# Discussing Ethical Issues in the Classroom: Leveraging Pedagogical Moments That May Otherwise Undermine Important Discussions

**Douglas J. Simpson***
Texas Tech University, USA

**William J. Hull, Jr.****
Associate at Jenkins, Wagnon, and Young, Lubbock, Texas USA

**Abstract**
The authors identify, examine, and clarify three kinds of hindrances (dismissive/evasive tactics, logical stoppers, and ad hominem arguments) to teaching about ethical issues in P-12 schools. In discussing these three types of obstacles, they stress that the barriers themselves provide both challenges and opportunities for teachers. Indeed, they argue that properly understood and utilized the pedagogical impediments to open, educative discussions can be leveraged into superb learning experiences. The authors provide illustrations of how questions may inhibit teaching as well as examples of how teachers may turn them into opportunities for productive educational discussions. In addition, the authors emphasize the importance of teachers being prepared to discuss ethical controversies in teacher preparation programs and through professional development activities and, in turn, preparing for and guiding students to discuss controversial ethical issues. Embedded in their arguments is the claim that a democratic society is partially dependent on teachers for the critique and expansion of democratic values and processes and that educators need to support one another as well as be supported by others in their districts and communities as they pursue their educational responsibilities.

**Keywords:** Ethical Issues, Silencing Voices, Teaching, Democratic Schools

*Douglas J. Simpson is a professor and the Helen DeVitt Jones Chair in Teacher Education, Texas Tech University. He is the author or co-author of many works, including *Ethical Decision Making in School Administration*.

**William J. Hull, Jr., earned the Ph.D. and J. D. at Texas Tech University after receiving degrees at the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard University. Currently, he is an associate for Jenkins, Wagnon, and Young (pending bar results in the fall).

## Introduction

*Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates to invention. It shocks us out of sheep-like passivity.*
*John Dewey (1922, p. 300)*

Most of us have probably been silenced in various situations—more than once—as children, students, colleagues, and teachers. Women, people of color, recent immigrants, individuals with alternative lifestyles, gays and lesbians, and people with non-traditional religious affiliations in particular settings may have their voices silenced more routinely. Indeed, it is difficult for many people, regardless of their backgrounds, to develop their voices, to question established mores, or to express their ideas in paternalistic, patrician, or oppressive situations. In addition, many teachers may find it disappointing to encounter pedagogical situations where students consciously or unconsciously make comments that silence or intimidate their classmates and, thus, thwart learning opportunities. Perhaps, even more distressing, are accounts of how a colleague responded to students in ways that silenced them, invalidated their ideas, or inhibited discussions.

## Discussing Ethical Issues

Discussions involving ethical issues are especially vulnerable to silencing because they are filled with controversial assumptions, delicate nuances, personal sensitivities, problematic arguments, cultural issues, and religious controversies. Thus, encouraging students to express their reflective opinions about ethical issues may be as risky for both students and teachers as it is desirable for everyone. Even when dialogical parameters are identified and agreed upon (e.g., Freire, 2003, pp. 88-92), some discussions (e.g., racism) are "excruciatingly difficult" for many if not most of us (Nieto, 2000, p. 5). Holder (Weiss, 2009) clarifies that part of the difficulty of discussing racism is that many people are afraid to express their views. However, fear-filled issues are often the ones that are most in need of guided, insightful, open, informed, and sensitive analyses (Forrest, 2009; Oakshott, 1991). Yet, preparing for these difficult conversations can help reduce the fear and anxiety of individuals and, thereby, encourage silenced voices to engage in dialogues that are essential in democratic institutions and societies (Center for Faculty Excellence, 2004; West, 1993).

## Teachers' Perspectives

In view of the personal discomforts, conceptual ambiguities, knowledge-claim controversies, social tensions, and pedagogical challenges, a teacher can understandably decide not to discuss important ethical issues rather than raise educative questions and encourage students to think and learn together. Indeed, an ethically sensitive teacher may not even want to initiate a discussion that could lead to misunderstanding, class disunity, or distrust. Ethical issues are frequently, however, too important to ignore. Plus, merely condemning unethical attitudes and affirming ethical ones are insufficient responses if we want to nurture democratic citizens, expand democracy, and help students discover their voices and identities. So, it

appears that teachers need to help students understand why some behaviors are proscribed, others are prescribed, still others are tolerated, and yet others are ignored.

Notwithstanding some teachers' personal discomfort with ethical controversies, a democratic society depends in significant ways on teachers recognizing and promoting democratic ethical values, and these include the free exchange of controversial ideas (Dewey, 1916). To advance the development of democracy, Holder (Weiss, 2009) adds that society must overcome its fear of conflict and develop the courage to discuss its most pressing issues. How is such possible if many teachers avoid cultivating both courage and communication? Fortunately, many other teachers (Claire & Holden, 2007; Williams, 1994) want to do a better job of creating classroom environments and atmospheres where democratic values—respect for persons, arguments, evidence, academic freedom, and so forth—are genuinely practiced and not simply professed.

Given the interest of many in becoming more effective as teachers and the need for such, this study identifies several hindrances to classroom discussions of ethical matters and offers suggestions on how to facilitate discussions of ethical controversies in more knowledgeable, approachable, reflective, and respectful ways. In particular, the study focuses on three types of comments that inhibit rather than invite student and teacher discussions: *dismissive/evasive tactics*, *logical stoppers*, and *ad hominem arguments*. For the purpose of this study, a statement is *dismissive* or *evasive* when a person uses it to extricate her- or himself from some form of ethical responsibility or moral accountability; a statement or action is a *logical stopper* when it specifies or implies that a conversation will or should not continue; and a statement is an *ad hominem argument* when it explicitly or implicitly attacks a person for some real or assumed personal characteristic rather than addressing the individual's arguments. In discussing these realms, we draw upon relevant research, experiential knowledge, and literature, including fictional and nonfictional, to clarify and illustrate ideas.

## Two Qualifications

Two qualifications regarding our focus are important. First, our examination is restricted to three types of comments that often have a silencing effect on dialogue. Many of the ideas discussed, however, apply to other settings, including informal learning situations. Further, we focus on questions rather than declarative statements, because they can appear more innocent and disarming yet be more pedagogically deadly. Our classification system, of course, would be misleading if it influenced us to think in discrete, trichotomous categories. A comment by a person may simultaneously fall into all three categories.

