorial approach but rather help them experience, recognize, understand, reflect on, and evaluate it as a possibility for their own teaching. The goal would be that they be able to compare these two approaches, so they could make an informed choice between the two approaches (or even think about a third approach). Peter was ready to accept a possibility that after careful consideration and understanding the students would have decided to reject an authorial approach. For him, dialogic education for and from authorial agency involves success when the students' decisions regarding their own approach to teaching are informed by considering and testing their professional desires, values, and goals against known alternatives. Thus, the pre-service teachers would author their own pedagogy in a critical and informed way. In this authorial approach to education one puts full trust in the students to be the final authority for and authorship of their own learning (Klag, 1994; Matusov, 1999).

By the time that the events surrounding Devon had emerged, the undergraduate students had solidly acknowledged that Peter had earned his epistemological authority (in addition to his assigned institutional authority). They demanded conceptual and practical guidance from him to fulfill their pedagogical desire for making Devon controllable. In part, their pedagogical desire was probably based on how they understood the role of the teacher as rooted in their own school experiences. They were also puzzled by relationship between Peter and Devon, which was paradoxically different from their own experiences. As John wrote in his miniproject reporting on his interview with Devon about his future professional aspirations, "What was most disturbing was his initial response to what he wants to be when he grows up. He wants to be a cop because 'they steal stuff' and when he grows up, which to him is age

ten, he wants to punch people in the face. Later, when Peter asked him, he said he wants to be a doctor or an artist. (I wonder why he answered differently to Peter)" (John, MP, 4/6/2006). It seemed that Devon was in different discursive spaces with John versus with Peter. With John, Devon activated the discursive space of survival, power, and domination fantasizing to be on the top of the power pyramid of the Universe Abuse (i.e., the US police that in his keen observational eyes, has arbitrary power over his community). In contrast, with Peter, Devon activated the discursive space of hope fanaticizing about his creative and caring contribution to the World and People.

In his own turn, Peter supported and legitimated the students' inquiries and concerns. He tried to question their pedagogical desires of control of Devon, encouraged them to talk with and, thus, subjectivize Devon by asking him genuine questions of their own interests (rather than constantly finalizing and objectivizing him – a common trend in the relations of preservice and inservice teachers with schoolchildren and community center children studied by Matusov & Smith, 2007). He also tried to provide his students with alternative approaches and non-technological, non-fool-proof solutions to their problems based on collaboration and enjoyment of being with Devon. In the following webtalk posting, Peter emphasized Devon as an agent of his own feelings and in his relationship with the undergraduate students:

**Re: Setting limits to kids in a collaborative way**  
Posted by Peter

4/17/2006 10:10 AM

Dear Jackie—

I'm really glad that you seem to expand a zone of your comfort of working with some particular kids! Good job! Please keep experimenting and report (and reflect) on these attempts as you are doing now.

You wrote, "Until Devon jumped on my back and started eating my hair. That was gross! I made him get down, but he was fixated on getting back at my hair again... I realized that I had to just basically ignore him for a few minutes to get him to let the hair thing alone..."

This is great that Devon feels comfortable with you. He played with you as he did with other ... [university] students. However, you did not feel comfortable and it is a good idea to communicate it to Devon. You could have told him, "Devon, I really-really enjoy playing with you. I know that you jump on the back of many my colleagues, [university] students, and it is probably fine with them. BUT, unfortunately, my back is not very strong and it is really painful for me. So, please, do not jump on my back. Instead, let's do..." and you can give an alternative game (e.g., "stone, paper, scissors").

What do you think? Any other strategies? If you decide to use this strategy or other strategies, please, let us know about the results?

Peter

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In the case above, the students did not directly respond to Peter's suggestions (at least known to us), which were aimed at placing Devon as an agent with equal rights. However, in some other cases the undergraduates did directly respond to this agency-based guidance, as seen in the following exchange between Lora and Peter on the online discussion forum about a child at LCC named MaryJane (Devon was not the only LCC child who was the object of pedagogical actions of Peter's students):

**Re: Physical force with kids**  
Posted by Lora

4/11/2006 3:14 PM

Sometimes I feel especially with MaryJane that the children are just looking for attention. It was not anyone's fault that she was losing and there was still a good chance she could come back and win the game. I feel like since she was not winning and did not have a lot of attention on her, she decided to steal the cards. She knew it would cause her to be watched or chased since the game could not go on without them.

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**Re: Testing alternative hypotheses**

4/17/2006 10:03 AM

Posted by Peter

Dear Lora—

[...]

Your hypothesis is very reasonable however, it is just a hypothesis. It is very dangerous for us, teachers, to act out of unchecked hypotheses because at best we can be insensitive to the kids' educational needs and at worst we can be unfair in the eyes of the kids. It is important to generate hypotheses and then check them.

Let me give an alternative hypothesis about MaryJane. She may have difficulty to control her emotions that the game generates in all the participants. Young kids have problem of coordinating their cognition and emotions. That is why for example little kids cannot play "Hide and Seek" game because they cannot control their emotions while hiding. Almost all little kids "cheat" because of that. It is nothing to do with real cold-blood calculated cheating or with striving for attention. For adults, it is difficult sometimes to understand kids because they are different.

