

# HGSE\_IM\_Session\_03\_Brion-Meisels\_FINAL-002

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[MUSIC PLAYING]

MONIK JIMENEZ: Thank you all for being here. I think this is a true testament to your dedication and interest in being in this space today, given the situation that we have outside, so I just want to acknowledge your bravery and thank you so much for coming. What I've been asked to do in this first little, very quick introduction here is frame the problem. So, why do we need to even consider equity in the classroom?

That's an important question. We talk about it, we throw it around, but unless we really understand why we want to include equity, we're never really going to be able to address how to achieve it. And often, we're challenged to consider whose voice is heard. And in my experience as a learner, as a teacher, if you will, or giver of knowledge-- if we can even say that-- most of the conversation has been around, how do we bring out the quiet student? How do we bring out the, quote unquote, "shy student?" How do we allow other peoples to have space from those students who talk more than the others?

And less often, the conversation has been around less putting blame on the student for maybe not talking, but thinking about what are the pathways that created space for some people to feel comfortable sharing and to ask questions, and close those pathways for others? We have to acknowledge our history, we have to acknowledge the structures of the systems in which we live.

Education, science, any other aspect of our social structure is not agnostic to the pathways and historic oppression that has allowed some voices to have space and other voices to be silenced. This is why we need to be thinking about equity. We have to be intentional, because equity doesn't happen by chance. It has to be designed and it has to be thought out carefully, because when we don't do that, we actually can inflict more harm.

What do we lose when we don't intentionally think about creating equitable learning spaces? We lose the richness and the critical perspective of those who have been historically left out of the conversation. And so it's not just those students who-- or learners who lose. All of us lose. And I include myself as a learner. I learn way more from my students than I think they learn from me, to be quite honest. And I lose if I'm not able to engage all of the voices in our classroom.

So, with that, I leave this question for us to individually challenge ourselves. Why does equity matter to you in your learning spaces? And with that, I yield to Gretchen.

[APPLAUSE]

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Hi. I feel like there are a lot of my students in this room, which is very reassuring. But they will know that I love teaching, and I don't love being on stage, so bear with me as we go through this. My name is Gretchen Brion-Meisels, and I am a senior lecturer here at HGSE, and I have the honor of being able to do a little teaching and learning with you today.

So I wanted to start by saying a little bit about what you can expect from today. I'm going to teach for about 40 minutes. We're going to learn together for about 40 minutes, and a lot of it will involve moving around. We're going to move several times. If moving is an access issue for you, or if you would prefer to

stay put, once you get to your first table, you can just stay there and you can let other folks come to you, and it won't impact your ability to participate or learn in any way.

We are going to be talking to folks with different roles and experiences than our own. Even just among the folks I know in this room, I can see people who are teachers, people who are administrators, people who are K-12, people who are higher ed, people who are researchers, people who are staff. But all of us are here because we're interested in this question around how we include more viewpoints and voices in our classrooms, and I would argue in whatever spaces we're in, right? We can think about teaching and learning more broadly than just what happens in a school or a classroom.

So, my plan is to talk about this question of how we include more voices while I model some of the strategies that I use to include more voices, and that's what I'm going to engage you with today. How many folks in this room think about themselves as working on stepping up versus working on stepping back versus feeling comfortable with both?

So if you think of yourself as someone who's working on stepping up when you enter a classroom, meaning participating more, I'm going to ask you to give us a very high thumbs up. If you think about yourself as someone who's working on stepping back, which means participating less or speaking less, I'm going to ask you to give us a very high thumbs down. And if you feel like you're someone who's got that balance, I'm going to ask you to give us a very high in the middle. So let's see what we have there. OK, so we have a real mix. We have a bunch of people who are in the middle, we have some people who are working on stepping up, and a few people who are working on stepping back. Awesome. If you consider yourself someone who prefers to participate verbally, whether that's in a small group or a large group when you're in a classroom, I'm going to ask you to give me a thumbs up. If you consider yourself someone who prefers to participate in writing or drawing or nonverbally, I'm going to ask you to give me a thumbs down. And if you're someone who prefers just to listen and process, I'm going to ask you to give me a middle.

So prefers to participate verbally, nonverbally, or listen. Where are you in that? Go ahead and give me what you are. So we have a lot-- we have a lot of verbal participants in here, which makes sense, because we're at a school in an institution that probably values verbal participation. But we also have some folks who prefer to write or draw, and some folks who prefer to listen.

So part of what I wanted to-- the reason why I wanted to start this way is because I want us to just think a little bit about the fact that, even as we're coming in we're coming in with lots of different learning styles. And there are folks in here who are really going to prefer to participate in a class or a meeting verbally, there are folks who are going to prefer to write or draw, and there are folks whose participation is going to be about listening or asking questions or synthesizing.

We're not going to set norms or aspirations for this space together today, because we're here for such a short period of time. But as we come to know each other and as we go through the tables, we're going to try to honor all those different ways of participation. And one of the things that you're going to notice about the activity we're about to do is that it allows for multiple forms of participation pretty easily as a part of the way it's structured.

So today, we are going to engage in an activity called World Café. And I did not make this activity up. The great thing about that is that you can find a lot of resources, if you want to do this yourself, online. So it is really easy to find all of the stuff that I have on the tables, as well as additional directions and even

communities of folks who are trying to use this type of strategy to teach and learn online, and you can find that on that website.

The purpose of World Café is that it is a structure or a social technology that supports us in having conversations that matter in ways that build on the strength of human connection and relationship. So it puts us into small groups, but allows us to move through different small groups such that we get a chance to talk to and connect with lots of different people and build on the conversations that have happened before the ones were currently happening.

And logistically, there are a few key guidelines as to how this works. The first is that we are in a minute going to get up, and we're going to go to the round tables in the back, and you're going to find a table that has a tablecloth on it. That's how you know it's an open table. The goal is to get four people to a table, and so we're going to try to mix ourselves up and get four people to a table.

We are going to go through three rounds of dialogue as a group, and each time we go through a new round of dialogue, we're going to move to a new table. So the first table you sit at, you'll be at for the first round of dialogue, and then, if you're able, you'll move to a new table with the goal being to try not to sit with any of the same people during any of the same rounds. So you want to try to mix up everyone at your table as much as possible.

Each time we sit down for a round, I'm going to ask the tables to start by picking a historian, which is a person who is going to use words or images to capture some of the big ideas that are happening in the dialogue at the table, and the historian is going to draw or write directly on the tablecloth. So you will see that there are markers at your table, and that the tablecloths are writable.

They are a little bit gentle, but they are totally doable, so if you're the historian, right gently. And anyone can write or add to the tablecloth, but the historian is taking responsibility for really making sure that something gets on the tablecloth. Those are the only three things you need to know as we go into this. I can talk more about the scaffolding of the questions on the back end.

So if you want to leave your stuff where you are, you're welcome to do that. Let's go ahead and get up and find a table. And if you need coffee or a treat, you can quickly grab that, because this is a cafe, and you can bring it to your table.

If you have not yet had a chance to choose a historian, that will be the first thing you do in a moment. But what we are going to do in this first round is, I'm going to ask each person to think about a classroom that you have spent time in where you felt comfortable and motivated to participate. It could be a classroom where you were an educator, or a classroom where you were a student it doesn't matter. And then I'm going to ask you to take a minute to just describe that space to other members of your group.

So we have about six minutes to share, and there are about four people, so that means about a minute, a minute and a half for each person. So we're not giving a long description, but we're just talking a little bit about what is-- just describing the classroom where you felt comfortable and motivated to participate. And again, if you have not chosen a historian, please do that before you start.

I'm going to watch the time carefully-- not my forte-- and I'm going to give you a one-minute warning when we're at five minutes, just so you can make sure everybody gets to at least say something. All right? All right. Go ahead.

AUDIENCE: So we're thinking about classrooms we felt comfortable or motivated to participate.

AUDIENCE: I could start us off. Is it one minute each person?

AUDIENCE: Roughly, yeah.

AUDIENCE: So currently in Gretchen's [INAUDIBLE] class, we're-- each of the groups are doing a project, and my project is in a fifth grade, a sixth grade classroom where actually we convene a bunch of students, and we're trying to design an after-school lab. And that environment feels really inviting. Well, I'm kind of teaching and also participating at the same time.

I think it's inviting because first we-- it's just a really convivial environment. We have snacks every week, we start off with a chant, so it's very lively, and it just started with joy, I feel like. And the conversation has been-- it's organized, but it's also where everyone can participate. And we don't really push people, so we noticed at first there are people who are quieter. But as the semester moved along, they are starting to contribute, and we're realizing that people with different personalities are contributing really different things. So that's one example.

