

2007

## Care ethic and teacher effectiveness

Laura Nguyen  
*San Jose State University*

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CARE ETHIC  
AND TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Elementary Education

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Laura Nguyen

August 2007

UMI Number: 1448889

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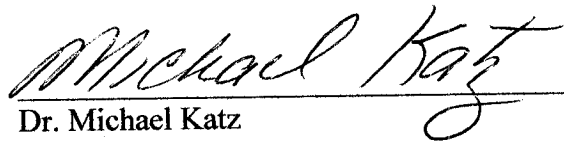
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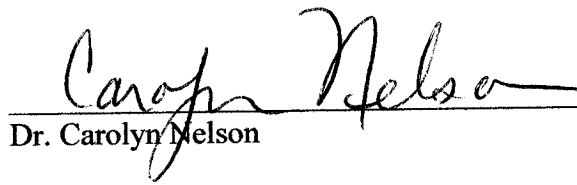
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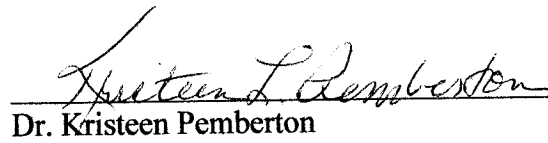
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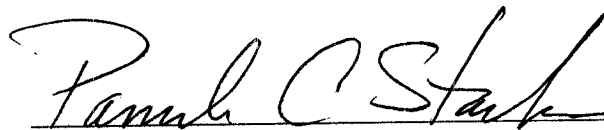
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carolyn Nelson".

Dr. Carolyn Nelson

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kristeen L. Pemberton".

Dr. Kristeen Pemberton

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A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pamela C. Stach".

ABSTRACT

CARE ETHIC  
AND TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

by Laura Nguyen

What makes someone an effective teacher? This educationally significant question has been the topic of an ongoing national debate. In spite of the general agreement on the extreme importance of high-quality and effective teaching, educators, researchers, and policy makers have not been able to reach a consensus on the specific qualities, characteristics, or pedagogical practices that produce an effective teacher.

Drawing from Milton Mayeroff's and Nel Noddings's theoretical views of caring, this study attempts to fill a research gap as it explores—through students' perceptions—the role of care ethic on teacher effectiveness. Using the teacher-student relationship as a critical variable, this investigation seeks to understand—through the perceptions of eight students who have had significantly influential teachers—what students think makes an effective teacher, and if caring plays a role in that effectiveness.

The participants of this study identified care as an essential feature of their teachers' characteristics and pedagogical practices.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people:

The handful of my caring teachers--from Kindergarten to college--for showing me that "caring is helping the other person grow and actualize himself."

The eight participants who gave generously of your time to this study. Thank you for sharing the inspiring stories of your inspiring teachers.

Milton Mayeroff and Nel Noddings whose work inspired this thesis.

Nel Noddings for the suggestion of literature and for your inspiring and revolutionary philosophy of education.

Colette Rabin for your time and feedback as a critical reader.

Dr. Victoria Harper for your guidance during the preliminary stage of this thesis.

Dr. Carolyn Nelson for dedicating your valuable time to this thesis as a committee member. Thank you also for the wonderful and transformative teacher education I have received at SJSU's Department of Elementary Education.

Dr. Kristeen Pemberton for giving of your time to this thesis as a committee member. Thank you for being a part of my transformation, and more importantly, for modeling effective teaching and caring for me.

Dr. Michael Katz, my thesis advisor, for instilling passion in me by introducing me to care theories. Thank you for the care and passion you gave to this thesis. Most importantly, thank you for teaching me about caring through your own example.

And lastly, Richard and William, for showing me that caring is unconditional.

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## **CHAPTER ONE THE CRITICAL RESEARCH PROBLEM**

### **What Is Teacher Effectiveness?**

What makes someone an effective teacher? This perennial and educationally significant question has been the topic of an ongoing national debate. In spite of the general agreement on the extreme importance of high-quality and effective teaching, educators, researchers, policy makers, and the public have not been able to reach a consensus on the specific qualities, characteristics, or pedagogical practices that produce an effective teacher.

Nevertheless, teacher effectiveness matters. In fact, it might be the most important school-related component influencing student achievement. A number of researchers have concluded that teacher effectiveness is a powerful predictor of student performance. Linda Darling-Hammond (2000) reports that measures of teacher quality and effectiveness--based on specific qualifications--are more strongly related to student performance than any other educational factors, such as students' socio-economic status or language skills, class size, educational spending, and teacher salaries.

In contrast to Darling-Hammond's approach, which equates teacher effectiveness with a specific set of qualifications, Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (1998) seek to measure teacher quality in terms of student performance outcomes. Their research identifies teacher effectiveness as the most influential factor in student achievement. From their analysis of 400,000 students in 3,000 schools, they conclude that, while school quality is an important factor in student achievement, the most important predictor is teacher effectiveness. In comparison, teacher education, experience,

and class size have a small role.

Hanushek (1992) reports that the difference between having a good teacher and a bad teacher can be quite significant. He estimates that this difference can exceed one grade-level equivalent in a student's annual achievement growth. Likewise, Sanders (1998) and Sanders and Rivers (1998) assert that the most influential factor affecting student performance is teachers, and that the effects of teachers on student achievement are both cumulative and additive. In addition, they believe that lower-achieving students are most likely to benefit from improvement in teacher effectiveness.

Although these studies do not agree on what constitutes a quality or effective teacher, they all conclude that teachers and their effectiveness are a critical contributor to student achievement. These findings present a strong case for the need for more research and greater understanding of what really accounts for these effects.

Research on teacher effectiveness should be continuously encouraged because of another compelling factor—spending. In 2002 alone, the United States invested 192 billion in teacher pay and benefits. Furthermore, billions of dollars are spent each year on teacher professional development. The Consortium of Policy Research in Education at the University of Wisconsin reports in 2007 that schools spend on the average \$7,700 per teacher annually. This can add up to over 22 billion dollars each year. Considering the size of such an investment, greater clarity on what really constitutes effective teaching can guide policy makers in their future decisions and inform the wisdom of current educational practices, such as whom to hire, whom to retain, and what to include in teacher education and professional-development training.

Jennifer King Rice (2003) believes that in spite of the seemingly inconclusive and

inconsistent evidence, policy makers, unfortunately, appear to be side-stepping research (or depending only on the studies that support their positions) to move forward with their teacher policies.

Rice suggests that policy makers and educators need to take into consideration the complexity of teaching. In her view, teaching is a multi-layered experience "influenced by the many elements of teacher quality." (p. vii) Most research, according to Rice, does not seek to capture interactions among the multiple dimensions of teacher quality and effectiveness. As a result, Rice contends, there are major gaps in the research that still need to be explored.

In agreement with Rice, I believe that current research has failed to acknowledge the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of teaching. More importantly, I wonder if one of these dimensions is a moral one. To address this question and to bridge one of the research gaps, my study seeks to explore the moral aspect of teaching through care theories, which I believe, have not been studied enough in educational research. My investigation will draw from the theoretical framework of two care theorists--Nel Noddings and Milton Mayeroff--whose work, I believe, has not received the attention it merits.

### **Why Should We Care About "Caring?"**

Instead of endorsing unreflective reform practices that rely on over-simplified solutions such as new methodologies, more testing, and more mandated curriculum, Nel Noddings (2002) encourages us to reevaluate our educational goals by asking ourselves these fundamental questions: "What do we want for our students?" "What do they need from education, and what does our society need?" In response, Noddings offers a thoughtful alternative, one I believe might be worthy of our examination.

Our society does not need to make its children first in the world in math and science. It needs to care for its children. . . . In direct opposition to the current emphasis on standards, a national curriculum and national assessment, I have argued that our main educational aim should be to encourage growth of competent, caring, and moral people. (Noddings, 2002, p. 92)

Caring, in Noddings's view, is a central feature of a successful pedagogy. Noddings believes that the capacity to establish and maintain caring relationships with others is critical to living a flourishing human life and should be the central aim of education. Caring, for Noddings, is not merely an instrumental but essentially intrinsic good that lies at the heart of what it means to develop educated persons. Furthermore, Noddings (2005) argues that the school cannot realize its academic goals without providing care for its students.

We must take public responsibility for raising healthy, competent, caring, and happy children. I will argue that the school must play a major role in this task, and I will argue that the school cannot achieve its academic goals without providing caring and continuity for its students. (Noddings, 2005, p. 14)

Milton Mayeroff (1971) contends: "To care for another person is to help him grow and actualize himself." To Noddings and Mayeroff, caring holds promising potential. Yet, in my opinion, caring has not been studied extensively in the field of education, especially in its relation to teacher effectiveness. I believe researchers and policy makers may be overlooking the importance of care ethic in education because, a) caring has been traditionally perceived as a non-academic domain, one exclusively reserved for the home and church and, b) caring has been associated with a "soft, permissive approach" to education, one that lacks academic rigor. In addition, I suspect that few educators or policy makers have been exposed to caring—to the work of Mayeroff or Noddings and other care theorists—to have had the opportunity to reflect deeply on this topic.



Hence, my study seeks to explore caring and its role in relation to teacher effectiveness. My investigation will examine the application of Mayeroff's and Noddings's care theories through eight students' perceptions of their effective teachers—those teachers who have made a significant and lasting difference in these students' lives.

## **CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this review of literature, I will present how my investigation--students' perceptions of effective teaching in general, and their views of caring as a critical part of a teacher-student relationship--relates to a larger body of literature.

I have not reviewed an extensive body of literature on effective teaching since my own investigation is essentially the application of the care theories of Milton Mayeroff and Nel Noddings to students' perceptions of effective teachers. However, I will make reference to some of the most recent research on teaching effectiveness that currently informs teacher policies and the content of many teacher-preparation programs. In addition, I will address what I perceive as an important research gap that might be further explored regarding teaching effectiveness. I suspect that research on effective teaching has not given sufficient attention to the centrality of teacher-student relationships in general and to the role of personal caring within these relationships.

Since my study will examine the students' views of caring on the teacher-student relationship, I will review a body of literature which relates to caring and caring relationships within the context of teaching and teaching effectiveness.

Finally, I will present an in-depth analysis on the care theories of Milton Mayeroff and Nel Noddings and their theoretical implications regarding teaching and education.

### **TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS**

#### **Part I. Pedagogical Practices of Effective Teaching**

In this section, I will briefly present some of the latest research regarding teacher

effectiveness. I have chosen to review the work of Linda Darling-Hammond as I believe she is considered an authority in the area of effective teaching. It appears from my research that her work might have informed the content of many teacher-preparation programs.

In their latest book, *A Good Teacher in Every Classroom*, Darling Hammond and Baratz-Snowden (2005)--representing the National Academy of Education Committee on Teacher Education--document the core strategies and practices that research has found to have contributed to effective teaching. Their conclusion has resulted from their analyses of an extensive body of literature. The recommendations they make are based on studies conducted by: Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 1998; Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Macdonald, 2000; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Shulman, 2002; and Darling-Hammond, Bransford, LePage, Hammerness, and Duffy, 2005. Following is a summary, according to the authors and the NAECTE, of the pedagogical practices effective teachers should engage in:

- 1) Know the subject well and how to teach it to children.
- 2) Understand how children learn and develop.
- 3) Be able to observe, monitor, and assess children to gain accurate feedback about their learning and development.
- 4) Know themselves--understand their own language and culture, and know how to learn about other cultures with different language patterns and ways of knowing.
- 5) Be able to develop a curriculum and learning activities that connect what they know about their students with what students need to learn.
- 6) Know how to teach subject matter in ways that are accessible to all learners.

- 7) Use different assessment tools for addressing different learning needs.
- 8) Know how to use systematic inquiry to diagnose a student's needs.
- 9) Be able to evaluate why children may be behaving in particular ways.
- 10) Be able to develop interventions and revise instructional strategies as necessary.
- 11) Engage students in active learning.
- 12) Set high expectations for high-quality work.
- 13) Provide constant feedback.
- 14) Design and manage a well-functioning and respectful classroom environment.
- 15) Involve parents in the learning process.

Looking at this list of recommendations, one might note that there is minimal emphasis on the quality or nature of the affective/emotional side of teacher-student relationships.

## **Part II. Characteristics of Effective Teachers**

### **1. Research Framework for NCLB:**

In this part of my review, I will present Jennifer King Rice's (2003) view on the inconclusive nature of the research framework which might have played a role in President Bush's *No Child Left Behind* legislation. Drawing from a substantial body of research regarding teacher quality and effectiveness, Rice contends that there are large gaps in the literature regarding teacher effectiveness that can be further explored.

The Bush Administration's proposal, which led to the federal legislation *No Child Left Behind*, specifies what is defined as a "highly qualified" teacher. The proposal operated on the premise that teacher excellence is critical to the realization of student achievement. *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), along with typical compensation and hiring systems, assumes the following

attributes as characteristic of a high quality and effective teacher: 1) years of teaching experience, 2) teacher certification, 3) engagement in certain type of coursework, and 4) performance on standardized assessment.

In *Teacher Quality: Understanding the Effectiveness of Teacher Attributes*, Jennifer King Rice (2003) presents the summary of a body of literature she reviewed regarding teacher qualities and effectiveness. Some of the studies Rice reviewed might have informed NCLB compliance regarding teachers. The framework Rice shows includes five broad categories of measurable teacher characteristics and attributes assumed to reflect teacher quality. Below is what Rice presents as the highlights of empirical evidence.

**a. Teacher Experience:**

Several studies have discovered a positive effect of teaching experience on teacher effectiveness. Specifically, the effect of "learning by doing" is most obvious in the early years of teaching.

**b. Teacher Preparation Programs and Degrees:**

Some research suggests that the prestige of the school a teacher attended has a positive effect on student achievement, especially at the secondary level.

Evidence has also demonstrated that teachers with advanced degrees have a positive influence on high school science and mathematics when the degrees earned were in these subjects. The evidence regarding the influence of advanced degrees at the elementary level is mixed.

**c. Teacher Certification:**

Research has suggested a positive effect of certified teachers on high school mathematics

achievement when the certification is in mathematics. Darling-Hammond (2000) reports that "measures of teacher preparation and certification are by far the strongest correlates of student achievement in reading and mathematics, both before and after controlling for student poverty and language status."

Studies show very little clear impact of alternative-route or emergency certification on student performance in either science or mathematics, as compared to teachers who have acquired standard certification.

**d. Teacher Coursework:**

Studies have indicated that teacher coursework in both pedagogy and subject area taught has a positive impact on educational outcomes.

Pedagogical coursework appears to contribute to teacher effectiveness at all grade levels, especially when coupled with content knowledge. The importance of content coursework appears to be most pronounced at the high school level.

**e. Teachers' Own Test Scores:**

Tests that measure teachers' literacy levels or verbal abilities have been shown to be associated with higher levels of student achievement.

**2. Research Context**

Although research can and should play a role in decisions regarding teacher policies, Rice believes that many policy makers are relying only on those studies that support their positions and ignoring those that do not. According to Rice, literature on teacher quality and effectiveness is currently perceived as inconsistent and inconclusive. Much of this perception, Rice believes, has been fueled by a set of analyses performed by Eric Hanushek in the past two decades.

In his meta-analysis of studies examining the impact of key educational resources on student achievement, Hanushek (1981, 1986, 1996, 1997) concluded that there is little or no systematic relationship between student performance and educational input. For example, in regard to teacher characteristics, Hanushek (1997) identified 171 estimates related to the impact of "teacher education" on student performance. Of these, he reported that 9% were statistically significant and positive, 5% were statistically significant and negative, and 86% were statistically insignificant. In addition, Hanushek includes 41 estimates of the impact of teacher test scores on student outcomes. Of these, 37% were statistically significant and positive, 10% were statistically significant and negative, and 54% were not significant. Finally, of the 207 studies that measured the effect of teaching experience, 29% of the estimates were statistically significant and positive, 5% were statistically significant and negative, and 66% were not statistically significant.

Although Hanushek's conclusions have been hotly challenged by other researchers, the fact remains--according to Rice--that empirical evidence has been inconclusive regarding the specific characteristics that are linked with teacher effectiveness.

Harold Wenglinsky (2002) contends that much of quantitative research on teaching and learning has conformed to a common pattern, resulting in little relationship between teacher inputs and student achievement. The Coleman Report (1966) or Equality of Educational Opportunity Study measured seven teacher characteristics: years of teaching experience, educational attainment, scores on vocabulary test, ethnicity, parents' educational attainment, whether the teacher grew up in the area where he or she was teaching, and the teacher's attitude toward teaching. This study found that these characteristics explain less than 1% of student test scores. The findings of other meta-analyses of studies, Wenglinsky tells us, were as inconclusive as those

of the Coleman Report. Less than 33% of the studies could provide a link between student outcomes and teacher experience, and about 10% could provide a link between teacher educational attainment and student outcomes. From such mixed results, the meta-analyses came to divergent conclusions.

In her attempt to explain the inconclusive results of research, Rice contends that there are many personal characteristics that are important for a good teacher to have but cannot be measured. Current studies, Rice observes, have mostly focused on aspects of teacher background that are measurable such as certification, education, and years of experience. Hence, personal characteristics that are difficult to measure have been ignored. Furthermore, Rice insists that research has failed to acknowledge the multi-dimensional nature of teaching and the interactions among these dimensions. Consequently, Rice believes that there remains a large gap in research regarding the area of teacher quality and effectiveness.

Rather, teacher policies need to reflect the reality that teaching is a complex activity that is influenced by the many elements of teacher quality. Most of the research does not seek to capture the interactions among the multiple dimensions of teacher quality, and as a result, there are major gaps in the research that still need to be explored. Nor does the research fully address evidence about teacher quality at the elementary and middle school levels, in subjects other than mathematics, or among different populations of students (such as high poverty, English language learners, or special education). (Rice, 2003, p. 2)

In agreement with Rice, I believe that there are research gaps in the area of teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, I suspect that within one of those gaps lies the dimension of the teacher-student relationship and the role caring plays on those relationships.

### **Part III. Students' Perception of Effective Teachers**

In my search for literature that links effective teaching to students' perception, I found only one study. In "Native Students Speak: What Makes a Good Teacher?" Thomas Peacock (2006)



sought to understand how native students perceive effective teachers.

The students' most popular response--regarding a good teacher's characteristics--was someone who possesses cultural knowledge. This quality in a teacher, especially for the native students, might be indirectly connected to care. According to Mayeroff, one essential feature of caring is empathy. The one caring, Mayeroff tells us, should seek to understand the other's world and to know what "it feels like to be inside it." (Mayeroff, 1971) Caring, in Mayeroff's notions, requires "knowing."

We sometimes speak as if caring did not require knowledge, as if caring for someone, for example, were simply a matter of good intentions or warm regard. . . . To care for someone, I must know many things. I must know, for example, who the other is . . . . (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 9)

Knowing a student's culture--as described by participants of the study--might be characteristic of caring as it entails understanding the other and "his world," which might include his culture.

According to the subjects of this study, the other characteristics a good teacher should possess include: 1) being interested in students, 2) listening to and understanding students' problems, 3) using multiple approaches to solve problems, 4) being caring, 5) being friendly, 6) being patient, and 7) being respectful to students.

We might note that the essence of care emerged in a few of the characteristics the students described. *Listening to and understanding* are features of both Mayeroff's empathy and Noddings's dialogue. As mentioned earlier, Mayeroff's empathy asks that the one caring seeks to understand the other and to know what it feels like to be in the other's world. Noddings's dialogue allows for participants to listen to and understand each other, and from this place of

understanding, empathy can develop.

*Caring* is another quality students noted a good teacher should possess. Other attributes such as *being interested in students* and *being patient* might also be perceived as characteristic of caring.

The native students in this study appear to value care and consider caring an important quality of a good teacher. However, many studies on teaching and caring and on teacher effectiveness seem to leave out students' perceptions of effective teachers as a critical variable. Hence, I believe there is another research gap in this field—examining teachers' effectiveness from the perceptions of students.

