From Peer Discourse to Critical Moral Perspectives: Teaching for Engaged Reasoning

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ABSTRACT: The social domain theory approach to moral education has focused on discourse between peers as a way of stimulating complex reasoning and fostering a critical moral orientation towards the norms of society. In this paper, we use the work of Anthony Laden and Mikhail Bakhtin to further refine our goals for using dialogue in the classroom. For Laden, "reasoning" is not simply *thinking*, but a social, dialogical activity. For Mikhail Bakhtin, "dialogue" is not simply *talk*, but the foundation of *relationship* and fundamental to becoming open to change. We argue that high-level reasoning in peer discourse is not an adequate end-goal for moral education—we must consider the intentions behind the discourse (e.g., deliberation, debate), and a young person's willingness to change his or her beliefs. We point to contemporary examples of young people engaging in this kind of heteroglossic, engaged reasoning through media and civic action.

KEYWORDS: moral education, peer discourse, transactive, dialogue, reasoning, Bakhtin, media

I. From Peer Discourse to Critical Moral Perspectives: Teaching for Engaged Reasoning

WHEN CONSIDERING HOW to foster moral and social development in schools, we must address the development of students' capacities to wrestle with both the fairness of how society functions, and society's impact on human welfare. Yet moral and character education, when implemented, is often reduced to anti-bullying campaigns, social-emotional skill building, codes of conduct, and character traits plastered in hallways. While extremely important, these efforts

do not go far enough—they do not outline a vision for our students of becoming engaged moral citizens, neighbors, and friends. For this vision to be realized, schools must also embrace their responsibility to ensure that a child develops her social and moral reasoning abilities and their application toward addressing existing social inequities. Educators must actively incorporate opportunities for children to *reason* collaboratively in the effort of developing a critical moral orientation towards their society and their world (Nucci 2009; 2016). Instead of limiting students to the development of basic attitudes and skills that maintain the moral status quo, it is our job to equip children with the tools to identify and critique the injustices of their time and to take action towards making society more fair.

II. Social Domain Theory: What Do We Mean by Reasoning?

Socio-moral reasoning is the process of evaluating relevant information; considering the moral, social, and personal factors at play in a situation; and coordinating these considerations when making decisions or forming judgments. The social domain theory framework has inspired fifty years of research on children's moral judgments and developmental reasoning trajectories (Nucci, Turiel, and Roded 2017; Smetana, Jambon, and Ball 2014; Turiel 1983). Researchers who work within this framework have shown that children make distinctions among acts that have inherently harmful or helpful consequences to others (moral domain), acts that require a social convention such as a law or rule to determine their acceptability (conventional domain), and acts that are matters of privacy or personal preference rather than right or wrong (personal/psychological domain). These distinctions factor into how one makes decisions in each type of situation. For example, the vast majority of individuals, including children, judge unprovoked hitting to be wrong and express justifications based upon concerns related to the welfare of the victim (moral domain). The judgment that unprovoked harm is wrong is accompanied by the view that refraining from the action is obligatory (not a matter of personal preference), and universal (this judgment would hold for all persons). In contrast, judging whether to engage in using certain manners at the dinner table (a matter of convention) would involve considerations of what is socially expected (existence of norm or rule/tradition) and whether one might get in trouble (experience social disapproval), or cause disruption to the social order (disrupt the normal pattern of the dinner). Finally, claims to an action as personal, such as the choice to wear a particular sweater, are accompanied by justifications that focus upon personal autonomy and identity (Smetana et al. 2014).