AUDIENCE: Do you want me to go now?

AUDIENCE: Sure. I mean, go when you feel so moved.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, I can share right now. So, usually classrooms that make me feel comfortable to participate is when I get the sign that I won't be judged by my participation in the content of my comment, but also in the depth of the comment. Because sometimes, I make comments based on the surface knowledge that I have, but I'm looking for more. And when I feel that it's OK for me to just touch the surface and then, together with the instructor, find more ways to deepen that learning-- is a great way for me to feel comfortable participating.

Also, when the participation is part of the class, and it's not like a lecture that you need to sit and just listen to, where other people are also invited to share their thoughts and their feelings. So those are, I think, the main things that make me comfortable to share.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Love that.

AUDIENCE: I wrote down judgment-free partnership, participation as a structure, joy, and chance. And then, [? Min-Joo, ?] I drew you with your sixth-graders. I like the reciprocity. You said it's going two directions.

AUDIENCE: You left out the snacks.

AUDIENCE: That's [? because ?] Gretchen got it.

AUDIENCE: Oh, she did. OK.

AUDIENCE: I'm sorry.

AUDIENCE: All right, cool.

AUDIENCE: I had an eye on Gretchen over there, yeah. I'll add snacks just because it's all in one place. [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: They always disappear so fast.

AUDIENCE: Oh, I bet. Where are they?

AUDIENCE: Other than what has been said, one thing that I think about is where I have a relationship with the person leading the class that's like, not just they're my professor or whatever, but I know them, they know me. That's probably when I've felt most comfortable participating-- is when I feel like I know that person in some way.

AUDIENCE: Thinking a lot about, like, the micro-relationship maps and not only the relationship to the people you already know, but are there moments for smaller breakouts with new people, I feel like that can really help me feel more comfortable to share if I have a moment to process with just like one or two elbow partners. Because then I feel like I can get my thoughts together to think about how to participate.

I also like classes where we can participate visually. I really like to take notes with colors and draw, so having opportunity to do that, I find really helpful. Or, like, gallery walks really help me feel engaged and motivated.

AUDIENCE: That's nice.

AUDIENCE: With relationships that can be tricky sometimes-- because I noticed some quieter students, they get really intimidated, where it's like, oh, group work. So yeah, I guess it's really different for different people.

AUDIENCE: I can think of one-- just to frame the part of the judgment a little more, I can think of one specific professor that I know that, even when the comment does not really align with what is being discussed, she really makes an effort to get more of what the student's thinking to get the student back on track of what the class is about, instead of just shutting down that student, like, no this is not what we're talking about.

Because that, for the future, will prevent that student to participate. Instead of shutting down, it's like, tell me more what do you meant when you say that. So that way, there is I think, a process of learning for everybody, right? And by that, even when you realize that the student was off track but the teacher was making an effort to bring it back to track, you feel comfortable that, if I say something wrong, I'm not going to be judged, so I can say it.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] that you are cared about in the classroom, not only the smart ones.

AUDIENCE: It's not like, the brilliant comments only, right?

AUDIENCE: I also think about the importance of joy. I feel like spaces where I feel comfortable, there is laughter, or people know each other's names. I just think that makes me want to participate more-- if I feel like there's something to gain-- like a sense of closeness with the community.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] names, at least.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUDIENCE: I'm going to try this.

AUDIENCE: Yeah, try that. Does anyone else want a marker? [INAUDIBLE]?

AUDIENCE: I'm good.

AUDIENCE: I was told to be gentle, and I wasn't.

AUDIENCE: That's all right. I ripped the paper, too.

AUDIENCE: I am the vocal participant.

[LAUGHTER]

AUDIENCE: You're like, I am the vocal participant.

AUDIENCE: I was the listener.

AUDIENCE: I'm often the person who takes a lot of notes, so I was trying to actually not do that. Tried to stretch into an area that's less comfortable for me.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: I'm going to pause people. I apologize, because I hate cutting people off, and if we had a little more time to play with, I wouldn't. So we are at the end of round one, and before we move-- let's see if I can make this work-- I'm going to ask each table to choose a host who can stay put at the table.

The host's job is written on the table, and the host is going to stay when others leave. When new people come to your table, the host is going to welcome the new people and have them introduce themselves,

and then the host's job is to very briefly share any key things that came up in the first round with the new group. You can use the tablecloth to do that.

And then, if you want to really get into your role, you can invite in voices in the next table that may be more quiet, and see if you can help people sort of speak and make sure everyone has a chance to speak, OK? So, you're going to choose a host-- that's step one. Step two-- everybody except the host is going to get up and move to a new table. The host is going to stay put. OK? Go ahead and do that.

AUDIENCE: I'm good staying or leaving. Either/or.

AUDIENCE: I feel compelled to move.

AUDIENCE: I can stay.

AUDIENCE: You want to stay?

AUDIENCE: I prefer to go, so what if you stay, then?

AUDIENCE: I think I can challenge myself a little bit.

AUDIENCE: Yes, [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: Yes, exactly.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: Thank you. Bye.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: So if you're the host, go ahead and share any big ideas that have come up in your first group.

AUDIENCE: All right. So this was the notes. I didn't make the notes, but-- so these are initials of our names, but basically what we were talking about. So I started sharing a classroom where I felt there was a lot of joy. It was a classroom with fifth and sixth graders, and we were trying to design an after-school program, and the reason it felt inviting is because first, the environment-- there was snacks, and so it felt really relaxing.

And we usually start with a chant and some community activities, and everyone was really open to participate, but we also don't push people. So I felt like that part-- where there's joy in the room-- it was really important.

[INAUDIBLE] was sharing about how, when he feels that there is no judgment in the classroom, it's easier to participate-- when he knows that he's not going to be judged by what he says. And yeah, and also--

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: 30 more seconds, and then I'm going to pause you.

AUDIENCE: And times where, when you make a comment, the teacher really invites you to say more about it, even though it's a little bit off track. So it's like not shutting down certain comments, and really inviting everyone's voices in the classroom. And that's when he felt really inviting.

There were other-- [? Ivy ?] shared about [? gallery ?] walk and how that really invites her to participate, and how sometimes being allowed to make notes, like this kind of colorful art, is what she likes to do in the classroom. So when there's opportunities to do that, it also feels inviting. And the last person shared about how relationships are really important. Like, when you feel like you know the people in the room and you have a relationship with the teacher, that's when it feels easier to participate.

But we also mentioned how sometimes it could be intimidating-- you know, like there are micro-relationships. [? Some are, ?] like, closer to other people, or--

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: I'm going to pause folks. Thank you to the hosts for sharing. In a minute, you're going to choose a new historian. If you love being the historian, you are welcome to volunteer

again, but this is an opportunity for someone different to step into that role. And, as a group, I'm going to ask you to discuss this time what are some of the barriers to including more student voices in conversations? And then, what helps to facilitate the inclusion of additional voices?

So now I'm asking you to zoom out a little bit from your own experience, and to think more broadly about teaching and learning, and to think a little bit about the barriers or the affordances that help us bring more voices into a room. If it's easier, you can still go around in a circle and just share your perspectives. If you prefer to jump back and forth and talk across the table, you're welcome to do that as well, and your host can help you figure that out.

So, I'm going to ask you to choose a historian, and then go ahead and jump into this second conversation. And again, we're going to have about six minutes to engage in this conversation with taking notes on the table. Go ahead when you're ready.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] be the historian?

AUDIENCE: I did it at my last table. I'm willing to do it here if no one else wants to do it.

AUDIENCE: You got it.

AUDIENCE: And do we want to just go around, or just like talk [INAUDIBLE]? I can start us off. So, in one of the classes I was taking this semester, we talked about the role of silence in the classroom, and how silence sometimes is also a form of participation, and how we kind of need to rethink what participation really means besides just vocal participation.

So I was thinking, inviting student voices in the conversation doesn't necessarily mean getting everyone to talk. Or, is it like how we really will be able to know what people are learning and thinking about, and also share ideas while not really forcing vocal participation as the only way to participate? So I was thinking about-- I don't know, like being able to write [INAUDIBLE], or maybe even allow moments of silence. But I'm not totally sure. So yeah, that's one question I've been thinking about.

Are you usually the quieter ones? Were you, like, thumbs up?

AUDIENCE: I'm quieter.

