

PROFANITY, DISGUST, AND DANGEROUS LITERATURE: A  
HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE* AND *THE  
CHOCOLATE WAR*

A Dissertation

by

MYCHELLE HADLEY SMITH

Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Chair of Committee,	Patrick Slattery
Committee Members,	Lynn M. Burlbaw
	Cathleen C. Loving
	Theodore George
Head of Department,	Yeping Li

August 2015

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

Copyright 2015 Mychelle Hadley Smith

## ABSTRACT

Varying levels and types of colloquial language are considered inappropriate, especially profanity. Obscene language is one aspect applied to the R-rating for movies and television shows. Profanity also plays a large role as a deterrent in books; consequently, profanity is a popular motive for banning books in schools and libraries. What if instead of turning away from profanity, readers could analyze and understand the reasons and meaning behind the profane words?

Hermeneutics, used as a philosophical lens, allows for deeper understanding of textual language. If interpreted through educational and historical context with the aid of hermeneutics, profanity becomes a useful literary element within the text. Rather than banning books from high school curricula, educators and students can interpret the meaning and underlying purpose of profanity in literature. This study utilizes hermeneutics as a lens for understanding the role of profanity in two young adult novels: *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*. Profanity usage in both novels is indicative of the realistic nature of the characters' lives and struggles.

Students need to know that their interpretation—of a text, of the world, of themselves—is important. The reader-response approach to literary criticism allows for an intimate relationship to develop between the reader and the object of interpretation—in this case the text. Analysis and discussion of the experiences that human beings have and our ability to share these experiences through language and fusions of horizons in Gadamer's hermeneutics allows for true education—ensuring understanding can take place.

## DEDICATION

To my mother and father, Patricia and Scott.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Patrick Slattery for his guidance as a mentor and his continued support to pursue the dangerous and provocative. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Loving, Dr. Burlbaw, and Dr. George for their guidance and support throughout the course of this philosophical experience.

I would especially like to thank my parents for their continued support and encouragement. I extend my gratitude to my husband, Travis, for his motivation and encouragement. Lastly, I extend a special thanks to Holden Caulfield and Jerry Renault.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Problem Statement .....	2
Theoretical Framework .....	3
Research Questions .....	4
Research Objectives .....	5
Significance of the Study .....	6
Plan for the Dissertation.....	6
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
Derrida’s Deconstruction.....	9
Introduction to Hermeneutics.....	12
Biblical Hermeneutics.....	14
Conservative Philosophical Hermeneutics: Schleiermacher.....	16
Gadamer’s Hermeneutics.....	19
Introduction to Disgust.....	25
Moralization of Disgust.....	26
Disgust and Society.....	30
Disgust and Food.....	34
Introduction of the Fifth Sense: Hearing .....	35
Profanity: Elicitor of Disgust .....	36
Word Aversion.....	42
Literary Analysis: Reader-response Criticism.....	45
Curriculum Theory.....	50
Censorship by Banning Books .....	59
<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> .....	71
<i>The Chocolate War</i> .....	72

	Page
Literature Review Conclusion .....	75
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY.....	76
Introduction .....	76
Research Perspective .....	76
Research Design .....	77
Research Questions .....	78
Focus .....	79
Key Facilitator for Creating Experiences .....	80
Subjectivity.....	80
Referential Adequacy and Structural Corroboration .....	80
CHAPTER IV EXPERIENCES.....	82
Introduction .....	82
Methodology Summary.....	82
Novel 1: <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> .....	83
Novel 2: <i>The Chocolate War</i> .....	99
CHAPTER V DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .....	121
Introduction .....	121
Research Question One .....	121
Research Question Two .....	127
Research Question Three.....	137
Limitations .....	142
Future Research .....	143
Conclusion .....	146
REFERENCES .....	150

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1	Conceptual Framework..... 9
Figure 2	Progression of Hermeneutics Leading to Gadamer..... 20
Figure 3	Book Challenges by Reason 1990-2009 ..... 68
Figure 4	Initiators of Book Challenges 1990-2009..... 69
Figure 5	Book Challenges by Institution from 1990-2009 ..... 70
Figure 6	Profanity Usage in <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> ..... 89
Figure 7	Profanity Usage in <i>The Chocolate War</i> ..... 109

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1	Frequency of Profane Words in <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i> ..... 88
Table 2	Frequency of Profane Words in <i>The Chocolate War</i> .....108



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

As a first year high school teacher in 2009-2010, I was given the task of selecting novels for my ninth and eleventh grade students to read. I wanted to select novels that the students could relate to, not just read about from a distance. I selected from a small variety of book titles that were already ordered and neatly organized on my classroom shelves. As the year progressed, parents came forth claiming that the material was not acceptable due to the profanity and mature content in the books. Literature such as *Of Mice and Men*, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and *The Crucible* was suddenly under attack. During my first year of teaching, I began my quest to better understand censorship such as banning books. This quest led me to investigate profanity's role in curriculum. While taking a Curriculum Theory course during my Master's Degree study, I was introduced to philosophical hermeneutics in Patrick Slattery's (2006) textbook, *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*. Two years later in my doctoral degree coursework, my interest in hermeneutics developed further in the Philosophy of Education course. I decided to create a hermeneutical analysis of colloquial language, specifically profanity, and apply this analysis to discuss high school reading curriculum. Specifically, I was concerned with the two novels, *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*. Writings, studies, and research involving hermeneutics are plentiful, as is material on profanity; however, the two have not yet been joined in the realm of educational philosophy research. The problem I would like to solve is: What role does

profanity have in high school English reading curriculum and how can philosophical hermeneutics be applied to interpret profanity?

### **Problem Statement**

Varying levels and types of colloquial language are considered inappropriate, especially profanity. Obscene language is one aspect applied to the R-rating for movies and television shows. Profanity also plays a large role as a deterrent in books. Profanity is a popular motive for banning books in schools and libraries. Of the 5,099 books banned since 2000, 1,291 books were banned due to offensive language (Frequently Challenged Books of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 2014). What are students missing due to the rejection of over 5,000 books? Is profanity limiting the reading possibilities for high school students due to schools deeming the literature obscene?

What if instead of turning away from profanity, readers could analyze and understand the reasons and meaning behind the profane words? Hermeneutics, used as a philosophical lens, allows for deeper understanding of textual language. Understanding allows the “layers of tradition, prejudice, and conscious evasion” to be set free (Slattery, p. 129, 2006). By analyzing the image of profanity, I am able to examine the influences of profanity in literature on a philosophical level. Hermeneutics will be used as a methodological tool for “recovering meaning that is essential to understanding” (Malpas, 2013).

If interpreted through educational and historical context with the aid of hermeneutics, profanity becomes a useful literary element within the text. Rather than

banning books from high school curricula, educators and students can interpret the meaning and underlying purpose of profanity in literature. By viewing profanity as an element rather than a deterrent, a new realm of literary analysis has been introduced. The use of contextual hermeneutics was used to recognize “social and historical conditions” that play a role in the use and understanding of profanity (Slattery, p. 131, 2006).

Philosophical hermeneutics allows educators to discover what is missing when books are banned.

### **Theoretical Framework**

I have identified two theories that will frame my hermeneutical analysis of profanity. The first theory is Hans George Gadamer’s theory of philosophical hermeneutics. This theory will be applied to the hermeneutic methodology. Gadamer’s (1976) theory of hermeneutics closely relates to Martin Heidegger’s (1962) theories of hermeneutics. Gadamer (1976) claims “hermeneutics reaches into all the contexts that determine and condition the linguisticity of the human experience of the world” (Gadamer, p. 19). Written word relates language and being which in turn leads to representing the human experience. “Gadamer also takes issue directly with [the] view of prejudice and the negative connotations often associated with the notion, arguing that, rather than closing us off, our prejudices are themselves what open us up to what is to be understood” (Malpas, 2013). Our prejudices with profanity can allow for deeper understanding. In order to understand a text, the reader must accept that readers and texts exist in the same fluid world. The meaning of understanding will always be relative

to the reader.

The second theory I will use to shape my hermeneutical analysis of profanity is the theory of reader-response criticism (1974). This theory will be used to shape the meaning of literary criticism in regards to the hermeneutic analysis. Reader-response theory is shaped by two beliefs:

1) that the role of the reader cannot be omitted from our understanding of literature and 2) that readers do not passively consume the meaning presented to them by an objective literary text; rather they actively make the meaning they find in literature. (Tyson, 1999, p.154)

Reader-response theory provides explanation for how students can interact with texts including profanity. Based on this theory, one set meaning for profanity does not exist; each reader creates their own meaning when he or she relates with the text.

### **Research Questions**

The first research question guiding this philosophical study relates to the methodological choice of using philosophical hermeneutics as a vehicle for analysis.

RQ 1: How can Gadamer's hermeneutics be used to understand the use of profanity in literature?

By using philosophical hermeneutics, the focus of the study revolves around interpreting and understanding profanity in *The Chocolate War* and *The Catcher in the Rye*.

The second research question guiding this philosophical study deals with profanity's purpose in literature.

RQ 2: What role does profanity play in the novels *The Chocolate War* and *The Catcher in the Rye*?

Both novels, *The Chocolate War* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, are equally popular and controversial for their use of obscene language, which some people may view as unsuitable for the intended readership. I was first motivated to research the role profanity plays in literature when I was teaching high school English. I wondered how sporadic usage of certain words could deter parents from entire novels that contained meaningful content for adolescent readers.

The third research question used in this philosophical study focuses on the use of Gadamer's approach and its effect on schools.

RQ 3: What educational insights emerge from self-understanding and Gadamer's hermeneutics?

This question focuses on understanding how utilizing a philosophical approach centered on Gadamer's hermeneutics can affect schools.

### **Research Objectives**

The first objective of this dissertation was to uncover the meaning of profanity in *The Chocolate War* and *Catcher in the Rye*. These two novels are popularly banned by schools, parents, and communities for their use of profanity. I used hermeneutics to further analyze the role of profanity and to gain insight into the effect profanity has on the novels.

The second objective of this dissertation was to employ the understanding of the

role profanity plays in *The Chocolate War* and *The Catcher in the Rye* to create an additional level of literary analysis. By understanding the role profanity plays in the two novels, *The Chocolate War* and *Catcher in the Rye*, further research can be completed to compare the role profanity plays in other novels. Gaining a better understanding of profanity's role and purpose in literature can aid teachers by introducing a new level of literary analysis to use in their classrooms.

This third objective of this dissertation was to gain insight into battling the standardization of education with the help of hermeneutics. The role of hermeneutics in the classroom was examined.

### **Significance of the Study**

Books are under attack in United States' libraries, schools, and communities every day. This project is significant due to the integration of philosophy, education, and literature. Gaining a better understanding of the role profanity plays in popular and classic literature will allow teachers to better handle the teaching of such books within a classroom. This study aims to bring a philosophical lens to the use of profanity in school literature.

### **Plan for the Dissertation**

The dissertation consists of five chapters, the first of which serves as an introduction to the project and rationale behind the study. The problem statement is included as well as personal background information that grounds the study.

Chapter II serves as a review of relevant literature. Topics in the literature review include: Derrida's deconstruction, hermeneutics, disgust, profanity, word aversion, literary analysis, reader-response criticism, curriculum theory, book banning, the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, and the novel *The Chocolate War*.

Chapter III details the project methodology and plan for analysis. The organization and design of the study will be explained in this chapter.

Chapter IV presents the experiences of the philosophical analysis. Responses to the three research questions are supplied. Both novels are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter V provides discussion of the experiences. The summary of discoveries is presented in a narrative fashion employing autobiographical techniques to relate the researcher to the research. Connections to schools are made here. Limitations of the study are discussed, and future implications for research are presented.

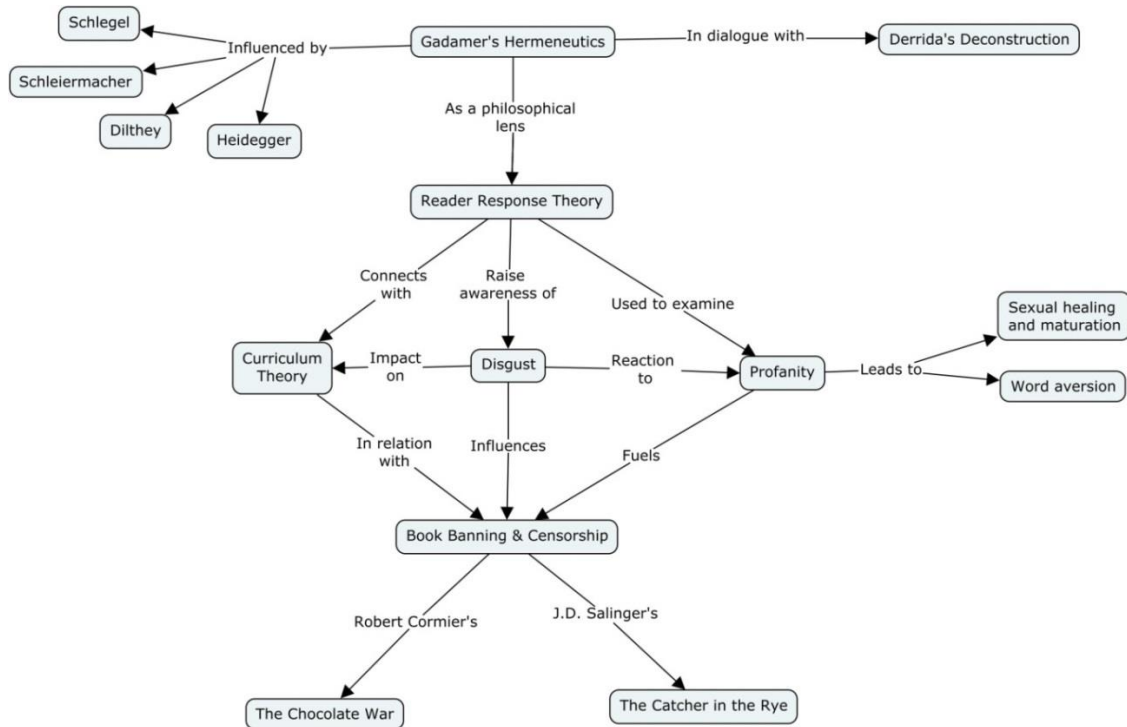
## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is a multi-disciplinary study including the fields of education, English literature, and philosophy. Due to the extensive scope of the research, several topics must be examined in order to uncover previous research which will contextualize the study. In order to uncover the meaning of profanity in literature, the topics of profanity, censorship by banning books, and reader-response literary criticism must be examined. In order to employ the understanding of the role profanity plays, the topics of hermeneutics, deconstruction, disgust, and word aversion must be examined. The literature review will begin with the methodological topics pertaining to hermeneutics and will then progress to topics of disgust, censorship by banning books, and the two novels, *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*. The conceptual framework highlights the structure of Chapter II in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.**



## Derrida's Deconstruction

Hermeneutics situates itself in the middle of an analytical spectrum with critical theory on the left and deconstruction on the right. Critical theory, on the left, focuses on human emancipation (Bohman, 2013). Deconstruction, on the right, seeks to find justice through various actions such as unearthing hidden assumptions and revealing hidden prejudices. Hermeneutics is considered the middle-ground view of analyzing interpretation with its focus on human understanding.

On the right side of hermeneutics is Deconstruction. Deconstruction is a school of philosophy centered on Jacques Derrida's theories and philosophies. Deconstruction

can be used in textual analysis to: problematize, question, interrupt, contextualize, challenge, historicize, expose, engage, trouble, or evoke (Slattery, 2013, p. 3). This school of philosophy is concerned with activities such as unearthing hidden assumptions, challenging the status quo, and revealing hidden prejudices.

Over the course of his career, Derrida has supplied numerous definitions for his philosophy of thought known as Deconstruction. Lawlor (2014) has identified two key definitions. The first definition claims deconstruction is “a criticism of Platonism, which is defined by the belief that existence is structured in terms of oppositions (separate substances or forms) and that the oppositions are hierarchical, with one side of the opposition being more valuable than the other” (Lawlor, 2014). For Derrida, we can only understand a word’s meaning if we distinguish it from other words (Tyson, 2006, p. 253). Two phases that comprise this process of criticizing Platonism involve reversing the hierarchies to place the inferior term in the position to be the original source of opposition (Lawlor, 2014). Platonistic hierarchies that are criticized in Deconstruction include: the hierarchies between the invisible or intelligible and the visible or sensible; between essence and appearance; between the soul and body; between living memory and rote memory; between *mnēmē* and *hypomnēsis*; between voice and writing; between finally good and evil (Lawlor, 2014).

The second definition of Deconstruction includes two sides. The first side includes a genealogical aspect of Deconstruction which involves “the history of a concept or theme” (Lawlor, 2014). The second side of the definition includes a “more formalistic or structural style of deconstruction, which examines a-historical paradoxes

or aporias” (Lawlor, 2014). Cornell, Rosenfeld, & Carlson have identified three aporias: “the *epoche* of the rule” (p. 22-23); “the ghost of the undecidable” (p. 24-26); and “the urgency that obstructs the horizon of knowledge” (p. 26-28). The first aporia focuses on rules. A key component of rules, for Derrida, is the idea of justice. One of the most common dictums in ethical or political thought is that to be just or unjust. In order to exercise justice, “one must be free and responsible for one's actions and decisions” (Lawlor, 2014). This freedom involves the decision to not only follow laws but also to make new judgments regarding the established laws. A free decision aimed at justice is both regulated and unregulated (Lawlor, 2014). *Epoche* in the first aporia refers to destruction, conservation, and suspension of a law (Lawlor, 2014). “Each case is other, each decision is different and requires an absolutely unique interpretation which no existing coded rule can or ought to guarantee” (Lawlor, 2014). The second aporia involves the making of decisions that begin with reading, interpreting, or calculating (Lawlor, 2014). For Derrida, a decision is not reached easily. To make a decision, one must experience undecidability (Lawlor, 2014). This undecidability involves the realization “that the case, being unique and singular, does not fit the established codes and therefore a decision about it seems to be impossible,” and plays a role in deconstructing texts (Lawlor, 2014). The realization of the impossibility of the decision, or the text, allows one to unearth new possibilities about a decision or text.

The undecidable, for Derrida, is not mere oscillation between two significations; it is the experience of what, though foreign to the calculable and the rule, is still obligated. We are obligated – this is a kind of duty—to give oneself up to the

impossible decision, while taking account of rules and law. (Lawlor, 2014)

The third aporia focuses on urgency and its effects on decision-making. Derrida emphasizes the Greek etymology of the word “horizon” as both the opening as well as the limit (Lawlor, 2014). This differs from Gadamer’s use of the word horizon meaning a person’s prejudices and preconceptions. Justice requires urgency for it does not wait; “a just decision is always required immediately” (Lawlor, 2014). The moment of decision is “the moment of madness, acting in the night of non-knowledge and non-rule” (Lawlor, 2014).

Two main purposes for choosing to deconstruct a text include: (1) to reveal the text’s undecidability and/or (2) to reveal the complex operations of the ideologies of which the text is constructed” (Tyson, 2006, p. 259). Deconstruction was not chosen as the philosophical method for this dissertation because the goal is not to problematize or question the use of profanity in literature. The texts under consideration are not presenting students with an urgency for justice. Instead, the goal of this dissertation is to employ hermeneutics to understand the reading experience between text and reader when students encounter literature with profanity.

### **Introduction to Hermeneutics**

Humans communicate with each other through speech, text, and body language. Language is the focus of all human communication. How the communication is perceived and interpreted varies based on the audience. “Hermeneutic understanding is in fact more a primordial way to comprehend the things around us, and much unlike

empirical knowledge that has been validated, hermeneutic understanding is incomplete, limited, and highly ambiguous at times” (Magrini, 2014, p. 88).

Understanding the role language plays in granting us access to being is a focus of philosophers. How can humans understand their relation to being in the world? In what ways can language grant humans access to understanding being? Hermeneutics can be used to better understand being in regard to textual communication. A general definition of hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation (Slattery, 2013). Through interpretation, one gains understanding. The use of the word science in the definition for hermeneutics is a topic for debate. Can an experience and conversation with a text be considered a science? Textual interpretation and the struggle for understanding appear in the study of science when scientists interpret science texts (Kuhn, 1962, p. 1).

“Philosophical hermeneutics resists the desire for finality, completeness, and control. It renounces the lust to reduce the power of language to an instrumental function and recovers the view of life as inherently problematic, mysterious, question-worthy, and difficult” (Magrini, 2014, p. 89).

Slattery, Krasny, and O’Malley (2007) have divided the history of hermeneutics into six categories: traditional theological hermeneutics, conservative philosophical hermeneutics, contextual hermeneutics, reflective hermeneutics, post-structural hermeneutics, and critical hermeneutics. A seventh category, dialogic hermeneutics, is suggested (Slattery et al. 2007). Some hermeneutists, those in the traditional theological and conservative philosophical categories, believe in a methodological-focused hermeneutics that strives to discover an objective meaning. I am not interested in using

hermeneutics to discover an objective meaning; instead, I am concerned with the experiences that take place while reading literature containing profanity. The history of hermeneutics is used as a foundation here for better understanding the use of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Biblical hermeneutics and conservative philosophical hermeneutics will be examined to better situate Gadamer's philosophies.

### **Biblical Hermeneutics**

The term hermeneutics was first associated with biblical analysis during the Middle Ages and Renaissance (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). Traditional theological hermeneutics is based on "addressing the understanding of religious intuitions" (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). Dating back to ancient philosophy as early as 400 C.E., hermeneutical interpretation was used by Plato and Aristotle to differentiate between religious knowledge and wisdom (Dilthey, 1996; Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). During the biblical analysis stage of hermeneutic history, "the allegorical method was employed to understand linguistic and grammatical components of scriptural texts in order to appropriate this meaning within the wider spiritual framework of the time" (Slattery et al., 2007). *Being* in the world related to the connections between readers and the Bible as well as theological texts. Texts were interpreted to find the Biblical and theological meanings. The rise of biblical hermeneutics arose out of the attack launched by the Council of Trent on the new Protestant principle of scripture (Dilthey, 1996, p. 34). One decision of the Council of Trent was to consider scripture and tradition "as equal for faith" (p. 34). This decision marked a combination of text and lived and believed

experiences. Considering the text as equivalent in faith as the traditions of religion meant the two were to be interpreted as equal.

The lived experience of the Reformation [occupied] a middle ground between the principle of Scripture proper and the material principle of the Reformation: It is an experience that consists both of comprehending and living through the inner coherence of Scripture, a coherence than enlivens all of its separate parts.

(Dilthey, 1996, p. 37)

As part of the ruling, a rule was given stating that every passage must be placed in “its total Scriptural context and clarified by parallels” (Dilthey, 1996, p. 40). Using this method required readers of the Scripture to interpret the meaning based on Biblical context.

Philo of Alexandria reflected on the “allegorical meaning of the Old Testament” and anticipated the idea that “the literal meaning of a text may conceal a deeper non-literal meaning that may only be uncovered through systematic interpretatory work” (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). This in turn amalgamated the Jewish and Greek hermeneutical traditions (Slattery, 2013). Augustine was the first to claim that “interpretation of Scripture involves a deeper, existential level of self-understanding” (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). Augustine’s philosophy included the idea of the ‘sign’ points to the ‘thing’ (Slattery et al., 2007, p. 543). Over a century later, Origenes claimed, “Scripture has three levels of meaning, corresponding to the triangle of body, soul, and spirit, each of which reflects a progressively more advanced stage of religious understanding” (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). Origenes’ emphasis on the need for text

interpretation helped provide “access and understanding for every interpreter of sacred writings” (Slattery et al., 2007, p. 543). Thomas Aquinas questioned “the authenticity of texts by comparing them to the existing Aristotelian corpus, thus anticipating a critical-philological procedure that would later emerge as a crucial aspect of Friedrich Schleiermacher's notion of grammatical interpretation” (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). Aquinas is now considered the “definitive authority on textual interpretation” (Slattery et al., 2007).

During the traditional theological stage of hermeneutic history, the Scripture found in the Bible was the predominant method for relating to being. Religious interpreters could develop ontological relations with the text by focusing on the word of God. During this time, hermeneutics did not focus on poetry and literature as much as modern hermeneutics.

### **Conservative Philosophical Hermeneutics: Schleiermacher**

The goal of conservative philosophical hermeneutics is “to reproduce the meaning or intention of the text” (Slattery, 2013, p. 136). Two key philosophical figures in the conservative philosophical realm of hermeneutics are Wilhelm Dilthey and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Dilthey claimed “understanding and interpretation is the method used throughout the human sciences” to bring together function and truth (Dilthey, 1985, p.152). Schleiermacher, the first to “pull together the intellectual currents of the time so as to articulate a coherent conception of a universal hermeneutics,” is considered the leading scholar in this category of hermeneutics



(Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics moves beyond relating to one particular text and relates to “linguistic meaning in general” (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). General hermeneutics according to Schleiermacher focuses on two forms of textual interpretation: grammatical and psychological (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998). Understanding another person’s speech involves focusing on the grammar and syntax as well as the individual stylistic choices made by the speaker (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). Interests of writing and discourse in regards to Schleiermacher’s hermeneutics are divided into three stages: interest in history, artistic interest, and speculative scientific and religious interest (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. 156). Schleiermacher “believed that understanding an utterance, whether spoken or written, necessarily involved a double aspect, namely the coalescence of two entirely different planes” (Mueller-Vollmer, 1985, p. 10). The first plane involves understanding the text in relation to language, and the second plane involves the text in relation to the “speaker’s life process, his internal or mental history” (Mueller-Vollmer, 1985, p. 10). Only focusing on the words used will leave the understanding of the text incomplete.

For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics was no longer occupied with decoding of a given meaning or with the clearing away of obstacles in the way of proper understanding, but was above all concerned with illuminating the conditions for the possibility of understanding and its modes of interpretation. Against the assumption of the older hermeneutics that a reader would understand everything unless or until he encountered contradictions or nonsensical passage, Schleiermacher advanced a radically different position. From the point of view

of hermeneutics we cannot claim to explain or to understand anything.

(Mueller-Vollmer, 1985, p. 9)

In the conservative philosophical mindset, knowledge is formed in response to something else. There must be a prior element for comparison.

Knowledge itself is only possible as the result of a particular intuition of the world in receptivity which is rendered identical with some other intuition by spontaneity, so there can be no *knowledge* of the principle which creates identity, because knowledge itself depends on a prior differentiation for synthesis to be possible in the first place. (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. xxiv)

We must be aware of the thought as well as the speech-act in order to achieve true understanding. “The belonging together of hermeneutics and rhetoric consists in the fact that every act of understanding is the inversion of a speech-act, during which the thought which was the basis of the speech must become conscious” (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. 7). Because of this, general hermeneutics “belongs together both with criticism and with grammar” (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. 7).

As stated above, thought and language come together to assist in achieving understanding; “thought and language everywhere combine with each other” (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. 91). Thought and language combine in “habitual colloquial conversation” known as talking to oneself or being lost-in-thought (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. 102). We could claim that reading is a type of conversation with ourselves. “The more someone speaks from within themselves and the basis of their combination lies purely within themselves, the more the question arises as

to how they arrived at what they say” (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. 102). Where does our conversation come from? This is where the thought must be considered. Our understanding of a text is not only based on our own conversations with ourselves, but also idle friendly writings which are defined as “deeds of the mind in personal relationships” and they affect how we create “understanding of the rest of their literary products” (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. 102).