Second, questions themselves may be pedagogically and ethically neutral, positive, or negative depending on a host of factors, e.g., a person's intentions, body language, prior comments, verbal inflection, tone, pitch, and emphases. Moreover, as Habermas (1984) notes, different cultural gestalts are embedded in our linguistic creations and usages and should be recognized if not appreciated and critiqued. Our specific concern is with those questions that are frequently "burning statements;" the kind which may or may not be accompanied by the "killing tools" of laughter (Hurston, 1978, p. 10). Instead of employing burning and killing actions in

classrooms, we encourage a dialogical model that is partially Hurstonian, one where at least part of the time people sit and pass "around the pictures of their thoughts for the others to look at and see" (Hurston, 1978, p. 81). Or, as Camus (1995, p. 70) observes, there are times when argumentative comments need to be set aside so people can simply talk and seek mutual understanding. The other part of our dialogical model is the evaluation of ideas, arguments, and data that should be encouraged when the goals and grounds of discussion have been clarified and accepted at least provisionally and the diversity of epistemological orientations[1] is acknowledge and, perhaps, encouraged (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999; Dewey, 1916; Freire, 2003; Habermas, 1984). Eryaman (2007, p. 18) identifies another fundamental presupposition of our model when he raises the question: what does it mean "to be an agent in the world"? Indeed, what might it mean for teacher educators, teachers, and students when they are intellectually, emotionally, and existentially recognized as agents?

## Evasive/Dismissive Tactics

### The Tactics Themselves

Evasive and/or dismissive tactics take many forms. Central to identifying them is that the person raising a question attempts to evade or dismiss personal responsibility. A high school student, for example, described his former dismissive attitude toward others' problems: "If it doesn't affect me, why bother?" (Freedom Writers with Gruwell, 1999, p. 170). But what, we inquire, happened to change his mind? A variety of experiences, no doubt, but visiting the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was so upsetting for him that he demanded, "How could this have happened? Why didn't someone stand up for these people?" (Freedom Writers with Gruwell, 1999, p. 169). At a minimum, this student's case illustrates how dismissive tactics can be partially overcome by informal educational experiences and underlines the importance of learning outside of the school and classroom.

### Examples of Evasiveness

Among a plethora of examples of evasiveness are some that may be seen as relevant to personal responsibility, fairness, and practicality: (a) Why should my parents pay higher taxes to provide safety nets for the lazy? (b) Why should we allow undocumented immigrants to stay here when they pay no taxes, deprive us of jobs, and disrespect our values?, and (c) How can she be held accountable when her principal told her to do it? As we recognize implicit and explicit evasive and dismissive—not to mention stereotypically loaded—questions, we can become better prepared to use these same statements as valuable educative opportunities. Indeed, we can even have students analyze these questions before they are raised and, thereby, avoid the discomfort of preventable awkward situations for a students who might raise them.

[1] The authors employ a form of classroom dialogue that is designed to be democratically situated, epistemologically inclusive, and educationally oriented. Although there are problems and challenges that are intrinsic to this approach, we think our approach can be substantially justified by considering our conception of dialogue itself when undertaken in public institutions in a liberal democracy. An introductory explanation of our rationale is found in Endnote v.

Sometimes an evasive or dismissive comment can be, on some level, at least partially correct. However, such comments often need contextual positioning to ascertain their significance. For example, few, if any, twenty-first century students could possibly have participated in the legal exploitation, torture, rape, and murder of indigenous peoples or Blacks in North America. Consequently, we might not be surprised to hear, "Since I didn't have anything to do with slavery or oppressing Lumbees and Blacks, why do people keep trying to make me feel guilty for what others have done in the past?" While the speaker may be partially correct, that does not mean she or he is adequately informed about the multilayered dimensions of racism. In reality, the questioner can still be largely incorrect in his analysis of a larger racial issue and, if not reflective, develop an attitude that is offensive. Thus, the previous student's question—like the earlier ones—opens the door to potentially fruitful discussions. For instance, consider an illustration about discussions of racism in its personal, institutional, and systemic forms. First, as Nieto (2000, p. 37) observes, it is important that students understand that even today, hundreds of years after racist atrocities were introduced to North America that:

> Racism as an institutional system implies that some people and groups benefit and others lose. Whites, whether they want to or not, benefit in a racist society; males benefit in a sexist society. Discrimination always helps somebody—those with the most power—which explains why racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination continue.

If Nieto's ideas are correct, a person who is not a racist and was not involved in the establishment of a systemically racist society can still profit from it. An individual can still be an heir and beneficiary of racism—inherit privilege, status, resources, property, stocks, bonds, and power—even when he or she is not personally racist. So, if we are interested in mutual respect, equal opportunity, equity, justice, reparation, and freedom, we need to speak openly to the question, "Why do people keep trying to make me feel guilty for what others have done in the past?" *and* proceed further to other queries, such as, "What can we do in the present to identify and diminish current forms of racism and their effects?" When we pursue these kinds of questions, our hope is that the critically self-conscious student comes to understand that "right thinking belongs intimately to right doing" (Freire, 1998, p. 42). To effectively advance our antiracist education, even to understand what is at issue, we need to retain the ability to dialogue about the persistent malignant power of systemic racism and distinguish between the pernicious racist beliefs and practices of individuals and systemic racisms wherever they appear in the world (Bales, 2004; Bhattacharyya, Gabriel, & Small, 2002).

Evasive and dismissive tactics seem most common when complexity surrounds a controversy, and, as Campbell and Huxman (2009) state, topics are complex when they are experientially remote, embedded in other issues, or require technical expertise. Dialogues on ethical matters are regularly complex because many of them are experientially remote and require expertise in several realms of inquiry, e.g., ethics, history, law, culture, and epistemology (Wagner & Simpson, 2009).

## Logical Stoppers

Paul Hirst (Gribble, 1969, p. 35) is credited with using the phrase *logical stopper* to indicate when a person implies, claims, or acts as if there is a point at which no one can question a particular claim. Inquiry may be accepted up to a point or in certain spheres, but then a number of other beliefs fall into a "No Inquiry Zone," where no one who has any doubts may enter. Importantly, the "No Inquiry Zone" may be implicit or explicit and often includes prohibitions that are connected to ideas about truth, virtue, and reality. In this realm, Holder's (Weiss, 2009) call for courage is a reminder of the obligation to ask unwanted questions and to be aware that unwelcomed inquiries are usually related to people's highly cherished beliefs (Campbell & Huxman, 2009).