## **TEACHING AND CARING**

### **Part I. Centrality of Relationships**

In this part of my literature review, I will present the research and writing of Robert Pianta (1999), Marilyn Watson (2003), and Carolee Howes and Sharon Ritchie (2002), whose studies have pointed to the centrality of teacher-student relationships in the classroom.

#### **1. The Role of Relationships on Children's Development and Learning**

Robert Pianta, an educational psychologist, suggests that there is a direct correlation between a child's learning and development and the relationships in his life, especially those of parent-child and teacher-student.

In his book, *Enhancing Relationships Between Children and Teachers*, Pianta (1999) brings to our attention the complexity of a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Pianta believes that there exists an intimate relationship and interconnectedness between different forces or components—what he labels as "systems"—that influence a child's behavior,

development, and learning. These "systems," Pianta tells us, consist of many components.

Among them are the relationships the child forms with the individuals and groups in his life: parent, teacher, friend, peers, classroom, family, school, church, neighborhood, community, etc. These relationships or "systems," according Pianta, interact with one another and significantly influence the child's development and learning. Applying a complex theory known as "general systems theory" (GST), Pianta seeks to demonstrate this point.

Any comprehensive discussion of the influences on children's learning and development has to describe those influences and their relations with one another. . . . Such a description includes the various contexts, or systems, that affect development. These systems . . . constantly interact with one another. . . . Each of these systems is a context for development, carrying with it a particular mechanism for influencing child outcomes. (Pianta, 1999, pp. 25, 26)

"Systems," Pianta tells us, are embedded within other systems. A unit in one system—for example, the child in the classroom—is also a system in itself. One way to perceive the child as a system is to recognize "that behavior is organized across many developmental domains (motor, cognitive, emotional) to produce an integrated whole—the whole child." (Pianta, 1999, p. 31) From this perspective, motor, social, cognitive, and emotional development are not independent, isolated units but are integrated within a dynamic, organized process. According to Pianta, educational practices that focus exclusively on one of these domains (e.g., reading achievement or cognitive assessment) often reinforce the false assumption that children's behaviors can be isolated from one another and from the organizational framework or context in which they are embedded. Drawing on research conducted by himself and his colleagues, Pianta posits that the whole child, as a system, can never be fully explained in terms of its parts, let alone in terms of one part.

Thus, research on interpersonal relationships suggests that *emotional* and *social* qualities of parent-child or teacher-child interaction predict *cognitive* competence in that and in other situations. (Pianta & Harbers, 1996; Pianta et al., 1997; Rogoff, 1990); (Pianta, 1999, p. 31)

When considering the child as a developing system, one focuses not only on one domain of functioning or an isolated behavior, such as aggression, but also on the organization of behavior from multiple domains. . . . In these respects, a child's particular behavior such as aggression cannot be understood on its own but in the context of related factors . . . . (Pianta, 1999, p. 31)

Among the many "systems" that influence a child's learning and development, Pianta contends that the teacher and the child-teacher relationships play a key role.

In the discussion of Vygotsky's ZPD, the child-context (or child-teacher) relationship regulates performance of certain skills within the zone of proximal development. (Pianta, 1999, p. 27)

Child-teacher relationships can regulate a child's experience in classroom settings. Child-teacher relationships stabilize a child's emotional experience in classrooms (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1992), provide structure and guides for his or her interactions with peers (Howes, Hamilton, and Matheson, 1994), serve as a source of security that supports his or her exploration and mastery (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Pianta, 1997a), and provide interactions that help shape the child's self-regulation. (Pianta, 1997a)

Pianta believes that relationships between children and teachers are systems, and are consequently, part of broader systems (e.g., classrooms). In understanding this perspective, we can understand how relationships between teachers and students might play a role in the students' learning and behavior. In the following two accounts--told by Pianta's participants--one might be able to detect the presence of a caring teacher-student relationship in one, and the absence of it in the other. One might also be able to detect the influence of those relationships (or lack thereof) on the student's behavior.

Ms. Smith describes her attitude toward teaching: "I like being a teacher . . . we live in a farming community and everyone knows one another. . . . I'll see the kids at the ball park, heck, I taught some of these kids' parents! One time I was at the park watching a softball

game and Theresa came up and snuggled in my lap . . . [and] watched the game with me. Then the next morning she came up and said, 'I saw you last night.' I will miss her when she goes to third grade. Theresa has struggled this year with some hard times at home and I know she has relied on me and on others in the school for some security. I hope she finds it next year." (Pianta, 1999, p. 7)

A second teacher, Mr. Irvin, provides a different view: "Fred wouldn't do anything for me. At best he was content to sit in class and take up space. At his worst he'd dedicate himself to making my life miserable--nagging, getting other kids to misbehave. I felt like we were in a power struggle most of the year. It was exhausting. He will be a junior in high school this year. All in all he had a tremendous attitude problem and was extremely lazy, never worked up to his potential . . . he was actually pretty capable. Made me mad to see him waste it. I found it hard to like anything about him." (Pianta, 1999, p. 7)

Citing other studies--Birch & Ladd, 1996; Howes, Matheson, & Hamilton, 1994; Pianta, 1992; Wentzel, 1996--Pianta tells us that teacher-student relationships influence many school-related outcomes. According to Pianta, child-parent relationships provide a foundation for the children's overall development, and child-teacher relationships, in turn, operate on and extend from this foundation. Evidence has shown, Pianta contends, that child-teacher relationships do play a formative role in social, emotional, and academic development. These relationships, Pianta concludes, have an enormous influence on a child's competence in childhood.

One cannot underestimate the extent to which relationships with people and environments support or inhibit developmental progress and functioning in school. Children are only competent as their context affords them the opportunity to be. In short, their competence is a property of these systems, and some of these systems are relationships--with parents and with teachers. Perhaps the single biggest error that educators make when working with children is to assume that competence is a property of the child and to fail to make the necessary observations of the child in context. (Pianta, 1999, p. 64)

Teacher-child relationships are an important "context" for development and learning in the school setting. . . . Optimizing the relational "fit" between teachers and children could contribute to enhanced relationships and school success. (Pianta, 1999, p. 104)

## **2. Transformation In An Elementary Classroom Where Caring Relationships Were**

### **Nurtured**

In this section, I will present a case study conducted by Marilyn Watson (2003). The evidence of Watson's research points to the centrality of relationships in the classroom as having a positive influence on children's learning and development.

In *Learning to Trust: Transforming Difficult Elementary Classrooms Through Developmental Discipline*, Marilyn Watson (2003)--in collaboration with Laura Ecken--seeks to demonstrate the positive influence of a teacher who sought to cultivate and nurture caring and trusting relationships with a group of inner-city primary students. The children featured in her study were among our nation's poorest and most neglected.

Watson's work is based on what is known as "attachment theory," which perceives children's motivations as rational and mostly governed by the quality of relationships they experienced during infancy and early childhood. According to attachment theory, when young children's needs are met, they develop trust in their caregivers, form secure attachment relationships, see themselves as worthy of care, and perceive relationships as cooperative in nature. When these children enter school, they resonate with the teachers' good will and seek collaborative and nurturing relationships with them. When the opposite happens, where parents or caregivers fail to respond sensitively to their needs, the children will still seek nurturing relationships, but these relationships may be built on mistrust. When these children enter school, they tend to distrust their teachers and peers; they are more likely to have poor emotional or social skills, and to perceive relationships as coercive in nature. By building nurturing relationships, Watson tells us, teachers can reverse the mistrust in the insecurely attached children and help them flourish.

From the perspective of attachment theory, to develop a healthy personality, insecurely

attached children need to change their beliefs about themselves and about the nature of relationships. As teachers, we can help these children change their debilitating beliefs by developing a consistently nurturing relationship with them, one that confirms their worth, supports their learning and development, and is sensitive to their unique gifts and talents. Research in attachment theory demonstrates that, over time, teachers can successfully develop mutually trusting relationships with children who have a history of insecure attachment. (Watson, 2003, p. 285)

A Kentucky teacher, Laura Ecken, was purposefully chosen for Watson's study, as the children Ecken taught were considered to be among the most difficult children to teach. With Watson as her mentor, Ecken set out to create a classroom where everyone belonged--a caring learning community where her students would feel cared for, embraced, and safe. Ecken's class was an ungraded, full-inclusion primary class. Most of her students were growing up in Louisville's largest and toughest housing project. More than half were African American. All of the children were poor, with 88% qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch. Many of the children had learning disabilities, emotional and/or behavioral problems.

Ecken's students stayed with her for two years. During this time she closely collaborated with Watson, and together, they explored strategies needed to help these children flourish. Following are some of the main practices Ecken employed to build a caring community and foster nurturing relationships: 1) learning to like all students, 2) recognizing their basic need for belonging, 3) getting to know the children and their families, 4) telling and showing students that she cared, 5) teaching children how to be friends, 6) helping students to get to know their classmates, 7) encouraging students to see the best in each other, 8) grouping students for friendship and learning, 9) fostering listening skills and forgiveness, 10) providing opportunities for reflection, and 11) eliminating competition.

Through the stories Ecken and Watson tell, we see in vivid detail the ongoing life of

Ecken's classroom. We see Ecken's daily challenges, thoughts, fears, failure, success, but more importantly, we witness the moment-to-moment, day-to-day transformation that took place in the classroom and in her students.

According to Watson, children with a history of insecure attachment need to be assured repeatedly that they are worthy and that their teachers care about them. Watson believes that teachers need to tell the children that they care about them, and at times, display physical affection. Being shown affection verbally and physically is especially meaningful for the insecurely attached children. Here are some of Ecken's accounts that reveal, in this case, the positive influence on a child when the teacher outwardly demonstrates a caring attitude.

Martin was furious because he didn't get picked to help me, first with a math activity and then to pass out cookies. When it was time for our read-aloud, he sat back in the corner and put his coat over his head. From under his coat he said [to me] : "I hate you!" I told him I was sorry to hear it, but we went on and started reading the story. I could see him stuck back there in his attitude and, finally, I said: "Martin, I need you to just come up here right now. I know what's wrong with you. You are feeling left out, so just let me put my arm around you." That's what we did for the rest of the story and he was fine. When we got ready to leave and they were lining up, he came over and gave me a big hug. Ecken (Watson, 2003, p. 46)

Ella was screaming in line . . . and when I asked her to stop she started screaming at me. I told her I wouldn't listen to that, and I asked her to sit down and write about what she could have done besides scream in line and scream at me. She wrote about what she should have done, and then she wrote on the letter, "To my teacher, Mrs. Ecken. Love you tons. Did not mean it at all. You know that. Love you Mrs. Ecken." We read the letter together. . . . It was half an hour later when she started yelling at me again. And I said, "Ella, no. I am not going to have it. Get yourself a piece of paper and write down why this is not going to go." And so she wrote, "Dear Mrs. Ecken, I should not back-talk. Do what she says. . . . Go back to my seat. Say Yes Mam, and go. I love you. By: Ella. And next time I will do what it says." When she handed me the note, I read it, and this time I answered her in writing: "I love you, too! I am counting on it. I know you can do it. Love you tons. Mrs. E." When she read those concrete words of affection, she just got the biggest smile. Ecken (Watson, 2003, p. 48)

According to Watson, the more we trust in our students' good will, the more likely we are



to provide them leeway to manage themselves as long as they are not causing disruption or harm.

Trusting in her students' good will, Ecken often asked her students to write a reflection.

Sometimes Ecken asked the students to reflect on and write about what they should have done.

Sometimes she asked them to write from the perspective of their classmates or someone who received the brunt of their behavior.

Martin and Leonard laughed at Kenny when he couldn't count by two. I stopped to talk with the whole class about how we want to be as a class, and still those two kept after Kenny. So I asked them to write, "Why do you want to be in a class where people can make mistakes and not be laughed at?" Martin wrote: "I am sorry for making fun at you Kenny and laughed at you because you didn't know your 2s and 5s and laughed at you when you was crying. I do not want to be in a class where people mistreat each other." Leonard wrote: "We should not laugh when some people do not know how to count by 2 because it hurts their feelings. I do not want to feel bad." (Watson, 2003, p. 168)

In this example, Martin and Leonard each had the opportunity to reflect from the Kenny's point of view. Leonard took it a step further and showed empathy as he realized that he felt bad when someone's feelings were hurt.

Sometimes Ecken used reflections to encourage her students to think about how they would like to be treated. In this particular incident, the children reflected on how it felt to be listened to.

Brian wrote: "It feels good to be listened to. When someone is talking you should listen to them like they listen to you." Janice wrote: "It feels good to be listened to. Because they will not listen to you and you will want them to listen to you." Ecken (Watson, 2003, p. 169)

Through Ecken and Watson's stories, we see how Ecken's students--who in the beginning were unmotivated, distrusting, angry, uncaring, emotionally and socially immature--were transformed into empathetic, caring, reflective, and cooperative children possessing confidence, curiosity, and a vested interest in learning. Watson reports that many of these children--despite

great odds—are still thriving. Watson's account dramatizes the importance of nurturing, caring, and trusting relationships in children's learning and development.

### **3. Relationships and Classroom Harmony and Learning**

Like Pianta and Watson, Carolee Howes and Sharon Ritchie (2002) employed the teacher-child relationships as the critical variable in their research. In *A Matter of Trust: Connecting Teachers and Learners in the Early Childhood Classroom*, Howes and Ritchie seeks to demonstrate that building trusting relationships in the classroom can enhance the potential for children's learning. Drawing on the same attachment theory (Bowlby, 1982) that informed Watson's research, Howes and Ritchie spent three school years analyzing and completing intensive observations of three early childhood programs in different school sites. Many students featured in this study lived in poverty and had many special needs.

The first school site was a university program that served a culturally diverse student body of children in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. Many lived in poverty and in neighborhoods with high levels of violence. The children observed were from five to seven years old.

The second school site was a Pre-K program for homeless children. The children ranged from four to six years old. They came from primarily monolingual Spanish-speaking families. Classes were conducted in Spanish.

The third school site was a therapeutic preschool serving children aged four to six. Half of the children had been prenatally exposed to drugs. Many had experienced multiple home placements.

The bulk of Howes and Ritchie's evidence suggests that only when the children observed have "internalized dispositions" for regulation and control would the classrooms become

sufficiently harmonious for learning to occur. According to the researchers' observations, the children developed these internalized dispositions through constructing positive child-teacher relationships and by having adults who supported and validated them. Operating from this contextual framework, the children then were able to engage in positive and reciprocal relationships with their teachers and classmates, and cooperated in creating a classroom that was conducive to learning. Under these conditions, the children's social and academic competence was enhanced.

Howes and Ritchie conclude that it is possible for teachers and children—even in the most difficult circumstances—to move from conflicts to positive and mutually reciprocal relationships by constructing positive and nurturing relationships.

## **Part II. Teachers' Perception of Care**

In the following analysis, I will present two phenomenological studies and a case study, all of which seek to understand how some teachers (including a pre-service teacher) perceive caring in relation to teaching. It appears that the teachers in all three studies value care and view caring teacher-student relationships as an important feature of their practices.

### **1. Exemplary Teachers' Views of Caring**

In "Exemplary Teachers: Practicing an Ethic of Care in England, Ireland, and the United States", Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (1999) contend that the educational policies in the three countries--England, Ireland, and the United States--have neglected care ethic as an important dimension of teaching.

The absence of a discussion of an ethic of care in the U.S. report, along with little explicit discussion in England and Ireland, is significant in light of increasing recognition of the association between an ethic of care and good teaching. . . . Emphasis on teacher

competence is insufficient; policies and credentials do not guarantee caring teachers or student learning. Competence must be motivated by an ethic of care so teachers can bring out the best in students. (Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson, 1999)

In their study, Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson sought to determine effective teachers' interpretation of the role of "care ethic" in good teaching. The exemplary teachers chosen for their study were those whose professional accomplishments and results served as a model for peers. In England and Ireland, the teachers were identified by principals, peers, educational advisors, university faculty and students who interned in their classes, or a combination of these. In the United States, participants were identified by peers, staff developers, or subject specialists who frequented their classrooms. Drawing from the framework of Mayeroff's and Noddings's theoretical views on care, the authors sought to identify the critical features of these teachers' perception of good teaching and whether care ethic played a role in their success.

The teachers in this study identified relationships as an important component of their teaching. They emphasized three kinds of relationships they tried to establish in the classroom: the teacher-student relationship, student-student relationships, and student-teacher relationship.

These teachers sought to cultivate respectful and caring relationships not only between themselves and their students but also among the students. In *Education for a Caring Society: Classroom Relationships and Moral Actions*, D. Kay Johnston (2006) emphasizes the importance of student relationships in the classroom. According to Johnston, it is the relationships between students, and not just between teacher and students, that contribute to a learning environment of care and trust. It is those student-student relationships, Johnston tells us, that will play an influential role in shaping the students' moral and ethical development. Here is one teacher's account of how he/she valued and sought to cultivate caring relationships among students. This

teacher pointed to his/her own actions as examples for his/her students.

I would expect them to be loyal to each other and to look out for their classmates. I would expect them to take responsibility for the atmosphere in the classroom. I would like to know that they were developing an increasingly mature understanding of human relationships. On this, they will take cues from me. I mean, they will do what I do, not what I say. (Irish teacher, p. 361)

When teachers model caring and respect for their students, the students begin to display the same behavior. According to Noddings, when children are cared for, they become the ones caring.

It works well. You get children saying [to the teacher], "Could you go and talk to that girl in year 8 over there? She is all on her own and I am frightened she might be bullied." So it is like a sort of home watch thing and it seems to work quite well. (U.K. teacher, p. 361)

The teachers in this study identified caring within the context of relationships as an essential feature of their practice. Here are some of their accounts: -

I have a pin that I wear [each day] that says "Educating with Love" and that's really my philosophy . . . that every child in my classroom is not only worthy of but deserved to be loved. And if you sort of look at it from that point of view, it makes a lot of things that would irritate you be not such big things after all. (U.S. teacher, p. 362)

I am very interested in them as people and . . . I consider them very important. I regularly tell them that they are very important and that they owe it to themselves to ask me questions when they don't understand and that they should use the classroom to learn skills other than the lesson. (Irish teacher, p. 363)

The teacher cares for [students], is interested in them, firstly as a person and secondly, in their academic performance . . . . (Irish teacher, p. 361)

If I can get them to care about one another and I can set the stage for respect in interaction, then I think I've got it licked." (U.S. teacher, p. 364)

Some teachers in this study found that personal teacher-student relationships can influence the classroom harmony in a positive way.

Teachers noted that when teachers know students outside the classroom, discipline

problems inside the classroom diminish. (Collinson, Killeavy, Stephenson, 1999, p. 357)

## **2. Caring as An Essential Feature of Teaching**

In her unpublished thesis "An Ethic of Care In Practice," Colette Rabin (2003) analyzed seven teachers' narratives of their teaching philosophy and experiences. The teachers in Rabin's study worked in a small, private elementary school where care was a central feature of its mission. The centrality of relationships, again, emerged in these teachers' accounts.

When the teachers spoke of cultivating caring relationships, they emphasized the importance of their own actions. Modeling, as Noddings contends, is critical for the one caring. The teacher, Noddings tells us, should not merely "talk" ethics but should "live" it. When students witness and experience being cared for, they become the ones caring. Here are two examples, among many, of Noddings's modeling found in this study:

Well, everything about a teacher, the student learns from. Students learn from how cheerful a human being a teacher is, how enthusiastic about anything and everything . . . the ability to entertain many perspectives, the quick recognition of mistakes, the lack of attachment to being right, flexibility, trustworthiness . . . . Everything I do has an effect on students. . . . All of my behaviors impact students and how they negotiate their relationships with others in the classroom and with me. (Rachel, p. 72)

Being a specialty teacher who teaches in two schools, I notice how generally the kids are with each other here. Like when someone gets hurt while dancing or someone's upset in my class, these students know how to be with that. They'll stop what they're doing and apologize or encourage each other. They seem aware of each other's space and how to be with each other. I know that this is only because I have seen each teacher model it for them--and value it. (Molly, p. 73)

A teacher explained how each moment was an opportunity for her students and herself to practice being in relationship with each other.