I do not want to say that my hypothesis is better than yours (although I have noticed that novice educators overuse the hypothesis about kids' striving for attention). I see an issue of seeing diverse hypotheses and testing them before acting. Do you know how to test these hypotheses?

Even when there is no time to test hypotheses because actions have to be immediate, it is still a good idea to keep in mind diverse alternative hypotheses so you can read better contextual clues of a situation.

Talking with the child involved always can be a plus to test your hypotheses and generate new and better ones.

What do you think?

Peter

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**Re: Testing alternative hypotheses**

4/17/2006 6:38 PM

Posted by Lora

I agree that there can be many reasons why MaryJane acts the way she does. I think as teachers we do need to talk with a child who acts out to get to the bottom of the problem. It could be a simple solution or very complicated.

While it seems from Lora's posting above that the undergraduate students began to problematize the afterschool minority children in their web postings, we do not know for sure in the full account how much the students experimented and engaged in conversations with the children at the Center. However, we know that they demanded Peter to demonstrate the "effectiveness"<sup>21</sup> of his pedagogical approach, apparently interpreted by them as a technological one. The students demanded that Peter reveal for them a toolkit of essential pedagogical strategies for their work with children; they wanted to learn portable decontextualized (but, probably, conditional) strategies, which could be applied to similar situations in their work with the children. They also wanted to learn universally applicable aspects of children's psychology, which could be used for manipulation and control of students in their future classrooms. However, Peter was ambivalent about "demonstrating the power" of his pedagogical approach because according to his authorial approach: 1) success could not be guaranteed and 2) his definition of success focused on the enjoyment of being-together and promoting student authorial agency. On the other hand, he wanted to prioritize and address his students' concerns even if he disagreed with these concerns. Peter thought that a teacher has to start with subjectivity of his or her students (Matusov & Smith, 2007). This case below, based on Peter's account of the events, illustrates the demands of the undergraduate

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<sup>21</sup> Effective in the eyes of the university students because the strategy produced the university students' desired result (i.e., a preset behavioral endpoint).

students for a technological solution to addressing children's conflicts, even in response to being guided by Peter to respond to the event with an agency-based approach:

**Mr. Dolphin, Mr. Shark, Mr. Tiger, and Mr. Snake: The Peter-Devon play community**

I [Peter] was called for help by my students to a small resource room at LCC where at that time board games and toys were stored in a locked metal closet. When I came in to the resource room, I saw a group of 6-7 of my students (John, who made Devon his "project," wasn't there) staying in a half circle and in the middle of the room there was Devon with many toys on the floor all around the room. My students explained that Devon asked them to open the closet with the toys and promised to clean after himself when asked by my students. When they asked him to clean, he refused. I asked Devon if it were true and he replied it was. I asked him why he refused to clean up after himself despite his earlier promise, and he told me that he changed his mind. My students looked helpless, but I saw them expecting some miracle from me, their professor. Meanwhile, Devon was leaving the room holding a toy shark in his hand.

I picked up a toy dolphin lying on the floor and asked in a pretend voice, "Hey, Mr. Shark, can you help Mr. Dolphin to clean up this stuff, please?" Devon turned back to me, smiled, and replied also in a pretend voice, "OK!" We started picking up toys scattered on the floor and putting them back to the closet. My students were standing above us staring in disbelief without helping us. I noticed a toy tiger and asked Devon in a pretend voice, "Hey, Mr. Shark, do we need a help from Mr. Tiger?" Devon replied in a pretend voice, "No, Mr. Dolphin, we will clean by ourselves. We're friends, Mr. Dolphin." I said looking at my students in a pretend voice, "Thanks, Mr. Tiger, for offering your help but Mr. Shark and I clean up ourselves without your help." My students did not get the hint I was sending them to join us and have a nice playful moment of collaboration while cleaning up. Since I was taller than Devon, Mr. Dolphin was lifting toys up to the upper shelves, while Mr. Shark was cleaning up toys from the floor and passing me the toys. We did not rush and did a lot of playful improvisations; for example, I was suggesting taking Mr. Snake carefully so it would not bite Mr. Shark with snake poison. Devon laughed and intentionally dropped Mr. Snake and I would say on behalf of Mr. Snake, "Ouch! I won't bite you, Mr. Shark!" and then immediately added in Mr. Dolphin's character, "Mr. Shark, but can we trust Mr. Snake? He can change his mind later. Be careful with him!" Devon laughed a lot and handled the toy snake with care to avoid its mouth. When we were done, Devon suggested doing the cleaning again. But I quickly locked the closet and told him that we could do it sometime in future but we had to leave LCC for [the university] as the bus was already waiting for us. He went with us to the LCC door to say goodbye and hugged me at the door.