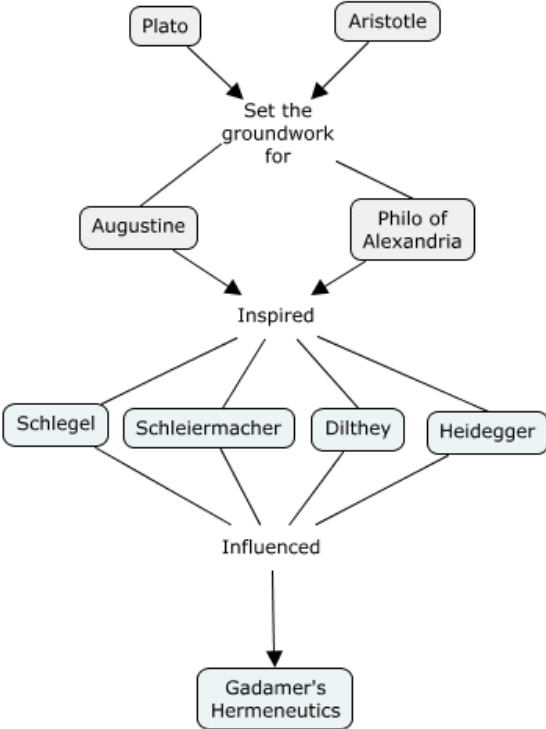
The conservative philosophical view of interpreting art (textual writing included) embraces understanding the role of the author. This counters the reader-response theory, which focuses more on the reader’s construction of the text. “Before the application of the art, one must put oneself in the place of author on the objective and subjective side” (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. 24). The text cannot be separated from the author. “The vocabulary and the history of an era of an author relate as the whole from which his writings must be understood as the part, and the whole must, in turn, be understood from the part” (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. 24). This is different from the theological hermeneutics, which relied on a Biblical allegory to aid understanding and differs slightly from Gadamer’s approach of experiencing the text as a conversation.

### **Gadamer’s Hermeneutics**

Philosophical hermeneutics can be viewed as a progression of philosophical views. Beginning with the classical influences, the German Romantic writings including Friedrich Schlegel, focus on humanity as the root of interpretation. Schleiermacher’s textual interpretation was centered on the examination of both grammatical and

psychological elements of the text. Dilthey focused on searching for a philosophy to encompass the human sciences; he created the now widely accepted term— *Geisteswissenschaften* or “human sciences” (Dilthey, 2014). Heidegger introduced another famous philosophical term— “hermeneutic circle”— which encompasses the idea that everything must be understood as parts of everyday experiences merged together to form a whole (Heidegger, 1962). The relationship of influences on the philosophical study of hermeneutics is outlined in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Contemporary Progression of Hermeneutics Leading to Gadamer.



With the emergence of German romanticism and idealism, the status of hermeneutics shifted to be more philosophical (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). German Romanticism has been labeled as “a literary movement with excessive emphasis on the irrational forces of human life” (Millán-Zaibert, 2007). However, the shift came about in response to Kant and the focus on mathematics and science as “a counter-movement to German Idealism” (Speight, 2011). A key figure of German Romanticism is the literary critic and philosopher Friedrich von Schlegel. Schlegel is known for being a prominent literary figure as well as a philosopher and art critic. “He developed his conception of the Romantic—that poetry should be at once philosophical and mythological, ironic and religious” (Friedrich von Schlegel, 2013).

When beginning to understand philosophical hermeneutics, a student must read the writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, is one of the leading scholars of philosophical hermeneutics and has published several essays and books written in the 1970s. One method for understanding Gadamer’s hermeneutics is to compare his view on understanding to John Dewey’s pragmatic approach. Philosophical hermeneutics is often favorably compared with John Dewey’s pragmatism in at least three ways: in embracing the hermeneutic circle, in recognizing the importance of aesthetic experience, and in rejecting a separation between theory and practice (Vessey, 2006, p. 209). Gadamer views hermeneutics as more than understanding; to him, hermeneutics is the process used “to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place” (Gadamer 1975, p. 263). For Gadamer, understanding is not enough; how one comes to reach that understanding is just as important. The question for Gadamer is not

“What can I know about something and how do I know it?; it is instead “How can and how do we come to an understanding in a conversation with one another about a disputed matter” (Wright, 2004, p. 235)? Gadamer believes understanding takes place when one can isolate an object. He suggests as a solution to develop a 'historical' self-awareness which makes conscious one's own prejudices and allows one to isolate and evaluate an object on its own (Gadamer 1975, p. 266). Gadamer began his own “studies on hermeneutics from the experience of art and from the experience of historical tradition” (Johnson, 2000, p. 16). By applying this method, in order to fully understand profanity, one must isolate the prejudices away from profanity in order to fully understand. A person walks alone on a journey through life, but what does the person find along the way? For Gadamer, a person “is a being of language” (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). This journey can be defined as the person’s relation to language, which in turn grants access to being. Each footstep of the journey is a new experience much like each text one experiences as a reader is a new experience. Experiences, in life and in texts, shape a person, just as the journey directs the traveler. Through our experiences with language, we are opened up to the world (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009). Although we may feel alone, “we are not beings alienated and isolated from the past” (Johnson, 2000, p. 39). Since many people hope to escape the past, this can lead to more loneliness and anxiety.

In order to fully experience a text, one must be aware of the prejudices that are brought to the experience. Gadamer believes that we as people come together with our already established horizons of understandings in order to form the fusion of horizons

(Slattery, 2013; Johnson, 2000).

Obtaining a fusion of horizons requires us to engage with the text in a productive way. This, however, is not something we can learn by coming to master a certain doctrine, method, or theory. It is more like a tacit capacity, which we acquire by following the example of others. The knowledge at stake is like a practical know-how; it resembles the Aristotelian *phronesis*. It is a knowledge that can neither be deduced theoretically, nor be fully articulated, but that rests on a kind of tact or sensitivity that is only exhibited in the form of exemplary judgments and interpretations. (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009)

Man journeys through the world alone, yet is affected by everyone around him. A text can also journey through the world as one entity, yet the way it is interpreted is affected by the book's predecessors. For Gadamer, the "co-determination of text and reader is [his] version of the hermeneutic circle" (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2009).

For Gadamer, interacting with a text is an experience. This is also true for reader-response criticism of literary theory. However, in order to understand experience, one must first understand the self. The most fundamental insight of experientialism is a different view of what it is to be human. "Man is fundamentally an imaginative animal" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1992). Human reason has both animalistic and imaginative character: "animalistic in that it is grounded to our bodily, animal nature; and imaginative in that it makes use of prototyping, schematizing, conceptualizing via metaphor, and the multiple framing of situations" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1992). Because we are imaginative animals, we cannot escape the multiplicity of self-definitions and the

problems they pose for us. It is important to realize that any attempt to reduce us to any single-definition is bound to fail, and to be unfaithful to our real complexities (Lakoff & Johnson, 1992). Without imagination, we could never make sense of our experience.

“Without imagination, we could never reason toward knowledge of reality” (Johnson, 1987). Without imagination, an interpretation would be rendered incomplete.

Understanding arises out of “bodily experience thanks to the participation of the imagination—which transcends the concrete even though it does not go beyond it without ‘romantic flights’” (Johnson, 1987). The imagination alters our view and understanding of our experiences, including the reading of texts. Knowing this allows people to realize that differences will arise when analyzing an experience. For Gadamer, the “scientific form of making things into objects is not the primary way that humans exist in the world” (Johnson, 2000, p. 49). Humans experience the world because of language. Language grants us access to experience, which leads to access to being. “Human speaking facilitates the development of growth of world by submitting, by enduring, by allowing ourselves to be taken hold of the thing” (Johnson, 2000, p. 49). Things become part of our experience through the act of speaking a language, which brings things into our experience as humans. Gadamer highlights the focus on the attitude and orientation of hermeneutics when he claims:

Hermeneutics has to do with a theoretical attitude towards practice of interpretation of text, but also in relation to the experiences interpreted in them and in our communicatively unfolded orientations in the world. This theoretical stance only makes us aware reflectively of what is performatively at play in the



practical experience of understanding. (Gadamer, 1981, p.112)

I relate to Gadamer's views of experiencing the text as well as generally focusing on experiences. When I was first teaching high school, I tried to enter into my student's lives in a way that allowed me to motivate them to learn. I taught at a small rural school where academics were not held in high regard. I managed to transform lives during my three years at this school. Students became excited to learn and celebrated academic accomplishments. I think education can be enhanced by encouraging teachers to focus on the experience with the students— not the curriculum, not the standards, not the state tests, but the experience with students. Students can appreciate literature more if they experience the text rather than mindlessly read words. More teachers need to stop and step back to look at the experiences that are taking place in their classroom. How are students interacting with texts? How are lives intersecting? How can the experience be enhanced? Taking the focus off of the curriculum and testing will allow teachers to better their experiences, which are the basis for education.

### **Introduction to Disgust**

People react to profanity in both oral and written form in many ways. I propose one of the ways in which people respond is with disgust. Paul Rozin, considered the father of disgust in psychology, defines disgust as "revulsion at the prospect of (oral) incorporation of an offensive object" (Rozin & Fallon, 1987, p.23). The offensive objects are usually types of food or bodily fluids that society has deemed offensive. Disgust is not equivalent to distaste or danger. It is "protected by taboo and hedged with

euphemism” (McGinn, 2011, p. 3). Disgust concerns the borders of the body—mouth, genitals, etc. Disgust relates back to humans being reminded of and reduced to their animalistic nature. “Disgust and contempt motivate and sustain the low ranking of things, people, and actions deemed disgusting and contemptible” (Miller, 1997, p. xiv). Due to the relationship with low ranking, disgust is “blamed more than praised” even though the blame received is “often motivated by disgust operating in its oral register” (Miller, 1997, p. xiv). I propose that auditory sensations—i.e. the hearing of profanity—can elicit disgust in the same manner as the other senses.

### **Moralization of Disgust**

The history of disgust highlights the role this emotion plays in maintaining human survival. To some, the role disgust plays in protecting humans may be surprising. It is more surprising that this same emotion is claimed when people respond to some moral transgressions (e.g., corruption and incest) that seem to bear little resemblance to traditional disgust elicitors (Pole, 2013, p. 269). When the history of disgust started as not ingesting disgusting items due to their toxins, the current evolution of disgust’s control over society can be alarming. “Such a claim challenges the evolutionary understanding of the role of disgust and raises questions about whether and why disgust is elicited by immoral events” (Pole, 2013, p. 269). According to Pole (2013), “evidence suggests that some aspects of disgust are innate but others are learned—which makes sense because objects of disgust can vary cross-culturally” (p.270).

One interpretation is that whereas the rudiments of disgust appear to be inborn,

its higher level adaptations require a level of maturity and cognitive development. Thus, a child must understand the abstract principle that disgust can be transferred through contamination before he or she can make use of parental facial expressions of disgust to learn new disgust elicitors, including the concept that immoral behavior can be disgusting (Pole, 2013, p. 270).

Disgust is not a finalized emotion; “manipulating disgust causes changes in moral behavior” (Pole, 2013, p. 270). Disgust has a rich and complex role in human psychology, behavior, and moral judgment (Pole, 2013, p. 270). It begins as a “gatekeeper preventing the ingestion of bitter food and drink but later warns of objects that carry invisible contaminants” (Pole, 2013, p. 270). We also learn that people can behave in ways that are potentially threatening to our bodies and thus we judge their behavior to be disgusting. In the same gatekeeper fashion, we decide to either interact with or avoid people who are potentially disgusting. Finally, “we extend the disgust concept to other non-bodily moral situations while also allowing other thoughts and emotions to color our moral experience of such events” (Pole, 2013, p. 270). People can display disgust towards the “invisible contaminants” either as individuals or as an entire society (p. 270).

Until recently, morality scholars often assumed that moral judgments—of an action as right or wrong, of a person’s character as good or evil—are founded upon higher order cognitive processes (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 963). The judgment of moral character was thought to be an advanced process. “The individual, in making a moral judgment, was presumed to consciously apply a priori principles, such

as beliefs about equality or rights” (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 963). A different view of moral judgment has emerged over the past two decades (Damasio, 1994; Greene & Haidt, 2002; Haidt, 2001, 2007 cited in Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 963). “This view highlights how emotions feed into *intuitions*, or fast, automatic hunches of right and wrong that figure prominently in moral judgments” (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 963). Disgust is one of these emotions that affect intuitions. Rather than using logic and reason to judge moral character, disgust encourages quick reactions. Empirical evidence of precise emotion-to moral-judgment associations is scarce, however, and some have argued that emotions may exert little, if any, direct influence upon moral judgment (Huebner, Dwyer, & Hauser, 2009, p. 963).

“Moral domains involve discrete sets of interrelated principles, rules, and values that impart a specific idea of what is good and virtuous, how people ought to behave, and what warrants punishment or sanctions” (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 963). The moral domains help control what is deemed disgusting. “Moral domains relate to moral judgments: Actions are judged morally wrong if perceived to breach the rules of a moral domain but judged morally virtuous if perceived to uphold those rules” (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 964). Recent treatments have conceptualized disgust as a moral emotion defined by appraisals of purity and contamination (Haidt, 2003; Rozin & Fallon, 1987 cited in Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 964). Rozin, Haidt, and their colleagues have argued that our hominid predecessors possessed a distaste system to protect against the ingestion of toxins and contaminants (e.g., Rozin & Fallon, 1987; Rozin, Haidt, & McCauley, 1999). From

distaste evolved disgust, an emotion that functions to “guard the body and soul from contamination, impurity, and degradation” (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, Cohen, 2009, p. 964).

“Characterized predominantly by unpleasant sensory experiences, core disgust elicitors bear a minimal explicit association with conceptions of morality” (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 964). Animal nature disgust is triggered by activities that remind people of their animal origins, such as certain sexual or eating habits. Interpersonal disgust is elicited by the prospect of contact with strangers, evildoers, or diseased persons. Finally, “sociomoral disgust is revulsion evoked by people who commit vulgar violations against others, such as child abuse or incest” (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 964). However elicited, disgust motivates people to reject anything “perceived as likely to contaminate the self physically or spiritually or to threaten their status as civilized human beings” (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p.964). Depending on how one defines *civilized*, this perception could include a wide range of contaminants. “In this way, disgust signals the ‘badness’ of impurity and, by extension, the ‘goodness’ of purity” (Horberg, Oveis, Keltner, & Cohen, 2009, p. 964).

Disgust differs from anger and indignation because disgust is not a sympathizable emotion (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 27). If a friend is disgusted by worms, but you are not, your friend will have a difficult time swaying your opinion of worms and you will not feel sympathy for their feeling of disgust. "There are no publicly articulable reasons to be given that would make the dialogue a real piece of persuasion"

(Nussbaum, 1999, p. 27). One would, however, be able to convince a friend why she was angry at another friend for lying. "The boundary between disgust and indignation is sometimes obscured by the fact that disgust can come packaged in a moralized form" (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 27). Disgust also is distanced from fear and hate. A person can be disgusted by something he/she neither fears nor hates (McGinn, 2011, p. 6). If one is disgusted by mustard covered French fries, this does not mean the person hates mustard or hates French fries. "Disgust identifies its objects independently of their harmfulness, irrespective of it" (McGinn, 2011, p. 12).

For each function disgust performs, psychological mechanisms must take specific inputs, integrate them with fitness-relevant moderating factors, and then set in motion the constellation of behavioral, cognitive, and physiological processes naturally selected to perform the function at hand (Tybur, Lieberman, Kurzban, & Descioli, 2013, p. 65). This explains how disgust-based decisions are made. Also, lifestyle choices including sexuality, diet, living habitat, and general behavior are controlled by disgust-based decisions. "Fitness- relevant moderating factors" can include anything related to keeping oneself healthy—in body and mind (Tybur, Lieberman, Kurzban, & Descioli, 2013, p. 65).

### **Disgust and Society**

Disgust can also be controlled by societal rules. Rules can vary tremendously across cultures and times (Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987 cited in Tybur, Lieberman, Kurzban, & Descioli, 2013, p. 74), and new rules appear frequently within

groups. “It is culture, not nature, that draws the lines between defilement and purity, clean and filthy, those crucial boundaries disgust is called on to police” (Miller, 1997, p. 11). This is one of the qualities that separate humans from animals. Our society can draw the lines. “Cultures [...] have much more leeway in admitting things or actions to the realm of the disgusting than in excluding certain ones from it” (Miller, 1997, p. 16). The phrase, “That’s disgusting!” is heard much more than rebuttal claims made in response. According to McGinn (2010), our society has two basic characteristics: (1) we are a social species; (2) we are prone to disgust (p. 189). “We ardently seek the company of our fellow human beings but we are repulsed by their presence” (McGinn, 2011, p. 189). There is a division of life into public and private spheres powered by disgust and how the species displays itself to others. “The public/private distinction arises, originally, from the necessity for disgust-management” (McGinn, 2011, p. 190). General societal understandings of defecating and fornication are based on disgust. Due to these understandings, “we must behave discreetly, tactfully, and often secretly” much in the same way people hide behind closed doors when reading banned books (McGinn, 2011, p. 190). In order to accomplish this behavior, we must become actors, “managing the impression we make on others, calibrating our interpersonal impact” (McGinn, 2011, p. 190). When people decide to act against the general societal understandings, they are labeled as *disgusting*.

The morality aspect of disgust plays a role in the societal aspect as well. “Moral disgust functions to motivate social distancing, rather than physical distancing, from an individual who has committed a serious wrong” (Curtis & Biran, 2001; Tybur,

Lieberman, & Griskevicius, 2009). If, for instance, those who are perceived as having committed moral sins—and their allies—are at risk of being punished by observers (DeScioli & Kurzban, 2012; Neuberg, Smith, Hoffman, & Russell, 1994; Tooby & Cosmides, 2010), there could be value in signaling to observers that one condemns the wrongdoer's actions (Tybur, Lieberman, Kurzban, & Descioli, 2013, p. 76).

Sometimes—

disgust is socially engineered rather than rooted in broadly shared human responses; it is summoned up as a way of putting some group down, distancing it from the dominant group, causing it to occupy a status between the fully human and the merely animal. (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 29)

Not all researchers agree regarding the initial displays of disgust. Whether or not disgust is shown in infants is disputed among researchers. On one hand, researchers such as Rozin, P., Lowery, L., & Ebert, R. (1994) believe that the sour faces of infants “attributed to stimulation by sour tastes” (Peiper, 1963; Rosenstein & Oster, 1988; Steiner, 1977 cited in Rozin, P., Lowery, L., & Ebert, R., 1994), also occurs in adults. Rozin, P., Lowery, L., & Ebert, R. (1994) equate the sour facial expression made by infants as a sign of disgust. Since the other negative infant “taste- face,” the gape associated with bitter, seems to have been co-opted by the disgust system, the researchers wondered if the “sour” expression had been co-opted in the same fashion. On the other hand, researchers such as Nussbaum (1999) believe that people are not born with the ability to show disgust. “Disgust is not present in infants during the first three years of life (Nussbaum, 199, p. 25). Infants are left to mimic the disgust reactions from



their caretakers. "With disgust, as with language, social teaching plays a large role in shaping the form that the innate equipment takes" (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 25). Disgust is an "especially powerful vehicle of social teaching" (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 25).

Disgust has been a topic of concern throughout the literary ages. One author who often tied this motif into his writing is Walt Whitman. Walt believed that the "really civilized nation must make a strenuous effort to counter the power of disgust as a barrier to the full equality and mutual respect of all citizens" (Nussbaum, 1999, p.32). Literary topics related to disgust involve the female body and genitalia, sexuality, race, and lower class society.

Disgust "shapes our intimacies and provides much of the structure of our daily routine" (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 20). Disgust even plays a role in lawmaking. It "figures... as the primary or even sole justification for making some acts illegal" (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 20). Obscenity is when "the disgust of an average member of society, applying contemporary community standards, has typically been taken to be a crucial element in the definition of the obscene" (p.20). Courts use obscenity to decide if "work may be subject to state regulation" (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 38). The courts use several definitions of obscenity including Webster's Third New International Dictionary definition which states "disgusting to the senses... grossly repugnant to the generally accepted notions of what is appropriate... offensive or revolting..." as well as the Oxford English Dictionary definition which states: "offensive to the senses, or to taste or refinement, disgusting, repulsive, filthy, foul, abominable, loathsome" (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 39).

Disgust is an important emotion being studied by psychologists, sociologists, and

philosophers, just to name a few. According to Miller (1997), disgust is not shunned from the world of academia—

Disgust owes what little acceptability it has as a topic of academic discourse to two main developments, one social and cultural, the other more narrowly intellectual: 1) the general loosening of norms surrounding once taboo topics of bodily functions and sexuality, what we might call the coarsening or pornographization of public discourse; 2) the resurgence across a multitude of disciplines of interest in the emotions. (p. 7)

Disgust is not always viewed through negatively connoted lenses—“ the disgusting has an allure; it exerts a fascination which manifests itself in the difficulty of averting our eyes at a gory accident, of not checking out the quantity and quality of our excretions; or in the attractions of horror films, and indeed sex itself” (Miller, 1997, p. 22). TV shows such as “Fear Factor” left the realm of fear and went more into the realm of disgust by having contestants consume certain bugs and bodily fluids from animals. Why did the show last? – Because viewers would tune in to be disgusted.

### **Disgust and Food**

Darwin marks the beginning of modern psychological interest in disgust.

Consider his interpretation:

The term “disgust” in its simplest sense, means something offensive to taste. It is curious how readily this feeling is excited by anything unusual in appearance, odour, or nature of our food. In Tierra del Fuego a native touched with his finger

some cold preserved meat which I was eating at our bivouac, and plainly showed utter disgust at its softness; whilst I felt utter disgust at my food being touched by a naked savage, though his hands did not appear dirty. A smear of soup on a man's beard looks disgusting, though there is of course nothing disgusting in the soup itself. I presume that this follows from the strong association in our minds between the sight of food, however circumstanced, and the idea of eating it. (Darwin, 1872, p. 257)

“Before the word disgust entered the English lexicon in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, taste figured distinctly less prominently than foul odors and loathsome sights” (Miller, 1997, p.1). The role of taste cannot be denied. “Disgust undoubtedly involves taste, but it also involves—not just by extension but at its core—smell, touch, even at time sight and hearing” (Miller, 1997, p.2). Due to the individualistic preferences of disgust, the emotion is not easily contained in understanding. “Above all, it is a moral and social sentiment” (Miller, 1997, p. 2). “In the West, taste does not become central to our conception of disgust until taste becomes a metaphor for an aesthetic and social sense of discernment” (Miller, 1997, p. 11). Darwin (1872) wrote, "As the sensation of disgust primarily arises in connection with the act of eating and tasting, it is natural that its expression should consist chiefly in movements around the mouth" (p. 257).

### **Introduction of the Fifth Sense: Hearing**

“Disgust differs from other emotions by having a unique aversive style” (Miller,

1997, p.9). When people encounter something that elicits fear or sadness, they will not necessarily avoid those elicitors completely. “The idiom of disgust consistently invokes the *sensory* experience of what it feels like to be put in danger by the disgusting, of what it feels like to be too close to it, to have to smell it, see it, or touch it” (Miller, 1997, p. 9). The only missing sense is hearing. By viewing speech as disgusting—using the profane words as speech—the fifth sense can be included in Miller’s sensory description. “In routine speech we use contempt, loathing, hatred, horror, or even fear, to express sentiments that we also could and do express by images of disgust” (Miller, 1997, p. 25).

According to Aurel Kolnai (2004), “one would search in vain for any even approximately equivalent parallel in the aural sphere to something like a putrid smell, the feel of a flabby body, or of a belly ripped open” (p. 49). Kolnai’s work, *On Disgust*, was originally published in 1929 in Germany. Kolnai excludes the auditory element of disgust because hearing does not “present its objects as the other senses do” (McGinn, 2011, p. 7). In the 84 years since Kolnai first wrote his words regarding auditory aspects of disgust, the world has become more publicly obscene. This leads to more profanity being spoken in the media and everyday vernacular. I propose that hearing certain words of profanity can elicit disgust in the same way taste, smell, touch, and sight can. One way to investigate the reactions to profanity is to study its role in literature.

### **Profanity: Elicitor of Disgust**

In order to understand profanity, one must first grasp the definitions and history.

*Profanity* is defined as “the quality of being profane” (profanity). Sobre-Denton and Simonis (2012) define *swearing* as “any conscious use of taboo language for communicative purposes”. Profanity is considered to be “a part of the shadow language of slang or argot, that ranges from the somewhat ungrammatical to the completely improper, from the colloquially quaint to the pejoratively dirty” (Sagarin, 1962, p. 31). *Profane* is defined in Merriam Webster dictionary as “characterized by irreverence or contempt for God or sacred principles or things; irreligious” (profane). Pagliai (2009) defines “outrageous speech” as “including obscenities, vulgarities, blasphemy, [and] dirty words” (p. 69). The level of outrageousness of these words is based on the context as well as the age, gender, and status of the speaker (Pagliai, 2009, p. 69). When the outrageous terms are in a text, the age, gender, and status applies to the reader. According to researchers at Brigham Young University, most research involving profanity deals with television, movies, and video games, not literature (Coyne, Callister, Stockdale, Nelson, & Wells, 2012, p. 361). Their study involved tracking the use of profanity in 40 adolescent books. I want to take this approach further and utilize philosophical hermeneutics to better understand profanity in two novels: *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*.

According to Natalie Angier of the *New York Times* (2005), researchers have found that what counts as taboo language in a given culture is often a mirror into that culture's fears and fixations. “The obscene achieves its eradicable place in human life by weaving together powerful elements of our biology, psychology, and culture” (Morris, 1993, p. 194-195).

Outrageous speech, words that cannot be used lightly, are more powerful than others in modifying the mood or key of the interaction. These words are often connected with liminal states, with the carnivalesque, with strong emotions and their threatened release, with the breakdown of everyday rules of appropriate behavior and hierarchies of power, with the upsetting and upending of social distinction, with rebellion. (Pagliai, 2009, p. 69)

Profanity is related to neurological control, psychological restraints, and socio-cultural restrictions (Jay, 2000, p. 22). In Jay's neuro-psycho-social (NPS) model of cursing, cursing is viewed as "purposeful and rule-governed" rather than "chaotic, meaningless, or random" (p. 22). One reason to study profanity, which drives this current study, is the vast opportunities for "incorrect interpretations of taboo words" by students (Sobre-Denton & Simonis, 2012, p. 180). I agree with researchers such as Coyne et al. (2012) that "more research is needed to assess whether exposure to profanity in the media [and in literature] has any real detrimental effect on viewers [and readers]" (p. 362).

Some researchers have taken a linguistic approach to studying profanity's impact on readers. Profanity and obscene language is often sheltered beneath euphemisms and dysphemisms. Where euphemisms "insure our comfort," dysphemisms "insure our discomfort" by pointing out the disgusting and disgraceful focus of the word (Bens, 1971). One argument made is that euphemisms and profanity have differing emotional responses due to the different phonology of the words (Bowers & Pleydell-Pearce, 2011, p. 2). The same emotional responses are elicited when well-educated college students hear bad grammar (Angier, 2005). Children initially are conditioned to respond

emotionally to cursing from as early as one year of age (Jay, 2000, p. 82). Cursing is a natural behavior progression occurring after the stage of biting and hitting (“Strategies for Kids Information for Parents”). Much like biting and hitting, using profanity is considered “socially unacceptable and is considered problem behavior in adolescents” (Coyne et al., 2012, p. 361). Other researchers have discovered that swearing has a cathartic quality because people feel better after using profanity (Sohn, 2010; Jay, 2000). Some writers have decided that profanity can be used to enhance character development but can also detract readers from the overall message of the literature (Reissenweber, 2012, p. 7). “When profanity influences characters or becomes pertinent to the unfolding action, it can be necessary” (Reissenweber, 2012, p. 7).