AUDIENCE: I think it depends on my role, or who I'm with, but yeah. I think when I was a student-- or as a student, I'm more verbally participative. But I really appreciate what you're saying about silence, and that student voice doesn't necessarily mean verbal communication, that there are other ways to elevate student perspectives and student inclusion. And so, I really appreciate a broader perspective of what student voice actually means, and how it can be seen as empowerment.

It's also interesting to me to think about what that means in terms of differentiation. So, what are different ways of bringing students in to meet them where they're at, and to push them maybe slightly past their comfort zone at some point? And kind of creating a dynamic where everyone who's in the space feels invited in in a way that they resonate with.

AUDIENCE: [? Anything ?] about barriers?

AUDIENCE: Yeah, lots of barriers, I think. I think in K through 12, at least in the US, I think one barrier is standards-- feeling like everyone has to meet the same standard or objective, which could be really tricky if it's then a more student-driven environment. Not impossible. Just a little bit trickier.

AUDIENCE: Sometimes there's the evaluation part [? when the ?] teacher's like, oh, certain people are talking, [? and ?] more points, or something like that. And there are, as you were talking about, there are standards, there are tests, there are [INAUDIBLE] that we need to push through. And there's necessarily

certain people whose voice or whose usual way of participation conforms with that more but there are other people whose voice [INAUDIBLE].

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: I was thinking about that, too, when Professor Jimenez was talking at the beginning about-- I forget how she said it, but something about how we need to take into account the history that shapes what equitable teaching and learning are, and this notion that how we define participation often is a very sort of academic, Western way of thinking about participation.

So I was thinking about that, and then also thinking a little bit about how, in many academic contexts, participation is seen as an individual thing versus a collective thing. Which, again, is like culturally bound and very US-y. And so, thinking about how do we shift so that we can think about participation as not just the person who speaks, but also the collective in some way?

AUDIENCE: Right. Because sometimes there's the culture of speaking, but the culture of listening is really tuned down. Like, even when the student is quiet, it's possible they're thinking about, oh, what should I speak next? And that takes a lot of listening opportunity away. Or really, it's very distracting as well.

AUDIENCE: To your point, I think one of the barriers is almost what we have valued as being valid participation or valid voice. And in some cultures, silence is actually valued, or listening is valued just as much as speaking.

And I think another one of the barriers is just understanding cultural context. So, a lot of times maybe the way that something might be presented or the way someone understands it-- there might be a barrier in the way that maybe they process it, or giving even enough time for people to process. I think sometimes that wait time can be a barrier if we are just moving so fast to get the content done, but not giving enough appropriate wait time.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Yeah. I've really had to challenge myself over the years on that. I have to practice counting in my head. You're like, move, move. Which relates to what you said, Justin, actually, about the external pressure, too. Part of the reason we don't give the wait time is because we're being-- there's sort of this higher-up way that we're being trained to believe that we have to keep moving so fast. Yeah, that's a great point.

AUDIENCE: Something interesting that she was saying about the collective--

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: You have about two minutes.

AUDIENCE: --and this idea of how much students feel competitions amongst each other, rather than like a collective elevation of progress or growth, and how that might shift dynamics as well.

AUDIENCE: I was thinking of something similar, because I looked at it and it said, in conversation-- not just including more voices, but in conversation. And I think even in many of my classes here-- actually, I think my high schoolers and maybe even middle schoolers I taught were actually better at being in conversation-- like, responding directly, in part because it was like something more focused on and taught than I think happens in a lot of classrooms here.

It's kind of like, someone says something, then someone says something else. I guess there's multiple student voices, but they're not really--

AUDIENCE: They're not communicating.

AUDIENCE: They're [? not even ?] communicating with each other, so there's no collective movement towards that.

AUDIENCE: I think that brings up the point, too, of relational trust within the bounds of a classroom or between each other. I think people are more willing to participate if they feel like what they're adding is not going to be judged, or that there are safe relationships between the people in the space.

AUDIENCE: I'm taking the class on documentation this semester, and there was one example in a high school AP literature classroom where they're talking about greatness, and then one student at one point said, oh, I guess we just all have different ideas. And at face value, it's a comment where it's like she's appreciating that there are differences.

But when you take another look, like when that teacher looked at the recording, she noticed how that comment actually shuts off. [INAUDIBLE] she's like, oh we're different. And then that's done. And I feel like that's kind of how we're getting [? in a ?] culture of tolerance. We tolerate all voices, but that the voices are not in communication with each other.

AUDIENCE: That's a good example.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: All right, I'm going to ask people to finish up their sentence. Great. And then I'm going to ask you to pick a host one more time. If you are someone who doesn't want to get up and walk around, feel free to volunteer to be the host again. Otherwise, this is an opportunity for someone else to try out the host position. So feel free to volunteer if you haven't had a chance. But you're going to pick a host, and then everyone is going to get up and find one more table.

And again, the goal is to see if you can sit with nobody that you have sat with yet today. So look for people you haven't sat with to the extent that we can, all right? Alison?

AUDIENCE: Will the host be summarizing both previous rounds?

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: The host is just going to summarize the last round. Great question. All right, so when you are ready, pick a host and then go ahead and get up. This will be the last round.

AUDIENCE: It's you.

AUDIENCE: I feel like I'm being volun-told.

[LAUGHTER]

[INAUDIBLE] I'll do it. I'm fine [INAUDIBLE].

[SIDE CONVERSATION]

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Again, you are going to start by introducing yourselves, and then the host is going to briefly share big ideas from round two. Because I don't want to stop you, I'm just going to go through all three directions at the same time now. Once the host has shared the big ideas, you're going to choose one final historian, and then you are going to talk about this last question, which is much more of an analytic question than we've done so far. What are the characteristics of a classroom that invites all voices into the dialogue?

And I'm in particular going to invite you to think about the characteristics of the students in that classroom, the educator in that classroom, and the content, which is something that Richard [? Elmore ?] used to talk about is the instructional core. So thinking about the characteristics of the classroom, and you're going to jot that down. We're going to take a couple of minutes for the host to summarize, six minutes to talk, and then we will close, OK?

Any questions, because I just gave you three directions at once? But they're on the board, so if you get confused, you can check the board. Go ahead.

AUDIENCE: So I'm [INAUDIBLE], and I teach here.

AUDIENCE: I'm [? Laura. ?] I'm a student at HGSE.

AUDIENCE: I'm Kenneth. I'm an [? online ?] [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]. I completed the Ed Policy and Management Program last year, but I am working full-time at the Ed [? redesign. ?] So for our last conversation, we talked about what are barriers, and then what facilitates student [? flows. ?]

So for the barriers, we talked about there being standards that everyone has to meet that are not necessarily individualized, that people are evaluated in the same ways, that there's individual versus collective mindset. So, people are assessed individually. The wait time-- not giving enough wait time for people to respond.

And then tolerance versus true communication. So sometimes ideas are tolerated, but there's not an open dialogue about those different ideas. And then, what is considered or valued in the space, and then the cultural context in which we exist, and that we're all different. And then relational trust, lack thereof in spaces.

And then, what facilitates-- we talked about inviting in student voice doesn't always mean talking. So are there ways that we can write, draw, or even value silence, or listening in the space more? A broader definition for student voice-- so, what does it look like for empowerment or differentiation or pushing past the comfort zone? So not just having one way of being in that, and what does participation mean?

And then, being in conversation. So, what does the relational piece of this look like, instead of it just being maybe an environment where the teaching is happening, but there's not the relational piece that is emphasized. And then we talked about valuing listening, and what did we hear? And we talked about the culture-- that Western culture values individualized thinking and really not necessarily the collective thinking, and how do we value listening more as a society?

AUDIENCE: Thanks. That was really comprehensive.

AUDIENCE: You guys really got into it in those six minutes.

AUDIENCE: So in some ways, I feel as if you've already named a bunch of things about, I don't know, the cultural or the pedagogical frame, which maybe says things about both the students and the educator. I'm not [? sure ?] that there was much about the content, and at my table, I don't think we talked much about content either. So, I don't know. It's just like, I'm interested in starting, there because it's something I haven't thought about yet today.

AUDIENCE: I agree. I think, for me, the content is at [? least-- ?]

AUDIENCE: I think we have to choose a historian first. Sorry.

AUDIENCE: Right.

AUDIENCE: Sorry to interrupt. I can be the historian. That's fine.

AUDIENCE: Thanks. [? You ?] sure?

AUDIENCE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Thank you. All right.