On the bus, my students expressed their amazement of how skillful I was in making Devon comply with my wishes. I was rather uncomfortable with their praise because it was not what I was doing. My goal was to have a good time with Devon while cleaning up the toys rather than to force him to do cleanup. I used a cleanup situation to create a good playful moment with Devon so we could have fun and enjoy being with each other. I thus did not see it as an issue of Devon complying with my demands against his own desires. I see his compliance as an accidental by-product of our enjoyment and good social relations. It was not guaranteed and it was not imposed on Devon<sup>22</sup>. I asked my students why they stood around Devon and me and did not join in our fun game. My students replied that they did not get that I wanted them to help. I told that it was not about me wanting them to help, or even helping with the cleaning, but rather about joining in our fun game and having good time together. I saw that they did not get what I was saying, and I began to think about how to better explain what I meant to them later on.

Later at LCC, I saw them trying to use "my strategy" of forcing Devon to clean up or do another one of their demands by using pretend play. This strategy sounded very fake and manipulative in my view. Needless to say,

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<sup>22</sup> The issue of how much Devon's clean-up was accidental or not can be contested because Peter centered Devon on the game of clean-up. In Peter's view, it was accidental because if Devon (or he) improvisationally deviated from clean-up, Peter would have followed this new direction. Clean-up was not the final goal but a provocation for joyful being together. However, there might be an alternative interpretation of Peter's provocation. See more below in the paper.

Devon not only refused to comply and engage in the students' manipulative "games," but often became rather violent toward my students. My explanation of his violent replies was that he was very sensitive to being manipulated by other people. I saw many times how his mother, who was apparently overwhelmed in her life, was yelling at him and threatening him with beatings when he refused to leave LCC with her (or in reply to complaints of Devon by the LCC staff). I had no doubts that she did not use empty threats as I saw her being very physical with him at LCC and on the street outside the Center (Peter's fieldnote#1 about pretend play cleanup of 4/3/2006, reconstructed in full on 3/27/2011)

In response to witnessing and discussing this event involving playful, friendly and improvisational collaboration between Peter and Devon, the students began searching for a powerful and reliable "strategy" that would work with Devon to make him predictably comply with their demands. This became apparent to Peter in the students' replies to him on the class discussion board. In response to his question about what "approaches" have been "successful"<sup>23</sup> with Devon, the students began to talk about "techniques" which would predictably work with any child (in bold below). Devon was further finalized and objectivized by the students as a "stubborn" child who is "set in his opinion." The students' discourse moved outside of any authorial relation between themselves and Devon, and instead moved purely onto a technological plane, despite Peter's efforts as provoking them in a more authorial direction (the emphasis is ours):

**Helping Devon to help himself**

4/3/2006 7:05 PM

Posted by Peter  
Dear folks—

Today I notice that when you transform a request into a play with Devon, he becomes very cooperative (and respectful). For example, he dropped blocks but refused to gather them. Instead he grabbed a toy shark and prepared to leave a room. I turned the request into a game by asking shark to help to gather the blocks. The "shark" agreed to help and Devon and I gathered blocks quickly. I used the same approach later when I asked Devon's mouse to help me collect all puzzle pieces from the floor.

What other successful approaches did you try with Devon?

What do you think?

Peter

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**Re: Helping Devon to help himself**

4/3/2006 9:23 PM

Posted by Mina

I have to be honest, I did not expect Devon to respond the way that he did. I know that **with the way I was raised**, little things like not picking up after yourself were not tolerated at all and you were in a way yelled into, or kind of scared into doing it. **This way you learned not to mess around with the authoritative position and you just knew what to expect if you didn't do it.** I guess you don't always have to get all bent out of shape or aggravated. Instead just get creative.

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**Techniques for Clean-up**

4/5/2006 5:49 PM

Posted by Dominique

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<sup>23</sup> Peter seemed to use the term "success" as "a boundary object" (Star & Griesemer, 1989) that had diverse if not opposing meaning for him and his students. For example, students may have defined success as Devon cleaning up; Peter, however, defined success as being in the world-with children, building relationships, and sharing a joyful moment. This boundary nature of the interpretation of "success" stayed obscure for the students, as they did not seem to sense its interpretative ambiguity. Furthermore, Peter's formulation "I **used** the same **approach**" – could easily be interpreted instrumentally, i.e. as part of the technological approach! Thus, it further masks Peter's authorial approach, instead of revealing it! We wonder if Peter should have further problematized the diverse notions of success, rather than directly engaging in this discussion of how to promote success technologically defined by the students.

In my past, I have seen a few successful **techniques** that teachers or people who watch children use. One **technique** is to give the child a five minute warning that clean-up time is coming so that they aren't surprised and so opposed to it when playtime is done.

Another one has to do with the **technique** Peter used. Have the kid pretend they are a vacuum cleaner and put their arms out as they make sounds. This way it seems that they are playing as they "suck up" the toys.

The third way usually **worked well on the boys**. If you ask them if they have strong muscles, of course most of them will insist that they do. Then they will pick up the toys and show you how strong their muscles are getting.

I was just wondering if someone else encountered anyone that has **used techniques** such as these; both successful or unsuccessful.