## Truth Claims

Hirst's idea is beautifully—and appallingly—illustrated in life and literature. Jun-ling, in Mah's *Falling Leaves*, encounters an interrogative statement that may be intended as a logical stopper. When she asks her brother Zi-jun if he wants to read letters that have a bearing on her truth claim, he responds, "'Is there such a thing as absolute truth?'" and quickly adds "'It all depends on a person's viewpoint.'" As if to emphasize that Jun-ling has entered a "No Inquiry Zone," Zi-jun dismisses her question: "In any case, it's all water under the bridge" (Mah, 1997, p. 269). Consequently, Jun-ling did not continue her inquiry.

Truth, Zi-jun argues, is entirely determined by—"it all depends on"—one's perspective. The popular assumption that truth depends utterly on one's perspective can easily derail discussions and immediately discredit anyone who questions another person's truth: "You may believe that, but I don't. Each of us is entitled to her opinion." This kind of logical stopper can have educationally deadening implications and may have hidden in it a questionable ethical assumption: I have a right to silence a person anytime I disagree with her. Similarly, the stereotypical implication that everyone who pursues understanding also wants to find, make, and impose claims about "absolute truth" can end inquiries. This inquiry-ending capacity is what makes a statement or question a logical stopper. If these logical stoppers concerning perspective and truth are unchallengeable absolute claims, discussion of nearly every ethical issue may be nullified, even a discussion of ethical principles that are promoted by national charters and constitutions and international organizations and courts, such as the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations and the International Criminal Court.

In reality, we can accommodate the notion that our perspectives influence what we see, think, and value, while validating the idea that truth or knowledge claims are not absolute, without coming to the conclusion that one opinion is as good as another. Like Dewey (1929), we can conclude that, if possible, all perspectives and data need to be examined as we seek to identify secure but not certain knowledge. But whatever our conclusions about truth claims and perspectivalism, neither we nor our students are well served by allowing logical stoppers to keep us from examining important claims.

**Value Claims**

A second common logical stopper regards explicit values—especially virtues—and so nearly any kind of ethical claim. Alexey, in Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, tells us that virtue is a relative matter, presumably governed exclusively by one's culture. He asks "[W]hat is virtue?" and answers his own question by claiming, "It's one thing to me and another thing to a Chinaman—it's a relative thing" but then seems to vacillate: "Or is it?" (Dostoyevsky, 1982, p. 696). Are virtues completely a matter of what one's culture teaches and are the teachings of different cultures hopelessly antithetical? At a minimum, recent empirical research raises serious questions about these as absolutist empirical assertions (Alexander, 2007; Axelrod, 1984; Coles, 2000; Peterson & Seligman, 2004), and philosophical inquiry has long indicated multiple conceptual, logical, and evidentiary problems for unsophisticated ethical relativism (Barrow, 1991; Dewey, 1948; Ennis, 1969; Holmes, 2003; Peters, 1970; Wagner & Simpson, 2009; Wong, 2006). Again, whatever our conclusions are in this realm, neither we nor our students are well served by allowing logical stoppers to block our inquiry into beliefs that some want to remain unexamined.

**Reality Claims**

Corrine, in McInerney's (2006) *The Good Life*, provides another example of a possible logical stopper. She notices a man, named Luke, who staggers toward her a day after 9/11. She stares at him: "His knees showed through the ripped legs of what until recently had been a pair of dress slacks. The hard hat looked anomalous, and indeed, as he tilted his head back, it fell to the curb, exposing a dark tangle of hair, streaked with ubiquitous talcy ash" (McInerney, 2006, p. 70). As Corrine talked with Luke, she discovered that he had had an appointment postponed approximately twenty-four hours earlier, an occurrence that had probably saved his life. As he pauses to get his bearings, he volunteers to Corrine that she is the first person he has seen and adds, "Unless I'm imagining you" (p. 70). Corrine takes time to assure him that he is not imagining her but then pauses to qualify her declaration: "It's hard to tell, though. What's real, I mean" (p. 70). No doubt, such a response was understandable considering the circumstances surrounding the story. Used as a logical stopper, however, a question—e.g., "We can't really tell what happened in the Jewish holocaust, can we?"—may seek to reduce historical inquiry to ideological propaganda and dogma. Ethically, thinking that denies the possibility of any knowledge of reality may trivialize some of the greatest past and current issues, relegate them to private impressions, and not allow public research and debate. Hence, we then have no way of determining when Muslims, atheists, and other groups are excluded from the opportunities and resources that are legitimately theirs in a democracy.

Cumulatively, these three queries and related ones can easily stymie classroom discussions and silence, if not slay, would-be gadflies. Consequently, we could have students, including future teachers, who conclude that every detail of reality is always hopelessly fuzzy, virtue is completely relative, and truth claims are entirely subjective perceptions. These conclusions frequently seem to be reached, not as a result of sustained study, but as a consequence of accepting cultural clichés. But logical stoppers predicated on clichés are educationally important because of their potentially

dialogue-closing effects on discussions. While these conclusions may be arrived at via persistent and reflective inquiry, passing them on without an open examination appears to be educationally counterproductive.

The silencing of critical deliberations may become more serious if someone intimidates others with extensions of these three logical stoppers. Namely, a student may ask, "Who are we to decide what is right or wrong for a student or school?" Further, someone may personalize the question, implying that each class member should ask her- or himself, "Who am I to say that a certain act is ethical or unethical?" Or, a person may inquire, "Who are *you* to decide what is right or wrong for your students and colleagues?" Happily, these questions and similar ones can be raised with praiseworthy intentions in mind and should not be avoided by teachers (Dewey & Tufts, 1932).

These questions can also open the door to educative dialogues and may not even be designed as logical stoppers. The questioner may merely want some suggestions about how to answer these questions. Regardless of the reasons for the questions, like Dewey (1922), we can appreciate the provocative nature of these questions and the stimuli they provide for reflection. Future and current teachers do, indeed, need to be able to discuss how these and many other questions might be examined and addressed. One way of addressing these questions is to examine them, first, in university teacher education programs by well-prepared professors (Center for Faculty Excellence, 2004) and, later, by well-prepared classroom teachers (Hess, 2009). A re-articulation technique—rephrasing questions—can be employed so that the ideas more easily stimulate classroom discussions, e.g., "Does a teacher ever have the responsibility to determine if a particular act may be wrong and, if it is, forbid it?"