AUDIENCE: I agree. I don't think content came up a lot [? when ?] we talked earlier, and for me as a student, I would assume that content is something I don't have a lot of control over, and I would just try to control everything else that I can. But for content, it's like-- it's something that the educator creates. But I think at this point, in this space, it's something that I can [? afford ?] to think about, but in a regular classroom environment, I wouldn't necessarily think about [? content. ?] But that doesn't necessarily answer this question.

AUDIENCE: No, but this is related to something that came up at the other table last round, which is that sometimes the content being intimidating, or even fears about using the wrong language in the content, can really be barriers to participation. And so, it's making me think about, as teachers and educators, how do we make sure content is accessible? And that feels very related to this.

AUDIENCE: I'm thinking-- I'm from Canada, so there's-- when I was in school, there wasn't specific curriculum that was about Indigenous students in Canada. And now, in teaching, there's calls to action for [? Truth ?] and Reconciliation. But I've had a lot of conversations, I've sat in staff rooms and people are like, what do we start? I don't have the content knowledge.

So that, I think, is talking about the students who are in the room, but also like the confidence to also be humble and saying, I don't know where to start, but I need to start. And how you can, as the professional, recognize that this is a big learning that students, need and students and society are having kind of together. But a fear of where to start is not a reason not to start.

And I think about bringing more voices into the dialogue. That's an example I can think of where I saw a tension between where is the resource, what is the resource, who is the resource, and do we start doing the work?

AUDIENCE: I think also just how relevant is the content to whoever is being engaged, and having a sense of cultural humility to really think about how is it resonating with people and the "so what" of why they're learning it. And I think that goes back to the standards conversation we had. It's like, yes, you have to meet the standards, but how are we looking at content that can be not only accessible, but relevant to everyone, and it can resonate with them so that they find value in it?

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: And if there isn't existing material, then how do we create it, right? And part of what I was thinking about when I was listening to you, Laura, was this notion that often when there are not-- there are few voices in a classroom that represent an experience, those voices end up being over-relied on to share, and so one question we can ask ourselves as teachers is, how do we make sure that we are bringing in outsiders to represent some of those voices and perspectives that are missing? And also, even within the room, but that we're bringing in-- basically, we're like paying or honoring and inviting rather than requiring.

AUDIENCE: Yeah. Yeah, and I think that's not talked about enough either. to? Put the resource-- like, to allocate a resource [? to. ?] Like, the actual money.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Yeah, exactly.

AUDIENCE: As much as that sounds just like, well, why-- [? there is ?] consultants in a whole bunch of different areas. But yeah, who feels, who's doing the work, and how is that being honored in a system-- from a system level?

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Exactly. Yeah. Thank you.

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: We have about two minutes.

AUDIENCE: I'm also interested in that the co-construction of content, like asking your learners and seeing what their funds of knowledge are and how that can be brought into the classroom in a more-- like, to be the norm, not the exception?

AUDIENCE: I think one of the best examples that I've seen in action is in one of my [? high school ?] courses. The professor used to ask students to send him pictures so he can use those pictures to explain concepts in the classroom. And he must have received a diverse type of pictures.

But the fact that he actually dedicated time to making sure that-- I mean, if you think about it, it's quite symbolic. But I think it went a long way in terms of actually including the entire class into the course. So that was a really nice touch [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: I think also having opportunities, like when you're creating content, that there's flexibility. So if students are interested in a particular topic, how do you go deeper with that particular topic, or feel OK to be nimble to adjust the way you're delivering the content and have extensions of learning outside of what you teach in the classroom, so that it's optional? Like, if a kid really is interested in something or a young person is interested in something, or whatever setting, how do you push the learning past the boundary of just what's being delivered in the classroom?

AUDIENCE: It does mean, I think, as an educator, we-- I mean, I think we're already talking, like you were already talking about this. Educators need to say, OK, I don't know enough. But I do need to start anyway. And the kind of flexibility you're talking about also requires a kind of humility, but also curiosity. And I think then, those require time.

AUDIENCE: And money.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: Right, yeah, because we can't ask teachers to be willing to follow students down new pathways if that just means they're up till 4:00 in the morning and they have to be up at 6:00 because [? they're ?] [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: It reminds me of early childhood principals brought forward to adults.

AUDIENCE: Yes.

AUDIENCE: Invitations to learn sometimes, instead of one [INAUDIBLE].

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: And then we are at time in the sense that we need to go back and have a sort of meta conversation about this experience. But what I would typically do next, if we were in a class where we had more time, is something called an idea catcher or an idea harvest, where we would think about, OK, across all these tables, what is coming up for us? What are we learning from each other? And sometimes, we also bring in the readings in this moment, too, and think about what could we have learned from the readings that might respond to these questions?

And that idea catcher would be organized in some way. So for example, I might organize this by asking folks to write on a whiteboard ideas about how educators foster diverse student perspectives or include more voices, how classroom structures can do that, and how students can support each other in doing that. And this last piece of co-constructed knowledge, as well as photographs of the tablecloths, would then go into our Canvas site, or wherever we are sharing our notes, so that we can hold on to those things as we move forward.

And sometimes, I actually type these up as well, so that I can bring them back the next week, and people can have them moving forward. So with that said, I'm going to invite us to move back to the other area of the room-- so much movement. If you feel like you need sugar, then come this way,

If you have not yet had a chance to choose a historian, that will be the first thing you do in a moment. But what we are going to do in this first round is, I'm going to ask each person to think about a classroom that you have spent time in where you felt comfortable and motivated to participate. It could be a classroom where you were an educator or a classroom where you are a student. It doesn't matter.

And then I'm going to ask you to take a minute to just describe that space to other members of your group. So we have about six minutes to share. And there are about four people, so that means about a

minute, a minute and a half for each person. So we're not giving a long description, but we're just talking a little bit about what is just describing the classroom where you felt comfortable and motivated to participate. And again, if you have not chosen a historian, please do that before you start, OK? I'm going to watch the time carefully-- not my forte. And I'm going to give you a one-minute warning when we're at five minutes just so you can make sure everybody gets to at least say something, all right? All right, go ahead.

AUDIENCE: All right. I'll volunteer. OK, thank you. Do we need, like, a minute to think?

AUDIENCE: I can go. I was thinking about recently, like the physical space of 319 or 320 in the building in front of us. Long--

AUDIENCE: Longfellow.

AUDIENCE: Yeah. I think I like that the walls are white boards and that the chairs have a desk. And I think that you can put your bag on. I think it's easy to move around to create groups. It has tall tables, it has short tables, and it has the walls around. And I think in the classes that I've taken there, because it's so changeable all the time, you're [INAUDIBLE].

In deeper learning we create new systems for the education. We transform the education system, but then you erase it. So it makes you focus a lot on the process and not what you're taking, because everything you erase, you move around [? a lot. ?] So I think the flexibility of that space really motivated me to participate and I was very comfortable. It's a warm space, but it's also very easy to change it to the needs of what we need.

AUDIENCE: Well, I can build on that space, because I also have a class there. And even though I did enjoy participating in writing on the walls, I did notice that I had a class that involved more than 80 people. So I felt that whenever I participated-- that was not that often, I felt as if it was very hard to have a conversation. It was more like just commenting or people giving their own opinions. But we couldn't really build that conversation between different ideas and build off on each other's previous comments. So I had this experience, because it was such a large classroom, that it made it hard. And I guess that when I was thinking when I feel more comfortable, it's like when they are small groups. So it's easier to get the time for everyone to talk, not to be concerned about if you're talking too much or not enough or et cetera, and to have the conversations.

AUDIENCE: That's great. I always think back to, honestly, one high school teacher that I had. And he ran his class much more like a democratic conversation. He graded on good questions that we asked and pushed us to try to ask questions that tricked him.

And I grew up in Kansas, and it was not often that I found a teacher that was really engaging in a completely different methodology [? and ?] the faith that he had in us to challenge him and challenge each other, and the safety that it was OK to do that, and that was made explicit from day one. I mean, it was fundamentally one of the best learning experiences I've ever had, and I was, like, 15. And it still stands up. So I think that the culture that he created there was pretty amazing in an unremarkable space. [? It was ?] In the same physical location [INAUDIBLE] every other much less engaging class I interacted with took place [? in. ?]

AUDIENCE: I was thinking of--

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] notes [? for ?] your [? part. ?]

AUDIENCE: Oh, OK. Thank you. So I was thinking to the extent that we've defined physical space, class size, and teachers' pedagogy, I'll call it a sense of community and shared mission. So I was actually

thinking about a class I taught here at the Ed School maybe five years ago that was a seminar of about 20 of us about educational justice. And the class just gelled in this really remarkable way, where the deep relationships that people built with one another enabled all of us actually just to take more risks, and to be more daring in our own learning than in most classes I've been a member of, whether as a learner or as a student formally, or as a teacher had a formal sense. It was just like this amazing sense of shared purpose that allowed us to go into divergent directions and challenge one another, because we trusted that we were all striving for the same goal of trying to illuminate what educational justice could mean.