Understanding authors’ views on profanity is important to the overall analysis of this taboo colloquial language. Some authors and educators find ignoring and limiting profanity is easier than studying its role in literature. “Teachers often struggle with representing the forbidden in their classrooms, from banned books to taboo terms” (Sobre-Denton & Simonis, 2012, p. 180). “Many English teachers don’t debate or, rather, they avoid debate by avoiding hearing or seeing the taboo words” (Bens, 1971). When the profanity is ignored, the teachers adopt the view that “cursing, profanity, obscenity - whether in a piece of literature or used spontaneously or by design by a student - simply doesn’t exist” (Bens 1971). Rather than disregard swearwords as part of a language, swearwords should be considered “part of the language and should be treated as such because – although often interpreted as offensive and indicative of lack of education—they contribute to the expressive power of language” (Sobre-Denton &

Simonis, 2012, p. 180). However, by ignoring profanity, “we turn our backs on the language of reality, hiding from and urging our students to hide from life” (Bens, 1971).

A recent study from Sobre-Denton and Simonis’ (2012), researchers at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, focuses on how profanity is viewed in the classroom and the effect profanity has on language and culture. Two out of their three research questions pertained to profanity: 1) Why is profanity taboo in the classroom? and 2) What can we learn about language, culture, and communication from the study of profanity and its use in the classroom? Interviews were conducted related to students’ thoughts on profanity in the classroom before and after they viewed the documentary entitled *F\*ck: A Documentary*. This study examined “the complex intersections among language, culture, profanity, and power” (p. 178). In their study, profanity is appreciated for its cathartic qualities, its ability to be substituted for any part of the sentence, and its ability to lead the United States debate of free speech (p. 179). In response to research question one, students were conditioned to view profanity as inappropriate due to punishments they received once the profane words were uttered in their childhood (p. 187). Students also gained “a greater understanding of arguments for and against censorship” due to classroom discussions (p. 186).

The use of profanity in classrooms, either willingly or unwillingly, by teachers merits the question of whether or not the teacher should be dismissed. Sutton (1992) offered examples of court cases involving profanity in schools. “The assigning and discussing [of] supplementary material containing offensive language after receiving a verbal reprimand and direction to discontinue the practice” did not result in the removal



of the teachers (Sutton, 1992). The teachers refused to remove the books in question from their teaching because they considered the books to be “worthwhile literary works” and they had a “professional obligation to expose their students to these types of literature” (Sutton, 1992). “The removal of a classroom textbook that contains offensive language” was successful in the 1988 case of *Virgil v. School Board of Columbia County, Florida* (Sutton, 1992). The school district removed the textbook from the classrooms but kept a copy of the textbook in the library. The retention of the book in the school library was considered a “fair compromise” (*Virgil v School Board of Columbia County, Florida*, 1989).

Students’ experiences with profanity can influence their views and understanding of the taboo colloquial language. “Cognitive and linguistic capacities enable reflection on, and the re-interpretation of, experience” (Smythe & Spence, 2012, p. 11). Thus there is a restless back and forth movement, or ‘play,’ between tradition and the experiencing, interpreting person (Gadamer, 1975). The person’s present, past and future are constitutively involved in the process of understanding. Smythe and Spence (2012) claim research that uses a hermeneutic framework acknowledges the limitations of detached observer research. In defining prejudice as how we unthinkingly judge before we have examined all the elements of a given situation, Gadamer (1975) challenges the negativity associated with contemporary use of this term and argues that adequate understanding needs to include positive and negative meanings. Indeed, for an argument to have any weight at all, it must be prejudiced (Ihde, 1998). This applies to a hermeneutical analysis of profanity perfectly. In order to fully understand the use of this

colloquial language, researchers must examine the positive and negative meanings of the language and take into account the experiences that this language will elicit in readers.

In response to the question, “Should the study of profanity be allowed in the classroom?” Sobre-Denton and Simonis (2012) conclude:

Words exist and we can’t protect ourselves or our children from learning them.

Profanity creates a safe space for rebellion, but can also be incredibly painful and violent when not used with care. Teaching students about profanity in a classroom setting, with tools such as scholarly readings, discussion boards, and the creation of a safe space for experimentation, can serve not necessarily to encourage them to swear, but rather to think about the power of language and how easily and thoughtlessly that power can be abused. (p.192)

### **Word Aversion**

“Word aversion is marked by strong reactions triggered by the sound, sight, and sometimes even the thought of certain words” (Malady, 2013). The aversion is “not to the things that they refer to, but to the word itself” (Malady, 2013). Each word elicits a unique meaning for each individual. Berlo (1960) claimed that rather than existing in the word, meaning exists within people. The unique word meanings carried by people allow words to be associated with emotions including sadness, happiness, and disgust to name a few. According to University of Pennsylvania linguistics professor Mark Liberman, the feelings involved seem to be something like disgust (Malady, 2013). Liberman defined the concept as

a feeling of intense, irrational distaste for the sound or sight of a particular word or phrase, not because its use is regarded as etymologically or logically or grammatically wrong, nor because it's felt to be over-used or redundant or trendy or non-standard, but simply because the word itself somehow feels unpleasant or even disgusting. (Malady, 2013)

Jason Riggle, a professor in the department of linguistics at the University of Chicago, claims word aversions are similar to phobias. "If there is a single central hallmark to this, it's probably that it's a more visceral response" (Malady, 2013).

The [words] evoke nausea and disgust rather than, say, annoyance or moral outrage. And the disgust response is triggered because the word evokes a highly specific and somewhat unusual association with imagery or a scenario that people would typically find disgusting—but don't typically associate with the word. These aversions don't seem to be elicited solely by specific letter combinations or word characteristics. If we collected enough of [these words], it might be the case that the words that fall in this category have some properties in common. But it's not the case that words with those properties in common always fall in the category. (Malady, 2013)

I would like to introduce the idea of word aversion to profanity. Certain obscene words are more visceral than others. Disgust is an appropriate response to the upper level profane diction.

Riggle believes the phenomenon may be "dependent on social interactions and media coverage" (Malady, 2013). Currently, the most disgusting word according to an

online survey is *moist* (Malady, 2013). “Given that, as far back as the aughts, there were comedians making jokes about hating [*moist*], people who were maybe prone to have that kind of reaction to one of these words, surely have had it pointed out to them that it’s an icky word” (Malady, 2013). The role of society is once again an issue. “So, to what extent is it really some sort of innate expression that is independently arrived at, and to what extent is it sort of socially transmitted?” (Malady, 2013). Once again, across varying aspect of disgust, research shows that disgust is really a very social emotion.

According to scholarly investigations, words do have the power to disgust and repulse (Malady, 2013). “Natasha Fedotova, a Ph.D. student studying psychology at the University of Pennsylvania, recently conducted research examining the extent to which individuals connect the properties of an especially repellent thing to the word that represents it” (Malady, 2013). Fedotova claims—

The word *rat*, which stands for a disgusting animal, can contaminate an edible object [such as water] if the two touch. This result cannot be explained solely in terms of the tendency of the word to act as a reminder of the disgusting entity because the effect depends on direct physical contact with the word. Put another way, if you serve people who are grossed out by rats Big Macs on plates that have the word *rat* written on them, some people will be less likely to want to eat the portion of the burger that touched the word. Humans, in these instances, go so far as to treat gross-out words as though they can transfer negative properties through physical contact. (Malady, 2013)

## **Literary Analysis: Reader-response Criticism**

In order for the problem of studying profanity in literature to be relevant, educators must value and utilize literary interpretation in the classroom. Why would a dispute over types of language used in high school reading curriculum be valid if teachers are no longer discussing literary analysis and interpretation? According to Ellie Holzer, “The nature of text study runs against the grain of widespread cultural patterns of learning and experiences” (Holzer, 2007, p. 38). An educator does not have to look far today to see that the future of education is traveling down the road of standardization powered by technology. Education is being transformed to move students quickly through grades and subjects without taking time to fully analyze and interpret meaning. The need for educators to deal with this question is echoed by Wolfgang Iser’s concerns about the study of literature and history:

The question arises as to why we may need this particular medium, especially in view of the fact that literature as a medium is put on a par with other media, and the ever increasing role that these play in our civilization shows the degree to which literature has lost its significance as the epitome of culture. The more comprehensively a medium fulfills its sociocultural function, the more it is taken for granted, as literature once used to be [...] Does literature still have anything to offer that the competing media are unable to provide? (Iser, 1997, p. 1)

Literature offers a chance for students to personally engage and interpret the curriculum as presented through texts.

The criticism I have chosen to use in this study is reader-response criticism. “Reader-response scholars rely on individual interpretations of books to make the literary understandings constructed throughout the reading process visible” (Brooks & Browne, 2012, p. 76). Common questions asked during reader-response criticism include:

- 1) How does the interaction of text and reader create meaning?
- 2) How might we interpret a literary text to show that the reader's response is, or is analogous to, the topic of the story? (Brizee & Tompkins, 2008).

If used in a classroom, these questions allow teachers and students to analyze literature on a more advanced level than only searching for the objective main idea. “Only in schools does the text become a spectacle, and we the dazed spectators, eyes glazed, sit in mute reception, waiting for something to appear” (Grumet, 1988, p. 143-144). Reading is not an objective task with clearly defined answers; reading is a personal experience. Through the use of reader-response criticism, students can be introduced to the idea that their own reading helps shape the text.

It is not that the presence of poetic qualities compels a certain kind of attention but that the paying of a certain kind of attention results in the emergence of poetic qualities. . . . Interpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing. Interpreters do not decode poems; they make them. (Fish, 1980)

Fish (1980) mentioned poems, but the same construction can be true of longer literary works such as short stories and novels. The construction of texts is a result of the reader experiencing the text and realizing that one is not the same after reading. “The meaning

of the text does not consist of the final conclusion we draw about what the text *says*; rather, the meaning of the text consists of our experience of what the text *does* to us as we read it” (Tyson, 2006, p. 176). Elizabeth Freund (1987) offers a thorough explanation of the purpose of reader-response criticism:

...reader-response criticism attempts to grapple with questions generally ignored by schools of criticism which teach us how to read; questions such as why do we read and what are the deepest sources of our engagement with literature: What does reading have to do with life of the psyche, or the imagination, or our linguistic habits: what happens—consciously or unconsciously, cognitively or psychologically—during the reading process? Reader-response criticism probes the practical or theoretical consequences of the event of reading by further asking what the relationship is between the private and the public, or how and where meaning is made, authenticated and authorized, or why readers agree or disagree about their interpretations. (Freund, 1987, p. 5-6)

Reader-response theorists can be separated into three categories. The first category contains theorists who “privilege authors by foregrounding the construction of the genre and features of the particular narratives the authors attempt to tell” (Brooks & Browne, 2012, p. 76). This category of theorists focuses mostly on “the ways in which authors guide interpretation through a particular set of literary conventions” (Brooks & Browne, 2012, p. 76). The second category of reader-response theorists is on the opposite end of the spectrum and believes “the text itself has very little to do with one’s interpretation of meaning” (Brooks & Browne, 2012, p. 76). The third and final group is

more neutral. This category of theorists views “reading as a negotiation of between both the text and the person engaging in the literary interpretation” (Brooks & Browne, 2012, p. 77). In this view, “what gets considered is how each (reader and text) influence the other during any construction of meaning” (Brooks & Browne, 2012, p. 77).

The use of dialogue in a text presents a specific focus for reader-response criticism. The scope of Thomas’ (2012) study of fictional dialogue was to place emphasis on dialogue as a key narrative device in the novel of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. “Dialogue plays a crucial role in helping to create and populate credible fictional worlds and in contributing drama and vitality to the actions and situations located within those worlds” (Thomas, 2012, p.15). A key component of fictional dialogue in the twenty-first century is the use of colloquial language including profanity. In order to create credible fictional worlds, readers must be able to identify elements of verisimilitude in the works. “What passes for realism varies considerably according to the prevailing aesthetic and cultural norms of the day” (Thomas, 2012, p.17). Authors are not as restricted as they once were. “Whereas the early novel had to tread carefully in representing the rude language of the common people, by the time James Joyce was writing this had become not so much an ideal as a requirement” (Thomas, 2012, p. 17).

During the act of reading, fictional speech... becomes ‘real speech,’ and as such, it works in and on the fictional world. At the same time, fictional speech works on the real world, continually shaping a new entity for the reader. (Rossen-Knill, 1999, p. 42)



“Writers continue to try to develop ways to celebrate oral cultures and immerse readers in the verbal worlds of their characters” (Thomas, 2012, p. 33). Profanity usage is a cultural aspect that has a right to be included in fictional dialogue. Teachers need to facilitate students in analyzing “the interactions that take place between fictional characters in terms of power dynamics and in terms of situating these exchanges within specific social and historical contexts” (Thomas, 2012, p. 170). Readers are not idly sitting by when reading a text; the reader takes on an active role while reading by “fully participating in the experience” of fictional dialogue (Thomas, 2012, p. 171). Brooks and Browne (2012) suggest we “mine texts more carefully for cultural milieu as well as find acceptance with a broader range of literacy interpretations.”

I believe the interpretation of language and literature connects each of us to our past history as human beings. Reading’s—

purpose is not to reduce mystery to what is obvious, patent, or to confirm solipsism but to provide a passage between the images, impulses, and glimpses of meaning that constitute being in the world and our encoded representations of that world.” (Grumet, 1988, p. 135-136)

Opponents to the intense study and interpretation of cultural classics disagree with the claim that interpretation can be viewed as a conversation. “What the critic fails to note, however, is that all experience is interpretative and all interpretation is justly described as a peculiar form of conversation” (Tracy, 1998, p 602). Nothing can escape the realm of interpretation. “The most valuable pedagogical application of reader-response criticism creates a link between real-life experience and the work—helping the

student to connect—and then builds on that connection” (Buckler, 1991, p. 38). Classic works of literature can and should be interpreted by each student in order to gain full understanding. If these works include profanity, then profanity goes under the lens of interpretation as well.

### **Curriculum Theory**

Analyzing literature relates to examining the curricular choices made by teachers and school districts. According to curriculum theorist William Pinar (2004), “teaching—from the point of view of curriculum theory—is a matter of enabling students to employ academic knowledge (and popular culture, increasingly via the media and the Internet) to understand their own self-formation within society and the world” (p. 16). We can then view curriculum theory as a way to discover and articulate “for oneself and with others, the educational significance of the school subjects for self and society in the ever-changing historical moment” (p. 16). “The world of learning therefore consists of the individual, the society, and cultural traditions” (Magrini, 2014, p. 91). Curriculum theory is also “the network of assumptions that undergirds curriculum proposals, policies, or practices, and is the critique of the same” which thus affects the historical moment (Schubert, 2009). “Curriculum, like language, is a moving form; conceived as an aspiration, the object and hope of our intentionality, it comes to form and slips, at the moment of its actualization, into the grounds of our actions” (Grumet, 1988, p. 131).

A key aspect of teaching in the twenty-first century is academic freedom. “Academic freedom refers to teachers having freedom to teach and students having

freedom to learn without interference from within or from ideological conflicts outside the institution” (Van Patten, 2009). “Teachers’ academic freedom interests are often viewed as subordinate to a school’s freedom to make its own decisions about the content of the curriculum and research” (“First amendment in schools”, n.d). “The courts have consistently upheld the right of teachers to exercise limited academic freedom in their classrooms with respect to oral or written discussions of offensive language, provided that the age and maturity level of the students, as well as the relevance of the language to curricular aspects, is taken into consideration (Keefe; Parducci; Mailloux cited in Sutton 1992).

Public schools represent a branch of the government. Due to this, people are entitled to the right to petition grievances involving school curriculum (Adler, 2009). One of the most popular grievances against the curriculum is banning books deemed unacceptable, dangerous, or obscene. There is an expectation for fair and just treatment once a challenge to the curriculum is made (Adler, 2009). For some challengers, nothing but the removal of the dangerous literature will be accepted. This was the case for the book banning in Kenawha County, Virginia in 1973 in which extremists resorted to bomb threats on car loads of children (Foerstel, 1994, p.4). For others, the ability for parents to allow permission for their students to access reading material will acquiesce the challenge.

I entered the teaching field in 2009, seven years after the passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). I taught high school English for three years at a small rural high school before I started my doctoral work full time. During my doctoral degree, I

instructed university courses in the teaching preparation program as well as freshmen level English courses at several community colleges. Over the past year, I have taught seventh, eighth, and twelfth grade English. In the decade since I attended a public high school, I have witnessed a change in education. Teaching now revolves around standardized tests.

We have arrived at a moment when students and teachers are subjected to a curriculum driven by disconnected multiple-choice questions or essay prompts that must be answered in a set amount of time and that have little if any relationship to problems, interests, or speculations that we might associate with thinking, erudition, creativity, or a curriculum animated by and responding to the flux of a classroom. (Taubman, 2009, p. 16)

The result of this focus on standardized tests has created college students who cannot think for themselves without detailed rubrics and step-by-step instructions. They expect all tests to be multiple-choice and hope for retests when they do not meet their required standard. Education is now driven by the “demand and reliance on numbers, on quantifiable data,” which shape curriculum decisions, instructional methods, and teacher selection (Taubman, 2009, p. 14). The demand for number-driven accountability reaches from early elementary classrooms all the way to higher education classrooms and departments. This accountability demand “reaches into the corners of our practices, constricts our daily life in schools, and influences how we think about what we do in our classrooms” (Taubman, 2009, p. 13). Arthur Wise argues the importance of teacher accountability driven by increased standards in his 2003 article, “What’s Wrong with

Teacher Certification.”

Basic skills testing should be replaced with tests that measure outcomes of liberal arts and general studies, including high levels of literacy and numeracy and writing and speaking skills... Rigorous content tests aligned with professional standards for teachers and students should be required... New teaching knowledge tests should be developed... Assessments of teaching performance, including the impact of teacher on student achievement, defined by success on exams, must be a prerequisite for a professional teaching license. (p.11)

When teacher pay and the renewal of teacher contracts are linked to scores on state tests, then of course teachers will begin to only focus on teaching to the test. This accountability practice officially began in 2004 after the Teaching Commission claimed good teaching would result from tying compensation to classroom performance (Taubman, 2004, p. 11). These numbers—test scores, performance measures, and percentages of objectives met— “give the impression that what happens in classrooms—extraordinarily complex, psychically tumultuous and potentially both ecstatic and maddening places of teaching—is best understood as objective, transparent, and measurable” (Taubman, 2009, p. 2).

This same objectification is taking place with the teaching of reading. Rather than valuing the experience, teachers are trained to measure outcomes and prescribe certain methodologies to achieve desired results of comprehension. Nancy Atwell’s book, *The Reading Zone* (2001), offers a simple yet life-changing approach to teaching reading. Rather than using textbooks and instructional fads, students should learn “to

become skilled, habitual, critical readers” by choosing their own books and reading every day. This style of teaching may seem scary to new teachers since there is no book to follow or worksheets to copy. Instead, the teacher becomes a facilitator, coach, and fellow reader who discusses the books and the students’ experiences with the books with each student. I have made the decision to return to public school teaching during my last year of my doctoral work. Even though my students have a state test to pass, I have incorporated the reading workshop discussed in Atwell’s (2007) book into my classroom. Students may choose their own reading material with the goal of the reading level being “just right” for each student (Atwell, 2007, p.40). I have implemented this viewpoint on student choice to allow for a heightened quality of life when reading. This “heightened awareness of the qualities of that life” create a learning environment where “teachers and students can become more intelligent within it” (Eisner, 1976, p. 140). Atwell (2007) suggests writing and reading workshops should happen daily at the middle school level and several times weekly at the high school. This plan does not check state standards off a to-do list; this plan allows students to learn to enjoy reading and writing.

Rather than focus on numbers and objectives, Pinar (2004) claims:

The educational point of the public school curriculum is understanding, understanding the relations among academic knowledge, the state of society, and processes of self-formation, and the character of the historical moment in which we live, in which others have lived, and in which our descendants will someday live. (p. 187)

In order to create a classroom that fosters understanding and appreciates the current historical moment, teachers must be allowed to build their own classroom curriculum that will allow for students to have a stake in the lessons. School districts may claim that teachers can “be free to create your own curriculum,” yet teachers are continually strongly advised without alternatives—or forced—to use certain adopted books and curriculum (Taubman, 2009, p. 9).

Contrary to the belief that the educational crisis we find ourselves in is a new problem, George Counts discussed several of the same issues plaguing American education in his pamphlet, “Dare the Schools Build a new Social Order” first published in 1932. Counts (1932) claims, “a very large part of American educational thought, inquiry, and experimentation is much ado about nothing” (Counts, 1932, p.7). Counts believed American education lacked a guiding orientation to direct the progress the system was making (Counts, 1932).

If Progressive Education is to be genuinely progressive, it must emancipate itself from the influence of this class, face squarely and courageously every social issue, come to grips with life in all its stark reality, establish an organized relation with the community, develop a realistic and comprehensive theory of welfare, fashion a compelling and challenging vision of human destiny, and become less frightened than it is today at the bogies of imposition and indoctrination. (Counts, 1932, p. 11-12)

The same lack of orientation exists today. What are we trying to achieve with an educational system driven by standards and accountability? Who is benefitting from this

system? Sadly, the students are not reaping any benefits. Basing a student's intelligence on their ability to answer multiple choice questions does not mirror real life nor does it truly gauge their abilities. According to Taubman (2009), these multiple choice tests "have little if any relationship to problems, interests, or speculations that we might associate with thinking, erudition, creativity or a curriculum animated by and responding to the flux of a classroom" (p. 17). Standardized tests are not needed for students to appreciate life and reality and be prepared to play a role in "the real world." Students need to be exposed to literature that helps them understand their role in the current historical moment as well as be encouraged to have "complicated conversations" that encourage "moments of reflection and self-understanding" (Pinar, 2004, p. 10).

A majority of the research studies being conducted in the field of education and curriculum and instruction are focused on describing the research in "quantitative, empirical terms" (Eisner, 1976, p. 136). Although 39 years have passed since Eisner's article "Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism: Their Form and Functions in Educational Evaluation" was published, education is still ruled by "the kind of knowledge that would permit prediction through control of the process and consequences of schooling" (Eisner, 1976, p. 135). This approach "conceives of knowledge as scientific and believes that precision is a function of quantifications" (Eisner, 1976, p. 149). In an educational society fixated on numbers, "quality becomes converted to quantity and then summed and averaged as a way of standing for the particular quality from which the quantities were initially derived" (Eisner, 1976, p. 137). This process summarizes the way most research is viewed in the age of



accountability that we are currently trapped within. “The single numerical test score is used to symbolize a universe of particulars, in spite of the fact that the number symbol itself possesses no inherent quality that expresses the quality of the particular it is intended to represent” (Eisner, 1976, p. 137). Students should be represented by more than a test score. Lawmakers view the test scores as indicators of students’ futures. “When the future becomes all-important, it must be achieved at all costs” (Eisner, 1976, p. 137). But what are we missing by not focusing on the current moment? Students are in school *now*, and they are attempting to make sense of their current realities—not the reality of the future but the reality of the *now*. “The present is sacrificed on the altar of tomorrow” (Eisner, 1976, p. 138). Student must be prepared to live in and understand their current historical moment.

Slattery (2008) claims in order to achieve Pinar’s (2004) “complicated conversations” educators must “explore the hidden curriculum, the silenced voices, and the neglected research in order to reconfigure the deficiencies of status quo assumptions and reconstruct alternative viewpoints” (p. 47). These tasks should not be limited to educators in higher education. Teachers in the K-12 realm must take action to break the traditional bonds of education in order for students to experience growth and understanding. John Dewey (1938) was a strong advocate for experience in education. Dewey believed education should be focused on the present experiences of students (Dewey, 1938).

Can we overcome our current crisis of accountability? For Pinar (2004), the answer is simple: leave the teachers and students alone. “The advancement of

understanding can not occur when government intervenes in the intellectual lives of teachers and students” (Pinar, 2004, p. 207). He further suggests that “subjective and social reconstruction is our professional obligation as educators in this nightmarish moment of anti-intellectualism and political subjugation” (p. 25). However, with the passage of No Child Left Behind legislation, which prescribed methodologies to follow, the legislation was “not, finally, many steps away from censorship” (p. 207). In the decade since NCLB passed, we are still focused on “teaching by numbers” (Taubman, 2009, p. 7). “Decentered, lost in thought, locked into the courtesies and protocols of our very formal operations, we forget that the symbolic systems of language, number, art, and culture are part of our lived worlds” (Grumet, 1988, p.131). In order to overcome the accountability crisis, Taubman (2009) claims, educators must “be willing to let go of our attachments to practices and discourses that participate, even from an ostensibly opposing position, in the logics, language, and practices of standards and accountability” (p. 201). Counts’ words still ring true: “Until school and society are bound together by common purposes the program of education will lack both meaning and vitality” (Counts, 1932, p. 17).

Profanity in literature is a part of our current historical moment as well as many students’ daily lives outside the classroom walls. Bens (1971) claims that as teachers, when we avoid reading and studying taboo terms such as profanity, we turn our backs to the “language of reality” and “urge students to hide from life” (p. 216). “While the notion of taboo-ness is universal (e.g., all cultures have constructs that are taboo and find transgressions of these constructs to be offensive at varying levels), taboos themselves

are culture-specific” (Sobre-Denton & Simonis, 2012, p. 181). Fully incorporating cultural studies into the classroom means educators must shed light on the taboo— such as profanity. “The obscenity of language cannot be determined apart from the speaking body or context of culture” (Sobre-Denton & Simonis, 2012, p. 181). In order to fully grasp teaching students with the intent of preparing them to be successful in the social culture outside of school, educators must “exercise greater control over what they teach” such as choosing literature outside the box of classic literary works (Pinar, 2004, p. 196). “Until what they teach permits ongoing curricular experimentation according to student concerns [...] school ‘conversation’ will be stilted at best, limited to classroom discourse, disconnected from students’ lived experience” (p. 196). Students should be allowed to read literature that mimics their current historical and cultural situations. “Education is more than reading, writing, and arithmetic; it is the making of citizens with the skills to succeed and adapt to changing times, able as well to decide important social issues and judge the performance of public officials” (“Public education,” n.d.). Incorporating elements of curriculum theory into teaching will allow teachers to better prepare students for making decisions and judgments.

### **Censorship by Book Banning**

Censorship is a word with a long history and multiple meanings. Encyclopedia Britannica defines censorship as “the changing or the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is deemed subversive of the common good” (Anastaplo, 2013). Oftentimes, censorship is “arbitrary and irrational” (Right to read, 2009). The term

*ensorship* relates to the term *ensor*. Censor is defined as “an official who examines books, plays, news reports, motion pictures, radio and television programs, letters, cablegrams, etc., for the purpose of suppressing parts deemed objectionable on moral, political, military, or other grounds” (“censor,” 2014). “Censors pressure public institutions, like libraries, to suppress and remove from public access information they judge inappropriate or dangerous, so that no one else has the chance to read or view the material and make up their own minds about it” (Definitions of censorship, 1999). The history of the word *ensor* dates back to 1531 in Rome and was defined as “one of two magistrates who took censuses and oversaw public morals” (Censor, 2014; Masterson, 2007b). Romans believed “censorship was required to mold the character of the citizens and that censorship was therefore acceptable and even wanted” (Masterson, 2007b). Socrates’ execution in 399 B.C. is one of the most famous cases of censorship (Masterson, 2007b). “The Roman people wanted to silence Socrates because they were afraid of the effect his ideas had on the youth of Rome” (Masterson, 2007b). Other instances of censorship in ancient history included: Minister Li Si and Emperor Qin Shi Huang of China ordering the destruction of many books, mostly history and philosophy texts, in 213 B.C (Koeller, 1999; Masterson, 2007b).; the burning of the Library of Alexandria in Egypt between 50 B.C. and A.D. 700 (Chesser, 2002; Masterson 2007b); and Athanasius, a Christian bishop in Alexandria, ordered Egyptians monks “to destroy all unacceptable theological writings” that he deemed inappropriate (Masterson, 2007b; Pagels, 2006). During the Middle Ages, the royal library of the Samanid Dynasty was burned (Masterson, 2007b; Vile, Hudson, & Schultz, 2009). The highly influential

Italian censor, Savonarola, was able to convince artists to burn their own works in the 1490s (Cavendish, 1998; Masterson, 2007b). When William Tyndale translated the Bible into English, the English church was angered. The church had decided “the bible should only be available in Latin because having the bible available in the native language of church followers threatened the power of religious leaders who wanted their worshipers to have to go through them to understand the word of God” (Masterson, 2007b). During the Renaissance, the Catholic Church published the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. This list contained books that Catholics were not allowed to read (Halstall, 1998; Masterson, 2007b). The list continued to have power until the 1950s (Halstall, 1998; Masterson, 2007b). The Catholic Church was once again censoring information including Galileo’s theories about space (Linder, 2002; Masterson, 2007b).