## Ad Hominem Arguments

Attacking people rather than evaluating their ideas is a perennial challenge in institutions and society. The seeming proliferation of personal attacks in political circles and on the World Wide Web is regrettable and probably has residual effects in classrooms. Even if this is not the case, the need to work toward open, inquiring climates in classrooms is a largely but not totally uncontested suggestion and nowhere more evident than in discussions of values. An ideal that is difficult to abandon, particularly if we are teachers, is expressed in *The Known World* by the character Barnum: "A body should be able to stand under some … kinda light and declare what he knows without retribution" (Jones, 2003, p. 303). For socially and academically vulnerable students or teachers, retribution for doing just that can come in many forms. A student's fear of being silenced during a discussion and being emotionally slain by others can make him or her feel particularly exposed to retaliation. Here Holder's (Weiss, 2009) exhortation to be courageous is sobering, especially if institutional and classroom safeguards are not in place. When safeguards have not already been institutionalized, a priority for educators should be to help encourage and establish policies, regulations, and laws regarding the study and teaching of controversial issues. With the backing of professional associations and unions and legislative leaders, educators need to work toward the passage of laws, policies, and procedures that enhance teaching controversial ideas in all kinds of educational institutions (Fisher, Schimmel, & Kelly, 1999; Stadler, 2007; Wagner & Simpson, 2009).

## Psychological Effects

Problems with classroom attacks go beyond their logical irrelevance and pedagogical destructiveness to their psychological effect. While some questioners might be just seeking to expand an issue or place it in a context, genuine attacks can be so insidious that they gnaw on our psyches for days, weeks, and months. The inner anguish experienced is sometimes nearly overwhelming. We, much like Jadine in *Tar Baby*, might be tempted to declare, "I want to get out of my skin and be only the person inside—not American—not black—just me" (Morrison, 1982, p. 48). Accepting externally imposed stereotypes and definitions that others foist on us—and maybe rejecting our identities in the process—shows the destructiveness of some ad hominem comments. Why would we willing reject our own identities except for the exhausting attacks some of us endure? As teachers, we have an obligation to collaborate with our students and one another to help create healthy classroom and school spaces for inquiry and for developing the strength to reject the cutting definitions of definers (Morrison, 1987, p. 190).

## Illustrative Situations

Illustrations of ad hominem arguments abound, but we use just one that shares a person's experiences with both school and university classmates and teachers. We begin with Walls' (2005) scenario about her informal conversation with another university student and continue with her formal discussion with a professor. During both, Walls was attempting to keep her past nomadic, dysfunctional, and impoverished family life and her parents' current semi-stable, but homeless lifestyle, secret. The context is her description of her family's sometimes self-inflicted, occasionally compelled, but recurrently painful struggles and treks from California to Arizona to West Virginia to New York.

In back-to-back examples, Walls' stories illustrate how ad hominem ideas and arguments can bring public embarrassment, personal stress, and self-hatred. The first describes part of a conversation she had with a fellow student as they walked down Broadway. In keeping with her habit of giving homeless people spare change, she offered a young fellow some money and was interrupted by Carol, her companion, who said: "You shouldn't do that." "It only encourages them. They're all scam artists" (Walls, 2005, p. 256). Hearing this stereotype of homeless people, Walls wanted to exclaim, "*What do you know*?" (p. 256). Her legitimate anger almost led her to orally attack her acquaintance rather than respond to her typecasting. Instead, her fear of revealing part of her history and her parents' circumstances caused her to say nothing. She silenced herself, going her "way without saying a thing" (p. 256).

Walls' (pp. 256-257) second scenario is more detailed, multilayered, complicated, and may have caused her to recall a fifth-grade experience. Her professor may begin her assault after Walls stated in class that some homeless people did not fit into the either/or (i.e., conservative or liberal) explanations that were mentioned. No doubt thinking of her university-educated parents (depicted as an eccentric want-to-be-artist-despite-the-traumatic-consequences mother and an alcoholic want-to-do-things-my-own-way-regardless-of-the-outcomes father), she said, "I think that maybe sometimes people get the lives they want" (p. 256). After making her statement, the ensuing professor-student interactions occurred:

> "Can you explain yourself?"
>
> "I think that maybe sometimes people get the lives they want."
>
> "Are you saying homeless people want to live on the street?"
>
> "Are you saying they don't want warm beds and roofs over their heads?"
>
> "Not exactly."
>
> "They do. But if some of them were willing to work hard and make compromises, they might not have ideal lives, but they could make ends meet." (pp. 256-257)

The three professorial questions might have been an innocent attempt to get Walls to examine, explain, or justify her thoughts. The professor may have been using sound pedagogy. Maybe her probing was well intentioned even if her use of personal pronouns was ill timed. But when the professor walked from behind the lectern to ask two additional questions, her intentions seemed either to change or become more manifest. Walls heard her own previously unarticulated question—"What do you know?"— echo in her mind:

> "What do you know about the lives of the underprivileged?"
>
> "What do you know about the hardships and obstacles that the underclass faces?" (p. 257).

Seeing a student who appeared to be a white, middle class, privileged female, the professor may have assumed that Walls knew nothing about the topic at hand and was merely voicing her unrecognized ignorance, unexamined ideology, or, worse, her own deep-seated prejudices. Like Hurston's Janie when speaking to Jody, Walls may have wanted to whisper to her professor, "Mah own mind ha tuh be squeezed and crowed out tuh make room for yours in me" (Hurston, 1978, p. 133). Surveying the stares of her fellow students, she may have recalled her fifth-grade teacher's question ("Perhaps you'd like to explain yourself?") and her classmates as they "swiveled their heads around to stare" (Walls, 2005, p. 138). In the end, she acquiesced: "You have a point" (p. 257). She, like Simone, concluded, "Who am I to argue?" (Belenky, Clincy, Goldberg, & Tarule, 1986, p. 216).

Like Walls' professor, we can make faulty assumptions about students and combine them with defective reasoning and poisonous pedagogy and use an ad hominem argument. In the process, we can silence not only the voices of those who are more knowledgeable, better experienced, and more reflective than we are, but we may also quell opportunities for genuine class inquiry. But even if Walls were an ill-informed, privileged white female, her ideas needed to be analyzed, not her personhood attacked. Even if Walls had misconstrued her experience and her parents' choices and preferences, her professor's response was toxic. Forgotten were some pertinent clichés that a student is "entitled to her opinion" and that "[r]easonable people can disagree about this" (McInerney, 2006, p. 226). As teachers, we may be well-advised to reflect on Nafisi's (2004) declaration about "the most unsympathetic

characters" who appear, lecture, and scold in novels: Their "incapacity for true dialogue implies an incapacity for tolerance, self-reflection and empathy" (p. 268).