Every opportunity with a friend is an opportunity to practice being a friend, giving friendship to one another. All day, every encounter is an opportunity to listen, to speak, to share and appreciate another person. (Rachel, p. 103)

According to Noddings, when students engage in the practice of caring, their inner "I must" is awakened. In the practice of caring, our caring capacity is enlarged. Caring, to both Mayeroff and Noddings, means responding to the other's needs. In this account, a teacher described how her students learned to be responsive to others' needs, and through that experience, their caring capacity was enhanced.

I'll tell one story. Our great learning took place one night when we had a lot of socks to give out. Now, for people who live on the street, socks are like gold. They don't own their own shoes. They get shoes that are given to them . . . they get blisters from them if they don't have socks . . . . And then we asked the kids to distribute the socks, but first to make eye contact and to say something to greet the person: "Hi, how are you tonight?" or "I've got some socks, can I offer you some?" We asked them to make sure that there was human contact.

. . . I remember a man who wanted some socks, but . . . he was shivering uncontrollably and he could not control his hand. This was not a pretty sight. . . . His hand was shaking. And a child hesitated and then took his hand, held it, and put the socks in his hand. It was so beautiful.

And then another woman came up and said, "I need two pairs of socks." And I saw a student decide: "I am going to be an arbiter of morality, or am going to just respond to their needs?" And they gave two pairs of socks. And then, of course, they begin to care about these people . . . they accept them as brothers and sisters . . . (Helena, p. 105)

Accounts of caring relationships--those of teacher-student, student-student, and teacher-teacher--abound in Rabin's study. The well-being and happiness of the children in the study are abundantly evident. More importantly, Rabin's study demonstrates how some teachers value care and perceive caring as an important feature of their pedagogy.

### **3. A Pre-Service Teacher's Perception of Care**

In this section, I would like to present an African-American pre-service teacher's perception of care in teaching through a case study conducted by Michelle Knight (2004). This

case study highlights five categories of a Black humanist vision of care: 1) affirming practices of different cultures, 2) the fortitude to persevere, 3) ability to recognize and the willingness to address difference and inequities, 4) the importance of the whole child, and 5) the ability to see oneself as a teacher engaging as a part of a collective in inequities. Since my research focus is not on a Black humanist vision of care, I will only the address those aspects of caring included in the study that directly relate to Mayeroff's and Noddings's care theories and to teaching.

In "Sensing the Urgency: Envisioning a Black Humanist Vision of Care in Teacher Education," Michelle Knight (2004) followed Amy, a young African American, pre-service teacher as she student taught for two years at two different elementary schools.

The first classroom Amy student taught in was at Dublin elementary school. There were 30 students, 98% of whom were African Americans. The class was taught by an African American teacher.

The second classroom Amy student taught in was at Monroe elementary school. The classroom consisted of an equal number of African American students and Hispanic students. In addition, there were five African American students. The class was team taught by two European American teachers.

Amy observed and contrasted her experiences in the two schools. Although Amy insisted that all of her cooperating teachers were caring, she noticed that there were different "degrees of caring."

At Monroe, Amy noticed that her two Anglo cooperating teachers seemed to be exclusively concerned with their students' academic goals in the classroom.

. . . the teachers know them on an academic level yet when they found out things about



kids they don't seem to do anything with information. One day, Mrs. Bernardi came from her reading group talking about two of her students smelling like urine and she couldn't stand it. What is the point of sharing this . . . if you are not going to take some action? (Amy, p. 221)

According to Amy, the caring that these teachers displayed toward the students was more of a concern regarding classroom management: "a primary concern with academics as related to the classroom experience such as raising your hand, following a finger in the book, school behavior, and school management." (p. 221) Even in the context of academic learning, their caring for the students' academic achievement did not appear to be very pronounced, in Amy's view. The students' learning, Amy observes, was not as "driven," as the teachers tended to dwell on what was not done before in previous grades. Amy described how one teacher commented: "Some of these kids readings levels are just so far below. And it's just so sad. They're just so far behind." (p. 221) Amy alleged that there was not a sense of urgency in the teacher's tone as far as reflecting on what she could do to help these students.

It's pity. . . . I don't know if she feels like "I just have to raise the kids up." It's more of: "isn't that sad?" mentality. (Amy, p. 221)

Amy then reflected on the attitude of the teachers she observed at Dublin.

Over at Dublin, they are not feeling sad. It's more like: "We are going to do this work. If it kills me, you guys are going to learn." (Amy, p. 221)

Amy believed the teachers at Dublin reflected the African-American population of the students and felt that they had a stake in the students' learning and lives. Amy reported that the teachers there had a "parental concern beyond academics" for students.

Each child is a charge in their lives much like their own child. You know you are much harder on your own child than other people's kids. They might run in the street but you are my kid. I am going to see that you make it through life. That is the level of caring where they have a stake in the community they serve. They are concerned about these

kids because there is so much out there they are going to have to face. They want them to be prepared, armed, and ready to resist when necessary. The level of caring seems to stem from a tiredness of our kids going to jail and being neglected to a deep drive to turn the situation around. That's the level of caring I see at Dublin. (Amy, p. 222)

After reflecting upon her experience as a student teacher, Amy concluded that there must be different "degrees of caring" in teaching. One degree of caring, Amy reflected, is limited to the "emphasis on academics," another degree of caring is the "focus on the survival and wholeness . . . of students which includes but is not limited to an academic focus." (p. 222) Michael Katz (2007) differentiates what he perceives to be the two types of caring--*professional* and *personal*--in teaching. *Professional caring*, according to Katz, is a concern for a student's well-being as a learner--as someone who is learning the subject matter and trying to succeed academically in school. Professional caring refers to a teacher's concern and responsiveness to the student's needs only in his/her role as a student. *Personal caring* is a concern for a student's personal well-being, whose life extends beyond his/her role as a learner. What Amy referred to as different "degrees of caring" appear to encompass both of Katz's categories of caring--*professional caring* and *personal caring*.

Drawing on qualities of a Black humanist vision of caring, Amy said she would like to implement in her own classroom the level of caring that would "exemplify individual and collective responsibility to enact what is necessary and possible for students, of love that perseveres and accepts no less of one's students than of one's own family members . . . ." (p. 222)

In Amy's account, we might conclude that she valued care--both professional and personal--and perceived caring as an important characteristic of her pedagogical practices.

### **Part III. Does A Caring School Make a Difference?**

In this section I will present two case studies conducted on caring and schools, and on the possible influence of caring on the schools featured. The staff at both schools valued care and sought to implement care as an important feature of their school mission and practices.

### **1. Building Schools as Caring Communities--A Middle School's Experience With Care**

Noddings (1992) cautions that educators will not be able to achieve even "meager success unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others." Raywid and Oshiyama (2000) report that many students yearn for care and perceive a lack of caring in their schools. In "Building Schools as Caring Communities, Why, What, and How?" Lynn Doyle and Patrick Doyle present a case study of a middle school that sought to create a caring community for its students.

When the faculty at Lincoln Center Middle School asked parents, staff, and business representatives, "What kind of person would you like to see graduate from LCMS?" the resounding response was a "caring, empathetic, and proficient student." According to Starrat (1994), a caring community has a "care ethic" which strives to develop students' caring capacities so that they will become empathetic adults who can transport a caring mission beyond the walls of the school into their communities. This task requires making caring an integral part of the curriculum and using metacognitive practices so that students not only engage in caring but also understand and reflect on issues of caring. To accomplish this goal, the staff at LCMS devised a program that teaches and models caring through five components: a) establishing powerful policies for equity; b) empowering groups; c) teaching caring in classrooms; d) caring for students; and e) caring by students.

### **a) Equity**

Because the curriculum at LCMS was grounded in the arts, admission policies were critical to ensure the school did not become elitist. Since equity was the vision, LCMS came up with admission policies that were unlike any other schools for the arts. There were no admission criteria or auditions since these practices can exclude some group. Instead, student selection is achieved by a district-wide lottery.

### **b) Empowerment**

LCMS empowered parents, staff, students, and teachers by creating structures that encouraged shared decision making and authority. At one point, the central administration asked the school to consider establishing criteria for early admission. Although this possibility might have strengthened the school's art component, the practice would not have been consistent with the school's vision for equity. Community members and parents argued vehemently against this policy and actively took action. Their voices were heard and the nonselective, open-enrollment policy was continued. This example shows how crucial empowerment is in the continuation and development of a caring community. Being empowered, community members and parents were able to help the school to stay true to its vision of equity.

### **c) Teaching about Caring**

LCMS aspired to infuse caring throughout the curriculum. Students participated in activities that developed their capacity to respond to and understand others. Students engaged in dialogue and discussed how they might have held social, religious, or political views that differed from those of others—including their classmates. They learned to broaden their understanding of others through dialogue, role playing and enactment activities.

#### **d) Caring for Students**

Because the staff at LCMS was concerned about the welfare of their students who were unsupervised after school, a Community Learning Center (CLC) was opened. The CLC extended the school day until 7:30 P.M. and provided transportation and dinner. Almost 75 percent of the faculty and 500 students participated in the CLC at some point during the school year. By having teachers involved in the LCL, LCMS provided a sense of continuity and extra opportunities for connections between students and teachers. Parents and volunteers participated as instructors, coaches, and lab monitors.

#### **e) Caring by Students**

To engage their students in the practice of caring, the faculty at LCMS decided to integrate service learning into their daily social studies classes. Teachers coordinated projects and held dialogues about caring with their students. Students visited nursing homes and painted a day-care center, and some established an ambassador program in which they visited elementary classrooms to share their experiences.

Did a caring community make a difference? According to the study, observations and interviews indicated that it appeared to do so. Since the implementation of the program, staff members observed that students' behavior improved. In the year the study was completed, LCMS had one of the lowest rates for disciplinary referrals of the twenty-three middle schools in the district. Attendance rates were over 90 percent compared to the average rate of a low 80 percent for middle schools in the district. Test scores also improved. The standardized testing results (in four out of five subject areas)--in the three years before the completion of the study--yielded continual gains. While no one at LCMS would conclude that the focus on caring directly

caused test scores to improve, the staff was pleased with the results and planned to continue working on the five components of their caring community.

## **2. Care and At-Risk Students--A Story of Hope**

In "Drop-Outs and Push-Outs: Finding Hope at a School that Actualizes the Ethic of Care," Wanda Cassidy and Anita Bates (2005) profile a school deeply committed to care ethic in working with a student body of underserved "at-risk" students who had a history of criminal activity and troubled behavior.

Whytecliff was a small school in Canada with 55-60 students. The school had a high attendance rate and a high rate of course completion. It was identified by a national study as an exemplary intervention program for at-risk youth. Thirty-two students were referred by the courts, and were on probation for a period of four to six months, for offenses such as attempted murder, arson, assault, breaking and entering, theft, and trafficking or possession of illegal drugs. The remaining 23-28 students were in a continuing program having satisfied their court-mandated stint. Most students were between 14 and 17 years old. Many were diagnosed with learning disabilities, some had mental-health issues, most struggled with substance abuse, and all were identified as having a "severe behavior disorder" (the most serious conduct disorder) by the provincial education body. Students' ethnic backgrounds consisted of aboriginal, Asian Canadian, African Canadian, and Caucasian. Approximately 70 percent were boys.

### **a) Creating a Culture of Care**

The three administrators--Paul, Greg, and Barbara--held similar conceptions of caring. Each perceived caring as essential to their "being" and "doing." They each sought to model and practice care, to encourage others to care, and to create a caring environment that would allow

staff, and students (and their families), to flourish. The administrators saw care as something embedded in their school's culture. They regularly used the metaphor of "the soil" to describe a learning environment "rich in nutrients" that would enable each student to flourish. Their program, they insisted, did not emphasize "pruning the plant," meaning to fix what was wrong with the student. They focused on the environment instead. Paul, the principal, explained: "We really look at the quality of the soil that we created. Is it a caring environment? Is it a respectful environment?" (p. 75) The staff members were regularly encouraged to reflect on questions like these: "What is needed to maintain the soil at the correct pH level even if I feel toxic at this moment, or this student is being toxic? How can I work to maintain the soil where it should be so the students can grow?" (p. 75)

- Noddings tells us that the student is more sacred than the rules. The student's well-being, hence, should guide the teacher's actions, and not the rules. Embracing this approach, the teachers in the school were guided by their principles of caring and not by rules. There were no rules, nor did the teachers punish their students. The administrators clarified that rules might trap or limit them only to rule-consequence escalation, and would divert their focus from trying to understand the multi-dimensional cause of behavior. When a student did something disruptive, the staff would focus on creating a positive solution.

Today when I arrived at school, I noticed a hole in the wall. When I asked about it the principal said that a boy, in an agitated mood, had kicked in the wall. So I asked how the staff responded. He said that the youth worker took the boy for a walk, then they went to the local hardware store to pick up the products to repair the wall. After school, they planned to do the repair together, while casually discussing alternative ways of getting rid of anger. The principal explained, "Here we don't tell a student if he did something bad on Tuesday that he can't play basketball on Friday. We try to respond in ways that are linked and that arrive at a positive outcome." (Cassidy, p. 76)

Another researcher, Steve Shafer (2005) observed, following his visit:

The plethora of rules and categories and phases serve nicely to keep "them" (students) at a distance. . . . Not so with your program, which avoids breaking people into pieces. When I visited, kids and staff smiled and laughed. Healing was actually happening. . . . Your staff have worked with from a vision informed by tested principles rather than rules. The kids wind up valuing themselves instead of spending time testing the rules. It's pretty amazing stuff. (p. 77)

Each administrator interviewed spoke of the importance of personal caring--of caring for all aspects of students' turbulent lives, not just their academic goals. Evidence of personal caring abound in the study. Here are some examples.

Today I was meeting with the principal in his office, when a girl about 16 came in, asking for Blackie's leash: "I am here to take Blackie for his walk." "Good boy," she said as she ruffled the dog's bushy hair. After she left, Paul explained that this girl had a history of killing animals. With the approval of her psychologist, Paul decided to see what would happen if she got to know his dog. So he started bringing Blackie to work. Later, I learned that the girl got a dog of her own. (Cassidy, p. 78)

One boy was described in the court records as a cold youth with no feelings because he did not cry when he learned his mother died. I did a little searching and found out where she was buried and arranged for a friend to make a beautiful cross with her name on it. I then went to the graveside with the boy and we planted the cross. He cried for a while, and then vowed he would keep the grave tidy and bring flowers regularly. It wasn't that he was cold and heartless but rather nobody had given him a chance to grieve. He simply did not have a relationship with an adult who could be trusted enough for him to be vulnerable, and I was lucky that he chose me to be that person. (Paul, pp. 78, 79)

Today I participated in the program's Christmas dinner celebration for the kids. . . . After the turkey dinner, one of the staff dressed as Santa came in and called out each student's name and presented him or her with a small gift along with a card with personal comments from each staff member. I was sitting next to a boy who did not seem that interested in his gift (a coffee mug), but was totally enthralled with his card. He kept reading and rereading the comments, angling the card to read the inscriptions, seemingly oblivious to everything that was happening around him. Sitting next to him, I felt the intensity of his emotion and had to leave the room as my eyes filled with tears. (Cassidy, p. 79)

#### **b) Teachers' Perception of Care--Centrality of Relationships**

The five teachers shared similar conceptions of caring: building relationships, creating the



right environment, showing respect, adapting the curriculum, being empathetic, and working in the students' best interest. They saw caring as enmeshed in, and made possible by, the school's philosophy of providing a safe, respectful, and nurturing community. The teachers perceived their role as flexible and multi-dimensional. Establishing caring relationships appeared to lie at the heart of their teaching. "We are kind of a cross between a teacher and a counselor, a motivator, a mentor, a leader, all at the same time." (p. 81) We are a "listener and a caregiver in a sense in dealing with social issues and life skills . . . as opposed to the educator that is separated from the students' lives . . . . We take on a more personal role." (p. 81) The teachers spoke of "sharing their lives" with students, "being there" for them, and valuing them as unique human beings. The most important difference between this school and the others is, according to the teachers, "the relationships that teachers and staff are encouraged to have with the kids. . . . The number one thing is the relationships. . . . It's the caring that helps develop the relationships. And relationships are paramount to change." (p. 81)

### **c) Students' Perception of Care**

The students who participated in the interviews differed from one another in many ways: age, ethnicity, length of time at school, criminal offenses, and home environments. Yet, according to Bates and Cassidy, there was remarkable consistency in what they said about their experiences, their school, teachers, staff, and how they perceived caring.

Students described the school as a safe and welcoming place. One said, "Like they understood me before I even came to the school. Everything was the way I would want a school to be." (p. 83) They spoke extensively about feeling safe at school--psychologically, emotionally, and physically. They placed a high value on being understood. Many said the staff at this school

understood them, in contrast to those from their previous schools.

Other principals just judged me and my life . . . . The principal here, he understands. He knows what is going on . . . . And the teachers here, they understand more than anyone else does, and they actually talk to you about what's going on, while other teachers are just like, "whatever, just do your work." (p. 83)

At other schools, students said staff lacked understanding of them, of the other problems in their lives which led to their conflicts and disruption in school. "At regular schools, you slip up just a little, you know what I mean, and you get into so much trouble, so much trouble. You've got to see the principal, and you've got to have a meeting with your parents, and this and that and other things, before you can even go back to class." (p. 85) The teachers at Whytecliff were perceived by students as those who actively sought to understand students. "If I don't want to work, if I am getting frustrated or something, he'll just sit down, talk to me, just see what I do and all that. Like, he wants to know about me." (p. 86)

Similar to Mayeroff and Noddings, students perceived care as having their needs responded to. "You always have help when you need it." (p. 86) Students reported that their teachers would persistently try different approaches until they understood the materials. Students spoke of being able to approach any staff member for help in personal problems. "They care about me . . . about my health. They care about my well-being. They care about how I am doing . . . and that's what I like about it. They are in it for us." (p. 86)

Each student interviewed said that his or her attitude about school had changed for the better. They said they enjoyed school more and experienced success at a new level. One said when his teacher introduced him to books that matched his interests, his reading skills "skyrocketed right off the roof." (p. 87) Another described: "I accomplished something. I got my

report card just recently. I got 89% on my English. . . . Whoa! I was really happy . . . it's like a drug I can't buy, and I love it! You know it's cool. And, it's addictive, but in a good way, that everyone can relate to." (p. 86) When asked to choose four or five words to describe the teachers, one student said he only needed one word, "Perfect!" The researcher responded, "That's pretty high praise," and the student replied, "They're perfect to a point. They are perfect on what they do for their jobs. They're perfect on working with kids. They're perfect, they're perfect, it's hard to explain them, like, they are perfect." (p. 87)

#### **d) What Makes a Good and Caring Teacher?**

At the end of the interview, each student was asked what advice he or she would give to a group of beginning teachers. Many of them spoke of caring for students as they (the teachers) would care for themselves. They suggested that teachers should: 1) listen to their students; 2) be a friend; 3) take personal interest in students; 4) treat students with respect; and 5) show students that they care. Students concurred that showing care was an important part of teaching. "The greatest thing a teacher can do is to care, to understand. You've got to go beyond the boundaries of what you're supposed to do to help the person learn. Because if not, the kid will say, 'Oh, they're giving up on me, so I might as well give up on myself.'" (p. 89)

The students in this study appear to have valued care and perceived caring as an essential feature of a good teacher's practices.

#### **Part IV. A Teacher's Commitment to Care: Nurturing the Ethical Ideal**

Noddings suggests that schools need to reprioritize and restructure themselves in order to support the implementation of care. Like Noddings, many believe that no matter how well-intentioned teachers are, their efforts to care for students can greatly be constrained by schools

and their policies. As a teacher who is limited in my experience with the public-school system (six weeks of student teaching), I often wonder about my ability to care for my students in such a setting. Hence, I find much inspiration and hope in reading the story of Erin Gruwell and her students, the Freedom Writers. In her memoir *Teach With Your Heart: Lessons I Learned from the Freedom Writers*, Gruwell (2007) demonstrates the far-reaching influence of a teacher who passionately dedicated herself to nurturing the ethical ideal of her students--caring for them and helping them to become ones caring. Gruwell's story, however, is slightly different from the two examples above since--unlike the schools in the two previous studies--Gruwell's school did not share or value her vision of care. Yet, caring--I believe--was an essential feature of her highly effective approach to teaching. In this sense, Gruwell's story is relevant to this study and might be worthy of our examination. Below is a summary of Gruwell and her students' story, taken directly from her memoir.