The culture war involving censorship by banning books is “ultimately about defining American values” (Herrmann, 2010). In order to preserve the prized American values, “teachers often attempt to whitewash the past, including history, literature, and other humanities” (Sobre-Denton & Simonis, 2012, p. 179). This culture war is waged between the citizens on the right who demand young readers be protected and the citizens on the left who sternly defend free speech (Herrmann, 2010). Precisely what the citizens on the right are protecting children from varies. “Children are above all impressionable, and books are capable of corrupting them” (Jalongo and Creany, 1991, p. 144). Herrmann (2010) claims parents and citizens of the community are aiming to protect students “from books that contain obscenities or sexually explicit or racist language, promote witchcraft, feature homosexual characters or themes, or are

‘antifamily.’” Schultz and Vile (2005) claim book banning aims to protect the public from material that “might be harmful to the public’s common interest and morals.” The supporters of banning books have a common fear regarding questionable books— that the books “will present ideas, raise questions, and incite critical inquiry among children that parents, political groups, or religious organizations are not ready to address or that they find inappropriate” (Vile, Hudson, & Schultz, 2009). Censorship is “rooted in the universal desire to shape society and promote a personal point of view” (Jalongo & Creany, 1991, p.147). Books are viewed as dangerous and educators and parents must “protect children from the harsh realities of life” (Jalongo & Creany, 1991, p. 145). “Many parents and critics feel strongly that literature for teenagers at this vulnerable period in their lives should help them develop their sense of moral choice and responsibility by presenting clear-cut guidelines” (Iskander, 1987, p. 8). I believe students should also be allowed to read books containing life examples of wrong choices.

Banning books serves to motivate students further to want to read the books. Opponents to the *Twilight* and *Hunger Games* series, two current equally popular and controversial series, fail to realize the restriction of the books only serves to motivate the children to want to read the denied literature (Hauser, 2013). The banned book list is oftentimes viewed as the must-read list. “We can’t hide from the explosion of music, books, and movies that contain either morally challenging or inappropriate content far beyond the mental grasp of the children who consume it” (Hauser, 2013). Whether we like it or not, the content is available and students will find a way to consume it.

[...] All books that young adults read have power. Their power results in their ability to sway and to change the reader in so many ways, not the least of these is morally. These books can create a moral sense in the young by demonstrating what is morally right and what is morally wrong. They can raise and resolve ethical issues. The reader may not agree with each resolution, but is certainly forced to think about issues he or she may never have thought about before. (Collins, 1996, p. 181)

The natural place for controversial topics to arise for discussion is the literature classroom (Hauser, 2013). Educators must use caution when choosing to integrate literature with profanity into their classroom curriculum. When books containing profanity are taught in schools, educators must be equipped “to face those groups or individuals who demand that children’s literature be altered, labeled, re-shelved, banned, or burned” (Jalongo & Creany, 1991, p.147). In order to handle controversies surrounding book banning, educators can keep current in the field, obtain selection criteria from national professional organizations, evaluate books with children, prepare a school policy statement, and adopt a formal complaint procedure for the school (Jalongo & Creany, 1991, p.146-147). Books are not the only way students interact with potentially dangerous content. Students are surrounded by both age-inappropriate as well as morally-inappropriate content outside of school (Hauser, 2013). However, educators must be prepared to handle the discussion of *dangerous* literature and material. “While we recognize that we have no control over what students do at home, we guide them within the school with the hope that some of what we teach may wear off

when they leave” (Hauser, 2013). Studying books that contain profanity and discussing the use of the taboo language will allow students to think critically about the content they are exposed to outside of the classroom walls. We, as educators, want our adolescent readers “to think for themselves, not just to prepare themselves as citizens in a democracy, but to be able to live in our world where information is readily available but with very little mediation” (Tarr, 2002, p. 112).

“The effort to remove books from schools and public libraries has taken place almost exclusively at the state and local level” (Herrmann, 2010). The issue of banning information in books raises the concern of the right to free speech found in the Constitution of the United States (Schultz & Vile, 2005). The right to free speech has been “applied to the states through the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment” (Schultz & Vile, 2005). This accounts for the majority of book banning cases being handled at the state and local levels. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of keeping books on the shelf when the Island Tree Union Free school board in New York removed nine books from the junior high and high school libraries (Island, 1982). The Supreme Court ruled school officials may not remove books from school libraries on the basis of disliking the content (Island Tree, 1982). As a result of the Board of Education, Island Tree Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico case, school boards have limited access to banning books in junior high and high school libraries. United States Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas defended students’ right to read in the 1951 court case *Adler v. Board of Education*:



Where suspicion fills the air and holds scholars in line for fear of their jobs, there can be no exercise of the free intellect. . . . A problem can no longer be pursued with impunity to its edges. Fear stalks the classroom. The teacher is no longer a stimulant to adventurous thinking; she becomes instead a pipe line for safe and sound information. A deadening dogma takes the place of free inquiry.

Instruction tends to become sterile; pursuit of knowledge is discouraged; discussion often leaves off where it should begin. (Adler v. Board of Education)

Banning literature not only has consequences for students in the classroom, but the authors are also negatively affected. Consequences of book banning for authors “can create an atmosphere of fear that results in ‘silent’ censorship by publishers and ‘formula’ books from authors” (Jalongo & Creany, 1991, p.146). Not only is the freedom to read compromised with book banning; the freedom to write is compromised as well.

When deciding to limit book options for students, educators have the option to allow students the freedom to choose which books to read or to restrict students from accessing books altogether. Censorship selection is rooted in three things: “the child, the book, and the society at large” (Jalongo and Creany, 1991, p. 143). When students have the ability to select books, “adults continue to have the right to object to books, but they do not insist upon removing them from the shelves for everyone else” (Jalongo and Creany, 1991, p. 144). “Book selection invokes standards for literary quality, guidelines for nonpartisan professional groups and knowledge of child development/child psychology when rendering decisions about children’s books” (Jalongo & Creany, 1991,

p. 144). The goal of book selection is not to limit students, rather “the goal is to give children access to the best literature has to offer” (p. 144). Book selection “operates from a set of standards agreed upon by the group, looks at the total work, is essentially positive and promotes quality literature” (NCTE, 1982). Censors, on the other hand, “tend to take a reactionary stance; to take words, phrases, or pictures out of context; to be essentially negative and to have book banning or labeling as its goal” (Jalongo & Creany, 1991, p. 144). Censors view books as being dangerous. From their point of view, “evil is lurking everywhere in society and needs to be eradicated” (Jalongo & Creany, 1991, p. 144). The three main reasons for banning books include: 1) The content is considered too mature/realistic; 2) The language is profane or obscene or 3) The sexual content is considered inappropriate (Jalongo & Creany, 1991, p. 145). Teachers should not be afraid to confront these ban-worthy issues in the classroom.

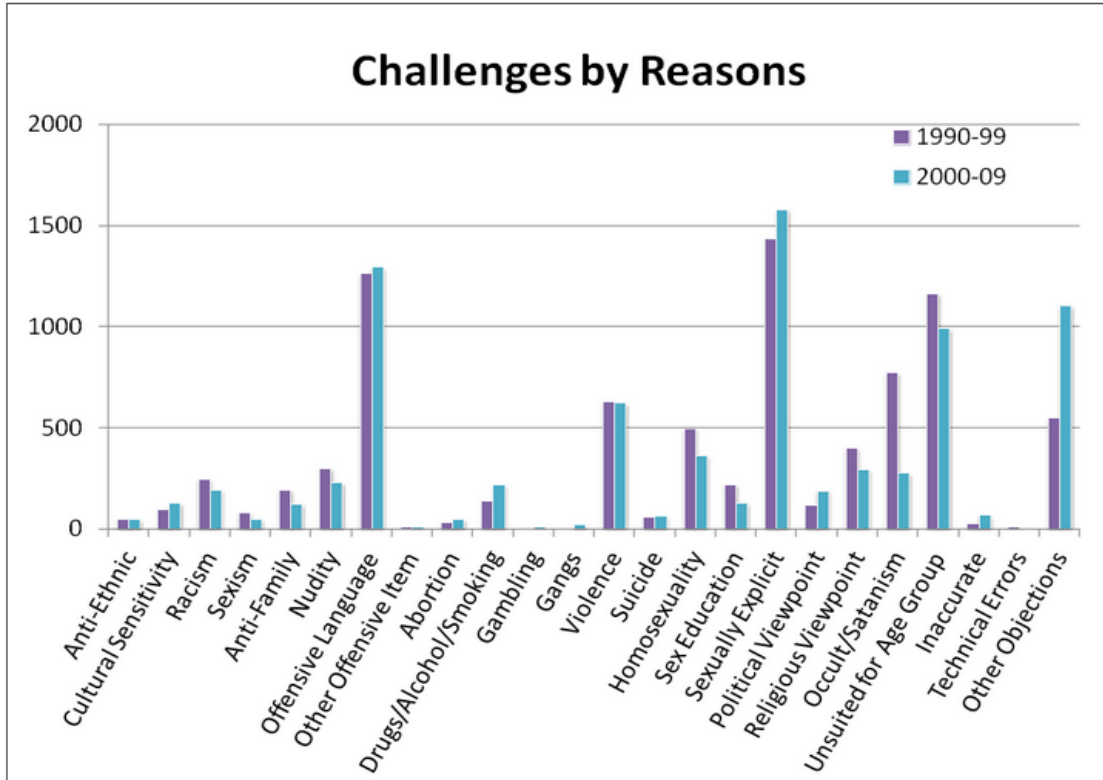
We teach our young people about their First Amendment rights, then refuse them a book. We tell them that they are free to learn and question and explore in this country, then insist that we will decide the boundaries of that freedom. What can they make of this? What can they think? (Oneal, 1993, p. 183)

“If controversial topics and ideas are kept from inquiring young minds because their teachers fear reprisal, opportunities to challenge, inform and enlighten students are being missed in the nation’s public schools” (Hudson, 2003, p. 87).

The American Library Association (ALA) “compiles a list of the top ten most frequently challenged books in order to inform the public about censorship in libraries and schools” (Frequently challenged books, 2014). Of the 6,364 challenges reported to

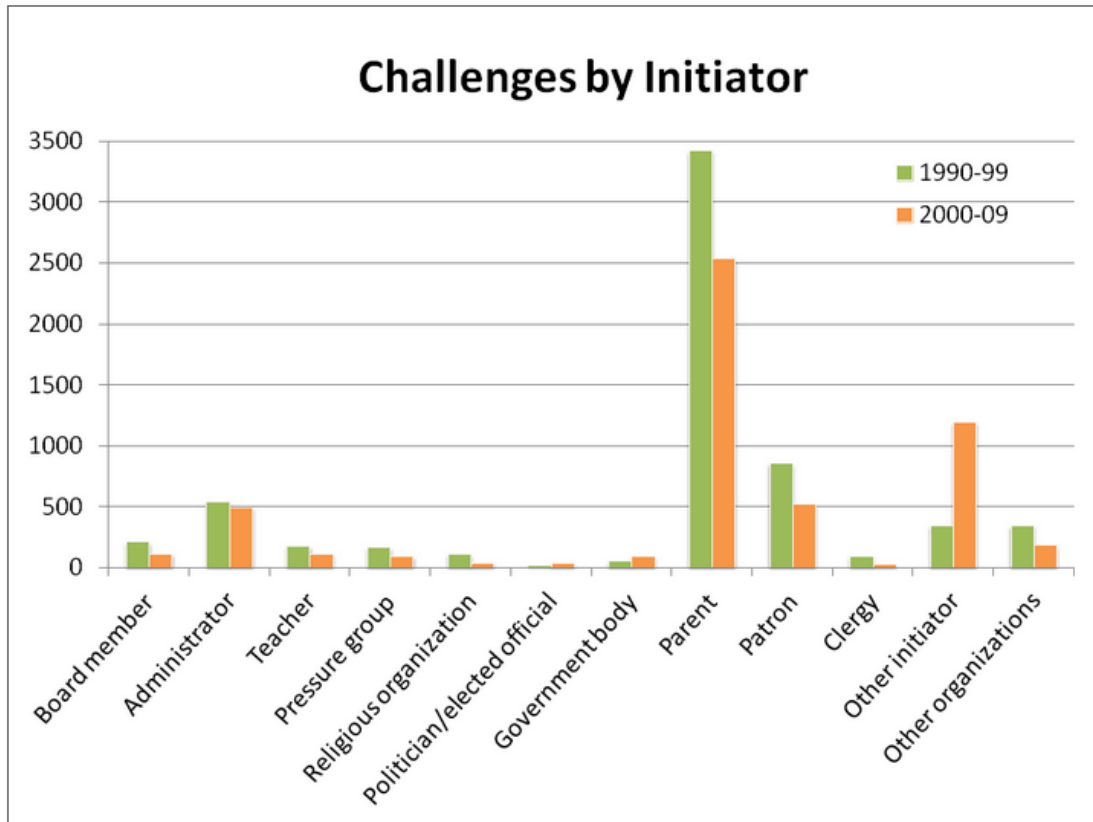
the ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom, 1,427 incidents were reported for "offensive language" (Herrmann, 2010). Of the 5,099 challenges to books in the years from 2000 to 2009, 1,291 challenges were due to "offensive language" (Frequently challenged books, 2014). "Offensive language" ranked second after "sexually explicit" material (1,607 incidents) from 1990-2000 (Herrmann, 2010). "Offensive language" was second in rank from 2000-2009 to "sexually explicit" material's 1,577 challenges (Frequently challenged books, 2014). The reasons for challenges made between 1990 and 2009 can be viewed in Figure 3. Figures 3, 4, and 5 are from the American Library Association website. According to the ALA, this material may be reprinted and distributed for non-commercial and educational purposes only, and not for resale. No resale use may be made of material on their website at any time. All other rights reserved.

**Figure 3.** Book Challenges by Reason 1990-2009 (American Library Association, 2013). © Copyright 1996-2015, American Library Association



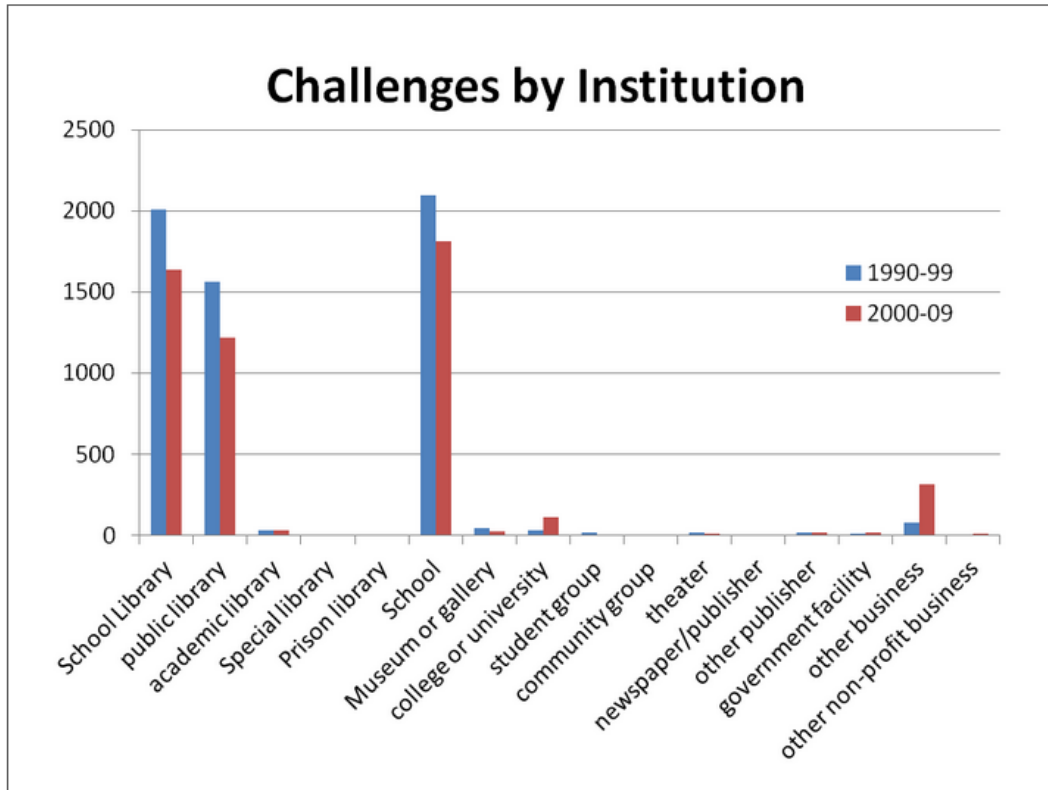
Most book challenges from 1990-2000 were instigated by parents (Schultz & Vile, 2005). The figures for initiators of challenges is presented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.** Initiators of Book Challenges 1990-2009 (American Library Association, 2013). © Copyright 1996-2015, American Library Association



Institutions involved with the schools, such as the school and school library, are the top institution locations for book challenges. Since the motivation of banning books is to protect the beliefs, ideals, and children, the school should be the top institution where challenges are made. Figure 5 shows the number of challenges by institution.

**Figure 5.** Book Challenges by Institution from 1990-2009 (American Library Association, 2013). © Copyright 1996-2015, American Library Association



Censorship through challenging and banning books is going against the first amendment. “The outcome of censorship challenges most often depends on the extent of support for free speech and academic freedom principles by school administrators, and the extent to which the school administration stands by their faculty’s exercise of professional judgment” (“First amendment in schools,” n.d.). In court cases within the past two decades, “courts have upheld school administrators’ decisions to discipline teachers for inappropriate actions such as “sanctioning the use of profanity in students’ creative writing assignments which was involved in the case of *Lacks v. Ferguson*

Reorganized School Dist., 147 F.3d 718 (8th Cir., 1998)” (“First amendment in schools,” n.d.). The U.S. Supreme Court in *Keyishian v. Board of Education* (1967) agreed on the following:

The classroom is peculiarly the ‘marketplace of ideas.’ The Nation’s future depends upon leaders trained through wide exposure to that robust exchange of ideas which discovers ‘truth out of a multitude of tongues,’ than through any kind of authoritative selection. (“Public education,” n.d.)

“In most instances, the courts favor access over prohibition and will not tolerate curtailment of First Amendment rights simply because community leaders, parents, or government authorities wish to promote a political, religious, or moral agenda through book banning” (Schultz & Vile, 2005).

### ***The Catcher in the Rye***

J.D. Salinger’s novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, was the thirteenth most challenged book on the 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2000 list (Masterson, 2007a). The novel has continued its contentious popularity in the twenty-first century and has been in the top ten challenged books by year from 2001-2012 three times (Frequently challenged books, 2014). Salinger’s novel made the top ten in 2001, 2005, and 2009 (Frequently challenged books, 2014). In December 2008, *The Catcher in the Rye* was among two dozen other novels that were put through a review process and consequently suspended by the Coeur d’Alene school board in Idaho (ABFFE & NCAC, 2009). “In the United States alone, *The Catcher in the Rye* sells about 250,000 copies a

year, with more than 65 million copies sold worldwide since its publication; the book seems to speak to teenagers and adults decade after decade” (Miltner, 2011, p. 35).

Salinger’s novel “immediately provoked a critical conversation that has waxed and waned but has persisted” (Edsforth & Bennett, 1991, p. 81). The novel “appeared on the *New York Times* best-seller list at number fourteen (out of sixteen) two weeks after its publication; it remained on the list for seven months, rising as high as number four and staying there for ten weeks” (Edsforth & Bennett, 1991, p. 81). “The most vociferous critics attacked, condemned, and generally threw up their hands in horror at Holden’s frankness and profanity (missing the novel’s humor, of course)” (p. 82). The novel’s explicit language and its negative view of contemporary America put religious, social, and educational institutions on alert” (p. 82).

“In the 1950’s post-World War II, pre-Civil Rights Movement America, Holden Caulfield—do we dare say single-handedly—(re)defined the identity of the American teenager and subsequently reconstructed the identity of Americans” (Steed, 2002, 2-3).

I have chosen to analyze this novel due to the disapproval surrounding the use of profanity in the text. The general anti-adult theme mixed with profanity present material that students could relate with as well as find interesting.

### ***The Chocolate War***

*The Chocolate War* (1974) by Robert Cormier was second on the list of most frequently banned books nationwide from 1980-1989 (Jalongo & Creany, 1991, p. 145). Not only was the novel controversial in the decade after its release, but the controversy



continues well into the twenty-first century. Robert Cormier's novel, *The Chocolate War*, was the fourth most challenged book on the 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2000 list (Masterson, 2007a). The novel has also been in the top ten challenged books by year from 2001-2012 seven times (Frequently challenged books, 2014). Cormier's novel made the top ten in 2001 in third place, 2002 in third place, 2004 in first place, 2005 in fourth place, 2006 in tenth place, 2007 in second place, and 2009 in tenth place (Frequently challenged books, 2014). What makes this book popular on the banned books list is its characters' explicit and profanity-laced words (Oneal, 1993, p. 179) as well as "sexual references and violence" (Keeling, 1999, p. 216). One specific example of *The Chocolate War* being challenged was in Bel Air, Maryland in April 2007 where "parents challenged the book because they objected to language, sexual content, and reference to homosexuality" (ABFFE & NCAC, 2009). The content of the novel in relation to the age of the readers is most commonly under scrutiny in regards to *The Chocolate War*. Critics claim "violence, sex, and bad language" were disturbing elements in the novel (Pitzner, 2002).

*The Chocolate War* was instantly controversial due to its ability to "break new ground in the world of young people's fiction, toppling dearly-held taboos, upsetting any number of conventions" (Oneal, 1993, p. 179). The bottom line is many adult readers are "troubled by Cormier's realism" (p. 179). Popular themes of *The Chocolate War* include misogyny, lack of moral agency, and the illusion of rebellion (Tarr, 2002, p. 98). Kara Keeling (1999) used *The Chocolate War* in her young adult college literature course. She claimed no other novel out of the twelve she taught sparked more

controversy amongst the students than *The Chocolate War* (Keeling, 1999, p. 216). Whether students are a fan of Cormier's novel or not, they "can surely identify with Jerry's struggle, the indecisive conflict of choosing whether to lead, follow, or to simply walk alone" (Pitzner, 2002, p. 122). "Cormier creates characters who are young, alone, defeated, [and] never given the opportunity for an honest, emotional, romantic relationship" (Tarr, 2002, p. 120). "Stripped of euphemism and sentimentality, the book asks hard questions and refuses to provide the sorts of answers that, even now, we expect to find in books for the young" (Oneal, 1993, p. 180). Cormier's message to reader is this: "Take a look at the world, he says. Failure happens. Despair ensues" (Oneal, 1993, p. 182). Adults know this to be true, but they want to protect young readers from these hard facts for as long as possible. Adults "pretend that [children] are not already fully aware of defeat and despair in their own lives" (Oneal, 1993, p. 182).

I have chosen this novel for the prevalence of profanity as well as the realistic theme the novel presents. "There was very little in the book to please the adult devoted to protecting some notion of youthful innocence" (Oneal, 1993, p. 179). Themes evident in *The Chocolate War* include good versus evil, tyranny, life and society, the idea of if you are not part of the solution you are part of the problem, and the vague use of Christian symbolism (Pitzner, 2002). Cormier "forces us to think to re-examine our comfortable assumptions about who we are and what we believe and what a book for young people ought to be about" (Oneal, 1993, p. 183). The novel is considered dangerous because readers will realize that happy endings do not always exist, thus

welcoming young readers to the reality of adulthood.

### **Literature Review Conclusion**

The disciplines of education, English literature, and philosophy have been combined in this literature review to focus on uncovering the role profanity plays in the experience readers have with a text containing profanity. The topics of profanity, censorship by banning books, and reader-response literary criticism have been examined to situate the two texts to be studied— *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*. The topics of hermeneutics, deconstruction, disgust, and word aversion were reviewed to create a basis for the experience of reading books with profanity.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to use Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as a lens to analyze profanity's role in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*. This chapter describes the research concepts, experiences, and approach for this study. I am concerned with creating a "rich and deep account" of the experience of reading books with profanity, and my focus is on "uncovering rather than accuracy" (Kafle, 2011, p. 188).

#### **Research Perspective**

This research has been conducted from a post-qualitative perspective. This study is focused on using Gadamer's philosophical analysis to better understand the role of profanity. Hermeneutics is used as a vehicle for interpretation and understanding. "Teaching is an activity that requires artistry, schooling itself is a cultural artifact, and education is a process whose features may differ from individual to individual, context to context" (Eisner, 1976, p. 140). For this reason, I have chosen to incorporate Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and reader-response criticism in order to better understand the context of my own understanding of profanity in the two novels, *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*. I agree with the research ideology of St. Pierre (2011):

The study of philosophy should precede the study of research methodology so that, for example, the typical social science researcher would understand the epistemological and ontological assumptions that structure positivist, interpretive, critical, postmodern, and other methodologies in the social sciences. Attempts to disentangle science and philosophy are always dangerous.

(St. Pierre, 2011, p. 614)

I have chosen to stray from the positivistic approach to qualitative research. Terms such as *subjects*, *validity*, *findings*, and *bias* will be replaced with *focus*, *referential adequacy*, *structural corroboration*, *experiences*, and *subjectivity*. Rather than gathering qualitative data from participants, I chose to focus on my own interpretation of profanity in order to better relate to each reader's individual response. I have chosen to allow my personal voice to have a place in this study. The experiences described in this dissertation are solely my own. "Everything is entangled and always already overlapping, dynamic, contested, multiple antagonistic, becoming, in process" (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 619). There can be no *researcher* and *results*. I am always already entangled with my experiences with my two chosen novels. I cannot separate myself from my reading or my thoughts. I agree with Eisner (1976); "I see no reason why we should not exploit the various forms of understanding that different knowledge structures can provide" (Eisner, 1976, p. 149).

## **Research Design**

In order to answer the research questions, reader-response literary analysis will combine with philosophical hermeneutics to offer more in-depth insight into the role

profanity plays in high school literature. The books were read three times. Each reading allowed me to become more intimate with the novels, characters, disgust, and profanity. Recorded notes were kept during the readings regarding the effect of obscene language. I recorded my notes on sticky notes within in the book. I typed a script of my notes once I finished reading the novels. The notes were typed into Microsoft OneNote, and then transferred into a Microsoft Word document.

The design of this study involved reading the novels three times each. The first reading focused on the general theme, plot, and character analysis of the novels. This reading mimicked how the novels are generally studied in high school classrooms. The second reading focused on profanity's role in each novel. During the second read, I highlighted the profane words as I encountered them. The third reading also focused on the highlighted profanity, but this reading focused on how profanity can be interpreted and how it can affect the novels. After the third read, I took notes on the context of the profane words and tabulated the count of each profane word used. I made notes looking at two pages at a time. The notes were recorded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The notes were then typed and transferred to a Word document.