## Conclusion

Several ideas deserve attention at this time. First, though we have been critical of several kinds of questions, it is clear that sound pedagogy makes generous use of numerous queries. Raising questions is a vital part of many—perhaps most—classrooms. Asking questions, in our opinion, should be encouraged not discouraged. Indeed, we want to encourage students and teachers to become reflective, questioning gadflies and work toward school environments that nurture settings to facilitate the intellectual, social, and emotional development of everyone involved. To help students think clearly, evidentially, cogently, critically, and comprehensively about ethical issues in our fields of expertise is no insignificant part of their educations. We are only discouraging the use of questions that are actually "burning statements" that are sometimes combined with other anti-educational behaviors that are "killing tools" (Hurston, 1978, p. 10).

Second, even though many questions are inappropriate because they stymie discussions, they may be invaluable indicators of related matters that we need to discuss. The questions—and statements—may be more important than the planned curriculum. So in a way, no matter how unfortunate the thought behind a question may be, we may thank students for providing educational opportunities when they express their dismissive/evasive tactics, logical stoppers, and ad hominem arguments. They help us, or at least create opportunities for us, to become better teachers.

Teachers also have to grapple with legal mandates (e.g., curriculum specifications and standardized tests) and administrative obstacles (e.g., leadership fear of community mores) that can silence or inhibit classroom learning. These and related obstructions can disrupt the work of many teachers, especially new ones who are often the most defenceless. Certainly, legal threats and administrative impediments that inhibit reflective teaching and student engagement may contribute to teacher attrition (Kozol, 2005, 2007). Of course, when teachers and schools focus on which instructional approach is effective in a certain situation and neglect social environments, teachers may end up implementing a technological, manufacturing, pre-determined approach to education (McLaren, 2010; Schwandt, 2002). While these emphases may help some students perform successfully on standardized tests and in market-driven classrooms, they may limit the flexibility that teachers have to adapt the curriculum to students' personal and local backgrounds (Eryaman, 2006, 2007). Encouraging teachers to develop and exercise good judgment or wisdom, however, can broaden classroom perspectives and provide students with opportunities to discuss sensitive issues while providing a counterbalance to the narrow view of the teacher as classroom manager (Kozol, 2005). In all of these situations, it is important that teachers understand and remind one another that "the world is not as dangerous as many in the older generation want to believe" (Kozol, 2007, p. 193). So, teachers and their allies need to work wisely toward their ideals less they "choke on their beliefs [and] … never know the taste of struggle in a decent cause and never know the thrill of even partial victories" (p. 193).

Third, we seem to be well-advised to anticipate patterns of student comments so as to be able to use their ideas in non-inflammatory but stimulating ways. So, if students appreciably control our classes by comments that tend to obstruct educative conversations, we need to reconsider our instructional practices (Schon, 1983). Staying abreast of contemporary student cultures and beliefs can be a very useful means of professional development and enable teachers to better anticipate students' expressions of their beliefs. Staying abreast of our legal rights as educators is also important. Hence, as teachers we need to keep abreast of recent developments in the field of school law, support local workshops on educational law, and attend professional conferences that address our rights and freedoms as educators. Moreover, we need to study dialogical practices as a profession so that we better understand and utilize the limits of our freedoms and rights as professionals (Cambron-McCabe, McCarthy, & Thomas, 2009; Essex, 2006; Fisher, Schimmel, & Kelly, 1999; Siegel, 2007; Stadler, 2007).

Fourth, as teachers we are not only responsible for nurturing healthy classroom environments but also for examining our own passions and prejudices and ensuring that they do not prompt us to mistreat students or unfairly present ideas. If we ignore our ethical responsibility to treat students with respect (regardless of how ill-founded we may deem their views), we run the risk of creating an ethical chasm between what we say our interests are and what we do in class (Gay, 2000). As Freire (2003) observes, when we act contrary to what we profess, we enlarge the gap between our ethical profession and our ethical practice and lose our credibility.

Fifth, if as teachers we are also teacher educators, it is at least arguable that we have a responsibility to better prepare aspiring teachers to address ethical questions in their classrooms. That is to say, we appear to have a professional duty to help our university students understand ethically significant questions and to handle delicate issues in pedagogically sound and intellectually honest ways. Preparing students who intend to be teachers and contributors to the development of democratic citizens demands such, for democracy itself is loaded with ethical questions and concerns (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1998; West, 2004). Moreover, we may need to challenge our university students to critique their and our assumptions, reasoning habits, and linguistic patterns that tend to inhibit rather than facilitate discussions and that have a tendency to close rather than open minds to important realms of inquiry. Extrapolating from Hess's (2009) remarks about preparing to teach high school students, we can say that preparing future teachers for these activities takes a great deal of preparation and study of positive examples of how to discuss controversies in the classroom. Together with the previous thoughts, it seems that we should assist aspiring and practicing teachers as they seek to understand how they may maintain open-minds about the credibility of longstanding and emerging knowledge claims (Hare, 1979, 1993), dig into their ideological assumptions and presuppositions for clarity (Shermer, 1997), interrogate their privileged beliefs and practices (Kincheloe, 2005; McLaren, & Farahmandpur, 2006), think critically about their everyday and professional beliefs and values (Paul & Elder, 2005; Stone, Patton, & Heen, 1999), identify their fallacious ways of thinking (Ennis, 1969; Norris, 1992) and scrutinize their beliefs in order to determine which are intelligent beliefs and disbeliefs (Noddings, 1993). The reflective spirit, as is widely known, is a two-edged sword and calls for an examination of our own beliefs—whether we are teacher educators, teachers, or students—and not just those of others. Similarly, Paz (1985) tells us that

we must begin to identify and evaluate our own ideologies before we can expect others to do the same. Even so, these preparations alone may not be sufficient: A teacher education program that seeks to foster reflective practitioners who acquire practical wisdom is also demanded (Eryaman, 2007).

Finally, in a Siegelian (Siegel, 2007) spirit, we conclude that we think we have offered ideas which appear credible and worthy of further consideration. We hope that multiple kinds of gadflies will critique, if not apply, our ideas. Rather than automatically condemning gadflies as being on the side of devils and designating ourselves as being on the side of angels, we hope they—with all of their idiosyncratic, irritable, questionable, and irreverent tendencies—will be encouraged to inquire into "indiscussible" questions, the protected dogmas of contemporary societies (Pinker, 2008). Of course, we need not be as optimistic as Mill (2004) in order to encourage gadflies to join more discussions. Likewise, we need to remember that in encouraging warranted discussions of sensitive and controversial topics we are not interested merely in open discourse but in dialogues that enable us to grow in our understanding of and acting with one another for the common good of our schools, communities, societies, nations, and world (Freire, 2003).