However, life presents more complicated scenarios than unprovoked hitting, requiring individuals to draw on multiple domains, and coordinate between them in order to come to a decision or judgment. For example, children's decisions about whether to include peers in social activities involves coordinating the

relevant conventions and social expectations (e.g., gender based conventions on what counts as a male or female activity), personal preference (whether one likes the peer), and possible psychological harm caused to the excluded peer (Killen and Rutland 2011). With development, children become better able to evaluate and balance these competing considerations and work toward fairer and less exclusionary practices. The act of balancing or integrating competing considerations is what we refer to below as *domain coordination*. Complicating the efforts of individuals is the fact that existing social norms and group identity often work at cross-purposes with morality, and sustain social exclusion and the harm that it generates (Killen and Rutland 2011). An effective approach to moral education as it would relate to addressing social exclusion would require attention to development within all three social cognitive domains (moral, conventional, personal) as well as engaging children in meaningfully addressing existing social expectations and beliefs. The goal would be to impact the ways in which children coordinate competing cross-domain considerations to arrive at more a equitable resolution of situations that had resulted in social exclusion.

In this paper, we discuss interventions that have sought to bring the social domain theory framework of development to teachers, and research conducted with teachers to create discourse-focused lessons that explore issues such as peer exclusion. We draw on philosophers Anthony Laden and Mikhail Bakhtin to envision an even more comprehensive way of embracing dialogue in classrooms and educational spaces.

III. Reasoning and Dialogue

Reasoning and dialogue go hand in hand. Contemporary philosopher Anthony Laden (2012) argued that reasoning is fundamentally social. He wrote, "In reasoning, we cannot be engaging in a pattern of reflection that isolates us from others" (145). Instead, he suggested thinking about reasoning in terms of offering *invitations* to join one another in accepting a common vantage point. We cannot reason fully if we are alone, but instead need to interact with others to authentically take into account their perspectives. We cannot presume to represent another person or group's perspective without including them in the dialogue. When others are at the table, we are also forced to consider our own egos. *Engaged reasoning* (Laden 2012) is a type of interaction or dialogue in which participants actively invite others to contribute to a shared set of information, and find a stance that everyone can claim as his or her own. These interactions are also characterized by participants' genuine efforts to respond to each other's contributions; they are not ignoring, bulldozing, or manipulating the words of others, but attempting to find common ground. For Laden, "reasoning" is not simply *thinking*, but a social, dialogical activity. Many aspects of this perspective are similar to the *community of inquiry* approach within the Philosophy for Children movement. The founder of the movement Matthew Lipman (2003) wrote:

> When we think by ourselves, rather than in conversation with others, our deductions are derived from premises we already know. As a result the conclusion we infer is completely unsurprising. But when no person knows all the premises, as is often the case in dialogue, the reasoning process has much more vitality and the conclusion can come with considerably more surprise. (179)

Within this framework, dialogue is referred to as mutual exploration and inquiry.

Mikhail Bakhtin, a literary scholar and theorist whose work often gets applied to education, believed that "dialogue" is not simply *talk* (Shields 2007, 65). According to Bakhtin, dialogue is the foundation of *relationship* and fundamental to cultivating a way of life that is open to change (Shields 2007). Elaborating on Bakhtin's definition of dialogue, Shields (2007) wrote, "Dialogue is not a semantic device for explaining, convincing, or manipulating others . . . It is a way of life" (65). One of Bakhtin's key ideas is *heteroglossia*, or an embracing of multiple, varied voices. This orientation is in contrast to a *monologic* mindset which is singular and closed off to different opinions. Through dialogue, we are able to glimpse multiple partial truths which we put together as best we can into a full picture of reality. Shields explained further, "It is appropriate to say that for Bakhtin dialogue is onotological—a way of living life in openness to others who are different from oneself, of relating to people and ideas that remain separate and distinct from our own" (65).

In addition to remaining open to and engaging multiple perspectives, Bakhtin wrote about the constant push and pull of *authoritative discourses* (i.e., authority of religious dogma, strong societal beliefs, messages from people in power) and *internally persuasive discourses* (Bakhtin 1981, 342). In order to discern where we stand ideologically as individuals, we are constantly distinguishing our own discourses from authoritative ones, pulling away from the language of power and status quo in some realms, and assimilating it in others. Ideology, for Bakhtin, is a system of ideas that permeates our communication and speech. Ideological becoming refers to "how we develop our way of viewing the world" (Freedman and Ball 2004, 5). Engaging head-on with authoritative discourses and interrogating their legitimacy, as well as interrogating our own beliefs and where they come from, is part of this constructive process of ideological development. Bakhtin's theory implies that a process of self-reflection, struggle, and revision of one's beliefs is constant and inevitable as we interact with our worlds.