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**Techniques for Clean-up**

4/5/2006 8:23 PM

Posted by Amanda

A teacher I have worked with in the past used the 5 minute warning method. Usually kids will keep playing but then the teacher starts counting down, so it's like a game to see who can clean up the fastest or before she finishes the countdown. I think this would **probably work better in a classroom** rather than playing a game with one or two kids, but it's worth a try.

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**Re: Techniques for Clean-up**

4/6/2006 3:09 PM

Posted by John

**Something that I found worked well** was asking **them** to do something, **without really asking**. When Devon knocked game pieces on the floor and didn't pick them up I said, "Well I'm not going to pick them up." Immediately he got down on the ground and picked up the pieces. INTERESTING!

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As demonstrated above, the university students continued to focus on finding effective ready-made strategies with predictable results that could be applied across all children and contexts with the intent of eliciting the same compliant behaviour (marked in bold above). In contrast, Peter wanted to show his university students his authorial approach, which values a child's agency and focuses on being-together-in-the-world with the child. Similarly, Nikulin (2010) defined dialogue as the main ontological condition of the human being, which is always being-together. Such an approach hinges on an improvisational stance toward emergent events in the world, recognizing and valuing responsive participation and enjoyment in on-going events. By offering Devon a moment to play, rather than telling him what he must do or not do, Peter extended an invitation to Devon to be his friend. Devon accepted it and reciprocated by joining the pretend clean up. As Marjanovic-Shane (2011) argues, creating play is both a mutually voluntary practice (all participants invite all others and voluntarily join in play but can also legitimately reject the invitation) and an authorial practice in which the players surprise each other with the unpredictability of each other's next move ("play offer") (cf. the notion of "interaddressivity" in Matusov, 2011c). At the same time, the players strengthen their trust in each other through collaborating on joint authoring of play events. What happened in the "Mr. Shark and Mr. Dolphin" play was emergent, unpredictable, and surprising to both participants (e.g., "Can we trust Mr. Shark?"). At the same time, both Peter and Devon could emerge as authors of the play content as well as creators of their new friendly relationship. The following field note of Peter's playful response to another event illustrates this improvisational nature of authorial relations:

**Encouraging Devon's Agency: Being in the world with children**

When I [Peter] entered a computer lab at LCC, I had a sense of déjà vu. Mr. Scott (a LCC staff responsible for teaching children technology ...) was not in the room but many of my [university] students were there with Françoise (another university instructor), including John. [LCC] Kids were playing on computers located on the periphery of the long and somewhat narrow room. In the middle of the room, there were long tables with Lego-

Logo blocks on them. Under the tables, Devon left Lego blocks that he played with and did not want to clean them up. Some of the students and Francoise used “my strategy” asking in their pretend voice “Mr. Shark” to clean up (there was no toy shark although). Devon refused in his own voice without accepting the role of Mr. Shark. Some [LCC] kids tried to support my [university] students telling Devon that they would “kick his ass out of the computer lab” if he did not start cleaning at once. In his turn, Devon told them that he would “kick their asses out of LCC.” The verbal abuse escalated. My students turned to me expecting me to do something miraculous.

I was amused by how older kids could use the bossing tone of their voice with Devon – it made me smile. It presented me with another playful opportunity. I turned to Devon, pointed at him with my finger, and ordered him in a pretend, overly exaggerated voice of authority, “Devon, I forbid you to clean up! You’ll lose this privilege today!” Everybody, including Devon, immediately stopped the verbal battle and turned to me in disbelief. Devon dropped on his knees and started silently cleaning up Legos under the table. I bended under the table and yelled in a fake anger, “Stop cleaning! I order you stop cleaning!” Devon smiled at me and yelled back, “I will! I will!” I continued in a fake authority voice, “What a disobedient boy! Stop cleaning at once! I said so! I order to you!” Devon laughed while he kept cleaning, “No, I will! I won’t listen to you!” I kept insisting in a fake manner, “Why don’t you listen to me?! I’m your boss!” Devon laughed loudly, “I ain’t have no bosses!” I was improvising, “What about me?! I’m your boss! They [showing at the people around] can’t boss you around but I can!” Devon laughed out loud – he was almost hysterical, “Yes, you’re my boss, but I won’t listen to you.” I continued, “Hey, you, stop cleaning at once! If not, if not.... I... [I made a fake anger face ready to strike]... I’ll join you!” He laughed at this threat and I joined him cleaning the Legos under the table. We cleaned and laughed a lot. Some other LCC kids laughed and joined us. Francoise joined us yelling at us in a pretend way that she forbade both of us cleaning and that she would call Mr. Scott to stop us if we would not stop at once. My students laughed as well but did not join us even though I, this time openly, encouraged them.