AUDIENCE: And I'm intrigued. What do you think led that group to build those relationships and [? build ?] that common sense of purpose?

AUDIENCE: I wish I knew. I mean, I think partly it was size. It mattered that it was 20 of us, rather than 60 of us, because the next year, I taught a 60-person class that did not achieve that.

And then I went back down. I capped it. And then it was never quite as magical as that class, but we got a lot closer when we were smaller. So I do think that size matters.

But I don't know. There were a couple of people who were just really good, I think, at creating a sense of cohesion, and bringing in food and things like that. That might also matter. I don't know.

AUDIENCE: I think what I heard and really connected with was the trust, how it exactly formed. It sounds like it's a little magical mix of a lot of things. As a therapeutic program manager, I worked with chronically disengaged and the kids identified with emotional impairments. And the teachers that I had just connected with the kids to the extent that they--

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: I apologize because I hate cutting people off. And if we had a little more time to play with, I wouldn't. So we are at the end of round one. And before we move up-- let's see if I can make this work.

I'm going to ask each table to choose a host who can stay put at the table. The host job is written on the table. And the host is going to stay when others leave.

When new people come to your table, the host is going to welcome the new people and have them introduce themselves. And then the host's job is to very briefly share any key things that came up in the first round with the new group. And you can use the tablecloth to do that.

And then if you want to really get into your role, you can invite in voices in the next table that may be more quiet, and see if you can help people speak and make sure everyone has a chance to speak. So you're going to choose a host. That's step one. Step two-- everybody except the host is going to get up and move to a new table. The host is going to stay put. Go ahead and do that.

AUDIENCE: Thank you for being our host.

AUDIENCE: It was nice to meet you.

AUDIENCE: Great to meet you all. You got this.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: So if you're the host, go ahead and share any big ideas that have come up in your first group.

AUDIENCE: Well, I'll try to summarize a little bit of what we talked about. So one participant shared about her experience in one of the classrooms here at Longfellow. That's a very flexible room that allows people to write on the walls. And the chairs are movable, so you can have a very flexible use of the space. And she felt really comfortable in there participating, writing, talking, et cetera.

Then I also shared that I had an experience in that space where the class size was so big, that it made it hard to have conversations. It was more like sharing opinions. And then we also talked about how the

pedagogical approaches used by the teachers generated very different environments, depending on how they facilitated the conversation and pushed students. And then another participant talked about how it was important to build trust, and how she had an experience where she felt that the group gelled in a very nice way. She couldn't really pinpoint which were the most important aspects that made that happen, but she really liked that experience.

AUDIENCE: Well done summary. Nicely done.

AUDIENCE: Very on time, too.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: OK, I'll get a pause, folks. Thank you to the hosts for sharing. In a minute, you're going to choose a new historian. If you love being the historian, you are welcome to volunteer again. But this is an opportunity for someone different to step into that role.

And as a group, I'm going to ask you to discuss this time what are some of the barriers to including more student voices in conversations? And then what helps to facilitate the inclusion of additional voices? So now I'm asking you to zoom out a little bit from your own experience, and to think more broadly about teaching and learning, and to think a little bit about the barriers or the affordances that help us bring more voices into a room.

If it's easier, you can still go around in a circle and just share your perspectives. If you prefer to jump back and forth, and talk across the table, you're welcome to do that as well. And your host can help you figure that out.

So I'm going to ask you to choose a historian, and then go ahead and jump into this second conversation. And again, we're going to have about six minutes to engage in this conversation with taking notes on the table. Go ahead when you're ready.

AUDIENCE: So does someone want to be historian?

AUDIENCE: I can be historian.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

[INAUDIBLE] pick my favorite colors. All right.

AUDIENCE: [? Augustina, ?] do you think we should go around?

AUDIENCE: However you like.

AUDIENCE: I can start I was thinking of last week's IM Live session, which was about astronomy. It was an introduction to astronomy class, and I felt so out of my element. And it was really hard for me to participate in the group activity.

So I think for me, just how you feel about the subject coming into the room can sometimes be a barrier, or your own identity in that discipline and in that subject. So I've always found it really helpful when the professors emphasize that it's OK to make mistakes. It's OK not to be an expert yet. So I know for me, anything where I feel like I'm not naturally good at it, or don't have a lot of experience in it, can be a barrier for my participation.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: One thing that makes me think about, Sarah, is the way that language can be a barrier in conversations, particularly if you feel like there is a way of talking that you're supposed to know that you can't access. So I often feel that way in math or science classes. But I hear students often say that to me in classes that are about equity and diversity actually.

They're nervous to say anything because they're not sure that the language they use is going to be the right language. So I don't know. I'm still thinking about how we pedagogically address that. But I'm

thinking about the fact that really maybe as you said, really normalizing, like we are going to make mistakes and we're here to learn, and we don't necessarily need to know the language as we walk in the door, is maybe helpful.

AUDIENCE: And that related [INAUDIBLE] I've been going through this IM Live lather, rinse, repeat cycle. [LAUGHS]

But Bob Keegan's videos that we used in the first IM Live pathway was a lot about psychological safety. And I just think, is it safe in this classroom? Is the teacher going to take comments and be loving and graceful and skillful with handling them? Will they acknowledge the diversity in the room welcome it? Like it was really interesting to both Sarah and I.

And the students who were interviewed were just like, it's not big thing. It's just subtle cues of use of language and how he makes people feel in the space that you then extrapolate, like, this is a safe space pretty early, pretty quickly. And so just to me, it was like, that's the first. It's not enough by itself. But without it, most other things aren't going to get me to feel comfortable participating.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: And Keegan in particular has this pass or play thing that he used to do. So if you were going to be called up, he could say, like, you to pass or play. You can either respond or pass, which is also making me think about choice in that, having agency and deciding whether you feel safe.

AUDIENCE: I love that.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: I'm curious because I'm taking a class that's very different in the role that instructors have. Its Power and Pedagogy. Maybe you've heard about it but the professor retreats from this role of facilitating the conversation.

AUDIENCE: Is it Dr. Harouni?

AUDIENCE: Yes, and he encourages us to organize the conversation by ourselves, and it's 70 of us. So it's very challenging. And so I was thinking, like, would there be-- and I know that many students struggle to participate.

And not everyone speaks. Not everyone feels comfortable. There's people who speak who then regret talking. So is there a way to-- I don't know, scaffold groups to maybe lead them to have those self-organized and more democratic conversations by themselves? What do you think?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: I don't know.

AUDIENCE: I can take some notes while you talk if you want [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: Sure. Actually, I don't know how to answer that. That's a very good question. I don't know, but I really agree with everything that I've put down on here.

And actually, I'm not sure how to put your point down. That's why I stopped writing. Do you think there's a good way to--

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] maybe it's--

AUDIENCE: What I heard was scaffolding small group work, so that people have clarity and comfort to participate.

AUDIENCE: And also, I'm thinking about the role of the instructor as the facilitator of a conversation, and if there's an alternative way of grading those conversations without having someone who's distributing voice and signaling people what's appropriate or not in the space.

AUDIENCE: Well, what do you think about the protocol we're doing right now? I mean, we plan to be able to do this with up to 70 people. And is this a version of that kind of scaffolding? Like, are we in small groups right now? Is this analogous enough to think is this somewhat of an answer to your question of protocols with structure and clear rules and expectations?

AUDIENCE: I think it is. But maybe it's structured because there is a host, a very timed protocol for the conversation. But definitely, it creates this opportunity to have the conversation without having the instructor present.

AUDIENCE: Totally.

AUDIENCE: I'm thinking too of this idea of trust, just because it's outlined right here next to me. But it sounds like in that case, the instructor has a lot of trust in the students to manage. But I'm thinking of what do you need to do to build beforehand so that the students feel like they have earned that trust, they have that trust, and that they have the trust in the instructor that, again, activities are maybe scaffolded or organized in a way that they can still be safe in the classroom when the instructor is taking more of a backseat.

AUDIENCE: I remember something the last IM session instructor said. You encourage all of the teaching fellows to be behind the students in front of the board. So they don't want themselves to be between the board and the students. They want the students to take initiative in doing the problem together and initially, facilitating the whole conversation. The instructor is only there to ask questions to move the conversation forward.