Both of these thinkers have insights for educators working towards cultivating a critical moral orientation in students. They envision the following: (a) a kind of social interaction in which each participant is *really listening*—not just crafting his or her next point, (b) a capacity to find common ground with people who look and sound different than they do, and (c) a way of life that promotes actively changing our own assumptions about what is right and fair based on new information and perspectives. When we give students the opportunity to engage

in dialogue about issues that are moral or social in nature, not only do students get to practice these skills and mindsets, but researchers and educators can also glimpse the process of students' ideas taking shape by analyzing their discourse.

Consider the brief excerpt of the dialogue between two fifth grade students below:

> Iris: ". . . And like it's not fair if one person is allowed to get something [from him for free] and then nobody else is allowed to get it."
>
> Anthony: ". . . It's his choice. It does not matter what you want. If the world were that way, it would be a constant movement of people getting what they want all the time."
>
> Iris: "Yes."
>
> Anthony: "For free!"
>
> Iris: "Yes."
>
> Anthony: "So that's okay with you? No. So anytime I want to, like, give a jellybean to a friend **everyone else** needs, like, a jellybean or it's like the planet explodes?"

Iris and Anthony initially take two sides of a debate over whether one can exercise a personal choice to give preferential treatment to friends, or whether there is a moral obligation to make the situation fair for everyone. The dilemma requires these students to coordinate between the moral (fairness, equality) and personal (choice, preference) domains. As the conversation progresses, their ideas morph and change. They push each other and make some small concessions. Finally, Iris attempts to refine her argument and find common ground.

> Anthony: "You realize there's no such thing as perfectly fair."
>
> Iris: "Yes. But you can make it more fair. It's called trying to make it more fair."

In this conversation, we see these participants defending their ideals, taking a stance, and adapting to one another's reasoning. Both Anthony and Iris were concerned that the other person accept their invitations and arguments as legitimate. At the end, there is a glimmer of a potential shared space that they might reach together. Posing the dilemma of whether to provide preferential treatment to a friend stimulated this engaged reasoning. By transcribing students' discourse and analyzing their speech acts and responses to each other, we gain insight into what reasoning skills need more work, and what ideas are coming into fruition.

IV. What Has Already Been Done? The Method in Action

The domain-based moral education approach advocates for finding moral, personal, and conventional issues and dilemmas within the academic curriculum,

and using them to start small group discussions (Nucci, Creane, and Powers 2015; Midgette et al. 2017). Our research group at UC Berkeley has been engaged in work with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade history teachers in a northern California school district to examine their curriculum and identify opportunities for including this kind of discourse. Teachers first conducted a domain analysis of their curriculum—identifying or creating moral, conventional, and personal dilemmas or conflicts that were relevant to their subject—and then created lesson plans that led students to tease apart these issues with their peers.

For example, one team of 8th grade history teachers was preparing to teach students about the federally-sanctioned removal of the Cherokee Nation from the southeastern United States in the 1830s. This unit included learning about how the U.S. government threatened the Cherokee to assimilate European ways of life, or risk being expelled from their land or attacked by the military. The 8th grade teachers viewed this lesson topic as relating primarily to moral harm, but also included addressing the role of social conventions in structuring the shared behaviors of members of a social group or society. These teachers had received an introduction to social domain theory, which included age-specific developmental research showing that 8th grade students are beginning to critique social conventions and apply moral understandings to social conventions. The U.S. government's ultimatum to the Cherokee presented an opportunity for teachers to bring social conventions into the spotlight. Teachers decided to challenge students' ideas about the word "civilized," and how people in power often decide what counts as civilized. They designed a lesson that asked students to examine European and Cherokee conventions, such as oral vs. written language, styles of dress, and agricultural vs. hunting and gathering, side by side. Students read carefully the dictionary definition of civilized and the criteria associated with the word, and wrestled with whether one set of norms could be called "more civilized" after taking into account the histories, beliefs, and environmental circumstances of the people living within each society. Students also discussed the ramifications of assimilation, that in this instance would entail an elimination or "genocide" of Cherokee cultural practices. Ultimately, this lesson pushed students to consider the role of social norms as they relate to group membership, political agendas, social exclusion, and power struggles. The lesson pitted moral concerns against conventional concerns as students were asked to coordinate ideas about the function of conventions and the capacity of said conventions to perpetuate moral harm. During these conversations, students had the chance to engage with academic material in a new way, as well as to test their own points of view, learn from others' points of view, and build new arguments together.