### **Research Questions**

The first research question guiding this philosophical study relates to the methodological choice of using philosophical hermeneutics as a vehicle for analysis.

RQ 1: How can Gadamer's hermeneutics and the notion of disgust be used to understand the use of profanity in literature? By using philosophical hermeneutics, the

focus of the study revolves around interpreting and understanding profanity in *The Chocolate War* and *Catcher in the Rye*.

The second research question guiding this philosophical study deals with profanity's purpose in literature.

RQ 2: What role does profanity play in the novels *The Chocolate War* and *The Catcher in the Rye*? Both novels, *The Chocolate War* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, are popular and controversial for their use of obscene language, which some may think makes the content unsuitable for the intended readership. I was first motivated to research the role profanity plays in literature when I was teaching high school English. I wondered how sporadic usage of certain words could deter parents from entire novels that contained meaningful content for adolescent readers.

The third research question used in this philosophical study focuses on the use of Gadamer's approach and its effect on schools.

RQ 3: What educational insights emerge from self-understanding and Gadamer's hermeneutics? This question focuses on what utilizing this approach can do for schools.

## **Focus**

This study is centered on the two novels *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger and *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier. *The Catcher in the Rye* was chosen due to its popularity as a literary classic and controversy concerning the use of obscene language and inappropriate content. *The Chocolate War* was chosen because it is not as well-known as *The Catcher in the Rye*, but this novel is equally controversial regarding

obscene language.

### **Key Facilitator for Creating Experiences**

The key facilitator for creating experiences for this research study is profanity. As stated in the research objectives and research questions, the focus of this study is the role and effect profanity has on *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*.

### **Subjectivity**

Since I am the only person involved in this study, my personal understanding through the hermeneutic process is brought forth in the research. The purpose of my study is not to compare my understanding of profanity to others' understanding. My purpose involves an autobiographical connection with the content of this study. My own ethical and moral views of profanity will help shape my understanding and interpretation.

### **Referential Adequacy and Structural Corroboration**

Referential adequacy (Eisner, 1976) will be established in this study through substantive validation. Eisner's explanation of referential adequacy follows:

Since criticism's aim is the reeducation of perception, good educational criticism, like good criticism of anything else, should help readers or listeners see more than they would without the benefit of the criticism. ... The test of criticism is empirical in the sense that one asks of the criticism whether the



referents it claims to describe, interpret, and evaluate can be found in the phenomena to which it attends. (Eisner, 1976, p. 148)

I have an understanding of the topic of profanity with the assistance of a well-written literature review. I have an understanding of the history of hermeneutics, disgust, and literary analysis which aided in corroborating my interpretation. I documented my understanding through self-reflective note taking. I interacted with the novels and recorded my interpretations throughout my four readings. My interactions, note-taking, and interpretation were used to supply structural corroboration for this study. “Structural corroboration is a process that seeks to validate or support one’s conclusions about a set of phenomena by demonstrating how a variety of facts or conditions within the phenomena support the conclusions drawn” (Eisner, 1976, p. 148). I have used this “process of demonstrating that the story hangs together, that the pieces fit” to establish cogency (Eisner, 1976, p. 148).

## CHAPTER IV

### EXPERIENCES

#### **Introduction**

Chapter IV presents the created experiences from this study. Reading notes represent the understanding of the text I created as a reader. These results embody my experience with the texts. Experiences are presented in two main sections. Each main section represents one of the novels being studied. Each section contains three subsections that represent the different readings of the novels. The first sub-section focuses on the notes during the first read. The second subsection focuses on the experience with profanity in the novels during the second read. The third subsection focuses on the reader-response notes taken during the third read mixed with notes on profanity from the second read.

#### **Methodology Summary**

This study began in June 2013 with the first reading of *The Chocolate War*. I alternated reading each novel throughout the research process. After finishing *The Chocolate War*, I began reading *The Catcher in the Rye*. I continued this pattern three times. The third reading of each novel was completed in February 2015. I was working full time during the research process. For the first year, I worked as a university instructor and adjunct college professor for two institutions. During the second year, I worked as a junior high and high school teacher in a Texas school district. The majority

of the research was conducted from November 2014-February 2015. Reader-response criticism was used when taking notes during the reading of the novels.

### **Novel 1: *The Catcher in the Rye***

#### **First Read**

During the first read of *The Catcher in the Rye*, I treated the novel as a normal literary choice. While reading, I analyzed the plot in a way that mimicked the study of a novel in a high school English classroom. I focused on plot development, characterization, conflict, and theme.

#### ***Brief Plot Summary***

J. D. Salinger's midcentury novel follows a troubled teenager down the path of mental breakdown. Readers join Holden Caulfield as he retells his story of self-destruction which eventually leads him into a mental institution. Holden is a discontent teenager who dislikes school, phonies, movies, and the loss of innocence. He is on a subconscious quest to recover his childhood. The loss of his younger brother Allie sends Holden into a downward spiral of mental distress and depression.

#### ***Characterization***

Holden Caulfield is the main character and narrator in the novel. He narrates the novel as a flashback, which chronicles the story of how he ends up in a mental institution. Holden is an academically-troubled teenager who opposes phonies and longs to return to childhood. He symbolizes the angst, rebellion, and difficulty most teenagers

experience. His vulnerability allows readers to gain insight into the battle teenagers face between childhood and adulthood.

Stradlater is Holden's roommate at Pencey Prep. Stradlater represents the ideal male; he is muscular, athletic, and charming with women. Stradlater is Holden's character foil. Stradlater represents the phony world that Holden despises.

Ackley is Holden's friend and suitemate at Pencey Prep. Ackley represents the students in the lower social class. He has acne, halitosis, dirty teeth, and awful hygiene. He has a positive personality, but his physical appearance prevents him from having many friends; however, Holden tolerates Ackley in order to have companionship with a peer.

Phoebe Caulfield is Holden's sister. She is ten years old and happily in the childhood stage that Holden longs to revisit. Holden introduces Holden to the readers by stating:

You should see her. You never saw a little kid so pretty and smart in your whole life. [...] You'd like her. I mean if you tell old Phoebe something, she knows exactly what the hell you're talking about. I mean you can even take her anywhere with you. If you take her to a lousy movie, for instance, she knows it's a lousy movie. If you take her to a pretty good movie, she knows it's a pretty good movie. (Salinger, p. 87-88)

Holden values Phoebe's opinion and does not want to disappoint her; ironically, he expresses little concern for disappointing his parents.

Allie Caulfield is Holden's deceased younger brother. Allie's death initiated Holden's downward mental spiral. Holden did not attend Allie's funeral because he was still recovering from his hand injury that was a result of him dealing with the news of Allie's death. "I was only thirteen, and they were going to have me psychoanalyzed and all, because I broke all the windows in the garage" (Salinger, p. 50). After the death of Allie, Holden's ideal role in life became being a catcher in the rye. He knows of the catcher from song lyrics which originally came from a poem. He wanted to save children from the cliff of adulthood.

Mr. Spencer was Holden's history teacher at Pencey Prep. Mr. Spencer represents a concerned adult figure who still believes in following rules. Mr. Spencer was upset with having to give Holden a failing grade, but Holden did not share his same level of concern. In a novel with so few adult characters, the limited adult-interaction Salinger chooses to share with readers becomes even more important.

Mr. Antolini was Holden's favorite teacher at Elkton Hills. His scandalous role in the novel highlights the hidden controversies in schools. Holden reaches out to Mr. Antolini in his time of distress searching for fatherly guidance. Instead, Holden awakes to Mr. Antolini physically reaching out to him and touching his head while he sleeps. Holden's thought of hope is shattered when he realizes that Mr. Antolini was nothing more than a phony. Holden is once again disappointed.

### ***Conflict Development***

The predominant conflict throughout *The Catcher in the Rye* is Holden's internal struggle to resist growing up. Holden's internal struggle dictates his actions and thoughts

throughout the book. Holden does not want to accept the responsibilities of being an adolescent; thus, he rejects becoming an adult. He resists academic success even though he has the capabilities to be academically successful. He pushes away his friends to avoid saying goodbye. He sees beyond the fake façade of the school institution and refuses to participate in the phoniness.

The main person-versus-person conflict in the novel includes Holden and his roommate, Stradlater's, physical altercation regarding Stradlater dating Jane, Holden's former love. Holden starts the fight even though he knows he is physically outmatched. The only result of the fight is Holden confirming Stradlater's physical dominance.

The second person versus person conflict in the novel is Holden versus Mr. Antolini. Holden's grasp on reality is loosened when he discovers Mr. Antolini might be inappropriately thinking about and/or touching students. Before this incident, Holden trusted and respected Mr. Antolini. Holden would speak to him more than his own parents. Holden's trust in adults is shattered when he can no longer trust Mr. Antolini.

The last major conflict in *The Catcher in the Rye* is Holden's struggle with the world. He goes against the societal norms of attending school and achieving the American dream—a car, suburban home, wife, etc.; he feels as if he is battling the world—school, adults, expectations, and his own family.

### ***Theme***

During my first read of the novel, I perceived the dominant theme to be the protection of innocence. Innocence is represented by Jane's virginity, Phoebe's childhood, and ridding the walls of the world of the *fuck you* statements. Holden's dream

of becoming the catcher in the rye in order to save children epitomizes this theme. While striving to protect innocence, Holden is continually reminded that growing up and becoming an adult brings disappointment. He has an incessant struggle with fulfilling his desires. He cannot go downstairs and say hello to Jane (Salinger, 1945, p. 40); he cannot express his true thoughts and emotions to Stradlater (p. 40); he writes the composition for Stradlater even though he does not want to help him (p. 49); he cannot call Jane, so he calls Sally instead (p. 194-195); he cannot have sex with the prostitute (p. 124-125); he cannot bring Allie back to life; and he cannot save Phoebe from growing up.

A secondary theme of the novel is the prevalence of phoniness in the world. Holden's persistent hatred for phonies—in movies, in school, and in everyday life—shows how Holden appreciates the truth. Holden appreciates reality, yet he does not want to face the reality of growing up.

### **Second Read**

During the second read of *The Catcher in the Rye*, I highlighted the profanity as I encountered it in the text. By doing this, I was able to take notice of which words were used more as well as the context in which they were used. I was able to reflect more on how each word was used while reading, searching, and highlighting. Since profanity is listed as one of the major reasons for the novel's banning, I expected to encounter profanity at every turn of the page; Salinger did not let me down. *The Catcher in the Rye* contains 813 uses of profanity. The most used profane word is *goddam* (243 appearances) followed closely by *hell* (218 appearances). Table 1 and Figure 6 depict

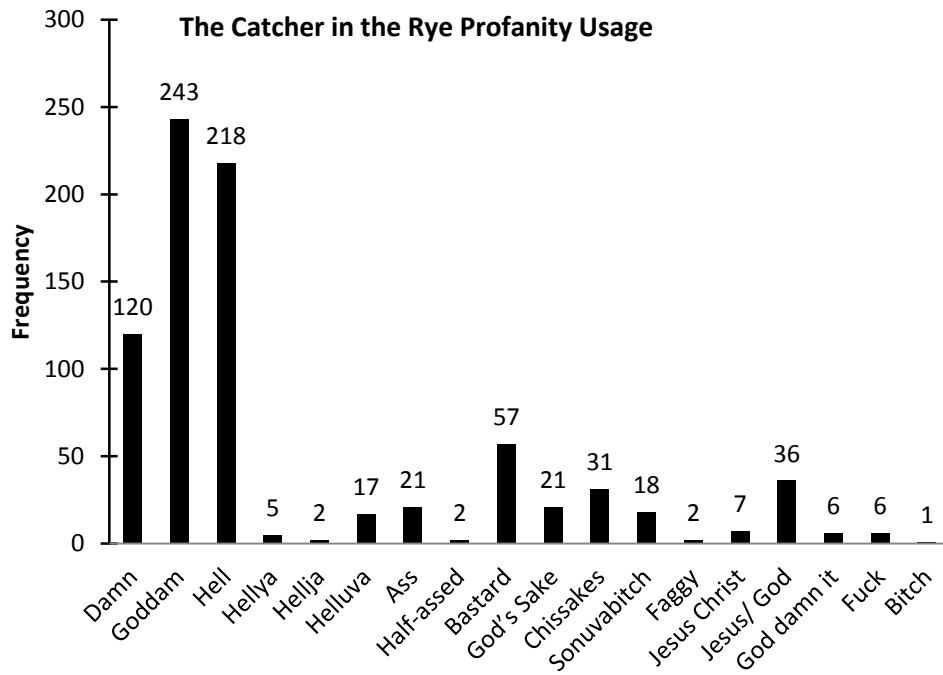
the frequency of the 18 profane words and phrases. Cormier supplies readers with an average of 2.93 profane words per page in the novel.

**Table 1.** Frequency of Profane Words in *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Frequency of Profane Words in <i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>	
Damn	120
Goddam	243
Hell	218
Hellya	5
Hellja	2
Helluva	17
Ass	21
Half-assed	2
Bastard	57
God's Sake	21
Chissakes	31
Sonuvabitch	18
Faggy	2
Jesus Christ	7
Jesus/ God	36
God damn it	6
Fuck	6
Bitch	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>813</b>



**Figure 6.** Profanity Usage in *The Catcher in the Rye*.



### Third Read

The first use of profanity occurs on the first page of the novel. Holden is beginning his narration of the events that led up to his mental breakdown which have landed him in a treatment facility. The use of *hell* seemed normal. The first *goddam* was more noticeable. I have been conditioned by society to be more accepting of *hell*. Through the use of profanity, I was able to understand his frustration. Holden maintains a steady use of profanity throughout the book; however, there are a few situations where his usage peaks. The first situation is when he describes his brother's, D.B., current job in Hollywood. Anytime Holden mentions D.B. writing for movies rather than short stories, Holden becomes upset and his use of profanity increases. Holden's use of

profanity also increases when he is discussing his latest school, Pencey Prep. The increase in profanity made me as a reader realize that the topics of his older brother's writing and his school are topics of contention for Holden. The profanity helps set the tone for these topics. Holden's usage of profanity increases when he is discussing the event of returning to school after he left the fencing equipment on the subway. This ruined the entire event for the whole team since they could not compete. Holden is also dealing with the fact that he has been kicked out of Pencey Prep. The profanity reflects Holden's state of mind once he returned to school and is dealing with his removal from school. He is grappling with saying goodbye. The repetition of the lost foils for the fencing team along with the usage of profanity used to describe them show the readers that Holden is upset with himself for letting the team down. He would never phrase it that way though. Profanity allows readers to gain insight the narrator is not willing to blatantly share. Holden's use of profanity also increases when Stradlater returns from his date with Jane. Before Stradlater returns, both Holden and Ackley are using profanity. This is a realistic depiction of two adolescent males. Once Stradlater returns, Holden is the only one using profanity. This makes me think he is uncomfortable or trying to subconsciously impress his peers. Stradlater asks Holden to do him a favor of writing his English composition. This is ironic because Holden is getting kicked out, yet his writing skills are still desirable and needed. The increase in profanity after this request was made allows me to see that Holden wants to say no, but he does not. He cannot follow through with what he truly wants. When Stradlater reads the composition that Holden wrote for him, he becomes upset that he wrote about a baseball glove. This is the most

profanity (20 instances) on two pages in the entire novel. This indicates the confrontation over the composition is a key moment in the book. Holden has to confront his jealousy about Jane and his pain over the loss of his brother. Stradlater, a phony jock, is the antithesis to everything that Holden represents.

Holden is worried, yet never voices it, that Jane's innocence has been lost. Jane also symbolizes innocence in Holden's mind. She is his past summer love. Stradlater represents the defilement of innocence, especially when combined with "Ed Banky's" car (p. 55). The car symbolizes the loss of innocence. Holden knows the car is used to "give her the time" as Holden says (p. 56). Holden cannot adequately process the thought of Jane and Stradlater going on a date. The use of profanity increases here to mask Holden's discomfort level with Stradlater taking Jane Gallagher on a date. He begins to horse-around with Stradlater in an attempt to ease the discomfort. Only Holden knows there is dissatisfaction. He uses more profanity around Stradlater. He is overcompensating for his lack of masculinity. He ends up attempting to fight Stradlater, but he quickly found himself on the floor. Holden is upset because Stradlater does not appreciate Jane. Stradlater confuses her name and calls her Jean (p. 40). Holden confronts Stradlater. Holden is a good guy who did not want Stradlater taking advantage of Jane. He wants Jane to be appreciated and valued. At the end of Holden's confrontation, he calls Stradlater a "goddamn moron" (p. 57). The irony is that Stradlater is more upset by the word moron (p. 57). Holden attempts to hit Stradlater in the face, but he misses (p. 56). Once again, Holden's desires are unfulfilled. I understand that this is a very upsetting time for Holden. It is easier for him to use profanity rather than truly

expressing his feelings. I feel this is normal for many teenage males. Profanity and fighting fit together in my mind. Sixty-three profane words are used in the encounter after Stradlater returns from his date.

The only other character to swear as much as Holden is a cab driver named Horwitz. Horwitz actually engaged in Holden's conversation about the ducks in Central Park. Their conversation contained 22 uses of profanity. Horwitz tried to settle Holden's worries, by saying "If you was a fish, Mother Nature'd take care of you, wouldn't she? Right? You don't think them fish just die when it gets to be winter, do ya" (p. 109)? Horwitz is discussing the fish, but Holden is worried about the ducks. Horwitz's thought is soothing though; Mother Nature will take care of the ducks and fish just like she takes care of children.

Besides profanity, Salinger includes several additional topics that readers may view as obscene. These topics include blasphemy, rape, and suicide. Holden uses profanity in an ironic and blasphemous way when he refers to religion as "goddamn religion" (p. 65). Holden reflects on the bible, and he reveals how it "annoys the hell out of [him]" (p. 130). Holden describes the character in the bible he likes the most as a "poor bastard" (p. 130). The topic of rape appears in the novel when Holden alludes to the idea that others guys would rape girls because they do not stop when "she keeps telling you to stop" (p. 120). "Most guys don't. I can't help it" (p. 120). Holden views his inability to refuse the girls' requests as negative. For Holden, continuing when a girl says *no* is considered more of the norm than stopping.

As Holden's journey towards a mental breakdown continues, he begins to think more about death and suicide. He wants to commit suicide: "What I really felt like, though, was committing suicide. I felt like jumping out the window. I probably would've done it too, if I'd been sure somebody'd cover me up as soon as I landed" (p. 136). Holden does not mind the idea of dying; rather he does not like the idea of people looking at his gory body (p. 136). Holden's nonchalant way of dealing with these dangerous topics allows readers to understand their commonality in the adolescent mind.

One continual theme throughout the novel is Holden's level of discontentment. Holden has the ability to dislike people for small reasons. He disliked his former roommate, Dick Slagle, because he had cheap suitcases (p. 141). Ultimately, Holden hated the embarrassment and sadness Dick's suitcases caused him because Holden had expensive suitcases. Rather than realizing the true cause of his annoyance, he continued to believe the issue with Dick was suitcases. Holden can hate people so easily, yet befriend people like Ackley who are considered social outcasts. This could be due to the fact that Holden is also a social outcast. He defies the norms, hates the phonies, and longs for innocence. Two constant targets of Holden's hatred throughout the novel are phonies and the movies (p. 19). Anything too mainstream is considered phony to Holden. Holden classifies tourists in the same hatred category as phonies. He dislikes them both (p. 98). Tourists represent the fake facade of a city; therefore, Holden dislikes tourists as well. Tourists do not experience or appreciate the true essence of the city. Holden appreciates true human nature and honesty.

Holden's discontentment with life is negatively affecting his quality of life.

When Phoebe asks Holden why he flunked out of school, Holden's response can be best summarized as: He failed because he hated phonies and hated the system of school (p. 217). When he has to explain himself to Phoebe, he finally felt bad about failing. "It made me feel sort of sad, the way she said it" (p. 217). Holden is even mad at himself for being "too yellow not to join" the secret fraternity at school (p. 217). After repeated usage of the word *goddam*, Phoebe tells Holden, "Don't swear so much" (p. 218). Phoebe represents childhood innocence, and Holden is defiling her innocence with his language. When Phoebe reacts logically to Holden's news of being kicked out of school, she states to Holden, "You don't like any schools. You don't like a million things. You don't"(p. 220)! This depresses Holden, because Phoebe is saying it to him (p. 220). When she asks him to think of something he actually likes all he can think about are things that upset him and depress him (p. 220-221). Holden claims he likes thinking about Allie and talking to Phoebe (p. 223). Phoebe does not understand how a dead brother and the act of conversation can count as something Holden likes (p. 223). This reminds me of how people do not appreciate the existential moments. Why are conversation and relationships not valued as equally as material objects and activities? He claims he "couldn't concentrate" (p. 220). As the plot progresses, Holden can only concentrate on the negative aspects of life. Phoebe asks Holden to stop swearing again even though he is expressing his true thoughts (p. 224). She is too young to realize the difference between using words as part of true expression and just the fact that profanity is not allowed. Studying the usage of profanity in this novel will allow students to gain understanding about the relationship between language and expression.

The first reference to the catcher in the rye is when Holden passes by a little boy singing about it on the street (p. 150). Hearing the boy sing the song eases Holden's depression (p. 150). The thought of saving children, or saving childhood, makes Holden feel better and "not so depressed any more" (p. 150). Unfortunately, Holden is unable to be the catcher in the rye. Holden cries when Phoebe gives him all her money (p. 233). He realizes that he cannot save the children. A child has to save him, rather than him being the catcher in the rye who saves children.

When Mr. Antolini is giving (drunken) life advice to Holden, he states:

This fall I think you're riding for—it's a special kind of fall, a horrible kind. The man falling isn't permitted to feel or hear himself hit bottom. He just keeps falling and falling. The whole arrangement's designed for men who, at some time or other in their lives, were looking for something their own environment couldn't supply them with. Or they thought their own environment couldn't supply them with. So they gave up looking. They gave up before they ever really got started. (p. 243-244)

Holden is searching for his childhood—for lost innocence in a world of phonies. The fall Mr. Antolini describes is the fall Holden is already involved in. Rather than catching children before they fall off the cliff, Holden actually fell off himself. Mr. Antolini tells Holden "You're going to have to find out where you want to go" (p. 245). This means Holden has to decide to grow up. What does it mean that the best advice Holden receives is from a drunken man who possibly violates children? Mr. Antolini can see the mental chaos and depression that Holden is tangled up in. He tries to make Holden feel

better by stating, "you're not the first person who was ever confused and frightened and even sickened by human behavior" (p. 246). Is this a subconscious admittance of his own dislike for his human behavior of admiring children? I believe Mr. Antolini is speaking from experience here.

During the third read, I noticed foreshadowing when Mr. Antolini uses the endearment, "Good night, handsome" when he leaves Holden (p. 248). The next time Holden sees Mr. Antolini, Mr. Antolini is "petting [him] or patting [him] on the goddamn head" while he is sleeping (p. 249). Holden wakes up and demands to know what is happening. Mr. Antolini claims, "Nothing! I'm simply sitting here, admiring" (p. 249). Holden repeatedly states that he is nervous and embarrassed. I felt sorry for Holden at this point in the novel. Mr. Antolini should be the one who feels embarrassed. Holden's use of profanity increased once he found Mr. Antolini petting his head. Holden is still trying to make sense of what just happened to him with Mr. Antolini. He does not want to think about it, but he really wants to know. His mind is grappling with this battle, and he uses profanity to release his emotions. This seems like a normal reaction to this incident. Holden reflects on his past experiences and thinks about how "that kind of stuff's happened to me about twenty times since I was a kid. I can't stand it" (p. 251). Why does stuff like this happen to Holden? Is he too vulnerable? Too trusting? The allusion to sexually assaulting a child is another obscene topic that can make readers uncomfortable; however, this is a sad reality in our world. Holden's thoughts may mimic the same thoughts of adolescent readers who have had similar experiences.



At the beginning of the novel, Holden runs from campus to Mr. Spencer's house. While running, he felt like was disappearing (p.8). He is not physically disappearing, but his childhood is disappearing. The reality of his expulsion from Pencey Prep has erased more of his childhood. He is leaving campus knowing that he has been kicked out. In a way, the old Holden is disappearing at this point. This is the same feeling he gets at the end of the novel when he is nearing his mental breakdown. After he left Mr. Antolini's in the middle of the night, Holden's anxiety level rises while he walking down the street. Holden's angst increases when he has to step off the curb. He suddenly feels like he will disappear. He thanks Allie each time he makes it to the other side of the street. At this point, he decided he will go away and never go home again. Holden knows he can never return to his childhood again, so he mimics this in real life with a refusal to return to his home. Holden's usage of profanity increases as his anxiety level rises.

Then all of the sudden, something very spooky started happening. Every time I came to the end of a block and stepped off the goddamn curb, I had this feeling that I'd never get to the other side of the street. (p. 256)

Once again, he has a fear of disappearing. The experience with Mr. Antolini has erased more of his innocence and has taken away a piece of his childhood. Because of this, he feels as if he is disappearing.

Holden notices the phrase, "Fuck you," on the wall of Phoebe's school (p. 260). Even though Holden uses profanity in his thoughts and speech regularly, he is disgusted at the thought of children seeing "Fuck you" on the wall at school. Salinger only uses fuck to symbolize the loss of innocence, which upsets Holden. Holden does not use this

word in his own conversations. Thinking about kids seeing the word makes Holden angry.

I thought how Phoebe and all the other little kids would see it, and how they'd wonder what the hell it meant, and then finally some dirty kid would tell them—all cockeyed, naturally—what it meant, and how they'd all think about it and maybe even worry about it. (p. 260)

I find Holden's thoughts ironic. Holden uses profanity— especially *goddam*— like it is common language, yet he is greatly maddened by the use of *fuck*. Opponents of this novel could have the same worry with students encountering profanity while reading the entire novel. However, I believe in reading books with profanity in high school classrooms so in those moments of thinking and worrying, then the teacher and class could have a discourse about the usage and meaning. Why should profanity be feared and misunderstood when it can help explain the current moment we are a part of?

Holden also finds the phrase "Fuck you" on the wall inside the museum (p. 264). Like the school, this is a place frequented by children. As the catcher in the rye, he must protect the children. He wanted to erase the phrase at the school, but when he sees it again at the museum, he realizes that he could never "find a place that's nice and peaceful" (p. 264). Every place has "Fuck you "written somewhere (p. 264). This goes with the theme that life is not fair. This is a realistic look at the world. Part of adulthood is realizing that life is not fair and that you can never erase all the "Fuck you" phrases on the wall. While Holden is thinking about how he cannot escaped being fucked by the world, he thinks about his own death again and passes out (p. 265). This is a symbolic

death as he is only passed out for a moment. Once he recovers, he decides to run away and escape the world by becoming a recluse in a cabin in the woods. Phoebe wants to escape with him, but he cannot handle the idea. Holden is rude to her and repeatedly tells her to "shut up" (p. 267). However, when Phoebe tells Holden to shut up (p. 269) he thinks "it sounded worse than swearing" (p. 269). He wants to escape the reality of adulthood, but he does not want his sister to do the same. He wants her to stay a child.

At the end of the novel, Holden enjoys watching Phoebe on the carrousel because of its sameness; it always plays the same song, and the same horses are spinning around in the same circle. The carrousel is symbolic of childhood. Watching Phoebe on the carrousel makes Holden happy. When Phoebe uses the word "please" when asking Holden if he will ride with her, he gets depressed again (p. 273). Why does he find the word please depressing? He gets emotional when it starts to rain while he is watching Phoebe go around and around. As his emotions rise, his profanity usage increases as well. Watching Phoebe spin around without changing is a rare and true moment of childhood happiness for Holden. "I was damn near bawling. I felt so happy. It was just that she looked so damn nice, the way she kept going around and around" (p. 275). The carrousel is symbolic of the never-ending childhood that Holden longs for.