On a bus on our way back to the university, John came to my seat and asked me why Devon listened to me and not to anybody else. I told John that my goal was not to force Devon to do what I wanted him to do but rather to have a good time together while cleaning up together and that I did not have any strategy. I told John that in my view, Devon was sick and tired of people bossing him around and that he was very sensitive to manipulation. I told him that if I needed to ask Devon, I would ask him but I would also respect him refusing my request. I tried to encourage John to start treating Devon with respect and enjoying being with him without bossing him around by focusing on how to make him to do what John wanted him to do. John told me that it was difficult for him but he would think about that and probably try. And John did. In a week told me about his successful effort after a class (see his description in his Final Project) (Peter’s fieldnote#2, “I forbid you to clean up!”, sometime later in April 2006, reconstructed in full on 3/27/2011).

What is notable here is Peter’s focus on having a good time, improvising and being *in the world with children*. Invitations to play open up possibilities, explicitly signal the non-obligatory nature of participation, in which refusal is expected and respected as a legitimate response, and bring forth the authorship of the participants. This may potentially lead to responsive improvisation within the ongoing discourse of the children. In doing so, Peter playfully re-voiced, double-voiced, the authoritarian discourse of the other LCC children (and indirectly other bosses on Devon’s life) while populating it with his own carnivalistic intonations (Bakhtin, 1999); in turn, he gave a new meaning to this discourse for Devon and the other children. It is also notable that such an approach to responding to events with children appears to be something which the university students might find attractive by its apparent gaiety, humor, collaborative friendly spirit, humanity, kindness, respect, play, mutual teasing, carnival spirit, dethroning of authority, and powerfulness (Sullivan, Smith, & Matusov, 2009). Yet, it was still confusing and difficult for them to recognize authorial guidance. Their puzzlement is somewhat understandable since the authorial approach, in the two examples above provided by Peter, elicited the reaction that the university students sought. Peter chose to create this puzzlement intentionally to produce “a boundary object” (Star &

Griesemer, 1989) for his students; it was thus important for Peter to create such a boundary object with which he could address and prioritize the university students' technological concerns, while at the same time introducing a new educational approach to them.

On the other hand, an invitation to play may potentially represent quite a powerful influence for an invited player to agree with the content, the rules and the basis of a play! According to Marjanovic-Shane (2016), the focus of the participants in play is on building an imaginary situation (chronotope). Without collaboration and working toward a mutual agreement, this goal is hard if not impossible to achieve (Marjanovic-Shane, 2011). The play may fall apart when someone refuses to "play" and becomes a "spoilsport". It is much more likely for such "boundary negotiations" to take place among the players with "equal rights" (Bakhtin, 1999) for the negotiations than among the players in hierarchical relationships. The illegitimacy of contesting the play rules is especially true in educational settings where play, improvisation and drama are used as pedagogical tools for achieving preset educational goals rather than authentically for having a good time together. The only option for a child in situations of unequal rank may be to refuse to play altogether, since s/he does not stand a chance to renegotiate the imagined chronotope content and rules. The price of refusal, however, may be high. The institutions usually do not tolerate a "spoilsport". "[H]e must be cast out, for he threatens the existence of the play-community" (Huizinga, 2009, p. 11). Because of that, it is possible that Devon's compliance was not completely "an accidental by-product of our enjoyment and good social relations" as Peter believed (see Peter's fieldnote #1 above), but that their enjoyment and good social relations created enough attraction for Devon to agree with Peter's play rules and thus join the play. The fact that Devon refused similar invitations to play by Peter's students, probably interpreting them as another tool of coercion, might be an additional indicator that it was the quality of the relationship and the teacher's focus on being together and having a good time that created an authentic opportunity for the participant's authorship.

### John's increasing subjectivizing and problematizing interest in Devon

Initially provoked to do so as a part of Peter's class assignments and then increasingly on his own, John chose to spend time and talk with Devon. Here we first identify John's responsive authorship; second, we see his emerging self-generated authorship as he became increasingly more committed to a long-term learning journey with Devon. John increasingly asked Devon more genuine questions of John's own interest. Initially, getting to know Devon seemed to be another technological strategy for John, but then this "strategy" apparently led John to a more authorial approach (emphasis is ours to reflect on technological and authorial approaches):

I wanted Devon to understand that what he was doing wasn't acceptable but at the same time I didn't want to lecture him. I've noticed that he doesn't like be lectured. **The best way to get through to him** is through friendly suggestions, not flat out correction (John, WP, 3/25/2006).

Something I found most interesting: Devon said that when he has a problem or gets in trouble he would come to me. I didn't realize the impact I had made on him already. [H]e doesn't like school because he doesn't like to "get teached." And he dislikes the LCC because he doesn't like being told what to do. ... [I]t was very **interesting getting to know Devon better**. I learned things about him that **I never would have expected** and I look forward to continuously working with him (John, MP, 4/6/2006).

**I've noticed** as we've been there that the children at the LCC seem to respond differently to verbal commands than other children I've worked with. **Specifically, Devon has made me think about this. I would like to explore** this topic [in my final project for the class]. How do these children like to be asked what to do? Why do they prefer this way? What is the one way they hate to be told to do something? Is this just at the LCC or in school as well? All of these questions are important to my projects (John, MP, 4/20/2006)



It seems to us that in John's own (school?) experience, other children did not mind or even like being told what to do. We wonder if "the other children" that John was juxtaposing with "these children" from the center have been over-socialized in a traditional model and have been so robbed of agency they did not even know it. In turn, they would not resent and rebel against adult demands the way the LCC minority children did (especially Devon). It seems to us that because of that, LLC was an ideal environment to teach preservice teachers how to recognize the dangers of sequestering children's (humans') agency.