In her first year of teaching (remedial Freshman English), Gruwell encountered what was to her a disturbing incident. A note was circulated in the classroom with a racial caricature of one African American student whose features were grossly exaggerated. The drawing reminded her of the images the Nazis used in their propaganda of racism. "This reminds me of the Holocaust!" Gruwell angrily exclaimed. To her amazement, none of her students knew what the holocaust was. Asked if any of them had been shot at, most of them raised their hands. Gruwell knew this was her teachable moment. She abandoned her meticulously planned lesson plan and focused on what she believed the students needed the most. She wanted them to examine the root of hate, which Gruwell believed, was consuming their lives.

Gruwell's students included many gang members who had seen their friends slain by

knives and gunfire, who had been to juvenile detention, who had witnessed their mothers beaten, and who had been abused themselves. Many of them lived lives that were entrenched in poverty, racial conflict, and violence. Intending for her students to reflect on the seeds and destructive power of hate, Gruwell took them to see *Schindler's List* and to visit the Museum of Intolerance. Instead of reading Shakespeare and Homer, they read *Catcher In the Rye*, books about a teen gangster, Anne Frank, and Zlata Filipovich--author of *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo*. Their teacher hoped that by reading about young people who experienced pain, loneliness and oppression, her students would not only relate to these people but would gain a deeper understanding of their own troubled lives. To pay for their field trips, expenses, and books, Gruwell worked a second job. In abandoning much of the traditional curriculum, Gruwell was perceived as outrageous and unconventional in her teaching and methodology; as a result, she received a lot of criticism. But Gruwell stayed committed to her vision. She did what, I believe, Noddings has suggested--namely, she discarded practices that endangered the ethical ideal and embraced those that enhanced it.

Gruwell sought to empower her students by encouraging them to write about themselves. In writing, they found their own voice. In writing, they reflected on their present and revisited their past. In writing, they confronted their anger. In writing, they learned about themselves and others. Much of Noddings's moral education is devoted to reflection and self-understanding, and Gruwell greatly emphasized and encouraged these practices. In addition, the students' stories allowed their teacher to experience their lives. She, as Mayeroff describes, wanted to know their world and to feel "what it is like to be inside it." "What are you going through?"--as Noddings would say--Gruwell constantly asked her students, and they responded partially through their writing.

Empowered and cared for lovingly by their teacher, Gruwell's students became ones caring. They--many of whom were once apathetic, angry, hateful, and violent--began to care for one another, for their teacher, for their families and community, for justice, and for ideas. As ones caring, their lives began to take on new meaning. In learning to care for ideas, Gruwell's students came to care passionately for the subject matter. Engrossed in, and inspired by, the stories of Anne Frank and Zlata Filipovich, Gruwell's students intensely desired to meet Miep Gies--the woman who helped shelter the Franks--and Zlata herself. They determinedly raised the money needed to pay for Miep's and Zlata's visits, and succeeded. This accomplishment helped them to see their inner power and possibilities. Meeting the two remarkable women transformed them and gave them hope.

Gruwell's classroom--once filled with racial tension, violence, anger--became a safe haven, a place both teacher and students called home, a caring community. They became a family. In addition, Gruwell's commitment to care did not compromise her academic goals for her students. As Noddings contends, caring provides a foundation for students' academic success.

I will argue that the school cannot achieve its academic goals without providing care . . . for students. (Noddings, 2005, p. 14)

All of Gruwell 150 students--many of whom were expected to have dropped out of high school by their junior year--graduated high school. Some turned their less than 1.0 GPA into straight A's. Many of them attended and finished college. Some are pursuing doctoral degrees. All of them became authors whose book inspired the motion picture *Freedom Writers*. Most importantly, many of the students became caring and empathetic adults; a few of them now seek to serve others in different capacities. (I will provide examples of this statement in the next

chapter, when we examine the story of one of Gruwell's students--a freedom writer). The odds of all this happening, I believe, would have been minuscule had it not been for their courageous teacher who challenged conventional practices and made it her primary aim to do precisely what Noddings has suggested, nurturing her students' ethical ideals.

Although most people find Gruwell's story inspiring, some question whether her success has been romanticized or whether it can be duplicated. Gruwell's methodology was so effective that, in my opinion, if we learn something from her practices, apply this learning to our own teaching and achieve even a small fraction of her success, the effort would be very worthwhile.

## **THEORETICAL VIEWS OF CARING**

### **Part I. I and Thou**

I will begin this section with the work of Martin Buber. I believe Buber's *I-Thou* relation provides a philosophical foundation for both Noddings's and Mayeroff's theoretical perceptions of care and caring relationships. In that sense, Buber's work is essential to this study.

Buber (1958) speaks of two types of human relationships--*I-It* vs. *I-Thou*. In an *I-It* relationship, we treat the other as an *object*, as something for us to experience and use for our own purposes.

The life of human beings does not exist in virtues of activities alone which have some *thing* for their object. I perceive something. I imagine something. I think something. . . . The life of human beings does not consist of all this and the like alone. This and the like together establish the realm of *It*. (Buber, 1958, p. 20)

From the perspective of the *I-It* relationship, we--according to Buber--behold a false view of the universe as the object of our sensory experience.

In the *I-Thou* relation, we enter a holy partnership where the other is perceived as sacred,

as a *subject* whom we receive; he is a creature with consciousness, alive and responsive, whose inner being we seek to understand as we understand our own. In this *I-Thou* relation, authentic dialogue and understanding are possible between two caring and empathetic human beings. The *I-Thou* relationship is holy to us as it mirrors our own relationship with God. When we encounter the other, he is no longer *He*, *She*, or *It*. He has become *Thou*, and "fills the firmament."

If I face a human being as my *Thou*, and say the primary word *I-Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things.

Thus human being is not *He* or *She*, bounded from every other *He* and *She*, a specific point in space and time within the net of the world; nor is he a nature able to be experienced and described, a loose bundle of named qualities. But with no neighbor and whole in himself, he is *Thou* and fills the heavens. This does not mean that nothing exists except himself. But all else lives in *his* light. (Buber, 1958, p. 23)

Love, in Buber's view, is a relation of *I* and *Thou*; it is a relation of subject to subject. True love, Buber claims, cannot be a relation of subject to object.

Buber's *I and Thou* first emerged in 1923 when the Industrial Revolution was sweeping the world. In response to the unethical treatment of human beings as instrumentalities of production in factories across the globe, Buber warned that our society had increasingly become that of an *I-It* world. Factory workers--perceived as machine-like--were manipulated, studied, measured, and analyzed for the ultimate aim of making a few men rich. This other had become *It*, whose inner being and thoughts I do not wish to know, but whose productivity and efficiency matter immensely to me. Doll (1993) relates an experiment conducted by industrial management on scientific efficiency.

After doing time-and-motion studies, Taylor and his associates concluded that through scientific management pig-iron handlers should be able to stack 47 to 48 tons per day. While this was a surprising figure, Taylor adopted the attitude that it must be reached. The "couldness" of the figure, derived theoretically, now became a moral imperative . . . .



To accomplish this mission, Taylor chose a man he called Schmidt. . . . most important, Schmidt was "stupid" enough to be suited for this physically draining task--"so stupid that he more nearly resembles an ox . . . ." For his 400% increased productivity, Schmidt received an extra 70 cents a day. (Doll, 1993, pp. 40, 41)

Taylor's *I-It* relationship with the factory workers, manifested in the laws of scientific management and its emphasis on "control through standardization and progress through efficiency," became the model for our educational policies and schools until this day. Is it possible that--as the factory workers were to Taylor and management--our students are often perceived as objects to our schools and policy makers?

While the *I-It* relation is inescapable in this world, Buber asks us to be cautious lest it comes to dominate our existence. Buber declares that the *I* which has no *Thou* lives a reality which is less complete than that of the *I* in the *I-Thou* relation. Similarly, Mayeroff contends that caring, through *I-Thou* relations, enables one to be "in place" in the world. In the act of caring for others, the self is enlarged and the one caring enjoys a richer, more expansive existence. Caring, in Mayeroff's view, not only benefits the cared for but also contributes to the well-being and expansion of the one caring.

We are "in place" in the world through having our lives ordered by inclusive caring. . . . I am unable to recognize myself in my past, the self I have been, is now enlarged and enjoys a more expansive life. (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 39)

Mayeroff and Buber would agree that our *I-Thou* caring relations enhance our well-being and that of our society. The way we treat one another forms the contour and essence of ourselves and our world. In Mayeroff's and Buber's views, the more *I-Thou* relations we cultivate, the fuller and more humane our society becomes.

In agreement with Buber and Mayeroff, Noddings (2002) has asserted that our society

needs more caring relations, that our students need to be cared for and to learn to become caring citizens. As mentioned earlier, Noddings believes that the capacity to establish and maintain caring relationships with others is central to living a flourishing human life and should be the central aim of education. In making this suggestion, Noddings does not imply that schools should compromise their academic goal of developing literacy and cognitive competence in students. Instead, she believes that caring will provide a foundation for the realization of academic goals.

I will argue that the school cannot achieve its academic goals without providing care and continuity for students. (Noddings, 2005, p. 14)

## **Part II. Mayeroff's Three Main Components of Care**

For caring to fulfill its highest purpose, Mayeroff requires many characteristics to be present in the caring relationship. However, the three most critical features of Mayeroff's caring are explained below. Caring ceases, according to Mayeroff, in the absence of any one of these three features.

### **1. *Being For the Other--Supporting and Respecting the Other's Individuality***

Milton Mayeroff (1971) defines caring as "helping the other person grow and actualize himself." (p. 1)

In caring as helping the other grow, I experience what I care for (a person, an ideal, an idea) as an expression of myself and as the same time as something separate from me that I respect in its own right. This feeling of the other as part of me is different from the kind of union with the other found in such parasitic relations as morbid dependence on another person or dogmatically clinging to a belief, for in both cases I am unable to experience the other as independent in its own right and I am unable to respond to it truly. (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 3)

The one caring--Mayeroff contends--must *be for* the person she cares for. *Being for him--* Mayeroff defines--means she recognizes and respects his human individuality and all that it

encompasses. She *is for* him in the sense that she celebrates and nourishes his uniqueness—his thoughts, ideals, interests, and aspirations—even if they are different from those of her own. She does not seek to manipulate or mold him into an idealized image of her own liking. When she does so, caring ceases and she no longer cares for him authentically.

In helping the other grow, I do not impose my own direction; rather, I allow the direction of the other's growth to guide what I do, to help determine how I am to respond . . . .  
(Mayeroff, 1971, p. 5)

In caring for another person I encourage him, I inspire him to have the courage to be himself. (Mayeroff, 1971. p. 32)

There will be times when the one caring might hold beliefs and opinions that vastly differ from those of the cared-for. If she is thoughtful and sensitive, she will not seek to impose on him what she believes to be right. Instead, she carefully cultivates those values within the content of their relationship. The cared-for is always more important than her ideology. Buber (1965) supports Mayeroff's notion of *being for* the other as he speaks of the teacher "raising a finger" or showing a "subtle hint" instead of exerting on the student what she believes to be right. In this way, Buber believes, the teacher is most effective. Interference, Buber contends, divides and violates the soul.

For if the educator of our day has to act consciously he must nevertheless do it "as though he did not." That raising of the finger, that questioning glance, are his genuine doing. Through him the selection of the effective world reaches the pupil. He fails the recipient when he presents this selection to him with a gesture of interference. It must be concentrated on him; and doing out of concentration has the appearance of rest. Interference divides the soul in his care into an obedient part and a rebellious part. But a hidden influence proceeding from his integrity has an integrating force. (Buber, 1965, p. 90)

## **2. *Being With* the Other--Empathy**

Caring, according to Mayeroff, must entail empathy.

To care for another person, I must be able to understand him and his world as if I were inside it. I must be able to see, as it were, with his eyes what his world is like to him and how he sees himself. Instead of merely looking at him in a detached way from outside, as if he were a specimen, I must be able to be *with* him in his world, "going" into his world in order to sense from "inside" what life is like for him, what he is striving to be, and what he requires to grow. (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 30)

In Mayeroff's view, the one caring is present; she is so deeply in tune with the cared for that she experiences his world "as if she were inside it." She feels and experiences what he feels, yet at the same time, she does not lose herself in "being with" him. The one caring desires to fully understand the other. And for this understanding to take place, she needs to *be with* the cared-for and to know his world. From this knowing, her empathy for him grows.

What is *being with* like from the perspective of the cared-for? Because the other is *with* him, he feels understood, he feels he is not alone, and he feels that the one-caring knows what it is like to be in his shoes. Because she understands him, he can open up and make it easier for her to help him. In Mayeroff's view, *being with* the other is crucial for the carer and characterizes the process of caring.

### **3. *Being There For* the Other--Loving Responsiveness**

Because the one caring is in tune with the other, she can *be there for* him. Mayeroff defines *being there for* the other as the act of attentive and loving responsiveness. This responsiveness, according to Mayeroff, requires the one caring to be available for the other in times of great need. *Being there for* the other, in Mayeroff's view, means being "on call" for him. When the other needs her, the one caring *is completely there for* him. She is willing to reprioritize her life in order to respond to him and his deepest needs, especially in a situation of crisis. This is the kind of responsiveness that communicates to the cared for that his well-being is primary to her.

Caring, to Mayeroff, requires knowing. It requires a deep attunement and knowledge of the one cared for and of caring itself on the part of the carer.

We sometimes speak as if caring did not require knowledge, as if caring for someone, for example, were simply a matter of good intentions or warm regard. But in order to care, I must understand the other's needs and I must be able to respond properly to them, and clearly, good intentions do not guarantee this. To care for someone, I must know many things. I must know, for example, who the other is, what his powers and limitations are, what his needs are, and what is conducive to his growth; I must know how to respond to his needs . . . . (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 9)

Knowing math, for example, might not be enough for a math teacher if she wants to reach her students successfully. She might need to know their strengths and weaknesses, what inspires them to learn and what intimidates them. Her attunement to them can help her to respond to their needs and learning appropriately. As Mayeroff contends, caring requires empathy; the carer needs to "be with" the cared-for, to understand his world and what he is feeling and experiencing. In Noddings's words, the one caring needs to continuously feel with the other. The question: "What are you going through?" should be asked often by the one caring. The teacher who works with English learners or learning-disabled students should understand to some degree their frustration, anxiety, and insecurity in order to help them feel safe and to accommodate their needs. The teacher who works with socially disadvantaged students needs to know to an extent what it might feel like to be poor, to not have enough money for school supplies, to be homeless, or to have a parent in jail. These insights on the teacher's part can help her to respond sensitively and appropriately to her students' needs.

### **Part III. Noddings's Perception of Care vs. Mayeroff's**

While Noddings's care ethic shares many core sentiments of Mayeroff's caring, there are two important differences. Before we analyze her work carefully, it might be helpful to examine

how her view of care might differ from that of Mayeroff.

### **1. Sympathy vs. Empathy**

Like that of Mayeroff, Noddings's care concept requires a deep sense of attunement to the cared-for on the part of the carer. Noddings perceives this attunement as *receptivity* or *engrossment*. The one caring is interested and present. She is immersed in the cared-for. Her receptivity toward the cared-for is, however, more than just feeling; there is a motivational shift. Her motive energy flows toward the other; it is at his service. Caring to Noddings is more the experience of *sympathy* rather than *empathy*. The one caring does not project herself onto the other but instead receives him. She does not attempt to put herself in his shoes or ask: "How would I feel in his place?" She simply *receives* the other into herself; she feels and sees with the other. She is *engrossed* in him. Noddings perceives *engrossment* as a critical feature of caring. *Engrossment*, to Noddings, involves feeling and receptivity. The one *engrossed* "*feels with the other and receives him into herself.*" (Noddings, 1984, p. 30)

Although they use different terms and characteristics to describe their perceptions of caring, Mayeroff's view of *empathy* and Noddings's view of *sympathy* and *engrossment* describe an encounter analogous to that of Buber's *I-Thou* relation, where the one caring receives the other as *Thou* and he in turn "fills the firmament."

When I receive the other, I am totally with the other. The relation is for the moment exactly as Buber has described it in *I and Thou*. The other "fills the firmament . . ." In the receptive mode itself, I am not thinking the other as object. (Noddings, 1984, p. 32)

### **2. Reciprocity**

Caring, according to Mayeroff, may or may not be reciprocated. In Mayeroff's view, caring is a moral virtue. It needs no reciprocity and is completed in the one caring's receptivity and

responsiveness to the cared-for. Caring, according to Mayeroff, is unconditional as the cared-for is not always capable of responding to the act of caring. A work of art or a patient in a coma, for example, cannot reciprocate the caring act. With or without the responsiveness of the cared-for, caring exists. Its virtue and completion are not diminished in the absence of the cared-for's reciprocity. The one caring knows she has cared and that is enough.

Noddings parts ways with Mayeroff here and contends that the cared-for must "receive" the caring for caring to be completed. Because caring is relational, it must be reciprocal. Noddings uses the example of two babies and the difference in their responsiveness to the same mother. When the mother holds them in the same way, one giggles and makes funny faces while the other looks away. The mother is bemused by the second child and guiltily admits that she enjoys the first one more. The first baby, according to Noddings, completes the mother's caring while the second one does not.

The cared-for, I believe, enhances the caring and can contribute significantly to the satisfaction of the one caring, but he does not complete the caring. While I resonate with much of Noddings's care theory, I disagree with her insistence on reciprocity in caring relations.

Let's examine the story of a teacher I know. Her experience, I believe, supports Mayeroff's notions of unconditional caring.

The teacher receives an autistic child into her classroom. She "receives" him but he does not "receive" her. When she approaches him, he refuses to look at her and tells her to go away. Regularly, he throws violent tantrums and disrupts her lessons. The teacher is hurt and frustrated. At times, she wishes that he had been sent to another classroom. But the teacher goes on caring. She tells herself that she must care for him in the same way, if not more, than she does her other

students. Late at night, she sits by her computer and investigates his disability. She wants to know his world and what "it feels like to be inside it." She attends workshops and spends hours talking to his parents and therapist. She rearranges the classroom and revises her pedagogical instructions for his sake. On the playground, she watches him from afar more than she does any other child. He has become *Thou* and she is engrossed in *Thou*. Still, the student does not respond. He remains aloof. He tells her to go away, and at times, screams at her when she comes near him. "How lovely it would be," the teacher says to herself, "if he would smile at me just once." But the child never smiles. One day, the child comes to class after a few days of absence. The sight of him makes the teacher's heart leap with joy. It stops mattering to her that he does not reciprocate her caring. She comes home and her heart is full. She knows she has cared for him to her best ability. In her mind, her caring is complete.

On the other hand, it is possible that the same teacher in the above story does not want to receive the child. She might perceive him as a burden: "Why him? Why my class?" She tries her very best, but she cannot love him. He is rude, difficult, disruptive, unresponsive and unlovable. She does not feel the same way about him as she does her other students. She is engrossed in the others but not in him. Her motive energy goes not toward him but to her other students. He is in her care but their caring relation is incomplete. Here, the one caring has not received the other. She knows not his *otherness*. He has not become *Thou*. And hence, she has not succeeded in caring for him.

In my view, the cared-for does not complete the caring. It is the responsiveness, engrossment, and receptivity of the one caring that fulfills caring.

#### **Part IV. Noddings's Ethic of Caring**



Here, I would like to present an in-depth analysis of Noddings's care ethic. A thorough understanding of Noddings's work, I believe, will be helpful to the reader as he/she attempts to see its relevance to teaching and to education. Noddings's care ethic begins with her differentiation between natural and ethical caring.

### 1. Natural and Ethical Caring

David Hume (1967) contends that morality is constructed upon and grounded in feeling.