During this set of studies, individual moral reasoning was assessed by examining: (a) students' tendencies to spontaneously coordinate between domains, and (b) changes in types of reasoning within each domain (moral, conventional, personal) and within the context of the scenario. The ability to arrive at fair

moral outcomes within complex situations is impacted by the capacity to coordinate considerations across domains as well as the level of development within domains (Nucci, Turiel, and Roded 2017). The 8th grade students in the above example were on the cusp of a developmental shift in their understanding of the social functions of conventions that allowed them to consider the moral implications of labeling the traditions of the Cherokee as less civilized than those of the Euro-Americans. It was the combined shift in developmental level and engagement in cross-domain coordination that accounted for the students' abilities to address the issues associated with the definition of "civilized" and the moral implications of rating one set of cultural norms as less civilized than the other.

Findings revealed that after experiencing the research lessons—developed by teachers in conjunction with domain theory researchers—students' reasoning within domains became more nuanced, and students were more likely to spontaneously coordinate between domains. In addition to reasoning assessments, students' speech acts were analyzed and coded using the transactive discourse coding scheme (Berkowitz and Gibbs 1983). This scheme is a tool for characterizing the level of sophistication of a dialogic utterance. For example, Anthony's statement above: "So anytime I want to, like, give a jellybean to a friend **everyone else** needs, like, a jellybean or it's like the planet explodes?" is an example of a *competitive extension*—or a type of *operational* transact. Operational transacts are speech acts that *operate* on previous reasoning, whereas *representational* transacts (paraphrases, requests for feedback, clarifications) are less complex. Students who produced more operational transacts in a peer dialogue about a moral issue were more likely to spontaneously coordinate between domains—or offer justifications and reasons from two or more domains (moral, conventional, personal) in their reasoning responses on post-intervention assessments (Nucci et al. 2015). Therefore, we can argue that collaborative dialogue has an impact on individual reasoning, and can serve as a catalyst for reasoning changes.

The takeaway from this research is that individual domain coordination and individual development within each domain can be fostered and stimulated through thoughtfully planned lessons that engage peers in dialogue with each other during the regular school day. However, we argue that it is also *not enough* to measure transactive discourse and call it moral education. Transactive discourse characterizes interactions in a hierarchical way, according to sophistication of the utterance. But this coding scheme fails to capture subtler aspects of truly engaged social reasoning, ala Laden, as we mentioned before. In our research agenda going forward, we are interested in exploring these subtler aspects. For example, can students *invite* others into a dialogue without the teacher forcing them to? When students enter into dialogues, are they open to changing their mind? Can students recognize when they do not have enough facts? *Who* do students invite to the table in the first place? Is it enough to craft a strong argument, or do we need to achieve consensus?