John designed his Final Project based on his conversation with Devon about how he wanted to be treated:

This project was inspired by a specific child at the LCC. I spent a great deal of time with this child and was constantly observing his behavior and interactions. Devon, age 7, was a rambunctious child with a serious disrespect for authority. He had many issues with authority because he felt that they were always telling him what to do. He did not like to be given orders. He would prefer if someone asked him nicely to do something. However, he often wouldn't respond when he was asked nicely. I found that the best way to have Devon respond to you was to offer a suggestion:

We were playing a board game and the pieces were knocked to the floor. He made no move to pick up the pieces so I said to him, "Well I'm not going to pick that up." Immediately, he bent down and proceeded to pick up all the pieces.

**However, I wasn't convinced that this would always work** and I found that Devon often contradicted himself. Therefore I conducted a small study of Devon. I gave him the same survey everyone else completed [about how they would like to be treated]. It showed that Devon would prefer to be asked nicely, but thought that telling someone to do something would prove more effective.

However, later that day I observed him interact with another child, which reaffirmed my assertions:

Devon and I were sitting at a table and I looked at him. He said to me, "Don't look at me! Turn around or I'll kick you in the face!" So I asked him, "**Why do you tell me what to do, when you don't like being told what to do?**" The only response he could give was "Sorry."

While Devon would prefer to be asked what to do, we see that he doesn't **apply** the same philosophies when addressing other people (John, Final Project, 5/19/2006)

In our view, through his conversations and engagements with Devon, John moved closer to an authorial approach to education and away from his initial technological. John became genuinely interested in Devon, wanting to know what Devon thought about John's topics of interest and taking Devon's responses seriously, treating him with the respect of "a consciousness with equal rights" (Bakhtin, 1999). Devon seemed to accept John's bid and reciprocated with his own dialogic attitude toward John.

However, in our judgment, John remained in his search for an universal ethical rule based in Kantian decontextualized universal ethics (Smith, 2010). John expected the logical consistency from other people, "[As I expected] **most of the children were consistent** when they would ask someone the way they would prefer to be asked. The one child that would constantly contradict himself was Devon" (John, FP, 5/19/2006).

In our view, Devon had been sorry not because he realized a logical inconsistency in his attitudes to others and himself, as John argued, but because he had probably felt sympathetic to John's distress, which Devon recognized that he himself had caused (as John communicated to him). In our interpretation, in Devon's view, John called on Devon to take responsibility for his own abusive actions on

a person whom Devon valued and wanted to be together with, “Something I found most interesting: Devon said that when he has a problem or gets in trouble he would come to me. I didn't realize the impact I had made on him already” (John, MP, 4/6/2006). Furthermore, in Devon's view, John called on Devon to consider how “we” (i.e., Devon and John) and mostly he, Devon, desired to relate and live together. In our view, Devon's reply to John's call was not to acknowledge that he, Devon, was logically inconsistent, as a Kantian universal and decontextualized ethics demands (i.e., “to treat others as you want to be treated”), and as John seemed to interpret it. Rather, Devon's reply was an acknowledgement that Devon felt sorry for offending John, a person whom Devon valued, liked, and respected.

We argue that through his own reflection and experimentations guided by Peter, John became increasingly dialogic in his relation with Devon; arguably, however, John was not yet “polyphonic” in his responses, as he did not recognize and value his own dialogism (Matusov, 2009; Morson & Emerson, 1989). In our judgment, Peter was successful in building authorial relations with his students (and Devon), as it was evident in their collaborative explorations of their ways of becoming good teachers and interest in being together in their classroom. The evidence of authorial relations is discernible in the establishment of the pedagogical regime of internally persuasive discourse, in which everything could be tested and testable in his classroom with the preservice teachers (Bakhtin, 1991; Matusov, 2009; Matusov & von Duyke, 2010; Morson, 2004). However, in our view, Peter failed to make a dialogic authorial approach visible for his students (even, arguably, including John). This can be seen in the students' puzzlement about Peter's relationship with Devon and their understanding of Peter's playful attitude as a “technology” or a “strategy” to get Devon to their pre-set end-point (to clean up the toys). Even more, when they tried to “apply” what they perceived as Peter's universal and decontextualized strategy, they “faked” play in a manipulative way and only managed to make Devon feel uneasy and defensive. We see that Peter failed to teach an authorial approach to education not because the students did not accept it but because this approach remained invisible to them. In our view, Peter successfully socialized his students in his authorial dialogic approach to education, but he did not make it an object of the students' deep reflection, consideration, and critical deconstruction. In contrast to the socialization, we define genuine education as critical deconstruction embedded in “the internally persuasive discourse” (Bakhtin, 1991; Matusov & von Duyke, 2010).