And it just really struck me how such a simple move is a power shift in the instruction and the students' role in that. And I think this is what came to my mind when you were talking about power and pedagogy.

And I think it's a very good way to have that balance of power between everybody in the room.

And also, that just builds an immense amount of trust between everybody because we feel equal. And we feel we are in the same space, safe space, and also a brave space, where we can voice things that might sound a little too much. But I feel like it's a good way to have that brave space to just have that conversation.

AUDIENCE: And I can see a connection between what you said about the opportunity of knowing that you can make mistakes, [? because ?] I guess that's what we are always doing when we are interacting with others. It's trying to have the cues and making sure that we are appropriate for it flowing in [INAUDIBLE] rules. So how can we make people feel more comfortable [? between-- ?] yes, like not being so cautious, and trying to be more like risky or taking risks.

AUDIENCE: That reminded me of that conversation yesterday with the diversity, equity, and inclusion lunch we had, just the fact to accept that people make mistakes and it's OK to make those mistakes. We can learn from each other. We can learn from the way we [INAUDIBLE] [? phrasing ?] things and just be brave and brave enough to voice that mistake.

[LAUGHS]

AUDIENCE: I also love-- I'm just in the instructional [INAUDIBLE] frame of mind. But there's a faculty member, Jane Mansbridge, and she teaches Democratic Theory, which is about old dead white men philosophers. But she has a super-diverse class and they talk about how it's useful in their context. And they're really teaching each other. Like, that's not just like nice participation. It's really, like, why does this matter to us. And we're really learning from each other, and that was very motivating.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: --one more time. If you are someone who doesn't want to get up and walk around, feel free to volunteer to be the host again. Otherwise, this is an opportunity for someone else to try out the host position. So feel free to volunteer if you haven't had a chance.

But you're going to pick a host, and then everyone is going to get up and find one more table. And again, the goal is to see if you can sit with nobody that you have sat with yet today. So look for people you haven't sat with to the extent that we can, all right? Allison.

AUDIENCE: Will the host summarize both previous rounds?

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: The host is just going to summarize the last round. Great question. All right, so when you are ready, pick a host and then go ahead and get up. This will be the last round.

AUDIENCE: Do you want to [INAUDIBLE]?

AUDIENCE: Thank you.

AUDIENCE: It was so nice to meet both of you.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Again, you are going to start by introducing yourselves. And then the host is going to briefly share big ideas from round two. Because I don't want to stop you, I'm just going to go through all three directions at the same time now. Once the host has shared the big ideas, you're going to choose one final historian.

And then you are going to talk about this last question, which is much more of an analytic question than we've done so far. What are the characteristics of a classroom that invites all voices into the dialogue?

And I'm in particular going to invite you to think about the characteristics of the students in that classroom, the educator in that classroom, and the content, which is something that Richard Elmore used to talk about is the instructional core, so thinking about the characteristics of the classroom.

And you're going to jot that down. We're going to take a couple of minutes for the host to summarize, six minutes to talk, and then we will close. Any questions? Because I just gave you three directions at once. But they're on the board. So if you get confused, you can check the board. Go ahead.

AUDIENCE: So my name's [INAUDIBLE]. I'm from the Learning, Design, Innovation, & Technology program here at HGSE. I was a preschool teacher, and also a curriculum developer before coming to [INAUDIBLE].

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: [? We ?] can maybe talk--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: My name is Sarah. I use she/her pronouns. And I was in HDE last year. And I'm now a researcher at Project Zero.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE]

AUDIENCE: My name is Liz [INAUDIBLE]. And I am a teaching fellow for a couple of courses, and also work full-time with [INAUDIBLE]. I'm a director at the program there.

AUDIENCE: [? Wow. ?] This is fabulous. I'm Allison Pingree, she/her. I am the associate director for instructional support and development at the Teaching and Learning Lab here. So I work really closely with Josh. And I also teach a course on essentials of coaching for leaders and educators.

AUDIENCE: Awesome-- so a few seconds for me to summarize what we talked about. We talked [? also ?] last session-- you can see these three are the new additions. So we have a graph that Josh drew with scaffolding protocols [? rules ?] and teacher curiosity--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Circulating. OK, this is a structure that would help facilitate equity of student voicing [INAUDIBLE] conversation. And also, the balance of power between students and teachers in the classroom is a key factor in including student voice. And then we wrote down a few barriers of student participation. The first one is being how you feel about a subject. And someone referred to the last IM session where the subject was you had to solve a astrology problem. And most of us came in with no background, and it was just very uncomfortable to not know anything about the stuff we're doing. But the instructor's reassurance really helped build that trust that facilitated student engagement and voice. There's also the language barrier. When you are not sure about what's the right language to use in a certain setting, it creates that barrier of speaking up. And through that line, we also talked about normalizing mistakes because we all make mistakes when we are engaging in conversations. And it is essential for us to normalize those mistakes and we learn from each other's mistakes. And there's also always mention psychological safety. When you have the subtle cues from instructors to give you that sense of psychological safety, that really encouraged student participation and voice. And when there's choice and agency for students, it also encourages just that. So I guess all of these are not only barriers, but some of them are facilitating being factors. And when the work is scaffolded, it also helps create that trust and just that bond between the participants. And did I miss anything? I think we did it.

AUDIENCE: Nice work.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: That was pretty thorough.

AUDIENCE: Thank you. [INAUDIBLE]. Are we going to decide who's going to be the historian? Does anyone feel drawn to [INAUDIBLE]?

AUDIENCE: Yeah--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: I should volunteer because I have this nice canvas here. And I do like the colors. Sarah in our first one was like, you're the one that always take notes. I'm like, yeah, but it doesn't [INAUDIBLE] this fun of a way.

[LAUGHTER]

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: [INAUDIBLE] invite voices into the dialogue. And I'm taking that to be both the physical environment, but also the class, not just the classroom. Is that how we're-- the social environment?

AUDIENCE: Yeah. Right. Not just the physical.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: When we think of psychological safety, it could also maybe be the emotional environment. right?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: Also for me, I feel like the role of educators should not overpower what the students are-- I don't know [INAUDIBLE]. When students are engaging in a conversation, the role of educator is to facilitate deeper conversation, and not take away, OK, that's not [? how they learn ?] in this class. Let's

move back to the topic. Sometimes, all of those side chats are actually really educational and facilitate learning.

AUDIENCE: Right. That seems reflective of this balance.

AUDIENCE: But also agency it sounds like as well.

AUDIENCE: Right. So something that seems-- like, I don't know if it's a paradox or just a creative tension for me is, how do we think about the important role of the structure that comes from scaffolds, [? protocols, ?] et cetera-- [? clarity ?] about all this, and what you just said, which is the unexpected? Somebody [INAUDIBLE] a quote that I really like a lot is that leading discussion is like is what he called the art of managing spontaneity. And so that managing is spontaneity. It's like the unexpected. So how do you manage something that's unexpected? And how do you-- so I don't know. If having a protocol is important, and the protocol hasn't anticipated something that the student brings up, so then what are you supposed to do?

AUDIENCE: Oh, I really like this, because when I was teaching three-year-olds, I feel like there's a lot of spontaneity.

[LAUGHTER]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

AUDIENCE: Every single second, there's something new that popped up. And I feel like for me, I set the rules [INAUDIBLE], like, we know how much time we have. As instructors, we know how much time we have for this conversation, and we just let it play within the time frame.

So I feel like I've been talking too much. But I feel like it's just allowing that spontaneity, and just let it flow. It's a good way of getting more conversation, and also building more trust, because those students feel like they're in control of that time together.

AUDIENCE: I was thinking of something [INAUDIBLE]. That's helpful to use it as a guide. But if something branches off, then why not follow it?

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

AUDIENCE: But then there's also pressures of time constraints, deadlines, which I don't know how to balance those two things either.

[CHUCKLES]

AUDIENCE: I also think it's interesting-- like, I put the informal dynamics in norms, because I think part of the spontaneity or when things go off script, so to speak, in class spaces, part of how that develops or evolves has to do with what energy has been established already in the space and what dynamics are there. So I appreciate this idea of having formal structural components like this, but also being really mindful of actual informal dynamics and norms, so that when things are off-script, it's more likely to evolve in a positive way.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: And part of that can just be normalizing that things will go off-script. And we don't have to panic about that or try to pretend. We have to have tools that allow us to figure out how to move if that happens, particularly when harm happens [INAUDIBLE].