That which renders morality an active virtue . . . . this final sentence depends on some internal sense of feeling, which nature has made universal in the whole species. For what else can have an influence of this nature? (Hume, 1967, p. 75)

In response to Hume, Noddings posits that morality as an "active virtue" entails two feelings and not just one. The first sentiment is that of *natural caring*. Natural caring occurs where we respond to the other because we *want* to.

There can be no ethical sentiment without the initial, enabling sentiment. In situations where we act on the behalf of the other because we want to do so, we are acting in accord with natural caring. A mother's caretaking efforts in behalf of her child are not usually considered ethical but natural. Even maternal animals take care of their offspring, and we do not credit them with ethical behavior. (Noddings, 1984, p. 79)

The second sentiment is what Noddings terms *ethical caring*, where the memory of natural caring (as one caring and cared for) influences our inclination to respond to the other.

This memory of our own best moments of caring and being cared for sweeps over us as a feeling--as an "I must"--in response to the plight to the other and our conflicting desire to serve our own interest. . . . When I encounter the other and feel the natural pang conflicted with my own desires--"I must--I do not want to"--I recognize the feeling and remember what has followed it in my own best moments. I have a picture of those moments in which I was cared for and in which I cared, and I may reach toward to this memory and guide my conduct . . . . (Noddings, 1984, p. 80)

In reference to Hume's "active virtue," Noddings agrees that her ethic of caring advocates the ethic of virtue. The virtue described by Noddings's ethical ideal in the one caring, however, is

not rooted in the abstract, but is cultivated in relations. It reaches out to the other and grows in response to him. Virtue, hence, is developed and grows in caring relations.

The holy man living abstemiously on top of the mountain, praying thrice daily, and denying himself human intercourse may display "virtues," but they are not virtues of one caring. . . . But if, when another intrudes upon his privacy, he receives the other as one-caring, we cannot charge him with violating our ethic. (Noddings, 1984, p. 80, 85)

## 2. Kantian Ethic vs. Care Ethic

The ethic of care speaks of obligation. It implies a limit on our ability to care. It refers to that sense of "I must" when the other appeals to us. At times, this inner voice of "I must" is met with resistance. We recognize the other's needs but we do not feel like responding. In such instances, Noddings tells us, we draw on our ethical ideal--the memories of being cared for and of caring for others, the mental pictures of our best selves and relations.

There are times when we ask ourselves: "What is our obligation to care? Why should we act?" Kant would recommend that we trace our obligation to a principle of reason that we are required to adhere to if we are to act morally.

There is, therefore, just one categorical imperative: *Act only on the principle of which, then and there, you would be willing to make a general law.* (Kant, 1960, p. 183)

In Kant's view, feeling is inferior to reason. Only actions performed from carefully reasoned-for principles and out of duty are morally worthy. Acts done out of love, feeling, and inclination are morally problematic for Kant. In this regard, Noddings (1998) objects to Kant's hypothesis and her care ethic seeks to reverse these priorities.

Many object to the grimness, to the Puritanical tone, of ethics of duty. Most of us prefer to be the recipients of acts done out of love, care, or inclination rather than duty. Recognizing this, Kantians have shrunk the moral universe. Those things that are done out of love are often considered not to be moral matters at all . . . . (Noddings, 1998, p. 143).

In Noddings's view, we accept our responsibility to care because we value its relatedness to natural caring. Noddings does not, by any means, devalue reasoning as she believes reason guides us in our caring act to the most sensible decision. However, as she reminds us, it is the other who motivates us to care, and not reasoning.

Ethical caring is always aimed at establishing, restoring, or enhancing the kind of relation in which we respond freely because we want to do so. An ethic of care does not eschew logic and reasoning. When we care, we must employ reasoning to decide what to do. . . . But reason is not what motivates us. It is feeling with and for the other that motivates us in natural caring. In ethical caring, this feeling is subdued, and so it must be augmented by a feeling of our own ethical selves. (Noddings, 2002, p. 14)

### **3. Women and Moral Reasoning**

For Noddings, the ethic of care is grounded in the feminine perspective. It treats caring from the perspective of feeling, not reason. Women, Noddings observes, approach moral predicaments differently from the way men do. Faced with a moral dilemma, women, or the majority of women, do not attempt to solve it by abstract reasoning or by referring to a set of rigid principles or rules. Their approach is rooted in caring, in the desire to feel with, and care for, the other. Carol Gilligan describes:

. . . women not only define themselves in a context of human relationship but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care. Woman's place in man's life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn lies. (Gilligan, 1979, p. 440)

Confronted with a hypothetical situation, women often request more information. They need to talk to those involved, to look them in the eyes, to see their facial expression. They desire to feel and see what the other feels and sees. It is unnatural to them to resort to abstract reasoning. They study the situations instead. After all, moral decisions are made in situations;

they are qualitatively different from the solution of a geometry problem.

Women, like act-deontologists in general, give reasons for their acts, but the reason points to feelings, needs, situational conditions, and their sense of personal ideal rather than universal principles and their application. (Noddings, 1984, p. 96)

A feminine perspective on moral knowledge influences Noddings' s ethic of care.

#### **4. Care Ethic and Moral Education**

In our analysis of Noddings's care ethic, we see that moral education lies at its very heart.

As Noddings has demonstrated, when we face an ethical dilemma, we draw on our own ethical ideal which comprises the memories of our caring relations--of caring and being cared for. In this sense, the ethic of care might be perceived as a form of pragmatic naturalism. It does not postulate a source of moral life beyond human interactions; it does not depend on God, or eternal verities, or man-conceived moral rules. Some religious persons, for example, might claim (and aspire) to live their lives by God's commandments. Those commandments, however, are--in Noddings's view--only abstract ideals until they are lived out in practice within human relations. Earlier, we see Noddings's example of the hermit living on top of the mountain. Renouncing the world in isolation, he might possess virtues, but they are not virtues we can see of one caring, that is, until he meets a stranger and receives this other as one caring. Noddings claims that we are each defined in relations. In her view, none of us can truly be an "individual" or a "person" without our relational other. Without the other, Noddings asks us, to whom are we a "mother," a "teacher," a "husband," or a "son?"

If caring relations are important to us, we shall then--Noddings believes--care for our children and teach them to give and receive care. Furthermore, caring--Noddings emphasizes--extends beyond the moral education of our children. In response to Kant who argues that each of

us is responsible for our own moral perfection, Noddings insists that we are partly responsible for the moral development of those we encounter. The way we treat another can bring out the worst or the best in him. How our parents live and behave can inspire us to become better or worse human beings. If a child has been abused and treated unkindly, he might become abusive and unkind to others. Moral development, just as in ethical caring, is relational.

Ethical caring, in Noddings's view, requires self-understanding and reflection. In caring relations, we seek to know not only the other but also our own selves. We need to recognize our own vices, virtues, and what we, morally and ethically, aspire toward. Through introspection, we gain self-knowledge. Hans Gadamer (1976), in agreement with Noddings, contends that moral knowledge requires self-understanding. Moral education is a critical part of Noddings's care ethic and much of it is devoted to understanding of others and of self.

## **Part V. Noddings's View of Moral Education**

### **1. The Primary Aim of Education**

As Noddings concludes earlier, we all bear a partial responsibility for the ethical perfection of others. From this perspective, moral education--Noddings suggests--should be a community-wide mission and is not exclusively reserved for home, church, or school. Further, it is twofold. First, it implies an education that is moral in the sense that those responsible for education--teachers, administrators, policy makers--strive to meet those involved--the students--morally. Secondly, it refers to an education that aims to enhance the ethical ideal of our students--the cared for--so they will meet others morally.

According to a Noddings's care ethic, the teacher--as one caring--has one important goal: preserving and enhancing caring in herself and in those she encounters. In this process, she

nurtures the ethical ideal of those she cares for. Noddings reminds us that this goal is something that is built into the process and not something that lies beyond it. Hence, all ideals and practices proposed to be a part of education, Noddings insists, must be examined from this point of view.

That which diminishes this aim should be discarded and that which fosters it should be embraced.

From this perspective, reasoning or rationality as "trained intelligence," Noddings cautions us, should not serve as the primary or guiding aim of education. In making such a claim, Noddings does not mean to imply that rationality should not be valued. Rationality--she believes--while essential and worthy, must serve something higher. Joseph Junell questions the emphasis on "trained intelligence" as the dominant aim of education.

Nor are present-day academicians espousing this view hard to find. In a provocative essay review of Arthur Schlesinger's book, *The Crisis of Confidence: Ideas, Power and Violence in America*, John Bunzel, president of San Jose State College, raises by implication the most nagging of all questions with which educators, since the day of Socrates, have ineffectually come to grips: To what part of man does public education owe its first obligation? Is it to his intellectual-academic world, or his emotional-social one? Which is more likely to insure him a measure of happiness and a reasonable chance of survival? (Junell, 1969, pp. 28, 29)

This perennial and educationally significant question, for the most part, has always been presented in this form. The writer often recognizes the supreme importance of both human facets but designates their nurturance to separate institutions. Hence, it becomes customary--albeit unreflectively so--to view schools as nurturing the intellect while viewing home and church as nurturing social development and morality. Noddings asserts that we must reject this view emphatically. The human being is made up of integral parts and qualities that make us whole. This interconnectedness of our different faculties is what makes us--our humanity--more than the sum of our parts. To segregate these parts is to make us less fully human.

It is not that these functions cannot be separated theoretically. It is, rather, that the human being who is an integral composite of qualities in several domains is thereby shaped into something less than fully human by the process. . . . Questioning concerning the ethical ideal cannot be assigned to any one or two institutions. All must accept responsibility. (Noddings, 1984, pp. 172, 173)

Junell, in the quotation above, advocates for an education that will ensure humankind a "measure of happiness and a reasonable chance of survival." Can we extrapolate from Junell's hypothesis that the aims of life might be those of survival and happiness? Noddings, while resonating with the idea of happiness as one aim of life, questions "survival" as the other aim.

Surely, we must agree that living things seek to preserve their own lives, and in the nonreflective mode, to perpetuate their kind. From a naturalistic viewpoint, the aim of life is life. But life as survival, while an obvious prerequisite, is not a sufficient aim for reflective consciousness. One aims for more than mere survival, and many would rather die than accept perpetual mere life. (Noddings, 1984, p. 173)

From Noddings's argument, can we conclude that happiness might be the purpose of life? Many educators and philosophers believe that it is. A.S Neill (1960) asserts: "I hold that the aim of life is happiness. Education should be a preparation for life."

But how do we define happiness, if it were to be the central purpose of life? Does happiness mean living a pleasure-filled life, as in some hedonistic tradition? Or is it living life as a preparation for the life beyond? Happiness, according to Noddings, is achieved through caring relations: to be cared for and to care, to be received and to receive. In her view, these are the basic realities and purpose of being human.

The aim of life, then, is not primarily happiness in either the sense of fulfilling pleasure or avoiding pain and trouble; nor is it perfection in the sense of preparation for another life. . . . The primary aim is, rather, caring and being cared for in the human domain and full receptivity and engagement in the nonhuman world. A life meeting this aim is--despite pain, deprivation, and trouble--filled at least occasionally with joy, wonder, engagement, and tenderness. (Noddings, 1984, p. 174)

Buber, as mentioned before, tells us that the *I* without *Thou* lives an existence that is less complete than that of the *I* in the *I-Thou* relation. Mayeroff suggests that caring not only contributes to the well-being of the cared-for but also enriches and expands the one caring. From the perspectives of Buber and Mayeroff, caring appears to be an essential component of human life. Hence, does Noddings have a valid point in claiming that caring not only is a worthy goal, but should be the central aim of life?

## **2. Nurturing the Ethical Ideal**

If we agree with Noddings and aspire to make the maintenance and enhancement of caring the primary aim of education, then school officials--Noddings believes--need to reevaluate their priorities. In making this suggestion, Noddings does not imply that we abandon our intellectual and aesthetic aims. These aims, however, must be set aside--not permanently, but temporarily--if their pursuit jeopardizes the ethical ideal. The ethical ideal, according to Noddings, must always come first.

In caring for the ethical ideal, Noddings contends, we should not separate the ends and the means. We do not want to compromise the process for the end product. In Noddings's view, the process always implies the notion that one undergoing it is growing and is becoming "better." If we attempt to teach a student *X*--for example--and he learns it, then we have succeeded instructionally. But if the student ends up hating *X*, his teacher, and school, then--according to Noddings--we have failed educationally. The student has not become "better" as a result of his and our effort. He has not received the subject matter, nor the teacher as one caring.

## **Part VI. Components of a Moral Education**

Noddings speaks of four essential components which constitute her vision of a moral



education: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation.

### **1. Modeling**

As one caring, Noddings tells us, the teacher has a unique power. She can contribute to either the enhancement or diminution of the student's ethical ideal, and therefore, she needs to be mindful of her actions and words. To her students, she is providing a model of one caring.

The student, Noddings insists, is always more important than the rules or an ideology. Hence, the rules should not guide the teacher's actions, but caring does. When the teacher refers to rules, they are important only in ways that they support her caring. If a teacher confronts a student who has been caught cheating, she might begin by—in Noddings's words—"attributing the best possible motive in him." Instead of saying: "you are dishonest and you have disappointed me" and resorting to punishment, Noddings suggests that the teacher look for the reason that compelled her student to cheat in the first place. She might say: "I know you wanted to help your friend . . ." or "I know you wanted a good grade on this exam," then proceed to explain why she will not allow him to cheat. She does not need to employ punishment. The rules are not sacred to her, but her student is. His relationship with her will likely influence the way he will approach his moral decisions.

Will he refer his ethical decisions to an ethic of caring or to rules and the likelihood of apprehension and punishment? Will he ask what his act means in terms of the feelings, needs, and projects of others, or will he be content with a catalog of rules-of-the-game? (Noddings, 1984, p. 178)

The teacher, Noddings contends, should not merely "talk" ethics but should "live" it. Instead of lecturing to her students about honesty or telling them to be honest, it might be more effective for her to model honesty for them, showing them, for example, how she arrives at an

honest decision. The way the student approaches his ethical dilemmas will probably result from his encounters with her and what she has taught him through her own doing.

Noddings contends that reflection is an essential part of caring. As teachers, we need to reflect, not only on our effectiveness as teachers and ones caring, but also on our roles as models. Reflection gives us insights and helps us to know ourselves and others better. Much of Noddings's care ethic is devoted to reflection and self-understanding. Through reflection, we can grow in our caring capacity.

## **2. Dialogue**

Dialogue is one of the most essential components of the Noddings's care model. Her notions of dialogue are complemented by the work of Freire (1970) and Burbules (1992) on dialogical relation. According to Burbules and Freire, authentic dialogue is not just conversation. It is open-ended and is nonteleological. Dialogue requires mutual trust, respect, and a desire to understand the other. Burbules describes a successful dialogue.

A successful dialogue involves a willing partnership and cooperation in the face of likely disagreements, confusions, failures, and misunderstandings. Persisting in this process requires a relation of mutual respect, and concern--and part of the dialogical interchange often must relate to the establishment and maintenance off these bonds. (Burbules, 1992, pp. 19, 20)

Dialogue is nonteleological as there should be no predetermined outcome. Interlocutors enter the dialogue with an open mind. In an authentic dialogue, one does not participate to defend a position or to win an argument. In dialogue, he withholds judgment, allows for different perspectives to emerge, and is open to the possibility of changing his mind. David Bohm and F. David Peat (1987) capture nicely the "spirit of dialogue."

In dialogue . . . a person may prefer a certain position but does not hold on to it non-

negotiable. He or she is ready to listen to others with sufficient sympathy and interest to understand the meaning of the other's position properly and is also ready to change his or her point of view if there is good reason to do so. . . . The spirit of dialogue is, in short, the ability to hold many points of view in suspension, along with the primary interest in the creation of common meaning. (Bohm and Peat, 1991, p. 82)

In the classroom, authentic dialogue is important because it empowers the student. It allows him to have a voice. The imbalance of power is neutralized in the presence of dialogue. Freire (Shor and Freire, 1987) calls dialogue an "epistemological relation . . . sealing together . . . the teacher and the students in the joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study." (p. 14)

Dialogue is essential to Noddings's care ethic because it allows those in caring relations to receive one another. In dialogue, we experience the *otherness* of the other. We care enough about him to be engrossed in his thoughts. True caring, in Noddings's view, cannot exist without the type of dialogue Freire and Burbules advocate for. Noddings speaks of dialogue in the context of caring and education.

What I am advocating is a form of dialectic between feeling and thinking that will lead in a continuing spiral to the basic feeling of genuine caring and the generous thinking that develops in its service. Through such a dialectic, we are led beyond the intense and particular feelings accompanying our own deeply held values, and beyond the beliefs to which these feelings are attached, to a realization that the other—who feels about that which I do not believe—is still one to be received. . . . Such dialogue . . . is vital in every aspect of education. (Noddings, 1984, p. 186)

Noddings concludes that the emphasis on dialogue ultimately points to the basic phenomenology of caring. In dialogue, the one caring is engrossed in the other, and the other receives her. Those in dialogue within a caring relation do not make the intellectual topic the sole focus of their attention. While they do pay attention to the subject, their primary aim is to attend to the other. Dialogue is essential to moral education as it continuously implies the question, "What

are you going through?" Simone Weil speaks of the "attentiveness" of dialogue.

The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say to him: "What are you going through?" It is a recognition that the sufferer exists, not only as a unit in a collection, or a specimen from the social category labeled "unfortunate", but as a man, exactly like us . . . . This way of looking is first of all attentive. The soul empties itself of all its content in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, just as he is, in all his truth. Only he who is capable of attention can do this. (Weil, 1977, p. 51)

In dialogue, the student is empowered, his subjectivity is highlighted, and he sees himself in relation to others and to the world. He sees himself not only as the one cared-for, but also as one caring, whose words and deeds influence and affect others.

### **3. Practice**

To learn about caring, students need to engage in the practice of caring. Noddings believes that we need to cultivate the capacity of interpersonal attention in our students. Simone Weil suggests that this capacity can be developed through "the right use of school duties," especially subjects like geometry. Noddings challenges this notion. There are many people, Nodding observes, who are brilliantly attentive to an intellectual field but are greatly insensitive to others and their needs. To develop the ability to care, Noddings believes, one must engage in the practice of care giving.

What kind of care practice should we provide to our students? Should gender influence our caring capacity to be ones caring? In many cultures including our own, people tend to believe that women innately have a larger ability to care than men do. Noddings challenges this assumption. She believes that we have been socialized into accepting this belief, since in most cultures, girls are expected to perform care giving duties while boys are exempt from them. From the view of care ethic, both sexes can learn to care. Hence, just as we now would like for girls to

explore science and mathematics, we should want our boys to engage in care giving practices. Boys, just like girls, should be expected to perform chores, to attend to the needs of younger siblings, to care for guests and grandparents, and the like. In caring, Noddings believes, the inner "I must" is awakened.

The supposition, from the care perspective, is that the closer we are to the intimate needs of life, the more likely we are to understand its fragility and to feel the pangs of the inner "I must"—that stirring of the heart that moves us to respond to one another. (Noddings, 2002, p. 20)

In schools, students can practice caring by assisting one another to learn. However, the primary aim is not for students to improve academic performance but to gain competence in caring. When we ask an older child to tutor a younger one, for example, our main focus is on the idea that they are learning to care and to be cared for. It is great if academic improvement results. But if the relation becomes tense, and caring is diminished because we fixate on academic success, we must then reevaluate it.

Some high schools have begun requiring community service as a way to engage students in the practice of caring. Just as making students learn geometry does not guarantee they will learn geometry, Noddings reminds us that community-service requirements will not guarantee that students will learn to care. The assignments must be considered thoughtfully, taking into consideration students' interests and capacities. Those from whom students are to learn must strive to model caring sensitively and effectively. Noddings also suggests that students engage in seminars where they can dialogue about their caring practice.