## **Novel 2: *The Chocolate War***

### **First Read**

During the first read of *The Chocolate War*, I treated the novel as I would have treated any other literary text. While reading, I analyzed the plot in a way that mimicked

the study of a novel in a high school English classroom. I focused on plot development, characterization, conflict, and theme.

During the first read, I read the novel while I also worked out in my garage. I would ride a stationary bike and read the book at the same time. I was alone with the book and my thoughts with no other people around. I would become lost in Jerry's world where pain, failure, and hopelessness were real.

During the first read, I was not distracted by the use of profanity. I actually was quite surprised there was not more profanity in the novel. The word choices seemed natural for teenage boys' conversations with their peers.

### ***Brief Plot Summary***

*The Chocolate War* is a story of one boy's struggle to defy norms. Jerry Renault is a freshman at Trinity School, a private Catholic school. He decides to go against tradition and expectation when he refuses to sell chocolates in a school fundraiser. A secret society named The Vigils secretly runs the inner workings of the school despite the façade that the brothers are in control. At first, Jerry is told to deny the chocolates as part of his Vigil initiation hazing ritual known as an "assignment." After ten days, Jerry was to agree to sell the chocolates. Jerry decided to make his own decisions. He refuses to sell the chocolates throughout the entire novel. He defies the norms of the school, set-in-place traditions, and expectations from both students and adults. The power dynamics throughout the book are tumultuous. The Assistant Headmaster, Brother Leon, strives to have complete power and control over not only his classroom, but also the entire school. The secret society, The Vigils, battles Brother Leon for control of that power.

### *Characterization*

The novel's protagonist is Jerry Renault, a high school freshman at Trinity School. The novel contains multiple antagonists. Jerry is a seemingly normal freshmen whose goals include making the football and talking to girls. Jerry's life is forever changed by his decision to refuse orders.

The main antagonist is Archie Costello, the assigner in *The Vigils*. Although he is not president of the society, his role is the most important. Without Archie's cunning ability to create the perfect hazing assignments, *The Vigils* would not be as feared within the school. Every Vigil member, and student, knows to "Keep him happy, when Archie's happy, we're all happy" (p. 11). Although feared, Archie is not violent. "Archie disliked violence—most of his assignments were exercises in the psychological rather than physical. That's why he got away with so much. The Trinity brothers wanted peace at any price, quiet on the campus, no broken bones" (p. 12). This shows how the adults in the school knew about the assignments, yet they did not attempt to stop *The Vigils*. This represents the corrupt nature of academic institutions. Readers are shown a world where the psychological breakdown of students is a normal occurrence.

The secondary antagonist is Brother Leon, the Assistant Headmaster of Trinity School. Brother Leon's outward appearance is deceiving:

On the surface, he was one of those pale, ingratiating kind of men who tiptoed through life on small, quick feet. He looked like a henpecked husband, a pushover, a sucker. He was the Assistant Headmaster of the school but actually served as a flunky for the Head. (p. 24)

In the classroom, however, Brother Leon is described as animalistic; he could "hold your attention like a cobra" and "he watched the class like a hawk" who was "probing for weakness" (p. 24).

The main supporting characters of my novel analysis include Obie, Goober, Emile Janza, and Carter. Obie is Archie's second-in-command. Obie is a senior and secretary of The Vigils. Although a senior and high-ranking member of The Vigils, Obie is treated like an errand-boy throughout the novel. His character serves the role of balancing Archie's character. Obie attempts to be the voice of reason, but the voice is always silenced.

Rouland Goubert, or Goober as he is known in the novel, is Jerry's only friend. Goober is also a freshman at Trinity. "He reminded Archie of a child, someone who didn't belong here, as if he'd been caught sneaking into an Adults Only movie. He was too skinny, of course. And he had the look of a loser. Vigil bait" (p. 30). Goober undergoes a Vigil assignment and the reader is able to witness his psychological breakdown. After he follows through with loosening all the screws in a classroom as his Vigil assignment, he eventually decides to quit football and track—even though he loves to run—and distance himself from Trinity and all the evil it contains.

Emile Janza is the stereotypical school bully in the novel. "He was an animal and he didn't play by the rules" (p. 49). "Not too many people defied Emile Janza, anyway, whether they were fat or skinny, mild or not" (p. 48). Janza would harass both teachers and students. "He found that the world was full of willing victims, especially kids his own age" (p. 49). He discovered in fourth grade that "nobody wanted to make trouble,

nobody wanted a showdown," so he used this knowledge to get what he wanted (p. 49). He breaks rules, has no respect for authority, and always gets what he wants—that is unless he is dealing with Archie Costello. Archie blackmails Emile, which enables Archie to control him throughout the novel. Janza plays a significant role in the mental and physical breakdown of Jerry.

John Carter is the president of The Vigils, a senior, and a member of the football and wrestling teams. He leads the Vigils meetings in theory, but Archie orchestrates them. Carter seems to be the character foil to Archie. He is athletic and likes violence. Carter likes to think he is a better person than Archie, but by the end of the novel, Archie shows Carter how everyone, including himself, is corrupt.

### ***Conflict Development***

*The Chocolate War* contains numerous character conflicts. This tempestuous plot line, along with the use of profanity, mimics the realistic life of teenagers. Teen readers will relate to both the conflicts and the use of profanity. There are five main person-versus-person conflicts in the novel. The first person versus person conflict in the novel is Archie versus Brother Leon. From the first meeting of these two characters, the reader can feel the tension jump off the pages when these two characters communicate. Archie does not hide his disdain for Brother Leon from the reader. This conflict represents the common teenager versus adult authority figure that is common in high schools across the United States. Cormier takes this conflict one step further by having Brother Leon represent the corrupt authority figure and having Archie represent the corrupt student. This conflict represents evil versus evil. The reader has no choice but to be on the side of

evil. In this battle, I found myself on Archie's side.

The second person versus person conflict in the novel is Jerry versus Archie. This conflict begins when Jerry is given the assignment of denying selling the chocolates. The conflict comes to fruition when Jerry continues to refuse the chocolates after his ten days of forced refusal have passed. This conflict leads to the development of the conflict between Jerry and Emile Janza.

The third person versus person conflict in the novel begins when Jerry refuses the chocolates. The conflict of Jerry versus Brother Leon aids in the development of Jerry's internal conflict. As a reader, I longed for Jerry to win this conflict. In one aspect, I think he did win because he disrupted the status quo of normalcy at Trinity School; however, he lost in the end because his defiant spirit was crushed.

The fourth person versus person conflict in the novel is the conflict between Archie and Emile. These characters are presented as two of the most corrupt students at Trinity School. Their battle is a psychological battle for power. Archie controls Emile Janza, an otherwise uncontrollable teen, through the use of blackmail. Emile acts as Archie's pawn and is used throughout the novel as Archie's strong arm. This conflict is won by Archie.

The last person versus person conflict in the novel is the mental and physical battle between Jerry and Emile Janza. As Archie's pawn, Emile battles Jerry for the Vigils. Jerry's defiance must be punished, and Emile Janza is the perfect punisher. Jerry is mentally beaten by Emile's accusation: "You're a fairy. A queer. Living in the closet. Hiding away" (p. 211). Because of this accusation, Archie is able to convince Jerry to



physically battle Emile in the novel's final battle. At this battle, Jerry and Emile are on display like two prized animals fighting in a ring. During this staged altercation, Jerry is physically and psychologically destroyed. His defiant spirit is erased. After he regains consciousness, Jerry feels he must tell Goober his realization and give him the advice "to sell whatever they wanted you to sell" or "to do whatever they wanted you to do" (p. 259). The final message to readers is to follow the norms and do what is expected.

*The Chocolate War* contains two person versus society conflicts. Jerry continually battles societal demands of being a teen male in the United States. He feels he must play football in order to exist at the school. Jerry's societal battle is heightened when a young man at the bus stop harasses Jerry for staring at him. Jerry's normalcy is pointed out: "Going to school every day. And back home on the bus. And do your homework" (p. 20). This moment causes Jerry to begin his defiant journey of refusing to sell the chocolates no matter who asks him to give-in to their request. Jerry's journey is fueled by his locker poster that mysteriously attracted him (p. 129). The quote on the posters states, "Dare I disturb the universe" (p. 129)? The second person versus society conflict in the novel is Archie's battle against his "bad boy" image. Archie has moments of weakness and doubt like all teenagers; however, his evil nature always wins the battle.

The only person versus self-conflict in the novel is Jerry's internal conflict. Jerry is undergoing the self-identity quest that is normal for most teenagers. He is trying to discover who he is in the world. This conflict is first encountered when Jerry is battling his own desire and need to play football. He wants to do what is expected of him, even if

that means his body takes a beating every day at practice. Football is the only topic Jerry and his father discuss. Without football, he would be an outcast—in his home, at school, and amongst his peers. Jerry's internal conflict is fueled by reminders of his mother's recent death. Jerry longs to recover the happy days of his past, but now his home and his father are nothing but constant reminders of his rigid normalcy. Jerry's father is the symbolic American worker drone. His daily activities are the same without any excitement. Jerry is headed down the same path; for this reason, Jerry wants to defy the norms and do the unexpected. Jerry wonders to himself when reflecting on his father's bleak existence in life, "Wasn't each man different? Didn't a man have a choice" (p. 64)? Jerry wants to know if there is more to life than just merely existing. Jerry decides he has a choice. Jerry's choice—lack of involvement in the chocolate sale—and the conflicts that ensue as a result, cause Jerry internal struggles. Because he feels he cannot speak with anyone about his need for defiance, he confines his emotions, worries, and fears inside himself. This confinement of emotions and fears causes difficulty for Jerry when he cannot masturbate correctly; "his hand now curled between his legs, he concentrated on the girl. But for once, it was no good, no good" (p. 123). Not only is Jerry struggling to discover himself, at this point in the novel he now is struggling to find pleasure in life.

### ***Theme***

During the first read of the novel, I perceived the main theme of *The Chocolate War* to be: Do not defy the norms. This theme is highlighted by Jerry's struggle with the chocolate sale. When Jerry's defiant spirit is crushed at the end of the novel, the book's

lesson is clear. A secondary theme of the novel is clear at the end: Life is not fair. During the first read, I was stunned by the lack of “happy ending” in this novel. I have been programmed to expect the always perfect ending to even the most difficult situations; however, this expectation is not realistic. Life is not fair, and people do not always win. Oftentimes, horrible events happen to the most undeserving people. This realistic depiction of a young boy’s freshman year is symbolic of the reality many students face. Studying this book in classrooms can allow students and teachers to develop discourse about realistic struggles. The discourse will allow the curriculum to become more relevant for students.

### **Second Read**

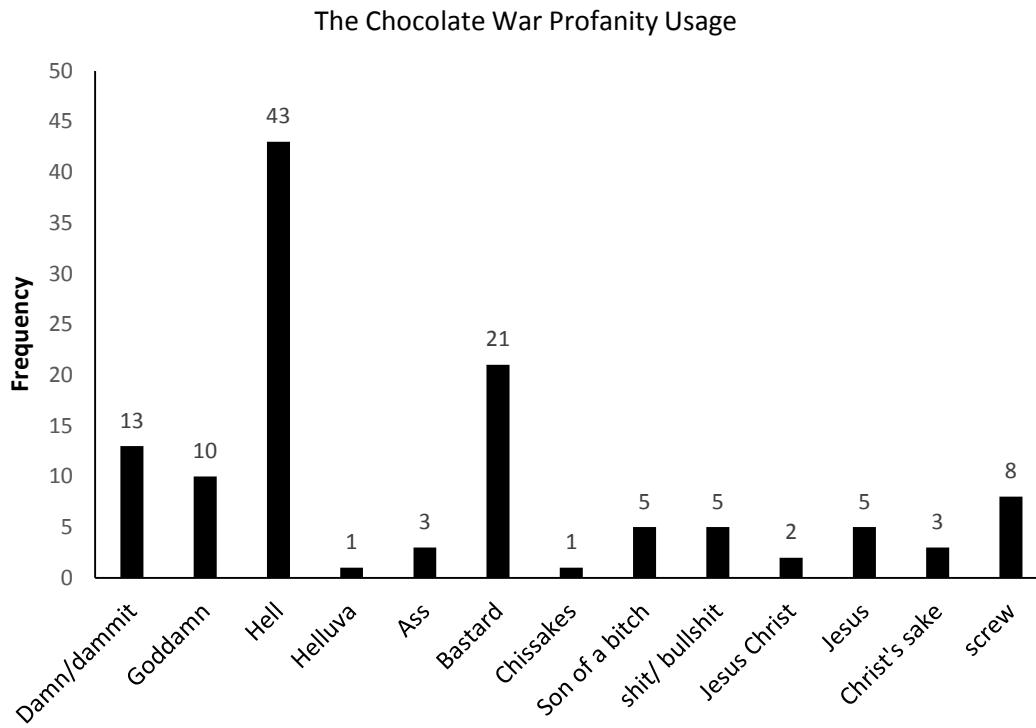
During the second read of *The Chocolate War*, I highlighted the profanity as I encountered it in the text. By doing this, I was able to take notice of which words were used more as well as the context in which they were used. I was able to reflect more on how each word was used while reading, searching, and highlighting. Since profanity is listed as one of the major reasons for the novel's banning, I expected to encounter profanity at every turn of the page; however, that was not the case. I only encountered 120 profane words in the entire novel. Oftentimes, I would go several pages without highlighting a single word. The longest stretch of the novel without profanity is 22 pages. Also, the novel contained three additional sections ranging from 10-14 pages without profanity. The average number of profane words used per two pages in the novel is less than one (0.46 profane words per page). In order to better understand the profanity usage in the novel, I tabulated the frequency of each profane word used. *The*

*Chocolate War* contains thirteen different profane words. These can be found in Table 2 and Figure 5. The most frequently used word is *hell*. *Fuck* and *bitch* are not used at all in this novel.

**Table 2.** Frequency of Profane Words in *The Chocolate War*.

Frequency of Profane Words in <i>The Chocolate War</i>	
Damn/dammit	13
Goddamn	10
Hell	43
Helluva	1
Ass	3
Bastard	21
Chissakes	1
Son of a bitch	5
shit/bullshit	5
Jesus Christ	2
Jesus	5
Christ's sake	3
screw	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>

**Figure 7.** Profanity Usage in *The Chocolate War*.



*The Chocolate War* is written in a multiple first-person perspective. The point-of-view changes throughout the book mostly by chapter but sometimes within a chapter as well. The novel opens to a scene on a football field from Jerry Renault's perspective. The first character in the novel to use profanity is the football coach. He repeatedly cusses at the players. I found it interesting that the first person to use profanity in the novel is an adult in an authoritative role. The next character to use profanity is Obie, a sidekick and errand-boy to the secret school gang called The Vigils. Obie swears when he is talking with Archie, and Archie chastises him for it. Jokingly, Archie says, "Don't swear. You'll have to tell it in confession" (p. 8). This ironic comment comes from a character who also uses profanity. Two adolescent characters joking about using

profanity and having to reveal their usage in confession allows readers to gain insight into the adolescent mind.

Profanity is used throughout Cormier's novel to enhance the mood, set the tone, and describe objects of disgust. Archie uses profanity in his thoughts and conversations frequently. Swearing is considered a sign of bad or negative behavior when Goober uses profanity. Jerry is worried because he had never heard Goober swear before when Goober described the Vigils as "the goddamn Vigils" (p. 128). Profanity is used here to enhance the seriousness of the situation and to reflect a troubled state of mind. Obie also uses profanity to express his thoughts about The Vigils, more specifically Archie. Obie uses profanity the most when he is reflecting about his feelings for Archie. Obie is disgusted by the way he always succumbs to Archie's demands despite his need to say no and defy him. Unlike Jerry, Obie does not have the guts to stand up to The Vigils. Jerry is depicted as a meek character, yet he has more power than anyone wanted to realize. Adult characters also use profanity. Brother Leon uses slang and profanity words to appeal to his students. "That was Brother Leon- always trying to shock. Using words like crap and bull and slipping in a few damns and hells once in a while" (Cormier, 40). The teacher uses profanity to appeal to his students or to shock his students. This use of profanity is more shocking, and ironic, at a private Catholic school.

### **Third Read**

Beyond the use of profanity, Cormier's novel contains content that may be considered too obscene for adolescent readers. Adult readers may not appreciate the negative insight into adult minds: "most grownups, most adults: they were vulnerable,

running scared, open to invasion" (p. 22). This message can allow teen readers to view adults in a different way. Cormier uses several sexual references throughout the novel as well. This usage mimics the reality of teenagers. When Archie is about to reveal Goober's assignment, the process is described as "the climax, almost like coming" (Cormier, 35). A sexual orgasm is referenced as Tubs Casper thinks about "having one" as he daydreams of his girlfriend (p. 93). He "felt himself hardening" the first time he brushed against her breasts (p. 94). These sexual references may be considered inappropriate for young readers. This contributes to the "obscene content" category that backs the novel's banning. As disturbing as this could be for teachers and students to read together, this is the reality of modern students. Why should teachers back away from disturbing, dangerous, or provocative discourse? If we do not have these conversations with students, then they will decipher it for themselves. They are living the reality that Cormier paints in *The Chocolate War*. Sex, profanity, and cruelty are realistic elements in their lives.

Cormier's novel gives readers insight into the inner-workings of schools. Secret deals between adults and kids transpire behind the façade of the prestigious Catholic school. The deal between Archie and Brother Leon symbolizes the corrupt nature of Trinity School. This is also symbolic of corruption in schools in general. The Vigils and Brother Leon continually use the word "tradition" to describe the negative behavior of hazing. What message does this send to readers? Students will be prompted to question their own school's traditions.

One particularly obscene incident in the book occurs when Richy Rondell is eye-raping a girl during a phone conversation with his friend, Howie Anderson. The way the boy watches girls on the street is described as "rape by eyeball" (p. 141). This allows the inner thoughts of boys to be put on the page. The girls are presented to the onlookers as food to be consumed. Richy consumes the girl when he "feasted himself on her rounded jeans" (p. 141). When he lost sight of the original treat, he began "looking for another girl to enjoy" (p. 143). This scene presents females as something for men and boys to consume, whether the action is wanted or not. The girl does not get a voice, nor does she get to say no.

Jerry is heckled by a young man on the street at the bus stop when the young man thinks Jerry is staring at him. The young man tells Jerry, "You know who's sub-human, man? You. You are. Going to school every day. And back home on the bus. And do your homework" (p. 20). I noted this interaction during my first read of the novel; however, during the third read, I analyzed the interaction further. Jerry does not want to be like this, yet this behavior is normal and expected. Jerry is battling conformity mentally at this point in the book. Before Jerry gets on the bus, the man on the streets calls out, "Don't miss the bus, boy. You're missing a lot of things in the world, better not miss that bus" (p. 20). As a freshman student, what else could Jerry miss? Jerry is tempted to defy norms and make his own choices rather than conform to what is expected. While on the bus, Jerry reflects on the comments from the man on the street. While reflecting, Jerry notices graffiti on a blank advertisement space. The word "Why?" was written with a response of "Why not?" After reading the novel two previous



times, these words stood out to me on the third read. I believe Jerry was focused on the "Why not?"

Throughout the novel, Cormier supplies the readers with examples of how good students should conform. Chapter 14 describes how the chocolate sale should be carried out by a traditional, well-conforming student. During the third read, this chapter seemed to stand out. Why does Cormier include a chapter from the perfect salesman? John Sulkey is Brother Leon's ideal pawn. This chapter gives an example of what the ideal student should be like, yet John makes poor grades. The message here is follow the norm and do not make waves. In a moment of exasperation, John tells himself, "you had to make sacrifices, big and small, for the sake of Service To The School..." (Cormier, 89). Why is the phrase Service To The School capitalized? Cormier is trying to send a message to readers that this idea of service is important. This shows John's thoughts about the sacrifices he has to make in order to sell the chocolate. Is this his true thought or is he mocking the phrases he hears all the time at school? I believe his comment is a combination of both truth and mockery. He knows the sale is forced upon him, yet he wants to do well.

David Caroni, an example of a "splendid scholar" at Trinity School, is harassed by Brother Leon in an attempt to acquire information about why Jerry is refusing to sell the chocolates (p. 107). Brother Leon purposely gives Caroni an F on a test. He explains the grade as a possible mistake, dangling hope in front of David. Brother Leon claims, "we are all too human" when alluding to the idea that teachers make mistakes (p. 109). At the end of the conversation, Brother Leon does not fix the F. Instead, he claims that

he will review the grade later. This gives Caroni hope that everything will work out for him. Cormier does not let the good side win. Brother Leon ends the conversation with the utterance, "perhaps the F will stand" (p. 115). Caroni has a realization here that "life was rotten, that there were no heroes, really and that you couldn't trust anybody, not even yourself" (p. 115). This realization also describes the summary of themes of the novel.

Obie— a reluctant and oftentimes perturbed member of The Vigils— watches one of the Vigil stunts in action and ponders in amazement the fact that "everybody— the kids as well as the teachers— knew these stunts were planned or carried out by The Vigils and yet they still maintained that air of mystery; refusing to acknowledge it all" (p. 133). This is once again reminding readers that no one wants to make waves. Everyone follows the rule: Do not disturb the universe. As a teacher, I am concerned by the power The Vigils have in the school. Adults know about the secret society, yet no one, adult or student, wants to make waves. I would have hoped that adults could stand up for what they believe to be right; however, we may be conditioned to follow the norms even more than the younger students. The young naïvety motivates Jerry to battle the tradition of succumbing to The Vigil's demands.

Cormier dangles hope in front of the reader like a carrot on a string. Readers turn the pages hopefully searching for good news. Will Archie pay for his cruelty? Will Jerry be victorious? Readers hope that good will win out. Cormier supplies the reader with insight into Archie's character when he still chooses Jerry for an assignment even after Archie finds out that Jerry's mother is dead. This is the beginning of the

"uncompromising portrait of human cruelty" referenced in the book review on the first physical page of the book. Hope also is dangled in front of readers with the black box. The black box was an insurance policy for The Vigils which "provided control" to ensure an assigner did not "go off the deep end" (p. 37). There was always a chance Archie had to complete the assignment if he drew the black marble. The black box gives readers hope that good will win out at some point in the novel. There is always a chance that Archie will have to pay for his cruelty; however, Archie —or evil— always wins. Once Archie had delivered the assignment to Goober, he "almost felt sorry for the kid" (Cormier, p. 38). This gives readers hope that Archie has a good side. He feels this way for a brief second because he himself feels "empty, used up, discarded" after his job of giving the assignment is complete (Cormier, p. 38). Archie quickly adds "Almost. But not quite" to his thought (Cormier, p. 38). Once again, readers are given hope of something positive only to be disappointed. The carrot is pulled away.

Throughout the novel, Jerry has doubts about his choice to defy tradition. Jerry daydreams about what it would be like to finally acquiesce to everyone's request. What if he decided to finally sell the chocolates? He thinks it would be "so easy to be like the others, not to have to confront those terrible eyes every morning" (p. 131). The eyes Jerry is referring to are those of Brother Leon. Brother Leon is symbolic of the powers in place over teenagers in society. This power may be parents, teachers, bosses, supervisors, or even society in general. When he decided to continue refusing to sell the chocolates, he is "swept with sadness, a sadness deep and penetrating, leaving him desolate like someone washed up on a beach, a lone survivor in a world full of

strangers" (p. 131). In this moment, he becomes the solitary figure walking on the beach in the locker poster. This symbolic message shows readers that going against social norms results in being isolated without friends. Should teenagers have to be like everyone else to have friends? The classroom discourse Cormier's novel can create will allow students to reflect on their own personal choices with conformity.

Brother Leon describes Jerry's actions of refusing to be like everyone as "a disease we could call apathy" (p. 155). Ironically, the students who continually do whatever Brother Leon wants are apathetic. Jerry's actions of being his own person and going against tradition are grounds for people to treat him like he is the "carrier of a terrible disease" (p. 223). As the psychological torture continues to affect Jerry, he begins to question his motives and actions of refusing to do what everyone wants. He asks himself, "Are you some kind of pervert?" to himself after a girl he attempts to call asks him the same thing when she thinks he is a stranger harassing her on the telephone (p. 176). Here, going against the norm is equated to perversion. Readers are given the message that going against norms is equal to apathy, perversion, and disease.

The sign in Jerry's locker is a convenient reminder for the reader of the theme in the novel. "Do I dare disturb the universe?" is the message displayed inside the locker on a scenic poster "a small solitary figure" walking along a beach" (p. 129). This poster is a metaphor for the school. Jerry is the "solitary figure" who chooses to defy the longstanding traditions of the "scenic beach" —or Trinity School. Archie confronts Jerry about his defiance and describes Jerry as "a freshman, a new student who should be filled with the spirit of Trinity" (p. 169). This "spirit" Archie speaks of is conformity

rather than actual school spirit. According to Archie, the younger students should be more willing to show school spirit. This symbolizes the fact that young children succumb to peer pressure and follow the norms more easily than adults. Children are not taught to fully think for themselves. Rules are given and must be followed.

Jerry is not the only character who dreams of making his own choices. Emile Janza, the bully in book, expresses his desire to have freedom from rules and ultimately from societal norms: "He wanted to make his own decisions, do his own thing" (p. 211). Is this not the same request Jerry is making? Why is the school allowing Janza to do whatever he wants, yet Jerry's life is ruined when he refuses to participate in a voluntary fundraiser? I believe the desire to "make your decisions" is the true desire of all teenagers. As a junior high and high school teacher, I see this desire on a daily basis. Students long for the freedom adults take for granted.

One theme represented in the novel that I noticed on the third read is the theme of individuality versus long-standing tradition. Brian Cochran, Brother Leon's treasurer of the chocolate sale, reflects on the chocolate sale once it is all over. He ponders the role of the school and of individuals within the school. Brother Leon claims that school spirit is most important. Readers know that his intentions throughout the sale had little to do with school spirit. At Trinity, school spirit is used as a front for other motives such as financial reasons and student hazing. "A spirit of brotherhood" was used to prove that "one bad apple does not spoil the whole bunch" (p. 228). Why is the student who stands up to the forced, ill-represented sale a bad apple? I would like to believe everyone would want to follow Jerry's lead. Cochran wonders for a moment if Brother Leon is right:

"That the school is more important than any one kid" (p. 228). But he considers the opposing argument for a moment as well: "But weren't individuals important, too" (p. 228)? This message allows readers to grapple with this decision as well. Is the overall school more important or the individual students who make up the school? Cochran shakes off thinking about the difficult topics and instead mentally celebrates that the chocolate sale is over. He avoids having to make a decision for himself on which is more important. By avoiding this thought, he chooses to not make waves.

As Obie stares at Jerry in the final scene on the football field, he realizes that Archie was once again ruling the school. This proved "the meek don't inherit the earth," which is a prevalent theme in the novel (p. 234). What hope does this leave for readers? Does this motivate students to stand up for what they believe even more, or does it encourage readers to succumb to the violent forces? I am motivated to stand up for what I believe despite the societal pressures. Choosing to include banned books in my classroom curriculum is an example of that choice. My lived experiences allow me to interact with the novel in a different way. As an adult, I probably have different reactions to the novel than adolescent and teenage readers. How can educators address this topic in schools? This novel will allow teachers and students to create a discourse about what it means to stand up for what they believe in despite the odds against them. Cormier's realistic depiction of high school social pressures, fears, and failures provides relevant content for adolescent readers to analyze and process.

As Jerry faces the crowd, he realizes in that moment that he cannot back down; he lists the reasons he cannot say no to the final fight in his mind. One main reason is the

future harm people like Archie and Janza will cause to society or "what they would do to the world when they left Trinity" (p. 236). He wants to defy norms to better society. His motives are larger than himself. This is a message that more students need to think about. In addition to creating discourse regarding the negative aspects of high school, this novel can allow classroom discourse about bettering society through student actions.