V. Discourse Protocols: Agree to Disagree?

In our research with teachers in California, one big challenge was going beyond *talk* in student discourse. Teachers creatively manipulated various aspects of the activities to try and generate transactive discourse and guide students towards changing or refining their opinions. These manipulations included giving students a dilemma to discuss—such as the 8th grade lesson about the moral implications of calling one group of people or practices civilized or uncivilized—and then with each round of discourse adding contextual details to complicate the scenario and make the "right" decision more ambiguous. They also created discourse protocols that required students to paraphrase the previous speaker, and then elaborate on the previous argument, during each turn of talk. This rule was intended to keep students focused and listening to each other. Other groups of teachers created protocols through which one person stated her opinion, and then each person evaluated and critiqued it. At the end of the round, the first speaker either revised or held onto her original opinion. In other classrooms, teachers allotted the first round of discourse to explore "pro" arguments, and the second round to explore "con" arguments. In the third round of discourse, each student could express his or her own opinion. These innovations resulted in some positive and some negative results.

On the one hand, the protocols ensured that everyone in a group participated, and that each person's ideas were considered in turn. The protocols helped quieter students who were reluctant to take a stance or were slower to contribute, and made the activity accessible to them. In discussions where students had to explore both pro and con arguments, these first two rounds served as scaffolds for the third round of discourse where students could express their own opinions. However, the protocols also occasionally stifled organic discussion and over-regulated what the students were supposed to say and when.

These classroom experiments make clear to us that transactive discourse is a step towards—but not a replacement for—engaged reasoning. As long as students were given the option to "agree to disagree," for example, then each student could leave the interaction *unchanged* by it. Laden (2012) wrote:

> It is this extra degree of responsiveness occasioned by the concern to find common ground that makes our conversation an engagement and the reasoning within it engaged. I try to find a place to stand where we can stand together. It requires me to tailor both my offers and my positions to where I think you do or could stand, and to respond to your responses to my offers in ways other than merely accepting that we stand in different places. (171)

As long as the task, assignment, or activity set before students only requires them to exercise their reasoning skills and sharpen their own singular points of view, we may not move students past the point of being great debaters. But

if we change the task and ask students to *deliberate* towards a joint goal or end, as Laden explains (2012, 174), we may see a shift towards engaged reasoning. That is to say, there can be a shift in focus from winning an argument toward searching for the best argument that all parties in the conversation can accept and identify with as their own.

Once we find common ground, Bakhtin emphasizes that we are not locked into any positions, but must continue to live in dialogue and be open to change. Shields (2007) summarized this position: "We can learn, in the light of the other's gaze, to re-create ourselves, to change, and to grow. Moreover, once we have convinced someone else to agree with us, we must then acknowledge the possibility that we will still grow, change, and perhaps even reverse our position. Fixed, final communication does not exist in Bakhtin's worldview" (61). These two ideas in tandem, engaged reasoning and living in dialogue with what we hold to be true at any time, represent ideal conditions for stimulating the growth of moral and social ideas. When students are motivated to learn from each other instead of proving they have the best argument, and apply logic collaboratively to a moral problem, students will not only walk away with nuanced moral thinking, but also with the skills to re-engage others when their current understandings, concepts, and beliefs are insufficient.

VI. Discourse in the School Context:
Who Gets a Seat at the Table?

The classroom is a unique space where children and youth are brought together institutionally, not by choice. It is fertile ground for practicing a dialogic way of life, and embracing multiple voices and stories. In writing about Bakhtin's notion of *ideological becoming*, Freedman and Ball (2004) wrote, "This rich and complex 'contact zone' inside the classroom yields plentiful opportunity for students to decide what will be internally persuasive for them, and consequently for them to develop their ideologies" (12). Over the past fifty years, researchers and educators have embraced culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings 1995; 2014) and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris and Alim 2014; 2017) that seek to affirm, draw on, and interrogate the multifaceted identities that each student brings into the classroom. These approaches advocate for doing so without fetishizing "diverse" communities and without feeding stereotypes or reducing complex identities to simple food choices and celebrations. These approaches are important given the Euro-centric nature of U.S. curriculum and the fact that as of 2017, 80 percent of teachers were white (Loewus 2017). Recognizing and celebrating multi-faceted identities in school is important for creating a culture in which peer discourse is constructive. Students and teachers will enter conversations with gender, ability, socioeconomic, or race-based privilege, which could serve as a barrier to engaged, responsive reasoning. It is essential to have moral conversations in settings like classrooms, where cultures, lifestyles, languages, and traditions may