#### **4. Confirmation**

Noddings agrees with Buber (1958) who declares: "To confirm others is to bring out the

best in them." In order to bring out the best in others, Noddings insists, we must believe in and recognize the best in them. When someone commits an unethical act, we confirm him by reminding him of his better self. As mentioned in the example earlier, the caring teacher--confronted with a student cheating--does not begin with accusation or condemnation. She does not say: "You are dishonest and you have disappointed me." Instead, she looks for the best possible motive that might have compelled him to cheat in the first place. She confirms him by demonstrating to him that she believes the act he committed--cheating--is not a full reflection of who he is. She might begin by saying: "I know you want to get a good grade on this exam . . ." then proceeds to explain why she will not allow him to cheat. Noddings warns us of the use of accusation, confession, and forgiveness. These acts suggest a relation of authority and subordinate that is not congruent with caring. Accusation, Noddings tells us, tends to discourage authentic dialogue, and hence, does not contribute to the enhancement of the ethical ideal.

Confirmation, I believe, also means recognizing potential in the cared-for which--in the moment--might not be apparent. I confirm you when I believe in your possibilities. The fact that a student is failing math does not mean he is incapable of learning math. In confirming this student, the teacher might reflect on her methodology or inquire about his home life through some of the following questions: "What are you going through?" "Why haven't you turned in your homework?" "What can I do to help?" "Are my instructions difficult for you to grasp?" Behind her reflection and questioning is the belief that the student can learn if the conditions around his learning were more conducive.

## **CONCLUSION**

Caring--according Buber, Mayeröff, and Noddings--lies at the very center of the human

life. To Noddings, caring is not merely an instrumental, but essentially intrinsic good that lies at the heart of what it means to develop educated persons, and should be the primary aim of education. Although Noddings does not advocate using care as a means to accomplish academic aims, she insists that we cannot realize our academic goals without providing care for our students.

We must take public responsibility to raise [caring], healthy, competent, and happy children. . . . I will argue further that the school cannot achieve its academic goals without providing caring and continuity for students. (Noddings, 2005, p. 14)

Some of the literature I reviewed appears to support Noddings's hypothesis. In studies where classroom relationships are a variable, we see how students' well-being and learning are enhanced when teachers seek to foster caring relationships. Studies reviewed in this chapter--conducted by Pianta (1999), Watson (2003), Howes and Ritchie (2002), Cassidy & Bates (2005)--point to the teacher-student relationships as having a positive influence on students' learning and development.

However, the studies I have cited describe care and teacher effectiveness mostly from the teachers' or researchers' perspectives. With the exception of one small study which targets a very specific group of students, most of them leave out the points of view of the students. As the direct recipients of teachers' caring and teaching, I believe the students should be the ultimate judges of their teachers' effectiveness. Yet the students' voice seems to be rarely taken into consideration by researchers. In my view, carefully measured variables, test scores, or observations by teachers and researchers--in contrast to students' reflections--cannot fully capture the intangible but significant influence of a teacher's care. Hence, I believe we cannot measure teacher effectiveness thoroughly and comprehensively without talking to students.

My investigation--determining teaching effectiveness from students' perceptions and

examining whether caring plays a role in those perceptions of effectiveness—is one that might begin to bridge an important research gap on teacher effectiveness in general and the role of caring in particular.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **The Research Question**

My research is a phenomenological study which seeks to explore caring and its relation to teacher effectiveness. My investigation will examine the application of Mayeroff's and Noddings's care theories through eight students' perceptions of effective teachers—those teachers who have made a significant difference in these students' lives. The following questions will inform my research: 1) *"What made these teachers effective? What qualities did they possess?"* 2) *"What specifically did they do—methods, approaches, strategies they employed, and how these were employed—to help their students?"* 3) *"What role did caring—professional and personal—play in their effectiveness, as perceived by their students?"*

#### **A Qualitative Approach**

My data will be gathered from in-depth (seventy-five minute) interviews with participants. I am interested in my participants' narratives about their caring encounters and relationships with their teachers and how these participants perceive caring in relation to their teachers' effectiveness.

The data from my interview will be more rich, descriptive, and contextual compared to that of a quantitative study. The variables, in this context, will be complex, intricate, and difficult to measure. I am looking to examine the depth and richness, not a quantitative value, of my participants' experiences. I view a caring relationship as subtle, complex, and holistic, and therefore, something that needs to be approached in its wholeness.

My participants' narratives and reflections will recall realities constructed through their encounters with their teachers--what Glesne (2006) refers to as "social constructivism" or a "constructivist paradigm." This paradigm maintains that we each construct our own perception of the world and of our experience. From this point-of-view, there is no perception that is more "right" or "real" than another.

## **Data Collection**

### **1. Interview**

All of my data will be generated from in-depth, 75-minute interviews with participants. Even though Mayeroff's and Noddings' s care theories will inform my questions, I will strive to maintain a "naive openness" to each individual's experience, with the hope that new insights and understanding can emerge.

### **2. Interview Questions**

I intend to ask my student participants the following questions:

- 1) I would like for you to go back to the time when you were in this teacher's class. What do you remember most about him or her?
- 2) Going back to all the years you were in school, why do you think you remember this teacher the most?
- 3) Can you describe the atmosphere of the classroom? What did it feel like to be in his or her classroom? What were your relationships with your peers and your teacher? Please explain.
- 4) Academically, how did you do in this teacher's class? Why do you think you got the grade that you did?

- 5) How do you perceive your teacher's effectiveness as far as helping you learn the subject matter? Please explain your answer.
- 6) Do you remember any particular lessons or instructional strategies he/she used?  
Can you describe one that stood out?
- 7) How did this teacher inspire you?
- 8) What do you think was his/her influence on you while you were in his/her care? What did he or she do that was especially meaningful to you personally?
- 9) What do you think was his/her long-term influence on you?
- 10) How do you think you were personally enriched by knowing him/her?
- 11) How long were you with this teacher? How much time did you spend with him/her each day?
- 12) Through your interactions with this teacher, what did you learn about yourself?
- 13) What do you think this teacher taught you the most?
- 14) If you can describe him/her with 5 adjectives, what would they be?
- 15) It is known that there are two types of caring in teaching. The first is professional caring where the teacher is concerned with the student mastering the subject matter and coming to appreciate it in the larger context of living intelligently in the world. The second type is personal caring, where the teacher cares for the student's well-being beyond the scope of the classroom and academic learning. Can you think of an incident where your teacher demonstrated that he/she cared for you on a personal level? Please be specific.
- 16) How important was your personal flourishing and well-being to him/her? Please be specific.

- 17) Did your teacher provide an environment that was safe for you to express your thoughts freely?
- 18) Were your thoughts important to your teacher? Were your ideas listened to actively by your teacher and peers?
- 18) What kind of discussions did you have in class? Can you describe one?
- 19) Was this teacher approachable? Did you trust him/her enough so that you would come to him/her with a personal crisis?
- 20) Do you think this teacher brought out the best in you? Please explain.
- 21) What qualities did your teacher bring out of you?
- 22) Did this teacher have faith in you? Did he/she believe you could learn the subject matter?
- 23) Did your teacher see potential in you?
- 24) Do you think this teacher was a (moral) role model for you? Please explain your answer.
- 25) What is your perception of a caring teacher?
- 26) What did this teacher teach you about caring?
- 27) Did you have an opportunity to care for others—people, ideas, plants, animals, environment, world—while you were in this teacher's care? Please explain.
- 28) In your opinion, how important is caring in education? Please explain.
- 29) Some educational theorists believe that caring for students' personal flourishing and well-being should be the primary aim of education. Do you agree or disagree with this hypothesis? Please explain.

The questions I intend to ask are designed to elicit details about the teachers' practices and how my subjects perceive these practices in relationship to their teachers' effectiveness and how these practices relate to Mayeroff's three main features of care--*being for, being with, being there for*--and Noddings's four components of moral education--*modeling, dialogue, practice, confirmation*. At the same time, the questions are open-ended enough that insights outside of care theories can emerge.

I will not accompany the interview with any kind of quantitative questionnaire. I perceive a teacher's caring as something whole, and in a sense, sacred. Hence, assigning a numerical value to a teacher's caring act is something I perceive as inappropriate and unnecessary. A qualitative approach to this study is most appropriate.

### **3. Data Analysis**

All of my interviews will be transcribed. I will carefully study and analyze the data, drawing connections and identifying patterns. I will look for links between the data and Mayeroff's three ingredients of caring--respecting the other's individuality, empathy, loving responsiveness (*being for, being with, being there for*)--and Noddings's four components of moral education: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. While I seek to explore the practical application of Mayeroff's and Noddings's care theories, I will also be open and receptive to the emergence of new insights and understanding.

### **Research Context and Participants**

I will send out an email to classmates, friends, and family members asking if they have had a "teacher who has made a lasting and significant difference in their lives," and would like to be interviewed for the study. I hope this approach will allow for a certain randomness in the

process of participant selection. From this process, I hope to recruit 8-10 adults (18 years or older) for the study.

I am choosing to interview adults because, in contrast to children, they will be able to reflect more thoughtfully on their experiences.

### **Myself As Researcher**

As a graduate student who is interested in care ethic and who have had both caring and non-caring teachers, I see the value of care in education, especially in my own learning experiences. As a teacher, I aspire to care for my students in a healthy way and recognize the value of caring relationships and their positive influence on a student's well-being and academic success.

In addition, I believe conducting research on a topic I deeply care about will be interesting and rewarding. I hope my findings will raise my own awareness and contribute to that of my colleagues on the moral dimension of teaching and its relation to teacher effectiveness.

## CHAPTER FOUR DATA ANALYSIS

### How Participants Were Selected

As mentioned in the previous chapter, all of my subjects were meant to be randomly selected based on the fact that they each had an effective and influential teacher, and were willing to be interviewed. During my search for participants, I saw Erin Gruwell on television promoting the movie *Freedom Writers*. At the time, I had seven volunteers and was having a difficult time looking for the eighth person to complete the thesis' requirement. Intrigued by Gruwell's story, I contacted the Freedom Writers Foundation, and one freedom writer--Hope--volunteered to participate. While I did not know about the teachers my other subjects would select, Hope and I knew in advance that our interview would be about Erin Gruwell. This was the only exception to the plan I had described in my Methodology Chapter.

### Schools And Participants

Although most of my participants were randomly selected and differed from one another in many ways, they did have certain things in common. They were all women and college students. Five of them were both graduate students and aspiring teachers, two of them were undergraduate students, and one was a young attorney. Of the eight participants, two were African Americans, three were Asian Americans, two were European Americans, one was Indo American. Seven of them were in their 20's (ranging from 20 to 29) and one was in her 40's.

Since the schools my participants attended and the length of time they spent with their teachers might have had an impact on the teachers' ability to care, I feel that it is important to

include the length of time my subjects spent with their teachers and a brief description of the schools where these relationships occurred. In addition, the reader might find it helpful to get a short description of each participant. A visual representation of this description can be found in Appendix A.

For caring in school to fulfill its fullest potential, Noddings (2002) suggests that teachers remain with their students (voluntarily) for more than one year. My data shows that seven out of eight participants spent at least two years with their teachers. Four out of eight were with their teachers for more than three years.

Dawn is a 25 year-old Chinese American who is a graduate student and an aspiring teacher. Dawn met her teacher during her senior year while attending a public high school near Sacramento. She spent one year studying AP biology with this teacher. For each school day, she spent about one hour with him.

Grace is a 24 year-old graduate student and is Chinese American. Grace attended a large public high school in San Jose where she met her teacher. She was with him for two years. He was her leadership teacher for one year and supervised her yearbook class the second year. They spent at least one hour together during each school day and have remained in touch since.

Leila attended a small K-8 private school in the Peninsula. Leila is a 20 year-old Amerasian undergraduate student. Leila studies theatre arts and aspires to become an actress. Leila was with her teacher for three years—first, second, and third grade. During her nine years at this school, Leila stayed closely connected with this teacher. They worked intimately together on their school's annual play until she finished eighth grade. Leila has remained in touch with her teacher.



Dottie is in her late 40's and is African American. Dottie was a former corporate trainer and is currently a graduate student and aspiring teacher. Dottie met her teacher in a boarding school as a teenager. She was Dottie's Spanish teacher and advisor. Although Dottie's teacher taught her Spanish for only one year, they saw each other daily for four years. Dottie still sees her teacher at school reunions.

Priya is 29 years old and has recently immigrated to the U.S. from India. Priya is a graduate student and an aspiring teacher. Priya attended a large private school in India. She was with her teacher from sixth grade to twelfth grade. Priya's teacher taught her both music and Hindi literature. Priya spent six years with her teacher. During these six years, they spent forty-five minutes to an hour together every day. Priya remained in contact with her teacher after graduating. Priya's teacher visited Priya while she was in college and attended Priya's wedding.

Lacie is European American. Lacie is 26 years old and is a graduate student and aspiring teacher. Lacie attended a small K-8 Catholic school in Southern California. Lacie was with her teacher for three years--sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. In sixth and seventh grade, Lacie's teacher taught her Language Arts for one hour each day. In eighth grade, she was Lacie's homeroom teacher and they spent 3/4 of each schoolday together.

Hope is a 25 year-old African American undergraduate student and is an aspiring college professor. Hope is putting herself through school and works part-time for the Freedom Writers Foundation. Hope attended a large public high school in Long Beach, where she met her teacher. Hope's teacher taught her English for two years--junior and senior year. They spent between three to four hours each day and have remained in close contact.

Lan is a 27 year-old Vietnamese American and is an attorney. Lan was attending a large

public high school in San Jose when she met her teacher. He taught her English for two years and supervised various extracurricular activities. Lan spent at least 45 minutes each day with her teacher. She has visited him a few times after graduating.

The background account shows that my subjects differed from one another in life experiences, cultural backgrounds, age, ethnicity, religions, and the types of schools they attended during their encounters with their teachers. Nevertheless, there were some remarkable similarities and consistency in what they said about the teachers and their experiences with these teachers.

### **Presentation of Data**

Michael Katz (2007) makes a distinction between two types of caring in teaching-- "professional caring" and "personal caring." Professional caring is defined by Katz as a teacher's dedication to the student's mastery of the subject matter and well-being as a learner. Personal caring refers to a teacher's caring for the student's personal well-being--a form of caring that extends beyond the boundaries of the classroom and academic learning. Prior to the actual investigation, I suspected that personal caring might play a role in these teachers' effectiveness and success. I also believed that other qualities and practices unrelated to caring would play a role as well. As I analyzed the data, I saw that care, occasionally, was embedded in a quality or practice that seemed to be unrelated to caring. For example, many of my subjects spoke of their teachers having a passion for the subject matter and for teaching. While a history teacher who is passionate about history might not care for his students personally, I discovered that personal caring was often embedded in these teachers' passion as many participants spoke of their teachers' passion for their students and for the students' well being. As I attempt to separate qualities and practices related to caring from those that are not, I will take into consideration

whether or not these qualities are imbedded in, or inspired by, care.

I will frame the presentation of my data in light of these three main questions: 1) What are the qualities of effective teachers? 2) What practices did these teachers employ? 3) Did caring play a role?

#### **A. Qualities of Effective Teachers**

When asked to use at least five adjectives to describe their teachers, these are the qualities used by more than one participant: passionate, caring, compassionate, intelligent, strong, humble, sincere, loving, hard-working, selfless, and inspirational. The following are six of the most chosen adjectives, separated into two categories: related to care and unrelated to care.

##### ***Qualities Related to Caring:***

###### **1. Passion:**

"Passionate" was chosen the most by my subjects. Six out of eight participants used this adjective to describe their teachers. Although passion is not a quality directly related to caring, many participants perceived caring as deeply embedded in their teachers' passion. Hence, I choose to include this quality in the care-related category.

The qualities of "passion" and "dedication" stood out the most during my interview with Dawn. Dawn spoke excitedly about her teacher's passion for the subject matter, for teaching, and for his students. This quality emerged again and again throughout the interview. By being passionate about the subject matter, Dawn's teacher was able to instill passion in his students. To Dawn, both aspects of personal and professional caring were embedded in her teacher's passion.

He was so *passionate* about teaching, about science. . . . I have friends who ended up studying science in college because of his class. He really instilled *passion* in them. . . . He put so much energy into developing the curriculum. It was not only the fact that it was time-consuming, but *you have to care so much about your students to do that*. He really devoted his whole life to us, to teaching. . . . I think if he taught a different subject which was not his specialty or gift, he would still make the curriculum as rich because of his *passion* for teaching. . . . He was so *passionate*. . . . He dedicated his life to us. (Dawn)

(italics mine)

Leila emphasized her teacher's passion for life, for her students, and for the simple things in life such as the red color of a lipstick. Leila said her teacher's passion for and positive attitude about life instilled in her a sense of enthusiasm, and a positive outlook in life.

She was a really good role model for me, as a child, for having *passion* the way she did. She was *excited* about the theatre, about things that are beautiful, even something as simple as . . . red lipstick. She was *excited* about life, about *us*. . . . Her love for the simple things in life taught me to love life, and to see life as a glass half full. (Leila) (italics mine)

Others spoke of their teachers' passion for the subject matter, for the well-being of their students, and for life.

Priya described how much she came to love the subject matter because of her teacher's passion and attitude toward it. Like Dawn's teacher, Priya's teacher instilled a deep love for the subject matter in her students.

I fell in love with the language because of her. The way she exuded *passion*, the way she explained the subject matter. There was so much *passion* and warmth, it was contagious. I just caught on, and I felt in love with the subject. (Priya) (italics mine)

Hope spoke of her teacher's passion and determination, especially when it came to the her students' interest.

She was incredibly *passionate*. If she believed something was possible for us, she wouldn't take "no." She was very stubborn when it came to our interest. Once she had a goal in mind, she would not let go. Everything [was] all about action. She would take action whenever, and with this *passionate* zeal. (Hope) (italics mine)

Although Grace didn't use the term "passionate" to describe her teacher, the essence of passion surfaced as she spoke of his long-term influence on her.

He taught me to live, to live *passionately*, to experience things, to look for what life has to offer . . . . (Grace) (italic mine)

Lacie described her teacher's passion for language arts.

She was *passionate* about language arts. Bad grammar would drive her crazy. . . . She helped us see what it was like to be *passionate*, excited, and dedicated in the classroom. (Lacie) (*italic mine*)

## 2. Caring

Six out of the eight subjects described "caring" as one characteristic their teachers possessed. Even for those who did not choose to use this word, the theme and essence of care, and the word "care" emerged in each interview. Two people used the term "compassionate" to describe their teachers' caring acts.

As described the previous chapter, Katz (2007) contends that one can distinguish between two types of caring in teaching—professional caring and personal caring. Professional caring refers to the teacher's effort in helping her student learn the subject matter and to do well academically. Personal caring involves the teacher's caring for the student's overall well-being—a form of caring that extends beyond the boundaries of the classroom and academic learning. Both professional caring and personal caring were present in the data. But the personal aspect of caring appeared to have made the greatest impression on my subjects.

Hope spoke fondly of the way her English teacher cared for her: "She was the one that cared the most." When they first met, Hope was struck by the way she was listened to and understood by this teacher. Caring, according to Mayeroff, requires empathy. The one caring, Mayeroff contends, should seek to understand the other's world and to know "what it feels like to be inside it." It appears that empathy was a central quality Hope's teacher possessed. In her care, Hope turned her 1.5 G.P.A. into a 4.0. Her teacher, evidently, did an exceptional job where

Hope's academic learning was concerned. But it was her personal caring that moved Hope the most. Here, Hope described how her teacher sought to understand her, and at one point, helped her and her family financially so they would not be evicted.

I felt that I was so important to her, and my problems were also her problems. She was the one teacher that *cared* the most. She was the one who actually *cared* for my well-being. She had vested interest in us, her students. . . . She looked deep within me and wanted to know all of me. . . . We were homeless for a while. . . . My mother was a single mom. She worked as a nanny and I don't know how she made ends meet. One day, I didn't know this, but she couldn't pay rent and she told Ms. G. And Ms. G. gave her the money for rent. . . . She didn't have to do that for me, but she did. (Hope) (*italics mine*)

Lacie emphasized feeling "special" in her teacher's eyes, and of being part of the caring community her teacher created.