At the conclusion of the novel, Jerry no longer has his original desire to do his own thing. Jerry did not want to solve his problems with violence. Readers absorb the message that standing up for yourself results in you becoming "another violent person in a violent world" (p. 254). Jerry had "allowed Archie to do this to him" (p. 254). His quest for freedom in choices resulted in violence and destruction. He no longer wants to be the lone figure on the beach in the poster. His final advice is "to sell whatever they wanted you to sell, to do whatever they wanted you to do" (p. 259). If you refuse, "they murder you" — body and soul (p. 259). His attempts to better the world have ruined him. The novel's beginning line takes on an entirely new meaning at the end of the novel. "They murdered him" is symbolic for the entire plot of the novel, as well as Jerry's performance on the football field on his first day at practice. "They" represents everyone at Trinity School. In the final fight scene, the students in the bleachers are symbolic of the onlookers in society. People can ridicule and chastise from a safe distance without harm to themselves, but they are still guilty of the violence that ensues. When this occurs, they feel innocent and detached from the actual harmful situation. By purchasing tickets to the fight between Jerry and Emile Janza, the students were guilty of Jerry's

psychological murder. His soul, determination, and drive to battle conformity have been murdered.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **Introduction**

The final chapter is broken into three sections. Each section pertains to one of the three original research questions. These three sections are followed by sections on limitations, future research, and a conclusion.

#### **Research Question One**

The first research question asked: How can Gadamer's hermeneutics be used to understand the use of profanity in literature? By using philosophical hermeneutics, the focus of the study revolved around interpreting and understanding profanity in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*. My research involved reading, thinking, reflecting, and analyzing. I chose to "think with theory" rather than collect positivist data ( Jackson & Mazzei, 2012). "Theory does not replace intelligence and perception and action, it provides some of the windows through which intelligence can look out into the world" (Eisner, 1976, p. 140). My experience with research in this project mimics that of St. Pierre (2011). "Until one begins to think, one cannot know what one will think with. In that sense, data are collected during thinking, and for me, especially during writing" (p. 621). My data are the thoughts, reflections, understandings, and experiences that I engaged in during my readings of the two novels. This style of research can be viewed as:

[...] a cacophony of ideas swirling as we think about our topics with all we can

muster—with words from theorists, participants, conference audiences, friends and lovers, ghosts who haunt our studies, characters in fiction and films and dreams—and with our bodies and all the other bodies and the earth and all the things and objects in our lives—the entire assemblage that is a life thinking and, and, and.... All those data are set to work in our thinking, and we think, and we work our way somewhere in thinking. (St. Pierre, 2011, p. 622)

I have isolated profanity using Gadamer's belief that we can better understand a phenomenon when it is isolated. This isolation was evident during the second read of the novels when I highlighted all the profane words used in each novel.

If we can remember our power to interpret and to reflect, we do not have to be passive recipients of bombardments from without. To articulate what is happening is to take a certain distance from what we are doing. It is to counter what is often thought of as immersion in the habitual or the everyday. Gaining some perspective on our understanding, we may become capable of voluntary action, we are no longer submerged. (Greene, 1991)

Isolating profanity allowed me to remove the conventional literary analysis elements associated with the novels. I was able to become involved in a conversation with the text and characters, thus allowing me to exist with the profanity not outside the profanity.

As a reader, I brought my own horizon of understanding to each reading. I have a more liberal approach to profanity than most teachers and most school student conduct policies. The current school policy at the school district where I work punishes “unacceptable language” with after school detention or in school suspension (Student

Handbook, 2015, p. 39). “Profanity towards a student” is punishable with in-school suspension (Student Handbook, 2015, p. 39). The most extreme offense with profanity is when a student uses “profanity towards a teacher or employee,” which is punishable with in-school suspension or placement in discipline alternative education (Student Handbook, 2015, p. 40). I do not believe teachers or administrators should be spending time berating students for their general usage of language. When the words are used in threatening or harming ways, then I believe the underlying student issues of hate, pain, and distrust are the real issues. “The use of dirty words or discussion of sex is one area of difficulty for parents, students, teachers, and administrators alike” (Jay, 1992, p. 33). Some people may believe school administrators and policy-makers must take a stand against dirty and dangerous language; however, curriculum needs sometimes fight back against these discipline policies. “At high school the curriculum is attuned to society’s needs and the lives of the students after graduation” (Jay, 1992, p. 33). Jay’s description of high school curriculum sounds nice but is no longer applicable. The curriculum that once was tailored to preparing to students for successful lives is now slowly killing the true education of students. Students are working like robots to download and absorb the required knowledge and skill standards assigned by policy-makers. In this realm of education, profanity-analysis has no place in a multiple choice question. I argue that we, as educators and citizens of thought, must break free of the standardized mold. Students deserve to be educated in a way that will enhance their lived experiences.

I agree with Read’s (1934) belief that “obscenity is an artificially created product and finds its strongest bulwark in those ‘right minded people’ who preserve its sanctity

by the hush in their own usage and by their training of the young” (Read, 1934, p. 267). Preventing students from reading profanity will not guard the students from its usage. However, profane words are “omitted from [schools] on the ground that [they] would corrupt youthful minds” (Read, 1934, p. 271). I embrace profanity as a part of language, thus it is a part of who we are as a society. “When one refrains from using the stigmatized words, one is not ignoring the taboo but is actively abetting it” (Read, 1934, p. 277). I have embraced the idea that “the structure of language is a powerful tool for an understanding of culture” (Sagarin, 1962, p. 18). If students are using and hearing profanity in their lives, then profanity is a part of who they are. Why should students hide from who they are in literature? I believe if students are able to use profanity in their everyday speech, hear it in songs, or hear it in movies, then teachers should be able to assign and teach using novels that contain profanity. Profanity should not be the only deterrent for a novel in a high school classroom. The obscenity surrounding profanity only exists in the reader’s mind; “The determinant of obscenity lies not in words or things, but in the attitudes that people have towards these words and things” (Read, 1934, p. 264). “Tabooness, then, is not universal for all dirty words, but changes with the listener-speaker relationship” (Jay, 1992, p. 13). Sagarin (1962) points out that “a word-sound by itself, separated from all that it might connote and denote, would not be forbidden” (p. 23). The words only become profane when the reader applies their already established level of understanding to the word. “No word has any meaning except what is brought to it by each speaker or hearer” (Read, 1934, p. 264). When thought and language combine in the “habitual colloquial conversations,” the

constructed meaning of profanity can be understood (Schleiermacher, 1838/1998, p. 102).

The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. We are always within the situation, and to throw light on it is a task that is never entirely completed. This is true also of the hermeneutic situation, i.e. the situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition that we are trying to understand. The illumination of this situation—effective-historical reflection—can never be completely achieved, but this is not due to a lack in the reflection, but lies in the essence of the historical being which is ours. To exist historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete. (Mueller-Vollmer, 1994, p. 269)

The tabooess lies in the understandings reader are already always entangled within.

“All interpretation, moreover, operates in the fore structure, which we have already characterized. Any interpretation which is to contribute to understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted” (Mueller-Vollmer, 1994, p.225). The horizons of understanding bring forth the taboo nature.

I understand this is a generally radical view of education. I also understand that not all parents agree that profanity should be used at all. However, if a student lives in close contact with other students at home or encounters them at school, then profanity will be heard in some capacity. Profanity can be found in the mouths of children and adults alike, as well as in books, songs, and scrawled on walls. “In March 2011, three of the top-ten hit songs on the *Billboard* pop music chart had obscenities in their titles”

(Mohr, 2013, p. 247). Students who view profanity as dirty and dangerous will be able to bring their own horizon of understanding to the discussion on language. Profanity has “settled comfortably in our everyday speech” (Chirico, 2014, p. 66). For this reason, it should settle into the realm of literary analysis in classrooms. Due to the self-inscribed taboo nature of profanity, there is no right answer when readers begin to analyze the use of profanity. Even though profanity is “in such marked disrepute, it does not follow that [it] should be ignored by the student of language” (Read, 1934, p. 264).

Education can be enhanced by encouraging teachers to focus on student experiences— not the curriculum, not the standards, not the state tests— but the experience with students. Students can appreciate literature more if they experience the text rather than search for already-established literary elements such as the main idea with the aid of context clues. There is more to life than multiple choice answer choices. Students must be taught how to understand lived experiences. Insight into the usage of profanity allows for deeper insight and understanding into lived experiences. More teachers should stop and step back to look at the experiences that are taking place in their classroom with students and with texts. How are students interacting with texts? How are lives intersecting? How can the experience be enhanced? Taking the focus off of the curriculum and testing will allow teachers to better focus their experiences, which are the basis for education.

## Research Question Two

The second research question asked: What role does profanity play in the novels *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*? Both novels, *The Chocolate War* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, are equally popular and controversial for their use of obscene language, which makes some people believe the content is unsuitable for the intended readership. I was first motivated to research the role profanity plays in literature when I was teaching high school English. I wondered how sporadic usage of certain words could deter parents from entire novels that contained meaningful content for adolescent readers.

Profanity should not automatically cause novels to be banned from secondary classrooms. Profanity is simply a type of language. “The propriety or respectability of a word is merely one aspect of its history” (Read, 1934, p. 264). The history of profanity is also a history of societal morals and norms. The way in which profanity causes books to be removed from shelves is evidence of the disgust elicited by these *dangerous* words. “The ordinary reaction to a display of filth and vulgarity should be a neutral one or else disgust; but the reaction to certain words connected with excrement and sex is neither of these, but a titillating thrill of scandalized perturbation” (Read, 1977 cited in Allan & Burrige, 2006). Disgust should not be the reaction to profanity, yet some argue that listeners and readers are shocked, appalled, and disgusted to read books with profanity. “On occasion a writer can employ concepts that are in themselves disgusting if he will only maintain the taboo of the small group of ‘lurid’ words” (p. 265). Since profane words are a part of the language we live and speak, I disagree that “some of

them are too low to deserve notice” (*An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1841 quoted in Read, 1934, p. 274). “Although they are in such marked disrepute, it does not follow that they should be ignored by the student of language” (p. 264). Profanity performs “a function for speakers of standard English by serving as scapegoats, ministering to the deep-rooted need for symbols of the forbidden” (p. 267). The use of profanity for these reasons allows for better insight into the minds and emotions of the characters.

The use of profanity in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War* is used to set the tone, add description and emotion, and highlight general teenage male behavior. These categorical usages are similar to Hall and Jay’s (1988) study. According to the summer camp research by Hall and Jay (1988), 350 children with ages ranging from 4-14 used taboo word 224 times for the following reasons: anger-frustration, description-evaluation, jokes, surprise, and sarcasm (p. 69). Cormier and Salinger’s characters’ profanity usage fit more in Jay’s (1992) anger-frustration category. Since both novels, *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*, follow adolescent male protagonists, the profanity usage mimics reality and should thus make sense to readers. If the characters did not use profanity, the realistic nature of the novels would be lost.

Profanity is still a popular reason for banning books; however, profanity is more acceptable now in 2015 than in the past. Throughout the history of language, profanity has become more tolerable to hear and read. “Like many of our most prescriptive points of grammar, modern attitudes toward swearing and social class are the legacy of Victorian social climbers who were afraid to look working-class” (Mohr, 2013, p. 209).



Once considered “unprintable, the words are today printed in books, dictionaries, and occasionally in magazines, although not in newspapers, whereas once they adorned only toilet walls and outlawed hard-core pornography” (Sagarin, 1962, p. 31). The *today* referenced by Sagarin was 1962. Not much has changed in regards to printing profanity. Now these words are appearing in a doctoral dissertation. I do not believe words should hide from academic research. Profanity’s role in novels is an important area for analysis used to better understand the character’s actions, state of mind, and dialogue. Sagarin (1962) continues to describe profanity as “a phenomenon in a state of flux” where “the words are often omitted from scientific and historical discussions of folklore, ethnography, linguistics, and even from discussions of obscenity” (p. 31). I was frustrated to find the absence of the word *fuck* in Read’s (1934) article titled, “An Obscenity Symbol.” The entire article was about the term *fuck*, but the term was nowhere mentioned in the article.

### **Set the Tone**

The role profanity plays in literature is a controversial issue. Societal norms, beliefs, religions, worldviews, and general consideration of manners affect the reception of profanity. Many people use profanity in casual conversations while many other people view profanity as dangerous to young minds. “Vulgar words are the oldest and best authorized words in language; and their use is as necessary to the classes of people who use them, as elegant words are to the statesman and the poet” (*An American Dictionary of the English Language*, 1841 quoted in Read, 1934, p. 274). Profanity is used throughout both novels to set the tone for plot situations.

In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden uses profanity to set the tone related to topics that upset him. When Holden describes how his brother D.B. writes for movies rather than short stories, Holden becomes upset and his use of profanity increases. Holden's use of profanity also increases when he is describing his school, Pencey Prep. The school represents the societal pressures to conform. The societal pressures represented in school—boys participating in sports, dating girls, go to college, get a job, get married—are symbols of the phoniness within the school walls. The students at the private boarding school appear to be perfect but are really tainted by reality in their personalities, morals, and actions. One of these realistic blemishes is the use of profanity. This secret way of living, even in a school, depicts the realistic nature of lived experiences. The increase in profanity made me as a reader realize that the topics of his older brother's writing and his school are topics of contention for Holden. Both of these topics relate to Holden's hatred of phonies. Holden also uses profanity to set the tone once he returns to school after ruining the fencing meet by leaving the equipment on the subway. He is sorry that he messed things up for the team, but he can never voice this fact. Holden hides his feelings from his peers. The profanity helps set the tone for these topics when his regular words cannot. The use of profanity also sets the tone in the conversation with Horwitz, the cab driver. Holden is finally able to engage in a conversation about the ducks in Central Park. Profanity is used to help illustrate Holden's drunken state of mind before he decides to search for the ducks in the park.

In *The Chocolate War*, profanity is used to set the tone in Archie Costello's conversations with his peers. Profanity assists Archie in developing his relationship with

his peers. He always wants to appear in control, confident, and powerful. Obie, Archie's second-in-command, also uses more profanity around Archie. Archie's peers want to appear to be equals with Archie. The profanity allows me to see the tension in their relationship.

### **Add Description and Emotion**

Cormier and Salinger both employ profanity to bring their characters' feelings to life for the reader. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden interlaces his speech and thoughts with profanity in adjective roles. "*Fucking*, and other highly charged adjectives can be combined with a variety of incongruous nouns" to become new phrases (Hughes, 2006, p. 180). This usage in turn supports the development of the tone. Profane adjectives are used when Holden addresses the topics of contention: his brother's writing, the lost fencing equipment, and his school. His use of profane adjectives increases when he is around his peers in his dorm room. Holden's profanity is symbolic of his desire to resist adulthood. Holden tried to hold on to *things*, like the record for Phoebe or the ducks in Central Pond, in order to resist change. *Things* "will not abandon you; and the nights are still there, and the winds that move through the trees and across many lands" remain as well when people must grow and change (Rilke, 1984, p. 58). For Holden, even *things* could not save his mental battle against adulthood.

The most predominant usage of profanity in both novels is to display emotions. This follows the norm of usage in real life as well. Jay (1992) claims that dirty words are mainly "used by children to express anger and frustration and to insult others more than

they are used in descriptive statements” (p. 71). Holden is frustrated by the reality of growing up. Facing this reality makes him angry.

In *The Chocolate War*, Jerry is concerned when he hears Goober swear. Goober swears because he is so upset about what the Vigils are doing to Jerry and for his guilt regarding his own involvement in a Vigil assignment. Cormier’s novel contains significantly less profanity than Salinger’s novel—a comparison of 120 profane words to 813. Because the novel contains less, readers know that when profanity is used, the usage is significant. On pages 232 and 233, Archie calls Jerry to convince him to show up to the final fight at the football field. He uses profanity when speaking to Jerry and in his thoughts. The point of view changes to Obie's, and he also uses profanity in his thoughts to once again call Archie a bastard. The increase in profanity (six words on two pages) is an increase over the zero to two words per two pages that have occurred over the previous 48 pages. This increase signals a rise in emotions as well as a rise in the plot development. As a reader, I was able to appreciate the significance of the fight and what it meant for the characters involved. I was able to reminisce about my own experiences in school, as well as the times I hear profanity used amongst students now that I am a teacher.

When the Vigils’ black box makes an appearance at the fight, *frigging* is used here as a euphemism rather than *fuck*. The use of this euphemism shows that the black box being out is a serious matter for the Vigils, yet not serious enough to merit Cormier using the full profane word. “The participial form *frigging* has become a general purpose adjective expressing annoyance or frustration, often used as a euphemism for *fucking*,

since the original sexual sense is now virtually obsolete” (Hughes, 2006, p. 186). I am left wondering why *goddam* is okay but *fuck* is not in Salinger’s novel. One reason may be: "Obscene or offensive language is usually (but not always) unacceptable in 'polite society,' and therefore decorum requires some euphemistic manner of referring to obscenities indirectly" (Hughes, 2006, p. 183). *Goddam* began its origins in medieval times but became popular during the English Civil War (1642-1649) when “swearing became a significant discriminator of the opposing sides” (p. 203). The term has “developed many semantic nuances and grammatical functions, undergoing semantic loss of intensity as its functions have proliferated” (p. 203). “Some might argue that ‘God damn it’ is blasphemy and a sin because it flies in the face of the Third Commandment, but such a phrase would probably not cause God to bat an eye because calling upon God to damn something is neither sinful nor unbiblical” (Chirico, 2014, p. 58). In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden uses *goddam* continually to highlight his attitude of abhorrence in response to the phony world around him.

A world without swearing would not be a world without aggression, hate, or conflict, but a world bereft of a key means of defusing these emotions, of working them out. Swearing is an important safety valve, allowing people to express negative emotions without resorting to physical violence. (Mohr, 2013, p. 255)

As Sagarin (1962) discusses, the increase use of profanity or “the aura of quasi-respectability surrounding these words” is neither a “sign or the degeneration of the times” or “a sign of man’s liberation from outmoded and outlandish puritanism” (p. 31-

32). Instead, “language reflects and reinforces a vision of reality: in this instance the reality as envisaged and as fixed in the language is one” (Sagarin, 1962, p. 32).

Language allows humans to experience the world. This experience grants access to being. Humans do not control language; language controls us. “We are slaves of language, not its masters, and perhaps the first stage in any struggle for freedom must be a recognition that the state of slavery exists” (Sagarin, 1962, p. 174). In order to break free from this slavery, we must acknowledge that words are only words. Profanity is only language. Profanity is an essential part of communication. Profanity is a type of language used to express emotions—giving insight into our experiences as hidden agents when speakers do not explicitly state their emotions.

### **Highlight General Teenage Male Behavior**

Profanity can be considered a rite of passage in the adolescent language development. Children use profanity to juxtapose the formal development leading to adulthood. “The adolescent humor appreciation takes advantage of the new, formal reasoning abilities and greater depth of knowledge about the world” (Jay, 1992, p. 29). The result of this combination is an increase use of profanity. Salinger and Cormier use profanity to highlight the common language of adolescent males. “Boys have a larger and more offensive production vocabulary relative to girls” (Jay, 1992, p. 33). In the adolescent world without supervision, the rules of polite society are set aside. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden's profanity increases when he is with his peers absent from supervision. Although his peers use profanity sparingly, Holden uses profanity in almost

every sentence when he is with Ackley and Stradlater. His profanity increase shows his desire to fit in and appear to be in a linguistically dominant role in the friendship group.

In *The Chocolate War*, Archie is repeatedly considered a bastard by his peers. The use of profanity is highlighting his character traits as viewed by his peers. This description more accurately portrays the character rather than simply viewing him as mean, manipulative, or vile.

Of the 813 instances of profanity in *The Catcher in the Rye*, only 6 of those involve the word *fuck*. Of the 120 instances of profanity in *The Chocolate War*, the word *fuck* is mentioned zero times. “The most powerfully taboo term for copulation over several centuries, *fuck* is still regarded as unmentionable by the vast majority of middle-class people” (Hughes, 2006, p. 188). Salinger treaded lightly with the use of *fuck* in *The Catcher in the Rye*. The usage of *fuck* in Salinger’s novel only pertains to Holden being upset at finding the word scrawled on the wall in places frequented by children. For Holden, *fuck* represents the corrupt aspect of the adult world; his goal is to protect children, especially Phoebe, from the corrupt world. At the end of the novel before he goes to the mental institution, Holden realizes that he can never save the children because fuck *you* will always be written on walls. The word *fuck* “was unlisted in standard dictionaries from 1728 until 1965” (p. 188). At the time Salinger published *The Catcher in the Rye*, students could read the word *fuck* in his novel but not in the dictionary. The word had only been readable in the dictionary for nine years when *The Chocolate War* was published. Even though Archie is considered an evil bastard, he does not use the word *fuck* in his thoughts or conversations. The use of *fuck* has become

more popular in society than at the time of publication of *The Catcher in the Rye*. “With the increase of the printed word, and a concurrent frankness in literature by the early twentieth century, this or that ‘fucking something-or-another’ was passing from vernacular into written word” (Chirico, 2014, p. 55). In a 1989 research study, Timothy Jay found that of the 496 usages of taboo terms by children aged 4-14, 73 of those instances involved the word *fuck* (Jay, 1992, p. 53). *Fuck* is moving towards a wider acceptance. “According to the MPAA, using ‘fuck’ sexually will garner an R rating, but as a non-sexual epithet it receives the milder PG-13 rating” (Chirico, 2014, p. 26). In 2011, three songs on the top ten *Billboard* pop music chart had the word *fuck* not only in the song, but also in the title; “Cee Lo Green told various people to ‘Fuck You!’, Enrique Iglesias begged pardon for his rudeness in announcing ‘Tonight (I’m Fuckin’ You),’ and Pink told listeners that they needn’t be ‘Fuckin’ Perfect’ (Mohr, 2013, p. 247).

Although causal agents may change throughout the years, profanity usage has maintained a similar purpose for centuries:

In the thousands of years we’ve surveyed, we’ve seen people use many different swearwords to express the same things—aggression, insult, one-upmanship, and denigration, certainly, but also love and friendship, and the surprisingness or awesomeness of our experiences. Swear words were and are perhaps the best words we have with which to communicate extremes of emotion, both negative and positive. (Mohr, 2013, p. 253)

Understanding the role profanity plays in literature allows teachers to relate profanity to



real lived experiences. Understanding profanity leads to understanding more of the world we live in. “There should be an open-minded account of the genesis of open swearing and how the marked change in turn affected and continues to affect the languages we speak and the culture in which we live” (Chirico, 2014, p. 31). Ignoring profanity is like ignoring humanity. “To ignore it is to be ignorant of the totality of human expression” and I claim—experience (Jay, 1992, p. 244).

### **Research Question Three**

The third research question asked: What educational insights emerge from self-understanding and Gadamer's hermeneutics? This question focused on understanding how utilizing a philosophical approach centered on Gadamer’s hermeneutics can affect schools. By using Gadamer's philosophical ideas of hermeneutics, teachers can guide students to take ownership of their reading experience. Each reading is a personal experience that is different for each student. “Whenever we cannot understand a text, the reason is that it says nothing to *us* or has nothing to say” (Grondin, 1994, p. 115). This idea is one that cannot be represented on a multiple choice exam. Educators must embrace the idea that students respond differently and create different experiences. “So there is nothing to be surprised or complain about if understanding occurs differently from one period to another, or even from one individual to another” (Grondin, 1994, p. 115). No longer should teachers expect all students to achieve the same understanding when reading a novel. Each student can be allowed to participate in their own reading experience and bring their own horizons of understanding to the novel.

To understand something means to have related it to ourselves in such a way that we discover in it an answer to our own questions—but ‘our own’ in a way that these questions, too, are assimilated into a tradition and metamorphosed by it. Every act of understanding, even self-understanding, is motivated, stimulated by questions that determine in advance the sight lines of understanding. (Grondin, 1994, p. 116-117)

Students who struggle with finding their place in a structured, multiple-choice based world can flourish in a classroom deregulated by hermeneutical analysis. Delving into the horizons of understandings brought forth by readers creates an educational atmosphere where each student’s interpretation of a novel can have merit. Each literary analysis is suddenly involved in the development of a reader’s understanding and experience.

This research moves beyond the relativistic idea of every answer being valued equally, although that idea can apply. Hermeneutical analysis allowed me to discover my own moral relationship with profanity. This relationship was already always entangled in who I was and how I viewed the world. “When we enter into conversation with other people with the intent of identifying our presuppositions and letting our experiences challenge these presuppositions in order to better identify the good for human life, we risk our very existence” (Johnson, 2000, p. 71). By conducting this research, I risked my existence. I emerged from this project with a deeper understanding of profanity, of the novels, and of who I am as a teacher, reader, and person. Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics differs itself from relativism by avoiding a positivistic,

objective answer for questions while still maintaining a revelation of truth.

By revealing the different concepts of language and history held by Gadamer and his critics, philosophical hermeneutics can be defended against the charges of relativism. Philosophical hermeneutics bases itself on the ontological structure of the relation between understanding, language and Being. Hermeneutic understanding is an experience of truth that is the truth of Being as presented in language as intelligible. The historicity of understanding refers to the finitude of human understanding, not to the Being of its object. Gadamer may not be drawing an idealist or absolute conclusion from his thesis, but this cannot be construed as leading to relativism. He avoids those conclusions, because of his conviction that the meaning of Being and the truth revealed through language are also concealed by language. Hence, this represents an historical limitation for any theory claiming absolute validity. (Council for Research in Values and Philosophy)

My moral relationship discovered through the text is possible due to the uncertainty of not knowing if my response is correct. This approach to reading and interpretation allows for a mutual uncertainty that leads to a discovered truth through the fusion of horizons. “There can be no question of merely setting aside one’s prejudices; the object is, rather, to recognize and work them out interpretively” (Grondin, 1994, p. 111). “We can interpret only from the vantage points of our particular locations in the social world” (Greene, 1991, p. 301). Gadamer’s (1976) fusion of horizons allows us to gain understanding based on what we have already experienced. We cannot escape our past

experiences. “For the young particularly, the interpretive effort ought to be used with regard to the forms and messages of pop culture,” in order to allow students and teachers alike to better understand the chains limiting and manipulating their thoughts (Greene, 1991, p. 301). Profanity is part of students’ pop culture reality. “Self-definition self-understanding, I am saying, demand understanding of the frameworks in which we find ourselves, the texts that play upon our preconceptions of things, the languages in which our and other stories can be told” (Greene, 1991, p. 301).

The use of philosophical hermeneutics allows us to uncover the “view of life as inherently problematic, mysterious, question-worthy, and difficult” (Magrini, 2014, p. 89). Some aspects of the “problematic,” “question-worthy, and difficult” nature involves the issues our students currently face in their daily lives. These issues—

have to do with the human condition in these often desolate days, and in some ways they make the notions of world-class achievement, benchmarks and the rest seem superficial and limited, if not absurd. They extend beyond the appalling actualities of family breakdown, homelessness, violence, and the ‘savage inequalities’ described by Jonathan Kozol. (Greene, 1995, p. 378)

Reader-response criticism mixed with hermeneutics allows education to move beyond normal bounds—beyond the page, beyond the words, beyond the scantron—and into the realm of lived experiences in the current historical moment.

The task of historical understanding also involves acquiring the particular historical horizon, so that what we are seeking to understand can be seen in its true dimensions. If we fail to place ourselves in this way within the historical

horizon out of which tradition speaks, we shall misunderstand the significance of what it has to say to us. (Mueller- Vollmer, 1994, p. 270)

Gadamer's hermeneutics in the classroom allows for fusions of horizons between the teacher, students, and text. Suddenly, the lives of characters and readers are amalgamated into a shared experience. The amalgamation of shared experiences creates an environment where life experiences influence understanding. Learning is fused with the understanding that results from knowledge gained in lived experiences. This counteracts the positivistic approach of state standards and prescribed knowledge and skills.