clash, so that students become used to the idea that their own narratives are only partial pieces of the story, and they learn to question stereotypes and dominant narratives perpetuated by society. That said, some classrooms are fairly homogenous with regards to socioeconomic status, ethnicity, life experiences, etc., and students may need perspectives from outside the classroom to engage in a heteroglossic dialogue. Educators have gone beyond students' immediate "contact zones" and facilitated connections and dialogue between students all over the world via social media (e.g., Hull, Stornaiuolo, and Sahni 2010). These opportunities give students a chance to explore the idea of global citizenship and identity.

VII. Zooming Out: Youth Claim Space in Socio-cultural-historical Dialogues

While we work towards enabling youth to extend genuine invitations to others and engage in social reasoning in the classroom, as adults in positions of power, we need to think about spaces, such as mainstream news media, where youth are excluded from discourses about issues that impact them. Up until this point we have used dialogue to mean an interpersonal interaction that involves reasoning together over a dilemma relevant to the academic curriculum. Ideally, these interpersonal interactions build skills that students can transfer to their participation in civic and social spheres. Moral education, in our view, is about preparing young people to participate in societal dialogues about contemporary issues by being engaged reasoners who can consider justice from multiple angles, and act on their convictions.

Dialogue in social and civic spheres takes a very different shape than classroom dialogue, and is largely situated within the social, popular, and news media landscapes. The participants are not always individuals, but may be political parties or coalitions representing specific interests, and they may have no intention of changing their minds, or acting in a dialogic manner towards contrasting points of view. Interactions on social media between politicians, activists, comedians (and others) happen via prepared remarks, carefully edited op-eds, and parody sketches (amongst other forms). It is in these social spheres that dominant narratives about the world take shape, and representations about what is "good" and "normal" get reinforced.

The voices that dominate public debates and shape the public narratives about key issues are rarely from youth. As journalists and media organizations seek different perspectives from scientists, financial experts, voters, and concerned citizens, the dialogue around an issue morphs and expands, bringing to light more partial truths which we use to make judgments and evaluations. Laden wrote, "Social practices and institutions can place barriers in the way of genuine reasoning together—hierarchies, social practices that leave some people able to decide whether they will take seriously what some others say to them" (2012, 159). While notable exceptions exist (e.g., Youth Radio in Oakland, CA; Radio

Rookies in New York City, NY), youth voices and perspectives are not often legitimized in mainstream news spheres, and get left out of important conversations. Soep and Chavez (2010) who researched and worked with Youth Radio argued, "young people's uneven access to meaningful roles as media producers" limits the potential of young people to engage with society "as full citizens and agents of social change" (82). However, their low-representation does not mean that young people are sitting on the sidelines—whether invited into the dialogue or not, they are actively participating in remixing and producing media on Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, YouTube and other platforms to voice their perspectives and take moral stances on issues that are important to them. The content that individuals choose to post on social media, and how they interact with other content (retweeting, remixing, liking, following, sharing, etc.) is a reflection of a moral and social reasoning process, and is an opportunity for young people to take moral stances on issues and assert their beliefs and opinions.

When young people find a way to enter into a national dialogue, the question becomes *how* to use that platform in a moral way. As an example, we can think about the impact of gun violence on youth in the United States. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, between January and August of 2018, the city of Chicago has seen eighty-three shootings of children between 0–16 years old (Bordens and Epton 2018). Gun violence is an issue that youth activists in Chicago have been confronting and fighting for a long time. By contrast, it took the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida by surprise when a shooter entered the school on February 14, 2018, and killed seventeen staff and students. Survivors of the attack started a social media movement to advocate for gun control measures using the hashtag #NeverAgain. An article in *The New Yorker* (Witt 2018) describes a series of dialogues and interactions between the Parkland activists and a group of youth activists in Chicago. Witt quoted a youth activist from Chicago named Audrey Wright who said, "We learned more from the Parkland kids about the politics side, whereas they learned more from our point of view about the everyday reality of living in Chicago." Other interactions were awkward and disappointing. The writer suggested the Parkland survivors were overwhelmed by stories of the chronic trauma of gun violence in Chicago communities, and sometimes gave unsatisfactory responses. The Parkland students, however, did make some efforts to spotlight the voices of their Chicago peers. The article reads:

> In interviews leading up to the Peace Rally, Parkland students had insisted on speaking to the media only in tandem with a kid from Chicago. They claimed that the press was biased toward the privileged children of Parkland, paying too much attention to them and to school shootings, instead of focusing on the coalition they were trying to build, in which every gun death was equal in its tragedy and emergency, no matter the cause or context. (Witt 2018)

The Parkland students were slowly recognizing the partial nature of their narratives, and the broader scope of the issue they represented.

The #NeverAgain movement garnered nationwide support and attention, and activists organized a massive demonstration in Washington D.C. called the "March for our Lives." In addition to speeches by Parkland students, the demonstration featured the perspectives of youth like Trevon Bosley, a high school student from Chicago, who spoke about living in fear of daily gun violence in his community (Laughland and Beckett 2018). Naomi Wadler, an 11-year-old from Virginia, spoke on behalf of Black girls in America who do not make the front pages of newspapers even though they are disproportionately affected by gun violence. The speeches were presented to the public in a kind of *designed dialogue*—each speaker representing a sector of the issue from a particular angle, filling out a bigger picture for the audience. Each speaker added a layer of meaning or unique perspective that operated on the reasoning of the others (as in transactive discourse). If we were to code Wadler's argument, for example, according to the transactive discourse scheme, it would be a high-level operational transact. She was *operating* on the reasoning of the Parkland survivors, saying 'I support you. Now consider this additional fact and perspective in the spirit of your argument.'

The 9-year-old granddaughter of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Yolanda Renee King also spoke at the march, saying, "I have a dream that enough is enough. And that this should be a gun-free world, period" (Laughland and Beckett 2018). In her statement, King's words were also an example of transactive reasoning—operating on both the messages of other speakers at the rally, but also on the reasoning of her grandfather, across time and space. King played with the context of her grandfather's words, "I have a dream," bringing them to life again in a new *dialogic context*. She creatively applied the words to her current reality. Shields quotes Bakhtin who wrote, "Even *past* meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all)—they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue" (Shields 2007, 70, quoting Bakhtin 1986, 170).

It is interesting to reflect on how the young people in Parkland wrestled with being spokespeople for this issue, and entering into a societal dialogue about guns. According to news sources they showed dialogic intentions by expanding their contact zones, and intentionally listening to and engaging with different perspectives. Their decisions involved complex moral reasoning, like figuring out when to step *out* of the spotlight, when to be an ally, and where one's own story of moral harm and human rights fits alongside the stories of others. The Parkland students also had to reckon with realizations of structural privilege, as their movement garnered national attention while students in North Lawndale Chicago struggled to make headlines in local papers. As educators, we can prepare students to enter into these societal dialogues by emphasizing engaged

reasoning skills during in-class, face-to-face dialogue activities, and facilitating media-based projects that encourage students to practice crafting opinions and responding in thoughtful ways to a wider public audience. Soep and Chavez (2010) explained their framework of converged literacy as entailing among other things, "the material and imaginative resources to claim and exercise your right to use media to promote justice" (24). Young people who started—and others who joined—the #NeverAgain movement used new and existing media platforms to engage with youth all over the country. The mission statement on the March for Our Lives website reads:

> Our children and teachers are dying. We must make it our top priority to save these lives. This is not just about schools, though. This is about churches, nightclubs, concerts, movie theaters, airports—it's everywhere. A child should not fear a bullet on their walk home. Although this movement has stemmed from children, we are not fighting for just children. All lives are precious, and our country must make the safety of its citizens a number one priority.
>
> March For Our Lives was created by, inspired by, and led by the students of Parkland, but has since curated student allies of all ethnicities, religions and sexualities across the country. We will no longer sit and wait for someone else to take action to stop the epidemic of gun violence. (March for Our Lives 2018)

This statement and their actions suggest that their movement intends to be heteroglossic and open to change: the young people spearheading the movement refined their stance to represent a growing base of perspectives, allies, and supporters.