Perhaps it is almost superfluous to say that we are not encouraging a false open-mindedness where teachers feel obligated to provide a so-called fair study of everyone's proposed issue, such as, say, the views of those who claim that the peak of African slave trade was limited to a few thousand people (Hare, 2009). Nevertheless, teachers need to be prepared to address when and why a question is ever closed and what needs to occur if a closed topic is to be reopened in a classroom setting (Hess, 2009). Likewise, toxic speech practices have no room in educative settings. Instead, classrooms need dialogue that avoids both "overly controlled" and "undisciplined" interactions (Freire, 2005, p. 81). Unfortunately, many of us seem to lack the courage that Holder (Weiss, 2009) supports so that we can discuss important topics in appropriate ways. Likewise, dialogical cultures that facilitate considered or educative discussions are often lacking in schools and communities, and that lack probably accounts for part of the fear Holder noted (Hess, 2009; Wagner & Simpson, 2009). In view of these circumstances, much culture-and-courage building is needed in schools and classrooms. Leveraging pedagogical moments that may otherwise undermine important dialogue provides opportunities for culture-and-courage building by teachers and students and, thereby, opportunities for ethical and democratic growth, not to mention the intellectual and emotional development that occurs in fields of inquiry and creativity.

## Endnotes

[i] The terms *teachers* and *teacher* are used throughout this work to include anyone who teaches in a university teacher education program or a P-12 school. Similarly, the terms *students* and *student* are employed to include anyone who is studying to become a teacher in a university preparation program or studying in a P-12 school.

[ii] The word *colleagues* is an inclusive term that includes anyone who meets the previously stated definition of a teacher.

[iii] The focus of this paper is on those occasions when inappropriate silencing of students occurs, not on those instances when a student or teacher violates legal or institutional free speech laws or policies. This focus, however, does not assume that all legal and/or institutional free speech laws and policies are ipso facto flawless.

[iv] Our general model is implied, in part, by references to Zora Neale Hurston (1978), Cornell West (2004), Paulo Friere (2003), Albert Camus (1995), John Dewey (1916), and Jurgen Habermas (1984). In short, our theoretical orientation is rooted in a liberal and humane view of a deep democracy (Green, 1999), one that is concerned with learning from the diversity of thought and values that exist in society, and one that is founded at a minimum on a tolerance of ideas that are repugnant but also a critique of ideas that are both disagreeable and agreeable (Vogt, 1997). Of course, there are numerous other thinkers who have helped shape out dialogical model and democratic ideals, such as Wong (2006), Siegel (2007), Peters (1970), Mill (2004), Noddings (1991, 1992), Hare (2009), and Campbell and Huxman (2009).

[v] The teacher, of course, has difficult decisions to make regarding which if any form or forms of dialogue to employ in a classroom. For example, challenges to engaging in dialogue in public schools might range from those who question any form of dialogue to those who question gender-specific forms to those who question culturally-specific forms to those who question comprehension-only forms to those who question epistemologically-diverse forms to those who question religiously-diverse forms (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2009). In addition, there is often the temptation to pursue a pseudo dialogue that leads nowhere and discredits sincere efforts to engage in dialogue (Simpson, 2010). While there are no absolutely non-controversial answers to the multiple dimensions of these challenges, we utilize a number of forms of dialogue for several reasons, including student, cultural, epistemic, gender, religious, and contextual preferences. We are sensitive to these dimensions because of our views of the conception of dialogue and the nature of public institutions in a democracy. While space does not permit us to delineate all of or elaborate on our reasons for our selecting and allowing students to select different kinds of dialogue, it is important for us to make several explanatory points and clarifications.

First, we begin by revisiting the idea dialogue. For us, dialogue is largely a way to understand others' ideas, reconsider our own thoughts, ask others to reassess their beliefs and to stimulate ourselves and others to act on what we learn and unlearn. Dialogue is made possible, in part, because we can communicate in our own literal and dialogical languages. Hence, we speak or use, for example, Deweyan, Freirean, Habermasian, Hurstonian, and Noddings-like kinds of dialogue when we or students have a preference for one kind over another. Occasionally, we engage in a more Deweyan or Freirean dialogue. Sometimes our dialogue may be more Camusian or Hurstonian. In a sense, we see being bi- or multi-dialogical as similar to but not identical with being bi- or multi-lingual. From an instrumentalist perspective, then, we want to facilitate communication. From an equal respect of persons viewpoint, we want to nurture a common interest in and respect for everyone in a dialogue. If learning other dialogical languages and epistemologies furthers these goals, we think it is worth our efforts to do so. If Scott (2009) is accurate, being versed in various epistemologies may also nurture a hospitable environment in which serious discussions about critical issues may occur.

Second, we think that understanding our diversity, including our different forms of dialogue and their epistemologies, is a critical part of living in a liberal democracy and provides powerful opportunities for educational experiences (Delgado, 1995; Wegner, 2006; Williams, 1994). For instance, even when a student voices opposition to dialogue, an educative moment is present. The student who indicates an opposition to dialogue may feel comfortable enough—in private if not in public—to discuss her or his view of particular dialogical shortcomings she or he has observed and, sometimes, may be willing to, paradoxically, dialogue about being anti-dialogical. In the process, the teacher may gain insight into the student's reasoning, culture, and identity and the student may learn that her or his agency, voice, and culture are important to her or his teacher.

Third, we think that our preference for certain forms of dialogue may open as well as close some doors of learning. Hence, we listen carefully to reasons for believing that a form of dialogue that is being employed is—or at least is perceived to be—embedded in cultural, ethnic, racial, ideological, nationalistic, and sexist biases (Delgado, 1995). Indeed, we welcome these stimulating discussions which may be as important as some of the topics we have selected for classroom analysis. Thus, we are comfortable adjusting our pedagogical and dialogical parameters so that students do not feel demeaned, silenced, or coerced (Forrest, 2009).

Fourth, we think that using different forms of dialogue—especially those that have different standards of truth, understanding, and action—are provocative. Or, in Dewey's (1922) framework, different forms of dialogue can be gadflies of reflection. From one perspective, then, exposing and

evaluating antithetical suppositions of forms of dialogue is a wonderful pedagogical opportunity to expand students' understanding to ideologies and ethical theories that they may not otherwise encounter and provide an occasion to dialogue about their non-commensurate theories of knowledge. Camus (1995), as noted earlier, welcomed dialogue with Catholics so that he and they could better understand each other during a time of international crisis. With this form of epistemologically non-commensurate dialogue, he and we have the opportunity to affirm others' identity and agency as we gain a better understanding of their ideas and yet we can continue to reject their ideologies. And, on occasions, we may modify our thinking on an issue if not our basic beliefs. This kind of growth in understanding often occurs on numerous occasions when diverse groups interact, e.g., pro-life and pro-choice proponents, capitalists and socialists, Muslims and Jews, atheists and theists, pacifists and just war proponents. Comprehension-only dialogue, therefore, may well be merited if we need to step out of our social and intellectual circles to avoid misunderstanding, stereotyping, and, even, overt hostilities.