AUDIENCE: I'm also thinking about how does it get decided what tangents or what departures from the plan we go with. If it's, OK, well, let's let this student spontaneity play a big role, but which students? And are there forms of spontaneity [INAUDIBLE] maybe getting back to what Gretchen was saying about harm.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: And take a minute--

AUDIENCE: --that are damaging to other students, rather than enlarging or generative.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: And then we are at time in the sense that we need to go back and have a meta conversation about this experience. But what I would typically do next, if we were in a class where we had more time, is something called an idea catcher or an idea harvest, where we would think about, OK, across all these tables, what is coming up for us? What are we learning from each other? And sometimes, we also bring in the readings in this moment, too, and think about what could we have learned from the readings that might respond to these questions?

And that idea catcher would be organized in some way. So for example, I might organize this by asking folks to write on a whiteboard ideas about how educators foster diverse student perspectives or include more voices, how classroom structures can do that, and how students can support each other in doing that. And this last piece of co-constructed knowledge, as well as photographs of the tablecloths, would then go into our Canvas site, or wherever we are sharing our notes, so that we can hold on to those things as we move forward.

And sometimes, I actually type these up as well so that I can bring them back the next week, and people can have them moving forward. So with that said, I'm going to invite us to move back to the other area of the room-- so much movement. If you feel like you need sugar, then come this way.

MONIK JIMENEZ: So first, I want to just personally thank you. This was such a fun experience. I don't know.

I saw a lot of smiles. I saw a lot of enthusiasm in the room. And you've given me some ideas to take into my classroom.

And so I have a couple of observations and questions that may spur other questions from others as well. The first thing that came to me that I noticed was the question was focusing on a positive experience. So could you expand a little bit more on the intentionality of focusing on a positive experience?

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Yeah that's a great question. There are two things I want to say about that. One is if I am going to require people share, I try to be very careful about not asking them to share something that is negative.

So in this kind of a context, because I was going to ask people to share even at their table, I wanted to orient people towards something positive so that it would be more likely to be something they felt comfortable sharing or they could access. If I wanted people to reflect on a negative experience, I might do that, but I would want to do that individually. And really want to be careful to think about what are the psychological impacts of doing that at the beginning of a class versus how useful is it to do that, and make sure that those two things don't outweigh each other, because we've all been in classes where we get asked a question that's triggering in some way.

And so then we're distracted, and we can't actually participate in the rest of the class. And I want to make sure that that's not happening, to the extent I can. Of course, that could happen in this case, because if you had nothing to share, that could be triggering.

The second thing is your question makes me think about Professor Lawrence-Lightfoot and her argument that research should look for the good, and that sometimes, we learn a lot by looking at what's going well. And I think I find that those kinds of questions, particularly in a room where I don't know people, are often a better way to start. So those are two things that come up for me.

MONIK JIMENEZ: Thank you. I think in my field, in public health, we're so focused on a deficit model. We really have to challenge ourselves to take that affirmative approach. And so it's really refreshing.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Yeah, and that is something that the field of education has been much more cognizant of and trying to move away from, I think, for a while. And so really thinking about what are the strengths of the folks in our community that we can build on as we construct.

MONIK JIMENEZ: The next question that I wanted to expand on is partially from watching how you structured these spaces, and then also listening to the reflections of people at each of those tables. And that was the use of small spaces, and how small spaces can be really empowering for students or for learners to engage with, and then also a loss of an amenity within those small spaces, so maybe sometimes a little bit of tension. And so I wanted to just ask and dig a little bit deeper about when are small spaces appropriate. Are they always appropriate?

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: That's a great question. I think there are a few parts of that for me. I would not normally do this activity right out of the gate on day one. And so that is a way, for me, part of what makes this appropriate is that we have relationships.

And we have some kind of-- I don't like the word norms because that tends to make me think of policing. But we have some kind of classroom guidelines or aspirations. We've talked about how we want to be in relationship. And part of that is honoring that different people are going to need different things. And also, part of that is honoring that any given day, someone might show up to the table needing something different.

So in my larger classes, I tend to keep groups more consistent so that people can get to know each other better. And I often ask people to start by checking in and just seeing what do people need today. And I encourage people to say, I didn't do the reading, so I need you to be understanding about that. Or I'm super tired, so I need to listen more. Or I'm feeling really sad, so I may just need a break-- whatever it is. So for me, I think the question is less about are group spaces inappropriate or appropriate given a particular pedagogical goal. And it's more about how do we foster the kind of community that can hold a group space, and where I can trust that students can hold it without me. Now, I personally, as my students know, really have a ton of faith in humanity in general, and also believe that every student is just as powerful a teacher as I am. And in that sense, I do have a lot of trust that students themselves-- that folks, that people can form spaces that are safe without me there. But if I was worried about the topic in particular, that might be a reason why I held people together, or why I put a more structured protocol in place, so that there was less wiggle room around how people talked.

One other thing is that I have had classrooms-- not this year, but classrooms where there's a dynamic in the class that I'm worried about. And I often will use my teaching fellows to try to interrupt that dynamic. So I'll say, please make sure you're keeping an eye on this table. Or please check this out, so that I can try to interrupt that.

One of the things I like about World Cafe is that there's choice at which table you go to. So if I was really struggling with Josh, for example, I could avoid him and choose not to go to that table. And I have agency in that without needing to request that the professor support me in that, which I like.

MONIK JIMENEZ: That gets me to the next question that I had planned to ask you. But I just wanted to maybe not let that thread go, and the importance of allowing structure, but yet allowing for enough agency within for the learners to choose how they can engage with the material and take care of themselves as necessary. For example, in my class on Mass Incarceration and Health, it's an incredibly triggering and

very heavy and challenging course. And we always struggle with making sure that we are providing students enough agency, because we don't know how the material is going to hit any one student. Sharing what feels right without feeling pressured to overshare as well [INAUDIBLE] challenging. GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: And you could imagine having choice in the questions that you're answering at different tables. It's harder for World Cafe because you're building towards a collective thing. But in a lot of classes, I will have small groups where you choose your question also. So you can choose where you're comfortable answering.

I was thinking as you were asking that question about Adrienne Maree Brown, who says something like-- I'm going to misquote this, but something like, there is a conversation that only the people in this room can have. Find that conversation.

And I think we have to have a lot of trust. And things go better when we trust that the people that are in a space will find the conversation they were meant to have. But also, people need tools and scaffolding to do that.

And so another thing that often happens is, I'll create a protocol or something. And then I will hear myself say, you can totally ignore this protocol if it's not what your group needs to do. And that's OK, too, I think sometimes, because things have to be allowed to happen.

MONIK JIMENEZ: So building off of that scaffolding, I noticed that when we first went to the tables, there was the instruction of identifying who your historian is going to be. Then there's the introduction of the question. Well, I take that back.

First there's the introductions, sharing pronouns, introducing everyone, identifying the historian, sharing. And then the introduction of the host came after. So could you talk a little bit about how you decide to scaffold and provide directions at certain points?

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Yeah. I was a middle school teacher, so I'm used to thinking about people not being able to hold more than one or two directions at a time. I also am very easily distractible, so I can't hold a lot of directions. So the way I help myself with that is by having slides, even when I might not need them, so that I can prompt myself.

And for me, I'm trying to think about the balance of how many directions is reasonable for someone to hold versus how many times am I going to have to interrupt. And that's a constant balancing act. If I have it in writing, that's the best possible case scenario. But I also often will say it. So in this case, I was trying to give people just enough information for what they needed to do the next step without overwhelming them with too much information.

A different strategy that I could have used would be to have had us choose a host at the beginning, and have that person remain the host for the entire duration. So they always stay there, and then we wouldn't have had to do it every time. And I often do do that in my classes, which is probably what you were remembering, Allison. But when I looked back at how you're supposed to do this, it said change hosts every time. So I was like, OK, we'll do it at the end.

MONIK JIMENEZ: Beautiful. Something else that I noticed was when to intervene and how to intervene. So for example, I noticed you approaching tables and being on your knees at the table, which may seem small. Maybe it wasn't intentional. But I think it has a profound impact on how one uses their physical body within a space. So I was wondering if you could expand a little bit more on how you intervene on a table or a small group, and how much you intervene within that space.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Yeah, I think the kneeling down thing is really important to me. And ideally, I would sit down or kneel down, because what I don't want to do is feel voyeuristic. What I don't want to do is enter a space for the sake of watching the space, because I think that often makes folks feel as though there's a right answer they're supposed to be coming up with or I don't trust them.

If I'm going to enter a space, I want to be a participant in that space. And I want to be engaging in that space as a co-creator. So for me, getting down helps me do that.