Some educators may doubt whether the role profanity plays in literature has any merit in classrooms. Some teachers may question if understanding profanity will benefit students in any way. "There must be conscious participation in a work, a going out of energy, an ability to notice what is there to be noticed in the play, the poem, the quartet" or the novel containing profanity (Greene, 1995). If we open ourselves up to the level of understanding needed in order to hermeneutically analyze profanity, then we become more human. We move closer to understanding our own being in the world. Why should we keep this from students? I believe students deserve more from education than prearranged standards and skills.

Knowing about," even in the most formal academic manner, is entirely different from creating an unreal world imaginatively and entering into it perceptually, affectively, and cognitively. To introduce people to such engagement is to strike a delicate balance between helping learner pay heed—to attend to shapes,

patterns, sounds, rhythms, figures of speech, contours, lines, and so on—and freeing them to perceive particular works as meaningful. Indeed, the inability to control what is meaningful makes many traditional educators uneasy and strikes them as being at odds with conceptions of a norm. (Greene, 1995)

Without this level of analysis and understanding, students are not engaged in the learning process. “Evasions of complex problems, the embrace of facile formulations of the human predicament, the reliance on conventional solutions—all those factors I would say stand in the way of imagination and engagement with the arts” (Greene, 1995). We must combat these problems or else we will become numb to our own human experience.

### **Limitations**

Throughout this project, I found myself most limited by the positivistic box that I was placed in by the established structure of social science research. “Gadamer there argued against the idea, fostered by historicism and positivism, that the human sciences had to work out proper methods for themselves before they could attain to the status of science” (Grondin, 1994, p. 108). As Gadamer suggested, I have created my own combination of methods to understand the role, purpose, and result of profanity in the novels *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*. “The scientific character of the human sciences ‘can be understood more easily from the tradition of the concept of Bildung than from the modern idea of scientific method’” (Gadamer, 1987, cited in Grondin, 1994, p. 109). During the writing of the methods chapter, I had to ask myself

what *data* I wanted to collect. I never really viewed my research as data-driven. Instead, I viewed my research as a combination of education and philosophy—or *Bildung*. I knew I wanted to better understand the role of profanity in *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War* with the lens of hermeneutics. Without the involvement of human subjects, I was only concerned about better understanding the role of profanity through the lens of hermeneutics. My own understanding was the end result of this study. “Since the understanding can often be misled by erroneous fore-conceptions, and since this danger can never be wholly avoided, interpreters must endeavor to develop appropriate interpretive initiatives from within their own situation” (Grondin, 1994), p. 112). For this reason, I chose not to involve others in this study. No one else can tell a reader what they understand in a text except the reader. I cannot separate myself from the novels. I can only know my own interpretation and meaning related to profanity usage in the novels. Making claims about what others will think can only be classified as erroneous.

### **Future Research**

Future research will involve the inclusion of secondary English teachers. I am interested in studying other teachers’ analyses and interpretations of profanity in banned books. These projects can be conducted with different types of teachers—different ages, different backgrounds, different grade level taught, or different location. In regards to age, I would like to know how the understanding of profanity differs by age group. For background, I would like to know if profanity is more accepted based on similar styles of upbringing. For grade level, I would like to know if there is a progression of

acceptability for profanity in literature based on grade succession in school. For location, I would like to know if region differences in profanity in literature exist. These projects can also differentiate from the current study by including different banned novels. The understanding that can emerge from these studies will allow educators to better understand their own experiences with profanity and with the novels. Understanding lived experiences enables teachers to relate with students on a different level than forcing “knowledge” into students via multiple choice tests. Connecting with students through a shared understanding of lived experiences juxtaposes the positivistic nature of alpha-numerical standards acting as a driving force of education. Why should we only limit this level of education to upper-level college courses?

I would like to conduct this research in small focal groups or one-on-one interviews with teachers. Using groups would enable me to carry-out and witness the fusion of our horizons. One-on-one interviews would allow for a more intimate sharing of opinions, experiences, and understandings. Even though I would be considered the researcher, I would never be able to separate myself from the research. In either design, I am also actively involved in the research study.

My future research interests with this topic also include delving into the depths of student understanding. Student research will include middle school and high school students. What is the difference? Do high school students have a better understanding of their lived experiences? I would like to collect student experiences and their own understanding of the profanity in novels. Opinions and understandings of the use of profanity can differ between students for several reasons such as background, gender,



beliefs, age—just to name a few of the possibilities. I would like to better understand students' and teachers' views of profanity by using various banned books.

My future research can also include a hermeneutical analysis of banned books for reasons other than profanity. The above future projects can also be carried out with different banned novels. The chosen novels will be analyzed for literary content, age-level, intended readership, and year published. I would like to know if there is more of a tolerance for profanity in more contemporary literature. I would like to compare classic literature versus contemporary classics on the banned book lists as well.

I am interested in battling the idea of banning books. This school year, I was able to share information to seventh and eighth grade students who had no knowledge that books were ever officially banned from schools and readers. Sharing the history of banning books with students can deepen their appreciation of literature. I would like to gain insight into students' thoughts, perceptions, and opinions of banning books. After completing this project, I am prepared to involve other readers into the hermeneutic circle in order to gain insight into the fusions of horizons between multiple teacher-readers and student-readers. After all, "the realm of hermeneutic experience is the realm of shared meaning" (Johnson, 2000, p. 71).

I am also interested to gaining insight into the affect changing the physical reading environment can have on the hermeneutical understanding. I plan to read certain chapters of different banned novels in different locations to examine how the reading environment affects the experience of reading the text with profanity.

## **Conclusion**

The most important thing that I learned in doing this research is that true education needs to move beyond the positivistic knowledge and skills that is forced upon students and teachers through assigned curriculum and standards. Teachers can break free from the standardized chains and allow students to study topics that will allow for more understanding in their life. “Instead of encouraging youngsters and bringing them into a community of learners, tests drive students away” (Ayers, 2001, p. 114). Education must move beyond the multiple-choice questions into true moments of understanding. In order for this move to occur, teachers must be honest with themselves and with their students. “If tests were at any time embedded in a context linked to teaching and learning, that context has been lost, and tests now add to a profound sense that schooling is without authentic value” (Ayers, 2001, p. 114). This was the reality fourteen years ago, and this is still the reality today. In the ideal educational setting:

Teachers would tell the truth about standardized tests, they would stop pretending that tests are sanctified, agreed-on, god-given texts, and they would invite students into an important discussion that has direct bearing on their lives and from which they have been excluded. (Ayers, 2001, p. 115)

Analysis and discussion of the experiences that human beings have and our ability to share these experiences through language and fusions of horizons in Gadamer’s hermeneutics allows for true education—ensuring understanding can take place.

“Gadamer particularly emphasizes that hermeneutics as practical philosophy is characterized by its interest in questions, endlessness of its task, and the recognition of

the importance of communality” (Johnson, 2000, p. 70). The intermutual blending of understanding allows students to connect on a deeper level beyond verbal communication.

Gadamer’s hermeneutics allows educators to move beyond the scantron and into the realm of understanding. Literature is an art form that allows for an intimate relationship between reader and text. “Art too is just a way of living, and however one lives, one can, without knowing, prepare for it; in everything real one is closer in it, more its neighbor, than in the unreal half-artistic professions” (Rilke, 1984, p. 108). The twenty-first century learners who are being shaped by state standards are being prepared to fill positions in the half-artistic professions. Art, like literature, allows for a deeper appreciation for life. Students deserve to gain this understanding. Without doing this research, I would have not been able to understand the possibilities available to teachers and students reading novels. My ability to better understand the role of profanity in novels, *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Chocolate War*, has been expanded by my own understanding of my horizon and all that I bring to each reading of the novels. Profanity is symbolic of the corrupt element of the school and the students in *The Chocolate War*. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, the profanity symbolizes Holden’s desire to resist and rebel against adulthood. Profanity is more than a deterrent of novels; profanity is an additional level of the language that we speak, that we read, and that we live on a daily basis.

While completing this hermeneutical research study, I have learned that students deserve more than what the current system of education is providing. Students need to know that their interpretation—of a text, of the world, of themselves—is important. The

reader-response approach to literary criticism allows for an intimate relationship to develop between the reader and the object of interpretation—in this case the text. “The text is made to speak through interpretation” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 415). Answers move from the objective realm into the realm of interpretation and self-understanding.

“Understanding always includes interpretation” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 417). Although making inferences is embraced on standardized tests, allowing students the freedom to interpret a text is not. Students should be able to choose their reading materials and develop their own understanding of those texts at the secondary level. How can anyone else decide what is best for a developed reader? Student interest is a relevant aspect of curriculum development. Even though “a time you had to work as a team” might sound interesting to test makers, twenty-first century learners are not interested in handwriting a formulaic one page response about teamwork using strategically placed details and thesis support. Students are placed into boxes under the regime of standardized testing, and they are not allowed to leave until they reach a non-tested subject or meet a courageous teacher who will teach beyond the test. Curriculum choices, especially those involving reading materials, should be made with teachers and students mutually agreeing upon texts. “Tests feel arbitrary and hollow, even to those who succeed at them” (Ayers, 2001, p. 114). Students who receive high scores are still empty—longing for the knowledge and understanding humans are capable of beholding. “In order to assess or evaluate anything or anyone, we must begin by knowing what we value” (Ayers, 2001, p. 117). Do we value the ability to choose C when in doubt? Do we value the ability to locate the main idea of a nonfiction article? Do we value the repetitive

teaching of test-taking strategies year after year? No, these educational skills should not be the top standards valued in education. I am not claiming these tasks are worthless; however, I am claiming that these are not the most important skills students should take away from their education. I value the lived experiences. I value the hermeneutic circle in which the reader engages on a journey to self-understanding with a text. I value experiences, consequently I also value profanity.

## REFERENCES

- Adler, L. (2009). Curriculum challenges in schools. In E. Provenzo, & A. Provenzo (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of the social and cultural foundations of education*. (pp. 224-227). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963992.n107>
- Adler v. Board of Education of City of New York* .LII / Legal Information Institute.  
Retrieved from [https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/342/485#writing\\_USSC\\_CR\\_0342\\_0485\\_ZD2](https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/342/485#writing_USSC_CR_0342_0485_ZD2)
- Allan, K., & Burrige, K. (2006). *Forbidden words: Taboo and the censoring of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression (ABFFE) & National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC). (2009). *The kids' right to read report*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncac.org/>
- American Library Association. (2013). *Challenges by reason, initiator & institution for 1990- 99 and 2000-09*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/statistics>
- Anastaplo, G. (2013). Censor. In *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. Retrieved from: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/101977/censorship>
- Angier, N. (2005) Almost before we spoke, we swore. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/20/science/20curs.html?oref=login&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/20/science/20curs.html?oref=login&_r=0)

- Atwell, N. (2007). *The reading zone*. New York: Scholastic.
- Ayers, W. (2001). *To teach: The journey of a teacher*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bens, J. H. (1971). Taboo or not taboo. *College Composition and Communication*, 22(3), 215-220.
- Berlo, D.K. (1960). *The process of communication: An introduction to theory and practice*. San Francisco: Rinehart Press.
- Brizee, A. & Tompkins, J. C. (2008). *Response criticism (1960s-present): What do you think?* Purdue University.
- Bohman, J. (2013). Critical theory. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. E. N. Zalta (Ed.). Retrieved from:  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2013/entries/critical-theory/>
- Bowers, J. S., & Pleydell-Pearce, C. W. (2011). Swearing, euphemisms, and linguistic relativity. *Plos ONE*, 6(7), 1-8. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0022341
- Brooks, W., & Browne, S. (2012). Towards a culturally situated reader-response theory. *Children's Literature in Education*, 43(1), 74-85.
- Buckler, P.P. (1991). Combining personal and textual experience: A reader-response approach to teaching American literature. In J. Cahalan and D. Downing (Eds.), *Practicing Theory in Introductory College Literature Courses*. (pp.36-46). Urbana, IL: NCTE
- Cavendish, R. (1998). Execution of Florentine friar Savonarola. *History Today*, 48(5).

- censor. (n.d.). *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved May 15, 2014, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/censor>
- Chesser, P. (2002). The burning of the library of Alexandria. Retrieved from: <http://ehistory.osu.edu/world/articles/articleview.cfm?aid=9>
- Chirico, R. (2014). *Damn! A cultural history of swearing in modern America*. Durham, NC: Pitchstone Publishing.
- Collins, C.J. (1996). Finding the way: Morality and young adult literature. In K. Vandegrift (Ed.), *Mosaics of meaning: Enhancing the intellectual life of young adults through story*, 157-183. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Cormier, R. (1974). *The chocolate war*. New York: Random House.
- Cornell, D., Rosenfeld, M., & Carlson, D.G. (Eds.). (1992). *Deconstruction and the possibility of justice*. New York: Routledge.
- Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. *Introduction*. Retrieved from: <http://www.crvp.org/book/Series02/IIA-11/introduction.htm>
- Counts, G.S. (1932). *Dare the schools build a new social order?* New York: Stratford Press.
- Coyne, S. M., Callister, M., Stockdale, L. A., Nelson, D. A., & Wells, B. M. (2012). “A helluva read”: Profanity in adolescent literature. *Mass Communication & Society*, 15(3), 360-383. doi:10.1080/15205436.2011.638431
- Curtis, V., & Biran, A. (2001). Dirt, disgust, and disease: Is hygiene in our genes? *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 44, 17–31. doi:10.1353/pbm.2001.0001



- Darwin, C. (1872). *The expression of the emotions in man and animals*. London: John Murray. 257-257.
- Definitions of censorship. (1999). Culture shock. Public Broadcasting Station. Retrieved from: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/whodecides/definitions.h>
- DeScioli, P., & Kurzban, R. (2012). A solution to the mysteries of morality. *Psychological Bulletin*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1037/a0029065
- Dewey, J. (1938). Logic: The theory of inquiry. *The later works, 1953*, 1-549.
- Dilthey, W. (1985). The understanding of other persons and their life-expressions. *The hermeneutic reader*. (K. Mueller-Norman). New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- Dilthey, W. (1996). *Selected works*. R.A. Makkreel and F. Rodi (Eds.). Vol. 4. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Edsforth, R., & Bennett, L. (1991). *Popular culture and political change in modern America*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Eisner, E. W. (1976). Educational connoisseurship and criticism: Their form and functions in educational evaluation. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 135-150.
- First amendment in schools: A resource guide. (n.d.). National Coalition Against Censorship. Retrieved from: <http://ncac.org/resource/first-amendment-in-schools/>
- Fish, S. (1980). *Is there a text in this class?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Foerstel, H.N. (1994). *Banned in the U.S.A.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Frequently challenged books of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (2014). American Library Association.

Retrieved January 31, 2014 from

<http://www.ala.org/bbooks/frequentlychallengedbooks/top10>

Freund, E. (1987). *The return of the reader: Reader-response criticism*. London: Methuen.

Friedrich von Schlegel, K.W. (2013). In *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Retrieved from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/527546/Friedrich-von-Schlegel>

Gadamer, H.G. (1975) *Truth and method*. London: Sheed and Ward.

Gadamer, H.G. (1981). *Reason in the age of science*. Trans. F.G. Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Greene, M. (1991). *Values education in the contemporary moment*. Clearing House, 64(5), 301.

Greene, M. (1995). Art and imagination. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(5), 378.

Grondin, J. (1994). *Introduction to philosophical hermeneutics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Grumet, M. R. (1988). *Bitter milk: Women and teaching*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Hall, P., & Jay, T.B. (1988, March). Children's use of obscene speech. Presented at Popular Culture Association Meeting, New Orleans.

Halstall, P. (1998). Modern history sourcebook: index librorum prohibitorum, 1557-1966. Fordham University. Retrieved from: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/indexlibrorum.asp>

Hauser, M.D. (2013). "Don't run away from teaching pop culture." *Education Week*.

Retrieved from:

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/02/06/20hauser.h32.html>

Heidegger, Martin (1962). *Being and time*. New York: Harper & Row.

Herrmann, G. M. (2010). Culture wars: An encyclopedia of issues, viewpoints, and voices. *Choice*, 47(9), 1662.

Holzer, E. (2007). Ethical dispositions in text study: a conceptual argument. *Journal of Moral Education*, 36(1), 37-49. doi:10.1080/03057240601185455

Horberg, E. J., Oveis, C., Keltner, D., & Cohen, A. B. (2009). Disgust and the moralization of purity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(6), 963-976. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0017423>

Hudson, D.L. (2003). *The silencing of student voices: Preserving free speech in America's schools*. Nashville, TN: First Amendment Center.

Huebner, B., Dwyer, S., & Hauser, M. (2009). The role of emotion in moral psychology. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 13(1), 1-6.

Hughes, G. (2006). *An encyclopedia of swearing: The social history of oaths, profanity, foul language, and ethnic slurs in the English-speaking world*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

Ihde, D. (1998). *Expanding hermeneutics*. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Iser, W. (1997). The significance of fictionalizing. *Anthropoetics*, 3(2), 1-9.

- Iskander, S. P. (1987). Readers, realism, and Robert Cormier. *Children's Literature* 15(1), 7-18. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Retrieved April 21, 2014, from Project MUSE database.
- Island Tree Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico 457 U.S. 853 (1982). Retrieved from Lexis Nexis Academic database.
- Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L.A. (2012). *Thinking with theory in qualitative research: Viewing data across multiple perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Jalongo, M. R., & Creany, A. D. (1991). Censorship in children's literature: What every educator should know. *Childhood Education*, 67(3), 143-148.
- Jay, T.B. (1989). The emergence of an obscene lexicon. Presented at Popular Culture Association meeting, New Orleans.
- Jay, T.B. (1992). *Cursing in America*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Jay, T.B. (2000). *Why we curse: a neuro-psycho-social theory of speech*. Philadelphia, PA: Benjamins.
- Johnson, M. (1987). *The body in the mind: The bodily basis of meaning, imagination, and reason*. University of Chicago Press.
- Johnson, P.A. (2000). *On Gadamer*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Kafle, N. P. (2011). Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified. *Bodhi: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 5, 181-200.
- Keeling, K. (1999). The misfortune of a man like ourselves: Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War* as Aristotelian tragedy. *The Alan Review*, 26(2), 9-12.

- Koeller, D.W. (1999). The burning of the books. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.thenagain.info/webchron/china/bookburn.html>
- Kolnai, A. *On disgust*. (2004). B. Smith & C. Korsmeyer. (Eds.). Chicago and La Aalle, IL.: Open Court.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1992). Experientialist philosophy. Retrieved from  
<https://georgelakoff.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/experientialist-philosophy-lakoff-and-johnson-1992.pdf>
- Lawlor, L. (2014). Jacques Derrida. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, E.N., Zalta (Ed.). Retrieved from:  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/derrida/>.
- Linder, D. (2002). The trial of Galileo. Retrieved from:  
<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/galileo/galileoaccount.html>
- Magrini, J. W. (2014). *Social efficiency and instrumentalism in education: Critical essays in ontology, phenomenology, and philosophical hermeneutics*. New York: Routledge.
- Malady, M. J. X., (2013). Why do we hate certain words? The curious phenomenon of word aversion. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the\\_good\\_word/2013/04/word\\_aversion\\_hate\\_moist\\_slacks\\_crevice\\_why\\_do\\_people\\_hate\\_words.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_good_word/2013/04/word_aversion_hate_moist_slacks_crevice_why_do_people_hate_words.html)

- Malpas, J. (2013). *Hans-Georg Gadamer*. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edward N. Zalta (ed.) Retrieved January 31 from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/gadamer>
- Masterson, W. (2007a). Banned books. Retrieved from: [http://viking.coe.uh.edu/~wmasterson/cuin7337/banned\\_books.htm](http://viking.coe.uh.edu/~wmasterson/cuin7337/banned_books.htm)
- Masterson, W. (2007b). History of book censorship. Retrieved from: <http://viking.coe.uh.edu/~wmasterson/cuin7337/history.htm>
- McGinn, C. (2011). *The meaning of disgust*. Oxford University Press.
- Millán-Zaibert, E. (2007). *Friedrich Schlegel and the emergence of Romantic philosophy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Miller, W.I. (1997). *The anatomy of disgust*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Miltner, R. (2011). Catching Holden through a cultural studies lens. In Joseph Dewey (Ed.) *Critical Insights: The Catcher in The Rye*, 33-48.
- Mohr, M. (2013). *Holy sh\*t: A brief history of swearing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Morris, E.K. (1993). Behavior analysis and mechanism: One is not the other. *The Behavior Analyst*, 16, 25-43.
- Mueller-Vollmer, K. (1985). *The hermeneutic reader*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company.
- National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE). (1982). Statement on censorship and professional guidelines. Urbana, IL.

- Neuberg, S. L., Smith, D. M., Hoffman, J. C., & Russell, F. J. (1994). When we observe stigmatized and “normal” individuals interacting: Stigma by association. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 196–209.  
doi:10.1177/0146167294202007
- Nussbaum, M. (1999). “Secret sewers of vice”: Disgust, bodies, and the law. In S.A. Bandes (Ed.), *The passions of law*. New York: New York University Press.
- Oneal, Z. (1993). “They tell you to do your own thing, but they don’t mean it.”: Censorship and *The Chocolate War*. *Censored Books: Critical Viewpoints*, 179-184.
- Pagels, E. (2006). *Revelations: Visions, prophecy, and politics in the book of revelation*. New York: Penguin.
- Pagliai, V. (2009). The art of dueling with words: Toward a new understanding of verbal duels across the world. *Oral Tradition*, 24(1), 61-88.
- Pinar, W. F. (2004). *What is curriculum theory?* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Pitzner, E. (2002). In defense of adolescent literature: A critical look at *The Chocolate War*. Retrieved from: <http://murphylibrary.uwlax.edu/digital/jur/2002/pitzner.pdf>
- Pole, N. (2013). Disgust discussed: Introduction to the special section. *Psychological Bulletin*, 139(2), 269-270. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0032073>
- profane. (n.d.). *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved April 27, 2013, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/profane>

- profanity. (n.d.). *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved April 27, 2013, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/profanity>
- Public education, democracy, free speech: The ideas that define and unite us.* (n.d.). National Education Association & National Coalition Against Censorship.
- Ramberg, B. & Gjesdal, K. (2009). Hermeneutics. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*(Summer 2009 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/hermeneutics>
- Read, A. W. (1934). An obscenity symbol. *American Speech*, 9(4), 264-278.
- Reissenweber, B. (2012). When is it all right to use profanity?. *Writer*, 125(4), 7.
- Rilke, R.M. (1984). *Letters to a young poet*. New York: Random House.
- Rossen-Knill, D. (1999). Creating and manipulating fictional worlds: A taxonomy of dialogue in fiction. *Journal of Literary Semantics*, XXVIII/1, 20-45.
- Rozin, P., & Fallon, A. E. (1987). A perspective on disgust. *Psychological review*, 94(1), 23.
- Rozin, P., Lowery, L., & Ebert, R. (1994). Varieties of disgust faces and the structure of disgust. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66(5), 870-881.  
doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.66.5.870>
- Sagarin, E. (1962). *The anatomy of dirty words*. New York: The Polyglot Press.
- Salinger, J.D. (1945). *The catcher in the rye*. New York: Back Bay Books.
- Schleiermacher, F. (1998). *Hermeneutics and criticism and other writings* (A. Bowie, Trans.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press (Original work published



1838).

- Schubert, W. (2009). Curriculum theory. In E. Provenzo, & A. Provenzo (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of the social and cultural foundations of education*. (pp. 227-229). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412963992.n108>
- Schultz, D.A., & Vile, J.R. (2005). *The encyclopedia of civil liberties in America* (106-108). Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe Reference.
- Slattery, P. (2006). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era*. New York: Routledge.
- Slattery, P. (2008). Academic freedom: The ethical imperative. *Childhood Education*, 85(1), 47.
- Slattery, P. (2013). *Curriculum development in the postmodern era: Teaching and learning in the age of accountability*. New York: Routledge.
- Slattery, P., Krasny, K.A., & O'Malley, M.P. (2007). Hermeneutics, aesthetics, and the quest for answerability: a dialogic possibility for reconceptualizing the interpretive process in curriculum studies. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 39(5), 537-558.
- Smythe, E., & Spence, D. (2012). Re-viewing literature in hermeneutic research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 11(1), 12-25.
- Sobre-Denton, M., & Simonis, J. (2012). Do you talk to your teacher with that mouth?: F\* ck: A documentary and profanity as a teaching tool in the communication classroom. *Communication Teacher*, 26(3), 178-193.

- Sohn, E. (2010). Why Do People Swear? *Discovery news*. Retrieved from <http://news.discovery.com/human/f-bomb-swear-curse-words-biden.html>
- Speight, A. (2011). Friedrich Schlegel. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. E.N. Zalta (Ed.). Retrieved from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=schlegel>
- Steed, J. P. (Ed.). (2002). *The catcher in the rye: new essays*. New York: Peter Lang.
- St. Pierre, E. A. (2011). Post qualitative research: The critique and the coming after. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*, (pp. 611-626). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Strategies for Kids Information for Parents. (n.d.). Module 2: Child development and behavior. New Zealand Government. Ministry of Social Development. Retrieved from <http://www.skip.org.nz/documents/resources/research-and-training/training-module-child-development-and-behaviour.pdf>
- Student handbook. (2014). North Zulch Independent School District.
- Sutton, K. (1992). Profanity in schools: Academic freedom and the first. *Clearing House*, 65(3), 146.
- Tarr, C. A. (2002). The absence of moral agency in Robert Cormier's *The Chocolate War*. *Children's Literature*, 30, 96-122.
- Taubman, P. (2009). *Teaching by numbers*. New York: Routledge.
- Thomas, B. (2012). *Fictional dialogue: Speech and conversation in the modern and postmodern novel*. University of Nebraska Press.

- Tracy, D. (1998). Is there hope for the public realm? Conversation as interpretation. *Social Research*, 65(3), 597-609.
- Tooby, J., & Cosmides, L. (2010). Groups in mind: The coalitional roots of war and morality. In Henrik Hogh-Olesen (Ed.), *Human morality and sociality: Evolutionary and comparative perspectives* (pp. 91–234). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tybur, J. M., Lieberman, D., & Griskevicius, V. (2009). Microbes, mating, and morality: Individual differences in three functional domains of disgust. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97, 103–122. doi:10.1037/a0015474
- Tybur, J. M., Lieberman, D., Kurzban, R., & Descioli, P. (2013). Disgust: Evolved function and structure. *Psychological Review*, 120(1), 65-84. Retrieved from <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1317584610?accountid=7082>
- Tyson, L. (1999). *Critical theory today*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc.
- Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical theory today: User friendly guide*. New York: Routledge.
- Van Patten, J. (2009). Academic freedom. In E. Provenzo, & A. Provenzo (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of the social and cultural foundations of education*. (pp. 3-6). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Vessey, D. (2006). Philosophical hermeneutics. *The Blackwell Companion to Pragmatism*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 209-214.
- Vile, J.R., Hudson, D.L., & Schultz, D.A. (2009). *The encyclopedia of the first amendment*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

*Virgil v School Board of Columbia County, Florida*. 862 f.2d 1517 at 1521, 1522–25

(1989). 50 *West's Education Law Reporter* 718 at 722, 723–26

Wise, A. (2003). What's wrong with teacher certification? *Newsletter of the National*

*Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education*, 11 (2): 1-3.

Wright, K. (2004). On what we have in common: The universality of philosophical

hermeneutics. *Renascence*, 56(4), 235-255.