VIII. Final Thoughts: Engaging Youth in Deliberation and Citizenship

Children's moral development represents the trajectory of children's changing ideas, beliefs, and judgments about moral, conventional, and personal issues (Nucci 2009; Turiel 1983). We know these ideas, beliefs, and judgments interact with and reshape as an individual encounters new experiences and matures (Nucci et al. 2017; Smetana et al. 2014). In domain-based moral education, researchers have teamed up with educators to craft learning experiences that put peers in conversation with each other, discussing moral topics that are connected to lesson content. Teachers in these studies have successfully taught their students to have respectful, productive conversations about moral dilemmas by scaffolding the discussions with sentence starters, and implementing turn-taking and reflection tools. Results have shown that when students engage in transactive discourse, their understandings of moral and conventional issues increased, and that they are more likely to coordinate between domains.

Now, we need to *step out* and *step back*. By stepping back, we mean that in order for these discourse and reasoning skills to be more than competitive logical tools for students to win debates, we need to foster a heteroglossic intention behind dialogue in the classroom, and *deliberate* more than debate. With a joint end or goal, students can come together with varied perspectives and background knowledge, but must approach each other with genuine invitations towards finding common ground. Likewise, they must be open to changing their minds, understanding that their truth is only partial. Finally, they have to be able to see the similarities and differences in the group of people sitting at the table, and understand when their collective perspectives are limited.

By stepping out, we mean that it is again *not enough* to know that reasoning capacities are flourishing within an individual. We want to see them in action! We want students to embrace dialogue as a way of life and a way of interacting. How can we create pathways for students to tackle their own community injustices using their well-reasoned ideas about fairness and welfare? When we acknowledge that young people navigate complex moral dilemmas every day—on social media, in their communities, in their friend groups, in school—it is clear that they need opportunities to reason through these dilemmas and tough decisions, and receive support along the way. Educators are in a unique position to facilitate this reasoning process, through activities like dialogue, creative media production, journalistic storytelling, or personal narrative projects.

In May of 2018, a high school student in the United States was berated over Twitter for wearing a traditional Chinese dress to her high school prom—as she was not Chinese herself (Cho 2018). The incident "blew up," with people all over the world weighing in on both sides—some supporting her choice, and others criticizing it. A simple choice in the life of a teenager—what to wear to prom—can have moral implications as well as personal ones. Personal implications included the right to express yourself through your attire and claim a sense of style, and moral implications included the consideration of whether one's attire is offensive or causing harm to others. Social media is rife with relevant dilemmas for young people to consider, and the platforms make it easy to weigh in. But educators can help students go beyond tweeting their initial gut reactions, by bringing these dilemmas into the classroom and allowing students to engage in joint reasoning. In 2012, Youth Radio's Malachi Segers reported a story titled, "Is your Halloween costume racist?" Combined with the Twitter debate about prom, teachers could engage students in exploring arguments on all sides of these debates over acceptable attire, and dig into the moral, conventional, and personal aspects of each story. Then, teachers could ask students to deliberate in groups and come up with a set of guidelines for judging when clothing is *wearable, or unbearable*. Finally, students could produce a piece of media—something simple, like posting on Instagram, or something complex like making a video PSA or a staging a digital fashion show—to share their guidelines with a wider

audience. Claiming one's right to use media to promote justice is one way that moral reasoning can turn into moral action (Soep and Chavez 2010). When we give students these opportunities, they become citizens of their community, able to use their ability to engage with people different than themselves and present well-reasoned, multifaceted stories.

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