***How could Peter engage his students in considering an authorial approach to education and make it visible and explicit for them?***

It seems that there were four challenges facing future teachers in developing a dialogic authorial approach. First, future teachers tend to take an overwhelmingly finalizing and objectivizing stance in their work toward children, treating them as objects of their pedagogical desires and actions, guided by universal pedagogical techniques (Matusov & Smith, 2007). At the same time, it seems that Peter's students experienced their interest and nostalgia for a dialogic authorial approach both in their relationship with Peter and their occasional relations with some children at LCC (more cooperative than Devon), as they reported at the end of the class and in the anonymous class evaluation. In these relations, they seemed to recognize that another way of thinking about children was possible, thinking about them as excitedly unpredictable and responsible beings-in-the-world. However, after a 9-week practicum, the students did not yet explicitly recognize and value this way of thinking about children as possible and/or desirable. Focusing and reflecting on their own enjoyment in the class and practicum guided by the instructor might have been helpful for the students to notice an alternative, dialogic authorial, educational approach to what they had been accustomed to. The hidden curriculum of the authorial approach had to become explicit curriculum.

Second, as Smith's (2010) analysis discusses, a "modernist" way of thinking about others and interpreting events in the world dominates the future teachers' discourse about their work with the children. This modernist approach demands Kantian universal de-contextualized ethics, separated from the ongoing events (both immediate and recursive) in the pre-service teachers' practicum experience. It seems that, in the future, Peter should make more explicit the distinct and contrasting difference between reflecting upon events as a responsible participant in the world with the others, and reflecting upon the events through de-contextualized concepts and strategies. His students should have had more opportunities to discuss these two approaches, their implications and their pros and cons, as well as to reflect on their own ways of approaching children and others in different situations. Alternatively (or even in addition), some of the pre-service teachers might evoke neo-liberal ideologies focusing on a hegemonic notion of "personal responsibility," thus blaming victims like Devon, while ignoring systemic institutional and societal pressures and injustice (Stringer, 2014). Peter might have investigated these diverse hypotheses to problematize them with his students.

Third, it seems that Peter needed to develop a way of sharing excitement and enjoyment in engaging with children at the Center with the university students. Perhaps Peter could reflect upon his enjoyment and excitement with the pre-service teachers more directly, asking students to reflect upon their enjoyable and exciting moments in working with children and what specifically made such experiences enjoyable. As Becker (1953) argued, guided interpretation of ambiguous experiences can become a part of learning to enjoy an activity with others. Enjoyment in working with children is socially learned and socially framed<sup>24</sup> rather than "natural," and requires a community of participants who engage in discussing how and why they enjoy it (it is arguably not something seen as immediately pleasurable). It may be necessary to more explicitly discuss why or why not students are enjoying or not enjoying the experience of working with children. As Becker writes about emergent authorial agency in a practice,

If a stable form of new behaviour toward the object is to emerge, a transformation of meanings must occur, in which the person develops a new conception of the nature of the object. This happens in a series of communicative acts in which others point out new aspects of his experience to him, present him with new interpretations of events, and help him achieve a new conceptual organization of his world, without which the new behaviour is not possible. Persons who do not achieve the proper kind of conceptualization are unable to engage in the given behaviour and turn off in the direction of some other relationship to the object or activity (H. Becker, 1953, p. 242).

Fourth is about problematizing of education itself for the students. The purpose of education may not be in making people good – e.g., making Devon prosocial and non-aggressive, make Devon to clean toys after himself, make Devon polite, make Devon civilized, make Devon cooperative, and so on. These desires may be important but they may not be educational in themselves. The purpose of education can be in engaging students in deciding for themselves what "good" means, to examine life, to test diverse ideas in a critical dialogue (Plato, 1997). In the future, Peter may want to engage his students, preservice teachers, in a critical ontological dialogue about the purpose of education and ontologies behind diverse purposes (e.g., pedagogy of survival and necessity vs. pedagogy of leisure, imagination, and desirability). Peter should make the contrast between conventional Standard-Based technological agency-free education and DEFFAA more visible for his future students so they can engage in a critical dialogic investigation of them and their own educational values. However, this advice is contradictory, reflecting the major paradox of education. We see the major paradox of education as the following: the major goal of education must be a part of education itself – i.e., a part of the students' own critical dialogue – and

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. "No one would fall in love if he hadn't read about it first" Francois de la Rochefoucauld (French writer, 1613-1680).

cannot pre-exist the education practice or be decided by the instructor in advance (or in our advice to Peter). This paradox includes the students' right not to adopt DEFFAA approach as a part of their successful education. However, this non-adoption should be a result of their critical examination of DEFFAA and other educational philosophies and not a gut decision, an opinionship, or a result of students' prior socialization. Of course, the latter demand involves smuggling DEFFAA into the criteria of "successful education" – the paradox remains....