We all felt special that we were in her class, that we were her students. Our class was such a *caring* community, and she made it that way. . . . Even before I came to her class, I felt she *cared* about me, that she knew about me. She always took the time to say "hi" . . . . She taught [me] that to *care* is to understand and support the other . . . . (Lacie) (*italics mine*)

Leila spoke of feeling "valued", "cared for", and "loved" by her teacher. Leila emphasized how much her teacher cared about the students' happiness. The word "love" showed up many times in my interview with Leila. Their caring relationship continues ten years later.

She really *cared* for us, for our happiness. That was so important to her. And she respected us. I felt so valued and loved by her. She loved and still loves (ten years later) the part of me that was unique and unconventional, that others may not [love]. When she talks to her former students, you can see how much she still loves them, and they love her back. (Leila) (*italics mine*)

Dottie repeatedly emphasized that her teacher was her safe place. Dottie said she remembered this teacher the most because of how much she cared about Dottie as "a whole person." Dottie said her personal well-being was very important to her teacher.

The impact that she had on me was that I truly got that she *cared about my well-being*.

She wanted me to be a good student and to get good grades, but it was abundantly clear that she *cared about Dottie as a whole person*. She *cared* about how things were with my family, crazy stuff that happened with boyfriends. . . . Her door was always wide open. She was my safe place. (Dottie) (italics mine)

Like Leila, Priya spoke repeatedly of "love." Through her teacher's example of caring, Priya said she learned about "the power of love."

She *cared* so much about me and my classmates. It was so apparent that she loved us. Love inspires great things. Love makes you work hard for those you love, and she worked hard for us. If you find that love, there is nothing like it. *And she taught me the power of love through her caring*. (Priya) (italics mine)

Mayeroff defines *being there for* the other as the act of attentive and loving responsiveness. The one caring makes herself available for the other whenever he needs her. Here, Lan describes how her teacher *was there for* his students.

He was one of those teachers who taught because he loved teaching and his students. He really took the time to be there for us. He *cared* for us inside and outside of the classroom. There were lots of extracurricular activities, and he was the advisor for many of those things. He was interested in each of us and took the time *to be there for* us when we needed him. (Lan) (italics mine)

### **3. Compassionate**

Although only two participants identified their teachers as compassionate, the essence of compassion and the evidence of compassionate acts appeared many times in this study. Here, we will examine those two participants' accounts.

Dawn described both her teacher's professional and personal caring. She spoke admiringly of the teacher's dedication to the curriculum and to the quality of learning of his students. She was impressed by his "caring" way of assigning grades, and emphasized how he was always available to his students if they needed him "for anything." Once again, we see the essence of Mayeroff's *being there for* the other emerged. *Being there for* someone means being

available or *on call* for the other, especially in times of crisis. The well-being of the other, in Mayeroff's view, is of primary importance to the one caring.

He was hard on us because he *cared* . . . . But he was also *compassionate*. *We could come to him for anything before school, after school, during lunch. We could do that. . . .* He would give pop quizzes. And on the first try, we typically wouldn't do well. Then we would talk about the quiz, and he would surprise us with the same quiz again. Naturally, we would do better the second time, and that was the score he chose. I think that was a *caring way* of assigning grades. (Dawn) (italics mine)

Grace excelled academically in her teacher's class, and emphasized how knowledgeable he was with the subject matter. But what Grace remembered the most was the way this teacher cared for his students' personal well-being.

He was kind and *compassionate*. He treated all of his students as if we were his children. He truly *cared* for us like a father. All the late nights we spent in his classroom, he would make sure there would be food available to us. He would go out and buy takeout food. I remember going to Costco with him regularly just to make sure his fridge was stocked with food. Any student who needed something to eat would have food. If my dad couldn't pick me up, my teacher would give me a ride. It was important to him that we were safe. I could always count on him. (Grace) (italics mine)

### ***Qualities Unrelated to Care:***

#### **1. Strength**

Many of us associate "caring" with something soft and gentle. While caring is a positive attribute, it does not always connote the presence of power or strength. Yet, many of my participants described their teachers as "very strong," "tough," "strict," "resilient," "demanding," having "inner strength" and "perseverance." While three people used the adjective "strong" to describe their teachers, their inner strength surfaced in many of their accounts.

Grace said her teacher's strength instilled in her a sense of determination and perseverance.



He is very *strong* in the sense that no matter what happens in his life, he is able to bounce back. And he taught us that. . . . When I feel unmotivated, I would remember the things learned in his class. And I would pick myself up, and I would say: "Yes, you can do this." (Grace) (italics mine)

Dawn spoke of her teacher's strength as embedded in his effort to inspire students to be their best. Dawn said her teacher was "hard" and "tough" because he *cared*.

He was not warm and fuzzy. . . . He was tough and demanding as far as not allowing us to settle for less than our best. . . . He had *strength* and conviction. . . . I don't know what you call it, tough love? Now I see why he was such a hard teacher, because he *cared* so much . . . . (Dawn) (italics mine)

Dottie described how her teacher's strength was inspired by love for the students.

Caring sounds soft, and it needs not be. It is tough love. It's like, "I love you so much that it is unacceptable for you to fail. It means me staying after school, it means giving up my recess or lunch time, or me having a difficult conversation with your mother. Whatever it may look like . . ." That was my teacher. There was this *strength* in her. She was loving, but tough when she needed to be. (Dottie) (italics mine)

Hope spoke admiringly of her teacher's strength and resilience. In wanting the best for her students, Hope's teacher often had to fight the system to get results. Hope described here what her teacher had to do to get them—students and teacher—to stay together for an additional year.

She had this *strength* within her, she [was] just so . . . she had *perseverance*. When she had a goal in mind, she did not let go. If she believed something would be good for us, she would fight for us to the end. She would not take "no" for an answer. If the department head said "no," she would go to the principal. If the principal said "no," she would go to the superintendent. And he would be the one to give us what we needed. She was *resilient* when it came to us. (Hope) (italics mine)

## 2. Intelligence

Three participants used the adjective "intelligent" to describe their teachers. One described her teacher as "wise."

### 3. Humility

Two of my participants described their teachers as "humble." While other adjectives—loving, sincere, hardworking, selfless, and inspirational—were also chosen twice, I am addressing humility since it seemed to have made a deep impression on my subjects.

One virtue of Mayeroff's caring is humility. In requiring humility, Mayeroff asks the one caring to be humble and to recognize that he can learn from the other. The teacher, Mayeroff tells us, should seek to learn from the student and the parent should seek to learn from the child. However, the humility my participants described resembles that of modesty, where their teachers were humble and modest regarding their accomplishments. This aspect of humility is not related to caring, and therefore, I am choosing to include it in the unrelated-to-care category.

Dawn admired her teacher's modesty about his accomplishments and knowledge.

He had so much knowledge about science. He was so smart, and he got to meet Watson and Crick, but he was *humble* in spirit. He never tried to wow us with his accomplishments. I liked his *humility* . . . . (Dawn) (italics mine)

The humility Priya's teacher displayed made a deep impression on Priya. Priya said she greatly admired her teacher's humble attitude, but most importantly, Priya believed she learned about "humility" from watching her teacher. The teacher, Noddings (1992) contends, does not merely "talk" ethics but should "live" it. Instead of lecturing to her students about honesty or telling them to be honest, it might be more effective for her to model for them, showing them how she arrives at an honest decision. The way the student approaches his ethical dilemmas is likely to be influenced by his encounters with her and what she has taught him through her own doing. Here, we see that Priya's teacher modeled for her student(s) effectively the quality of humility.

I am *humbled* because of her. I know what *humility* is now. *Humility* is what I learned from

her. There is a thing they say about a tree which bears fruit, and the more fruit it has, the more it bends down with *humility*. That was my teacher. She taught me *humility*. She was a walking, talking example of *humility*. She was so *humble*. She had so many books to her credit. She wrote music. She composed songs. She was multi-faceted. She worked for the Dalai Lama. She did all these amazing things and she was so *humble*. She never told us a thing about her accomplishments. I found out afterwards. When we were with her, it was always about us. (Priya) (*italics mine*)

## **B. Practices of Effective Teachers**

The participants described the following practices employed by their teachers: 1) creating a caring, learning community and environment; 2) seeing potential in students; 3) setting high expectations; 4) listening to students; 5) giving generously of their time; 6) promoting critical thinking; 7) empowering students; 8) engaging students; and 9) possessing subject-matter expertise.

The first seven practices are related to caring and the last two practices are unrelated to caring. Here is an in-depth analysis of those practices.

### ***Practices Related to Care***

#### **1. Creating a Caring Learning Community or Environment**

Many of my subjects spoke of being in a classroom that was caring and supportive. They described the harmonious relationships they experienced not only with their teachers, but also with their peers. D. Kay Johnston (2006) emphasizes the importance of relationships within the classroom—not only those between teacher and students, but also those between students. Johnston contends that the relationships students form in the classroom have a role in shaping their moral and ethical development. Noddings (1992) reminds us that moral virtues are cultivated within relationships. Many of my participants spoke fondly of being part of a caring community, of being supported and listened to by their peers and teachers. Some emphasized the caring and

harmonious relationships they had with their peers and teachers. In addition to "caring," four participants described the learning atmosphere as "safe." But the safe feeling they described was not separated from, but was a part of, a caring environment.

Lan described a caring community she experienced in this class and the relationships she cultivated and maintained with her peers. Lan explained how she and her classmates learned "to listen to and understand one another." The act of listening and understanding is a central characteristic of caring, according to both Noddings and Mayeroff.

It was like a *caring* community. We really knew and interacted with each other. It wasn't just him teaching us, but us voicing our ideas, working together. I really got to know my classmates, more than any other class. Many people from that class became my close friends; and we are still great friends. He created a safe environment where we were able to debate any issue and not feel judged by anyone. . . . *We learned to listen to and understand one another . . . .* (Lan) (italics mine)

Hope described her classroom as a "safe haven" because of the relationships she formed with her peers. Hope said her teacher and classmates were like a family to her. The centrality of relationships was apparent in my interview with Hope. Within these relationships, Hope described the students "being there [for] and hearing one another about issues and problems and [to] commiserate . . ."

The classroom was by far a safe haven, there was a sense of home. I usually walked seven blocks from home, and I would be sure to be there around 7:30. She opened the classroom then, and I would stay there long after she left. It was home. Our homes were tumultuous and not at all stable. And our class was like a substitute for home, and we would come and stay for hours. We would do our homework there and hang out. There was no other alternative. The relationships that arose out of our experiences out of that location were very special. *We were almost like brothers and sisters. . . . We truly cared about one another. We tried to be there, and we would hear one another about our issues and our problems, and we would commiserate with each other. We genuinely cared about one another. If [some]one wasn't there, we would ask: "Where is so and so?" We actually looked out for one another.* (Hope) (italics mine)

In Lacie's story, we see once again the focus on caring relationships. Like Hope, Lacie reported that her class felt like a "family" which she described as a "community." Lacie spoke of the feeling she shared with her classmates--feeling "special" being in her teacher's class. Lacie emphasized that the caring classroom environment helped her to do well.

There was a sense of community. We were good friends and we *cared* about each other. . . . It was a *caring* community, partly because everyone had known each other for a long time. . . . You felt special when you came into her room because you felt like part of the family. I felt safe in her class because I knew she *cared* about us. . . . We were a very close group. All of us got along, and we worked well together. *The relationships that we had with each other was part of the reason that the classroom was safe. We had so much history together, we all knew each other well. It was something very special. . . . The environment of the classroom helped me to do well.* (Lacie) (italics mine)

Dawn described the "serious" feel of the classroom because of her teacher's high expectations, but also emphasized the caring aspect of it. Like others, Dawn spoke of her harmonious relationships with her peers.

I had many friends in the class. . . . My peers were willing to share their work, and I remember collaborating with a group on lab experiments and write ups. . . . The environment was both serious and *caring*. Serious, because I felt like Mr. Walford was very knowledgeable and had high standards for us. Therefore, not a lot of time could be spent on fooling around and being off task in class. *Care*, because I felt like he only made it so because he was passionate about our learning, and had a love for science and teaching. (Dawn) (italics mine)

Both Dottie and Grace described the classroom as caring and safe.

In Mrs. Samji's classroom I felt at home. She . . . created a safe and *caring* environment. . . Relationships with peers/classmates were pleasant, healthy, and fun. (Dottie) (italics mine)

Whenever I was in his class, I knew it was a safe place to be. . . . I felt *cared for*. . . . (Grace) (italics mine)

Although Priya and Leila did not use the term "care," both described their classroom as having a "home" or "family" atmosphere. Priya said her teacher modeled kindness and respect

while Leila emphasized the "loving" quality and said she and her peers were happy there.

It was like home whenever we were around her. We were kind and respectful to one another because we learned that from her. (Priya)

The classroom, the school . . . we were like a loving family. We were happy there. (Leila)

## 2. Seeing Potential in Students

Noddings's care ethic requires confirmation. Drawing on Buber, Noddings's confirmation entails seeing the best in the other. The teacher confirms her student by continually drawing the student's attention to his "better self." All of my subjects spoke of their teachers seeing the best in them and believing in them.

Hope's teacher was the first person in her life who saw "infinite possibilities" in her. Her teacher's confirmation meant a lot to Hope.

It was really beautiful that she didn't see me in the same light as my other teachers did, as far as seeing me as someone lazy. . . . For me, personally, I didn't have really any goals and hopes beyond graduation. I didn't think it was possible. I was discouraged by school officials. I remember going to my school counselor for a meeting on our plans after high school. I told her that I wanted to be a nurse. She told me that I wasn't college material and that I should consider a trade school. I was so insulted and deflated by that comment. She wasn't the only school official that told me that I didn't measure up or I wasn't worth it. So after a while of being told that you are not good, you start believing it. It wasn't until Ms. G. *showed us that there are infinite possibilities for us.* That is when we truly believed in ourselves. *She never put a limit on what we could do. It was all possible.* (Hope) (italics mine)

Other participants spoke of their teachers seeing potential in them and believing in them.

He really *believed in and had hope in all of us.* Now I understand his toughness. He wanted us to *be the best we could be.* (Dawn) (italics mine)

Part of the reason I did well was that there was *no concept of not doing well or failure for us.* (Leila) (italics mine)

In her mind, *I could do anything and accomplish anything I wanted to.* I never felt any *doubt* from her about what I could do. (Dottie) (italics mine)

Priya, Lacie, and Lan described how they have realized the potential their teachers saw in them. In Mayeroff's words: "caring is helping the other grow and actualize himself." (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 1)

I wanted to do something no one had ever done, starting a Hindi music society. Instead of saying: "A Hindi music society, how unusual . . ." she said: "Go for it; *you can do anything if you believe in it.*" I started that music society and everyone [who joined it] was happy. *To her, the sky was the limit for me.* From then on, there was no looking back. Whenever I was inspired by an idea, I would go for it. In college, I ran for the secretary of the music society, the president of the student union, and I did become the president of the student union. It was *all because of her . . . .* (Priya) (italics mine)

I was shy, so I was surprised when she encouraged me to run for the student council. "Why would she think I would be good at something like that?" But *she saw potential, something in me that I didn't know myself.* I ran and I got elected, and I was good in that role. I became a leader. (Lacie) (italics mine)

Even though I was shy, he always knew I knew the answer. And he would call on me, drawing me out. And slowly, I came out of my shell. He *recognized that I was capable in ways others didn't.* As an attorney, you can't be shy; you have to be outspoken. And that ability to articulate my thoughts confidently, clearly, and convincingly began to develop in his class. (Lan) (italics mine)

### 3. Listening to Students

Mayeroff's caring requires empathy—a deep attunement to the cared-for by the one caring—and this attunement is developed partly through an active act of listening. Noddings's care ethic requires dialogue. Authentic dialogue, according to Noddings, Freire, and Burbules, involves the act of attentive listening by the participants, and ultimately results in further understanding. My participants emphasized the experience of being listened to. They all said their thoughts were important to their teachers. They felt listened to, appreciated, and understood by their teachers. To my participants, their teachers were good listeners. Many subjects spoke of feeling important and valued because their teachers listened to their ideas, problems, thoughts, and concerns, both

inside and outside of the classroom.

Dawn spoke of how her teacher was always interested in what his students were thinking.

If you made a comment, you could tell he *really listened and cared* because, days later, he would come back and say something that would push you to think further about that. . . . He was *interested in our thoughts and opinions*. He *always wanted to know what we were thinking* about the projects we worked on, and why we chose that project. . . . For everyone, you were an important student to him. (Dawn) (italics mine)

Leila described how her teacher listened to and valued *every one* of the students' ideas.

*Every idea we had was a big deal to her*. We created this newsletter and she made such a big deal of it. I came up with a slogan for it in the Third Grade and she loved it. She gushed about it. It was something like: "The Edenvue School Angels Have a Lot to Say" and she loved it. She went over it. She sucked it in; she relished it. . . . She *always listened to us, she appreciated each of our creative contributions and thoughts and ideas*. (Leila) (italics mine)

The student, Noddings insists, is always more important than the rules. Hence, the rules should not guide the teacher's actions, but caring does. Here, Dottie's teacher demonstrated Noddings's ideal, where she perceived her student as more sacred than the rules. Dottie described how her teacher really listened to and understood Dottie, whereas the other adults who were more rule-bound were not able to do the same. Having an adult in her life who valued her and listened to her was very affirming and "wonderful" for Dottie.

She was someone I believe I could say anything to and she would *listen and understand*. . . . Whereas the other faculty were so rule-oriented and authority-oriented that there was no place to go. They couldn't remember what it was like to be a teenager, but she did. She had a knack for *understanding* what it is like to be a teenager. . . . It was such a challenging place, to be a teenager. There was stuff that was very hard to talk about. . . . Whenever I was messed up, I would go to her and she would *listen to me*. She really *listened*. . . . She was a safe place for me. . . . For a young person, it is wonderful *to be heard* and be accepted no matter what you have to say. (Dottie) (italics mine)

Lan said her teacher's interest in the students' thoughts and his ability to listen distinguished him from the other teachers.



He really wanted each student to voice our opinions. That was so important to him. *In other classes, sometimes you don't feel that the teacher really listened or valued what you said. But he did.* (Lan)

Hope described how her teacher listened to her very "intently." In Hope's account, we see what Noddings defines as *engrossment* in the other. The attentiveness Noddings required in dialogue is captured here nicely by Simone Weil.

The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say to him: "What are you going through?" It is a recognition that the sufferer exists . . . as a man exactly like us. . . . This way of looking is first of all attentive. The soul empties itself of all its content in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at. . . . Only he who is capable of attention can do this. (Weil, 1977, p. 51)

Hope's teacher, it appears, was capable of such "attentiveness."

When she spoke with you, she would look at you as if you were the only person there was. She would look at me very sincerely, very authentically. When I spoke with her about, say, problems at home, she would look at me and I would know that she understood. I felt that I had her complete attention. . . . When I first talked to her, I was struck by the way *she listened so intently*. I was like, "Oh my gosh, she really wants to know me, all of me . . ." (Hope) (italics mine)

Grace and Priya described their teachers as caring and attentive listeners.

He *was always there to listen to us*. Even when our ideas were dumb ideas, *he was always there to listen*. . . . He cared about my thoughts. He *always asked me what I was thinking*, what I thought about the class, what I wanted to do . . . . (Grace) (italics mine)

She was a *hugely patient and caring listener, and you really knew that she was listening*. (Priya) (italics mine)

#### **4. Generously Dedicating Time to Students and Curriculum**

Mayeroff's caring requires the carer to *be there* for the one caring. *Being there* for the other means making time for him, being available to him, and responding to his needs. In *being there* for someone, the one caring makes the well-being of the other of primary importance to her. Many of my subjects spoke admiringly of the amount of time and energy their teachers generously

dedicated to the curriculum and to the students, responding to their academic and personal needs, both inside and outside the classroom. What appeared to move my subjects the most was the time their teachers made available to them outside the classroom.

Dawn described the generous time and energy her teacher dedicated to the curriculum and to his students. We see here that this teacher's generosity with his time and energy was deeply embedded in both professional and personal caring.