Fifth, since we highly value the personhood and agency of each student and teacher, we encourage them to think reflectively, choose intelligently, build coherently, and act prudentially as they go about their professional and personal responsibilities, including developing their dialogical styles and practices. We want them to learn and experience dialogical paradigms we think are philosophically and pedagogically incongruent, because we think this practice can help them better construct their own theories of dialogical practice by experiencing and evaluating multiple forms. As fallibilists (Cohen, 1988), we recognize that students—as have we—will reach at times ill-informed conclusions and make ill-advised decisions. But that is a risk that accompanies a pedagogy that seeks both to evaluate (Dewey, 1938) and to avoid normalizing itself (Foucault, 1977). It is also a risk of teaching the maturing in public schools in a liberal democracy. Even so, we prefer these risks to the alternatives we have examined.

Sixth, but in conjunction with our prior notion, we believe it is important to emphasize that we do not think each form of dialogue is always ipso facto just as effective, meritorious, or valid as any other one. Thus, a study of forms of dialogue that involves a critique of them in theory and practice is warranted and can be a significant educational experience. This critique probably needs to include, at a minimum, an understanding and interrogation of school and classroom contexts and rules that favor some students and disadvantage others because of their cultural, class, gender, ethnic, religious, and language differences (Bernstein, 1990; Gay, 2000; Moore, 2005). But biases are complex, complicated, nuanced, convoluted and, off-and-on, opaque**.** And we may be simply mistaken on occasions about what we claim is a bias. Consider, for a moment, what might be viewed as a culturally biased form of dialogue by some. Both Hurston (1978) and Jones (2003) promote, through their characters, a form of dialogue used by some African Americans that is at least initially a comprehension-only one and similar to Camus's (1995) use of dialogue with Catholics. Is this form of culturally-specific dialogue inappropriate all of the time? We think not, in part, because a cultural group may find the form facilitates their speaking their minds and clarifying their thoughts without the interruptions and distractions of queries and cross examinations. Plus, we think a culture-specific dialogue can be open to non-culture members if they are interested in learning about another culture and willing to honor that culture's preferences. Either way—with or without people from another culture—a so-called comprehension-only form of dialogue may well plant the seeds of gadfly-ish intellectual inquiry.

Finally, while we recognize that there are historical connections between certain philosophical beliefs and particular forms of dialogue, we hesitate to conclude that these relationships are always of a detailed deterministic or logically causal nature. That is to say, we think that the precise details of a dialogical theory and practice are not necessarily determined by a straight-line extension from one's ontological, epistemological, and ethical theories (Hall, 2008; Magrini, 2009). Sometimes the relationship seems to be more a matter of influence and philosophical boundary setting for dialogical practice than it is an if-then paradigm, e.g., if I scribe to Deweyan experimentalism, then I must use a specifically prescribed pattern of dialogical interaction. Instead, he (Dewey, 1938; Simpson, Jackson, & Aycock, 2005) seems delighted when teachers use their knowledge of what is being communicated, who are the people engaging in the dialogue, where are the people situated culturally and geographically, and what is their understanding of the ideals, skills, and attitudes to be learned to make judgments about how to initiate, guide, and close a dialogue. But he adds other qualifications to his dialogical theory, such as how will the imagination, creativity, and passions of the teacher affect her teaching and interactions with students and what unique interests, needs, and purposes of the students will be brought to the dialogue? Moreover, the weight and priority that a specific teacher places on a

subject and its subparts will influence her dialogical interactions. In the end, the teacher's ability to place the multitude of variables of Dewey's theory of dialogue into a gestalt and to weight each unique situation to make wise decisions about the dynamics of dialogue are contingent upon her or his precise views of democracy, dialogue, agency, and public education. They are also contingent, in part, on the uniqueness of the every changing student, teacher, and curriculum that are situated in schools in a dynamic democracy and evolving global world and our ability to identify border crossings that allow us to interact in ways that engage one another in educative and sensitive ways (Forrest, 2009; Vokey, 2010).

## References

Alexander, J. (2007). *The structural evolution of morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Axelrod, R. (1984). *The evolution of cooperation*. New York: Basic Books.

Bales, K. (2004). *Disposable people: New slavery in the global economy* (Revised ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Barrow, R. (1991). *Utilitarianism: A contemporary statement*. Brookfield, VT: Edward Elgar Publishing Company.

Belenky, M., Clincy, B., Goldberger, N., & Tarule, J. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.

Bernstein, B. (1990). *Class, codes and control*: *The structuring of pedagogic discourse*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Bhattacharyya, J., Gabriel, J., & Small, S. (2002). *Race and power: Global racism in the twenty- first century*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Brookfield, S., & Preskill, S. (1999). *Discussion as a way of teaching: Tools and techniques for democratic classrooms*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Campbell, K., & Huxman, S. (2009). *The rhetorical act, thinking, speaking, and writing critically* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Cambron-McCabe, N., McCarthy, M., & Thomas, S. (2009). *Legal rights of teachers and students* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Camus, A. (1995). *Resistance, rebellion, and death*. (J. O'Brien, Trans.). New York: Vintage Books.

Center for Faculty Excellence (2004). Teaching Controversial Issues. *For your consideration . . . suggestions and reflections on teaching and learning* (CFC, No.21). Retrieved March, 6, 2010, from http://cfe.unc.edu/pdfs/FYC21.pdf

Claire, H., & Holden, C. (Eds.). (2007). *The challenge of teaching controversial issues*. Stroke on Trent: Trentham Books.

Cohen, S. (1988). How to be a fallibilist. *Philosophical Perspectives*, *2*, 91–123.

Coles, R. (2000). *The moral life of children*. New York: Grove/Atlantic.

Delgado, R. (Ed.). (1995). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: The Free Press.

Dewey, J. (1922). *Human nature and conduct: An introduction to social psychology.* New York: Modern Library.

Dewey, J. (1929). *The quest for certainty*. New York: Minton, Balch and Co.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education.* New York: Touchstone.

Dewey, J. (1948). *Reconstruction in philosophy* (Enlarged ed.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Dewey, J., & Tufts, J. (1932). *Ethics* (Revised ed.). New York: Holt.

Dostoyevsky, D. (1982). *The brothers Karamazov*. (D. Magarshack, Trans.). Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd.