With that said, I am very enthusiastic, and so I like to participate. And I have to constantly check in with myself about that. When I go to tables, I worry about I'm going to talk too much if I kneel down.

So sometimes, I'll hang back all together if I'm worried about that. And also sometimes, I'll get the sense that a table is engaged in a discussion that is not to be interrupted. And so I'll try to move on if that's the case. Sometimes, I ask, like, is it OK if I join you?

My preference is to sit at one table for a full round. I didn't do that today. And the reason for that is, again, because if I'm going to be there, I want to be participating. I don't want to be watching. And so to the extent that I can be a full participant, I want to try to do that.

MONIK JIMENEZ: Thank you.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Yeah.

MONIK JIMENEZ: I think we're going to open it up to questions from the group. Yes. We're going to bring a mic over to you [INAUDIBLE]. Questions or comments. Yes.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Only because they're my students, so they may have things to say.  
[LAUGHS]

AUDIENCE: Thank you so much for this experience today. It's been really wonderful to participate in it. Thank you for being here. So my question is, something that came up in our group was how power dynamics can inhibit student participation, whether those power dynamics exist teacher to student or student to student. And we were thinking about ways to interrupt those, whether they just stemmed from the fact that the teacher is the teacher and the student is the student, and that's felt in among the students-- or if there was something else, whether it was racial or gender based or anything like that. So I was wondering if you could speak a little bit on that and how you-- because I know you do, thoughtfully and intentionally disrupt those power dynamics in the classroom.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: I am glad you asked that question, even though I didn't plant it, Georgina, because there is something about the way that World Cafe questions are scaffolded that is really important in this. In the same way as you scaffold a phenomenological interview, you start with descriptive and you move toward analytic. And you don't start with analytic on purpose, because if you start with analytic, you can get the academic posturing.

That then makes other people uncomfortable and afraid to participate. So I think a big strategy of mine is to try to figure out as many ways as possible to give people entry points into knowing that what they have to contribute is valuable. So that might mean starting with a question that's about your own personal experience, which I did. It might mean different ways of participating, like drawing versus writing versus talking. It might mean really having a pause.

Like, if we did this more frequently or with more time, we might add that if you're the host, you should pay attention to who's participating and invite people to participate if they're not. So I think a lot about what are the different entry points, and how can we give people as many opportunities to enter in as possible

without forcing them to enter in, because I worry about forcing people to enter in a lot. So that's one thing I think about.

If I'm really worried about power dynamic, I often draw on the practice of having a talking piece, or some kind of a circular way of talking, because I think that flattens the power dynamic. I'm not a huge fan of timekeeping, but that also can help if you're worried about people dominating. But for me, the biggest thing is actually this notion of we're all at the same level, we're all in a circle, we all have something to contribute. And this is not going to be a space where you are judged for not having done the reading or knowing the word or having the quote to explain what it is that you've done. That is not the only way we think about rigor in this space.

We also think about rigor as the capacity to be able to bring our life experiences and our embodied knowledge into the dialogue. That's hard to do in academia, and I don't know how well I do it. But I feel like that's the goal for me. Thank you for asking.

AUDIENCE: So that actually raises a question for me, which is we were all equally able to participate because we were asked to reflect on our own experiences, although then because many of us-- not all of us were are from the Ed School, we are also drawing on some professional knowledge. But I am curious how do you use some of these techniques when you are trying to get students to engage directly with texts when there are better answers and worse answers, when you do need analytic thinking and you're trying to build those skills, et cetera.

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Yeah, that's a great question. I think there's a couple of ways that I'm thinking about that. And I think I'm still trying to figure out what that looks like, in the sense that we want people to be rigorous in the way they're explaining and thinking about their thinking. But I don't necessarily want to require that they draw on dominant forms of knowledge to do that. And I'm trying to balance those two things.

So one way that I think about that is having choice in my syllabus around the kinds of texts that we use, so that people can use a podcast or look at a piece of art or watch a video, rather than necessarily engaging with an academic text. And I will try to have multiple texts that we can draw from in the same conversation so that my syllabi look more and more like a choose your own adventure, where it's like pick something from this set, pick something from this set-- or if you're interested in higher ed, pick something from here, if you're interested in early childhood, pick something from here, knowing that then we're going to break up into tables based on those groups. And you can pull on whatever it is you want to draw on.

So one strategy is to really broadly think about what are the broad ways of thinking about text and evidence. And how do I let people draw on all of those, and how do I demonstrate in the way I think and talk that all of those are equally valuable? And I think that is countercultural in academia. So I think there are people who would disagree with that.

The other thing is that I think if I'm really going to ask people to draw on a text or understand something in particular, I really try to make sure I scaffold access to the ideas that I want them to be able to have. So there's two ways that I might do that. One is to give them the question ahead of time and to say we're going to talk about this, and I'm going to ask you to pull in an example, or think time to really, say, like take a few minutes to go through the text.

The other thing-- I just blanked on. Hold on one second. It was the more important.

The other thing is to say-- I blanked on it. It'll come back to me. But I'm trying to think about what are the ways that I can scaffold people having access to being able to process in a way that makes the most sense for them, and then inviting them to do it that way. So that's another way.

One other thing that I sometimes do is, I do the discussions that are really textual in writing first, so people can walk around, and they can bring their text and write. Because the one challenge for me is that if I ask for a certain type of evidence, often the same five students are going to be really skilled at pulling out that evidence really quickly. So if I do that in the context of a dialogue, then I over-rely on those students.

So I'm trying to mitigate that and think about what are the different ways that we bring in evidence. I can't remember what I forgot. But if I do, I'll tell you.

AUDIENCE: Can you speak a little bit about-- you talked about norms versus, really, agreement is what I think you preferred. But I'm wondering about this notion of psychological safety versus brave spaces, and the creation of the latter. I think the former is necessary in order to create the latter, but can you talk a little bit about how you go about pushing beyond the analytic, or inviting the analytic, to support brave space-making, and then therefore critical analyses, debate in a way that does not dehumanize?

GRETCHEN BRION-MEISELS: Yeah, I really, really appreciate that question. And I want to start by saying that I have been thinking about that question a lot in higher ed. I think I had come to a place where I was comfortable with that question as a middle school teacher, and higher ed is a very different ballgame. And what I've learned about myself in the context of higher ed is that I don't believe that a brave space requires violence or conflict in calling-out sense. But I do believe that it requires that people have the space and the agency and the trust to speak truth to power, and speak truth to each other-- their own truth to each other.

So I'm saying that as a caveat because there are some people who I think have a different definition of brave space. And I don't disagree with that. It's just not how I think about it in the context of my classrooms.

So if my definition of brave space in my classrooms is to try to create a container that can hold all of our embodied emotional and intellectual knowledge, and what we're bringing on a subject, and can hold a disagreement or dissonance in that, then I think for me, there are a few things that are really helpful in doing that. And they all take a lot of time. So one is, when we create these kinds of aspirations or norms or agreements, we check in on them fairly regularly, usually at least at the beginning.

We play a lot of games in my classes. And I have been critiqued for that by students who are like, it feels like middle school in here. But I believe that a 10-minute game at the beginning of class with a debrief is actually worth more than half the other things I can do in terms of our capacity to learn and engage. We spend a lot of time trying to focus on positive and connect over positive things, but also recognize that there's no right or wrong answer to most of the things we're talking about.

And actually, this is interesting because this connects to what you were saying, [? Mira. ?] Like, five or six years ago, I realized that the only kinds of discussions I really wanted to have in class were discussions where I didn't know the answer. If I knew the answer, then I could lecture it, put it in a video, or put it on a piece of paper if I was that convinced about it.

So if I'm going to ask a question, I do not know the answer. And because I don't know the answer, I don't expect you to know the answer. And therefore, it's really safe. It's safer, I think, for us all to co-construct what it is.

And then this isn't the last thing. But one other thing I'll say is that I model my own vulnerability and my own mistakes as much as possible. That's possible for me because of certain kinds of privilege I have, so I'm really aware of that. And I think my ability to do that, and my ability to model making a mistake, goes a long way in terms of then allowing other people the room to change-- that we're not fixed people, that we change. So I hope that helps.

JOSH BOOKIN: Awesome. Well, thank you join me in thanking--

[APPLAUSE]

--Monik and Gretchen for sharing a lot of insights, as well as just presence and time with us. And thank all of you for coming. Really appreciate you being part of this. IM Live series, and engaging in the thinking and the doing. Thank you very much, and have a good rest of your day.

MONIK JIMENEZ: Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

[THEME MUSIC]