Of course, our suggestions would not guarantee a success for Peter or any future educators – nothing does, according to a dialogic authorial approach. However, they represent reasonable and plausible hypotheses to test and interesting and promising provocations to try in future educational practice guided by the authorial approach.

## Conclusions

In our view, a dialogic authorial pedagogical approach starts with a certain quality of the teacher being with the student. This quality involves mutual interest in each other – what they think and how they feel about the world and the self (cf. the concept of interaddressivity, Matusov, 2011c) -- and mutual respect. The latter involves legitimacy of non-cooperation and non-participation. For Peter and Devon their quality of being together was based on their having fun through improvisational play suggested by Peter. For John and Devon, their quality of being together seemed to emerge more from interest in, puzzlement with, and attraction to each other. For Peter and his university students, their quality of being together seemed to come from mutual interest in each being taken seriously and from Peter's pedagogical desire to be helpful to his students. By being helpful, Peter accepted the validity of the way the students defined their inquiries, but he did not express agreement with the formulation of their inquiries.

At the same time, Peter and John's successes in promoting critical dialogues among the undergraduate students – and their desires, worldviews, and pedagogical approaches – in their work with Devon were limited. On the positive side, Peter apparently managed to engage his students in puzzlement, hypothesizing their dear beliefs, considering alternatives, searching for a pedagogical approach to a problem they experienced, and considering his own pedagogical approach unfamiliar to them. He also seemed to guide John successfully into engaging in a dialogic authorial guidance with Devon. Finally, John was successful in engaging Devon (and some other LCC children) in critical dialogue about considering a desired approach for being asked to do something. However, Peter seemed to fail to make his students recognize his dialogic authorial approach with them and with Devon, and consider it as an alternative to a technological approach with which they were familiar.

Dialogic education for and from authorial agency (DEFFAA), a new paradigm in education, is based in a fundamentally different orientation and set of purposes than the technological agency-free approach. Dialogic education for and from authorial agency grounded in this set of premises and values is characterized by the following qualities that we described as an authorial approach and contrasted to the currently prevailing technological approach. An authorial approach to education is an extension of the dialogic understanding of human authorial agency — in which both the student and the teacher participate in authoring their own new, unpredictable beings-in-the-world, their new desires and new subjectivities which cannot be pre-planned or known in advance by anyone including themselves. This process is supported by having rich opportunities for problem defining; being encouraged in making unpredictable turns and connections; mutual appreciation and respect as well as recognition and acceptance of the collision of diverging desires.

1. The dialogic authorial approach to education focuses on the relational nature of human activity and discourse, rather than the technological, which focuses on acquiring knowledge and skills as tools detached from their purposes and use. As tools, knowledge and skills must be knowingly authored and authentically desired. Otherwise, tools, in themselves, cannot be used to develop and assist human beings and their lived purposes because someone is authoring someone else without their consent – i.e., without an “authorial signature” (Bakhtin, 1993). The technologically minded/guided teachers can only manipulate unconscious or enforce resisted or compliant behaviors. Thus, by nature these tools, and their uses, are either non- or even anti-educational.<sup>25</sup>
2. Authoring is anti-manipulative. In education, pedagogical manipulation entails forcing predefined curricula on students, in a pre-defined, lock-step pace, through predefined instructional and motivational management strategies, regardless of or in exploitation of the students’ interests, understanding and values<sup>26</sup>. Any expression of students’ authorial agency may (and often does) create a deviation, difference and non-compliance to this rigid and predetermined set of procedures, a problem that needs to be eliminated. In contrast, authoring includes participants in the dialogic devising, exposing, and setting of agendas, goals, problems, journeys, and provocations, exposing boundary objects and their reification for potential re-negotiation, and includes all affected members.
3. Authorial education sets purposes and goals, but cannot be based on predefined curricular endpoints or officially preset explicit or implicit agendas. Such pre-defined and, therefore, depersonalized and decontextualized endpoints - i.e. reified knowledge and skills, position teachers to look for ways to control learners in a universal, abstract, non-eventful, technological, and impersonal manner. This is dangerous because teachers’ and learners’ agencies are ignored and devalued.
4. To return back to humanitarian meaning of the notion of “education” expressed in its etymology in diverse languages, education has to focus on authorial agency (DEFFAA) rather than on curricular standards (technological agency-free education).

Authorial Agency (aka DEFFAA) is incompatible with conventional Standard-Based technological agency-free education. It is important to consider how educational institutions and even DEFFAA-minded educators can create conditions for DEFFAA in their own local settings, often shaped by the conventional Standard-Based technological agency-free education and hegemonic neoliberal agenda. In our judgment, DEFFAA can flow in full only when our society transforms from survival- and need-based into leisure- and agency-based.

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<sup>25</sup> Lobok (2001) argues that the Russian word for education “obrazovanie” (“образование”) etymologically originates with a concept of promoting and actualizing the unique unfolding Universe (“об-раз”, “ob-raz”, defining the morphology of the Russian word education, means literally “embracing the oneness”) within in each student.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Behaviorism has defined as its goal the need for those in authority “to control and predict behavior” of subordinate others (Hartmann, 1992).

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