Essex, N. (2006). *A teacher's pocket guide to school law*. Boston: Pearson.

Ennis, R. (1969). *Logic in teaching*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Eryaman, M. (2006). A hermeneutic approach towards integrating technology into schools: Policy and practice. In S. Tettegah & R. Hunter (Eds.), *Technology: Issues in administration, policy, and applications in K-12 schools* (pp. 149-167). Elsevier Science Publications.

Eryaman, M. (2007). From reflective practice to practical wisdom: Towards a post-foundational teacher education. *International Journal of Progressive Education*, *3* (1), 1-23.

Fisher, L., Schimmel, D., & Kelly, C. (1999). *Teachers and the law*. New York: Longman.

Forrest, M. (2009). Sensitive controversy in teaching to be critical. *Paideusis*, *18*(1), 80-93.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punishment: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage.

Freedom Writers, The, with Gruwell, E. (1999). *The freedom writers diary*. New York: Broadway Books.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. (P. Clarke, Trans.). New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Freire, P. (2003). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary ed.). (M. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum.

Freire, P. (2005). *Teachers as cultural workers* (Expanded ed.). (D. Macedo, D. Koike, & A. Oliveria, Trans.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, & practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Green, J. (1999). *Deep democracy*: *Community, diversity, and transformation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Gribble, J. (1969). *Introduction to philosophy of education*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Habermas, J. (1984). *The theory of communicative action.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hall, N. (2008). Causation. In F. Jackson & M. Smith (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy* (pp. 505–533). New York: Oxford University Press.

Hare, W. (1979). *Open-mindedness and education*. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

Hare, W. (1993). *Attitudes in teaching and education.* Calgary, AB: Detselig Enterprises, Ltd.

Hare, W. (2009). What open-mindedness requires. *Skeptical Inquirer*, *33*(1), 36-39.

Hess, D. (2009). *Controversy in the classroom*: *The democratic power of discussion*. New York: Routledge.

Holmes, R. (2003). *Basic moral philosophy* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Hurston, Z. (1978). *Their eyes were watching God*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Jones, E. (2003). *The known world*. New York: Amistad.

Kincheloe. J. (2005). *Critical constructivism primer*. New York: Peter Lang.

Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Kozol, J. (2007). *Letters to a young teacher*. New York: Crown Publishers.

Magrini, J. (2009). How the conception of knowledge influences our educational practices: Toward a philosophical understanding of epistemology in education.*Philosophy Scholarship*. Paper 13. http://dc.cod.edu/philosophypub/13

Mah, A. (1997). *Falling leaves: The memoir of an unwanted Chinese daughter*. New York: Broadway Books.

McInerney. J. (2006). *The good life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

McLaren, P. & Farahmandpur, R. (2006). The pedagogy of oppression: A brief look at *No Child Left Behind. Monthly Review*, *58*(3), 94-99.

McLaren, P. (2010). Afterwords. *Educational Theory*, *60* (3), 391-393.

Mill, J. (2004). *On liberty*. New York: Barnes & Noble.

Moore, R. (2005). *Education and society: Issues and explanations in the sociology of education*. London: Cambridge: Polity Press.

Morrison, T. (1982). *Tar baby*. New York: A Plume Book.

Morrison, T. (1987). *Beloved*. New York: A Plume Book.

Nafisi, N. (2004). *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A memoir in books*. New York: Random House.

Nelson, J., Palonsky, S. & McCarthy, M. (2009). *Critical issues in education: Dialogues and dialectics* (7th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Nieto, S. (2000). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.

Noddings, N. (1991). Stories in dialogue: Caring and interpersonal reasoning. In C. Witherell & N. Noddings (Eds.), *Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education* (pp. 157-170). New York: Teachers College Press.

Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Noddings, N. (1993). *Educating for intelligent belief or unbelief*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Norris, S. (1992). *The generalizability of critical thinking*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Oakeshott, M. (1991). *Moral consciousness and communicative action*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2005). *Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your learning and your life* (2nd ed.). New York: Prentice Hall.

Paz, O. (1985). *The labyrinth of solitude*. (L. Kemp, Y. Milos, & R. Belash, Trans.). New York: Grove Press.

Peters, R. (1970). *Ethics and education*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues*. Washington, D.C.: Oxford University Press.

Pinker, S. (2008, January 13). The moral instinct. *The New York Times*. Retrieved January 29, 2008, from http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/13/magazine/13Psychology-t.html

Schon, D. (1983). *How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.

Scott, C. (2009). Epistemological multilingualism: A tool for conviviality. *Paideusis*, *18*(2), 43-54.

Schwandt, T. (2002). Evaluation as practical hermeneutics. In T.A. Schwandt (Ed.), *Evaluation practices revisited* (pp. 59-74). New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Shermer, M. (1997). *Why people believe weird things: Pseudoscience, superstition, and other confusions of our time*. New York: Henry Holt & Company.

Siegel, H. (2007). What is freedom of speech in teaching? In W. Hare & J. Portelli (Eds.),*Key questions for educators*. San Francisco, CA: Caddo Gap Press.

Simpson, D. (2010). The high stakes of artificial dialogue in teacher education. *Teacher Education & Practice*, *22* (4), 478-481.

Simpson, D., Jackson, M., & Aycock, J. (2005). *John Dewey and the art of teaching: Toward reflective and imaginative practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stadler, D. (2007). *Law and ethics in educational leadership*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (1999). *Difficult conversations: How to discuss what matters most*. New York: Viking.

Vogt, W. (1997). *Tolerance & education: Learning to live with diversity and difference*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Vokey, D. (2010). Border crossings: Dialogue across and within fields and traditions. *Paideusis*, *19*(1), 69-76.

Wagner, P., & Simpson, D. (2009). *Ethical decision making in school administration: Leadership as moral architecture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Walls, J. (2005). *The glass castle: A memoir*. New York: Scribner.

Wegner, J. (2006). *Difficult dialogues initiative discussion guide: Promoting pluralism and academic freedom on campus*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Weiss, D. (2009). Holder says US is 'Nation of Cowards' in racial discussions. Retrieved February 21, 2009, from http://abajournal.com/news/holder_says_us_is_nation_of_cowards_in_racial_discussions

West, C. (1993). *Race matters*. Boston: Beacon Press.

West, C. (2004). *Democracy matters: Winning the fight against imperialism*. New York: The Penguin Press.

Williams, J. (1994). *Classroom in conflict: Teaching controversial subjects in a diverse society*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Wong, D. (2006). *Natural moralities*: *A defense of pluralistic relativism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.