The other teachers did not go out of their way, but he did. . . . He went above and beyond, getting us supplies . . . . He *really took the time to devise the curriculum*; the activities that we did must have required so much preparation. Just the resources that he would bring in, it wasn't like he was wealthy or had an assistant. . . . *His curriculum was so rich because of the time he put in to prepare. . . . He put so, so much time and energy into developing the curriculum. It was not only the fact that it was time-consuming but you had to care so much about your students to do that. He was generous and flexible with his time. He would open up his room during his lunch time. If we wanted to come and work with him or talk with him about anything before school, after school, or lunch, we could do that.* (Dawn) (italics mine)

Dottie, Priya, Lan, and Grace spoke of their teachers being available to them outside of the classroom. Mayeroff describes *being there for* the other as being "on call" for him. When the cared-for needs her, the one caring makes herself available. The teachers in the following accounts exemplified Mayeroff's idea of *being there for* the other.

Her door was wide open to us. . . . I could come to her for anything, at any time. *She was always available, day and night.* She was a safe place for me. (Dottie) (italics mine)

She had so many students, she was so busy, but *she always made time for any student—*whether it is a former student or a current one—who needed her. *She was always there for me. I could come to her house when I was distressed . . . .* (Priya) (italics mine)

*He really, really took the time out of his schedule to support us. It was both inside and outside the classroom.* His relationship with us evolved into a lot of extracurricular activities, and he was the advisor for a lot of those different ones. *He really cared about us and he took the time to be there for us when we needed him.* (Lan) (italics mine)

*Most of what I remember about him was what he did outside of class for me. I would talk to him about boyfriend issues. He was always concerned about his students, not only academically but also outside of class. . . . He was very compassionate. He would always be there if you needed someone to talk to. He helped us fill out college applications or if you have a project in school. He was always the type of teacher who would stay so late. I remember him staying late until 8 or 9 at night to help us finish whatever we needed to finish. (Grace) (italics mine)*

Hope described how her teacher--dedicated to a rich curriculum for her remedial students--worked a second job to pay for the expenses. Not only was Hope's teacher available to her students before school, after school, during lunch, and on the weekends, she also gave up her weekends to work another job in order to pay for her students' classroom expenses.

*The field trips and activities she wanted for us to experience could get expensive. In addition, she had to buy books and supplies and things for us. She wasn't rich, so she worked another job on the weekend to pay for those things. I had no idea she was doing that for us at the time. . . . She was always there--before school, after school, during lunch, on the weekend--whether it was to help us with our essays or filling out a college application . . . . (Hope) (italics mine)*

## **5. Empowering Students**

The ultimate goal of caring, in Mayeroff's view, is the "self-actualization" of the cared-for. When cared for in the most ideal way, the one cared for is more likely to flourish and become his own best self: independent, empowered, capable of living his own life, making his own decisions, following his own dreams, and realizing his potential.

Noddings's care ethic seeks to empower the cared-for through dialogue. In dialogue, the student is empowered. The authority of the classroom relationship is neutralized, and the student is given a voice and a role in his own learning. Hence, my interpretation of empowerment, viewed from Noddings's and Mayeroff's concepts of care, is characteristic of caring.

Here are some examples of what my subjects said about their experiences with

empowerment in the classroom.

Dawn described how her teacher empowered the students by giving them a lot of responsibility and the freedom to conduct their own science experiments. Dawn said she sees now how her teacher's toughness and high standards had a purpose—that of empowering his students.

He allowed and encouraged us to conduct our own experiments. . . . He *really empowered us*. He gave us so much responsibility, and it was so neat to have so much responsibility. We had to devise the whole experiment. We had to come up with everything, step-by-step. Now I understand his toughness. His [high] standards had a purpose. . . . He *wanted to empower us*. (Dawn) (italics mine)

Grace described how her teacher sought to put the students in charge of their own learning.

When we worked on a project, he never told us what it was we should have changed. He wanted to hear from us. He *wanted us to come up with the idea* and what we wanted to do to improve our project and how we would want to incorporate our ideas into the next activities that we do. *We always had a voice*. . . . [The classroom] was *student-directed, student-centered, student-ran*. He never hovered over us telling us what to do. *He let us change the classroom how we wanted it*. If we wanted to paint the room, he would let us paint the room as long as we had a plan as how it could get done. (Grace) (italics mine)

The theme of empowerment emerged several times in Hope's account. Hope is dyslexic, and described how she no longer viewed her learning disability as disabling because of her teacher.

She *empowered me*; she helped me see that there is nothing wrong with me because I had a learning disability. *It does not mean that I am not able or disabled*, it means that I [learn] differently . . . . (Hope) (italics mine)

Her teacher, Hope said, had helped Hope and her peers to recognize their own personal power.

She taught us that we are not just a bunch of kids, that we can influence change. It does

not matter how powerless you feel in the way society tells you you are, *you do have the power*. And *we recognized that power in us*. . . . (Hope) (italics mine)

Here, Hope described how her teacher empowered the students in their own learning.

*We became the Freedom Writers because of us*. . . . One day, we were learning about the Civil Rights movement and we had to watch the video about the original Freedom Riders who rode the buses from Washington to Alabama. . . . One of the students was like: "We should call ourselves "freedom writers" because we write to then get us that freedom." *It was all because the student raised his hand*. And she was like: "Okay, let's do it." And when we were like: "Maybe we should go to Washington D.C.," it was done. Or when we said: "We want to meet the Holocaust survivors," it was done. . . . *It was always our voice, our participation that contributed [to] what should happen*. . . . (Hope) (italics mine)

Leila described how her teacher empowered the students in conflict resolution.

When conflict arose, she would ask us: "What would make everyone the happiest? What would be good for everyone without getting anyone upset?" (Leila) (italics mine)

### ***Practices Unrelated to Caring***

#### **1. Setting High Expectations for Students**

We can interpret setting high expectations for students as something resulted from seeing potential in them, and therefore, indirectly connected to care. However, one can argue that a teacher can set high expectations for his students without caring for them. For that reason, I am placing this practice under the unrelated-to-care category. Many participants spoke of the high standards and expectations their teachers had for them.

He had *very high expectations* for his students. If we were slacking off, he *wouldn't allow* it. He *always pushed* us. He would say: "Good is the enemy of best." So, no matter how good you think you are, there is always a way to make things better. That phrase stuck with me. Whatever I do, if I think I've done a great job, I know there is always something I can make better. He had *high expectations for me and for all of us because he knew we could do better*. (Grace) (italics mine)

She really made me become more responsible, because she had *high expectations* for behavior and work quality and timeliness. . . . She set her *expectations high so we were*

*always working and thinking hard.* (Lacie) (italics mine)

There were students who would just do enough to get by and to pass the class, and that was *completely unacceptable to her*. She did not like that at all. She was like, "*Satisfactory work is not going to cut it in the classroom.*" So *she always wanted you to step up to [that] level*. She *never accepted satisfactory work, and she [would] call you on it*. . . . She *always pushed us to be better students*. . . . *Your hardship--like being homeless--she did not allow that to define you.* (Hope) (italics mine)

He had a reputation for being tough. He was supposedly one of the toughest teachers in school, *who really set high standards*. *He had high standards for everyone*. *It wasn't like he would give you slack because you were an ELL student*. He would work with us if we needed help, but *he held all of us to a high standard* . . . . (Dawn) (italics mine)

Part of the reason I did well was that there was no concept of not doing well or failure for us. It was *assumed and expected that we would do well*. There was never a hint of any other possibility. (Leila) (italics mine)

What I remember most is someone who was supportive, good energy . . . who *expected high standards*. (Dottie) (italics mine)

He had *high expectations for me and for all of us* because he knew we could do better. (Grace) (italics mine)

## **2. Engaging Students**

My subjects recalled the teachers' efforts to engage them in the learning process. Many of the participants explained how learning was interesting and meaningful because they were engaged and actively a part of the experience. Some participants spoke of their teachers reaching out to them, seeking to interest and involve them. There is an element of engrossment described by my subjects regarding their learning experiences. Hans Gadamer (1976) refers to this engrossment in learning as *transcendence*. It might be worthwhile here to briefly examine Gadamer's concept of "transcendence" in the educational context.

Gadamer employs the concept of play to analyze the educational experience. In play, Gadamer contends, the player takes risks. The game is alluring enough that it calls to the player,

seducing him, luring him out of himself to play. Interested, the player ventures out. Going beyond himself, he enters the unknown and projects his own possibilities into it. He experiences what Gadamer describes as *transcendence*—the experience of being beyond oneself. Watching a football game played in the rain, we see the wisdom and truth of Gadamer's metaphor. The players are so immersed in the game that they become self-forgetful, not noticing that they are getting wet. In playing the game—Gadamer tells us—the player loses himself as the game eventually takes over. Fortunately, the player is not lost forever to the game. The self lost in transcendence, Gadamer declares, eventually reemerges. The player, at one point, returns to himself, transformed. Gallagher (1992) explains Gadamer's perception of transcendence in play.

The possibility of losing oneself or transcending oneself is attractive or alluring only because of the possibility of finding oneself again. I can let myself be taken up by the the game and immerse myself in the spirit of play, only because I know that at some point I will reemerge transformed. The self lost in play does not disappear together. Play is productive for the self rather than destructive. Insofar as play is educational experience, the player risks herself to acquire an openness for new experiences. The result is self-transformation. (Gallagher, 1992, p. 50)

Play is educational when transformation results. The educational implication here, according to Gadamer and Gallagher, is that authentic learning requires the presence of transcendence, or an active engrossment or immersion on the part of the learner so that he becomes self-forgetful. True learning, Gadamer believes, involves transcendence, and ultimately transforms the learner and results in self-understanding.

Although my subjects never used the terms "transcendence," "self-understanding," or "transformation" to describe their learning experiences, I discovered all of these elements in their descriptions. Many of my subjects described being actively "involved," "engaged," "interested," "passionate," and "excited" about learning. The love of learning was abundantly present in many

accounts. As the result of their active involvement or *transcendence*, transformation and self-understanding occasionally occurred. Some of my participants described their growth or change in the process, a form of growth which I interpret as transformation. Some discovered a new interest, passion, or calling, which I perceive as self-understanding.

Lan--a confident and articulate 27-year-old Vietnamese American attorney--credited her high school English teacher for helping her overcome her shyness. She spoke fondly of her teacher's class and said it was there that she began to think for herself, to voice her opinions, and to gain confidence in herself. She used the terms "interested" and "involved" to describe her learning. She spoke of her teacher's efforts to draw her out, to engage her, and to encourage her to voice her thoughts. She described gaining confidence and discovering her interest in studying law. In Lan's story, I detected the presence of transcendence, transformation, and self-understanding. Lan experienced transcendence through her active involvement in the learning process, transformation as she gained confidence and overcame her shyness, and self-understanding as she discovered her newly found passion for justice and for the law. By seeking to engage Lan, her teacher influenced her in a very wonderful and empowering way.

I was shy and did not want to speak at times. He always called on me, in a non-intimidating way, and somehow knew that I knew the answer. And he would *encourage and engage me*. . . . In speaking out, I learned that I had much to contribute to the class. . . . He really fostered building confidence. I became less shy, and so *interested and involved* in the class. It was *so fun* and I *loved* it. . . . *It was here that I became interested in the law*. The stories we discussed were full of moral and ethical implications and so compelling. And I began to consider becoming a lawyer, *to be someone that advocates for justice*. . . . *I gained confidence in myself*. . . . (Lan) (italics mine)

Leila, a college student and aspiring actress, described the creative inspiration instilled in her and her classmates by her teacher. The yearly play, initiated by her teacher, was the most



memorable experience of her school life. She described it as "empowering . . . put me in touch with that inner part of myself . . . ." Leila emphasized how each student was involved and how the experience helped her and her peers gain confidence and poise. In addition, Leila spoke of knowing many former classmates who are pursuing creative career paths. By engaging her students and ensuring their participation in the annual play, Leila's teacher helped her students grow in poise and confidence (transformation) and instilled passion in them, allowing them to discover their interests and gifts (self-understanding). In Leila's story, we again see Gadamer's theoretical implication carried out in practice.

The yearly play was my favorite. The fact that *every child got to participate* was pretty incredible. . . . It was something *we were excited about and looked forward to*. The play experience really instilled passion in us. . . . Many of our graduates are pursuing creative career paths like film, theatre, photography, or arts. Even for kids who were not artistically inclined, they *loved* the experience. They have gained confidence and poise in the process. And they will have these skills for the rest of their lives. (Leila) (italics mine)

Dawn described being "excited" and "passionate" about the science fair. Dawn explained how she used to dislike science and then discovered that science was "enjoyable" and "challenging" because of her teacher. In working on her science project, Dawn said she got "so into it" and became "excited" and "passionate." Dawn experienced transcendence through her immersion in the project and it transformed her dislike for science into enjoyment and success.

For someone who did not like science, I really *got into* it. It was so neat to have so many responsibilities. I was so *into* it. . . . It [was] the idea that you put in so much time and energy into something you really got *excited* and *passionate* about. . . . The class was not painful as I expected, but was really enjoyable and challenging. (Dawn) (italics mine)

Hope and Lacie described how their teachers engaged students by attempting to reach different learners in the classroom.

She wanted *all of us to be involved* no matter what kind of learners we were. She fundamentally understood that not every student is a visual learner. So she incorporated as many different learning styles as she could. Whenever she introduced a book, there were multiple options for everyone. For example, we read *The Color Purple*. We didn't just read and retell the story. One of [our] assignments was to write a script where Sophie was confronting Mr. Big. So the writers would be in charge of the script, although everyone contributed. And the physical learners would act it out. And the artists would paint the backdrop. There were choices for all of us. We all read the same book but we expressed that book in different ways. *We were all engaged. No one was sitting there watching. . . .* She empowered us. She put us in charge of our learning. . . . She always *engaged* us and pushed us to be better students. (Hope) (italics mine)

She did a combination of different modalities in order to reach everyone and really solidify the information. We did things such as take notes, give presentations, work in groups, and differentiate math classes. She presented things visually [and] orally, and gave us opportunities to ask questions and participate. I think by trying many different approaches, *she wanted to involve and reach all of us*, and that she appreciated different learning styles. (Lacie) (italics mine)

Grace described the field trips she loved. She spoke of being actively involved, of "experiencing" and "feeling" the places and the people instead of just reading about them.

Transformation took place in Grace as she explained having her eyes opened and her "awareness of the world expanded" as her teacher engaged her in direct, experiential learning.

The things I loved the most about his class were the field trips. We got to go to New York with him, to Kansas City, to Seattle, to Hawaii. These are trips I believe lots of students should have the opportunity to take. He really opened up my eyes, introducing me to a world I did not know about. He exposed us to different cultures. He took us to areas in the U.S. that not many get to experience. *We didn't just read about the people and places passively, we experienced and felt them.* My awareness of the world expanded. (Grace) (italics mine)

Priya described how she was enthralled by, and fell in love with, Hindi literature. It appears that the subject matter took on a personality or consciousness, and Priya received it as something analogous to Buber's *Thou*. While Noddings contends that caring for ideas is not the same as caring for living things and people, as caring is relational and requires a response from

the other, Noddings (2005) acknowledges—although finding it strange—that some people do experience and report some type of responsiveness from ideas or objects. Gauss, the mathematician, said he was “seized” by mathematics. The poet Robert Frost told us he experienced “the poem finding its own way.” Mayeroff, in disagreement with Noddings, does not find such occurrences unusual or odd. It is possible for a piece of music, Mayeroff contends, to be alive, responsive, and able to exert power over the composer or listener. Priya, supporting Mayeroff, described how she was enthralled by, and fell in love with, Hindi literature. In an *I-Thou* relation, Buber tells us, one enters a spiritual or mystical communion with the other. Priya reported just such an experience with the subject matter. It “seized” her and exerted “power” over her. Priya’s experience speaks highly of her teacher’s ability to engage Priya and to instill a deep love of learning in her.

She was so involved in the subject that she sort of *hypnotized us* with the way she read the poem. We were like, “Oh, she is reading it just like a poet would.” Normally we see our aim in school as getting good grades and getting by, but this was something we actually worshipped. In India, we speak of God as being a part of education, so [education] is like an object of veneration. And I first understood this idea in her class. I *actually experienced God* in the language. . . . *I felt in love. . . . I was under a spell.* This subject was my *object of veneration* because of the way she treated it. She elevated it and put it on a pedestal. When she read a poem, we were like, *under its power.* . . . She said: “You have to get into the ocean, you have to dive deep . . . .” So I tried to dive deep, I tried to get to the bottom of things, to get that precious meaning. . . . In India, people perceived language arts as boring, that science and math were more important. But not to me. Hindi literature was the most meaningful part of the whole day and I always looked forward to it. (Priya) (*italics mine*)

### 3. Promoting Critical Thinking

Is critical thinking related to care? One of Mayeroff’s main components of caring is *being for the other*. Mayeroff defines *being for* as supporting and honoring the uniqueness of the other’s individuality. Caring, according to Mayeroff, is “to help the other person grow and actualize

himself." (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 1) The one caring seeks to support and nurture the cared-for so that, ultimately, he flourishes and becomes independent, both in his thinking and in living his life.

Caring, to Noddings, requires the one caring to contribute to the enhancement of the other's ethical ideal. To do this effectively, the one caring needs to engage the cared-for in dialogue. In dialogue, the student is empowered, his subjectivity is highlighted and he sees himself in relation to others and to the world. He sees himself not only as the one cared for, but also as one caring, whose words and deeds influence and affect others. Through dialogue, the teacher seeks to empower students by helping them to develop critical-thinking skills. In doing so, the students might be able to emancipate themselves from deeply internalized prejudices and biases, something Bowers (1984) believes might have resulted from the process of socialization. From this perspective, cultivating critical thinking can be characteristic of caring.

However, one might argue that a teacher who seeks to cultivate critical-thinking skills in his students might not care for his students personally or professionally. From this perspective, I will, hence, place this practice under the unrelated-to-care category.

Some participants described their teachers as someone who encouraged students to "think independently," "question things," or "think outside of the box." Critical thinking appeared to be an attribute some of these teachers aspired to foster in their students.

Dawn described how her teacher always sought to encourage his students to think independently.

*He always encouraged you to think. If you said a comment . . . he would come back and say something that would push you to think further about that. . . . He encouraged us to think independently, to question things, and not to be afraid to try out new experiments. . . . He challenged us to think about the decisions we made. He challenged us to think for ourselves and to always ask "why" . . . . He always promoted questioning. . . . He*

*challenged us to think out[side] of the box.* (Dawn) (italics mine)

Lan described how her teacher fostered critical thinking through dialogue.

He really *encouraged active free debates*. . . . *He wanted us to think*. . . . He really *encouraged us to voice our ideas, but he challenged them as well*. . . . He would ask: "Have you ever thought of it *this way*?" He always *pushed you to think a little further*. . . . He would really open peoples' minds. It's like, he would say something and we would go: "Wow, I never thought of it that way," and *his questioning would expand our thinking*. . . . He would throw out ideas and ask: "What do you think of this idea?" One day, we talked about capital punishment, and he was going back and forth: "Do you think it's right? Do you think it's wrong? Why?" And if you believe it one way or another, you begin to see how others whom you disagree with might think . . . *He helped us to develop the ability to understand others' points of view.* (Lan) (italics mine)

Hope said she believes a good teacher is one who encourages critical thinking in her students.

*She challenged us to think and to reflect* through our reading and writing and debates. . . . A good teacher to me is not someone who keeps us quiet, and raising our hand, and keeping the class in order. . . . *A good teacher keeps you engaged and [has] dialogues with you, where you are critically thinking*. . . . (Hope) (italics mine)

Noddings contends, "everything the teacher does has a moral overtone." In teaching any subject, the teacher has the opportunity to raise her students' moral and ethical awareness. Here, Grace described how her teacher sought to challenge his students' unexamined assumptions and biases regarding race, disabilities, and sexual orientation.

My teacher *always encouraged us to think outside of the box*. . . . *He challenged our assumptions and prejudice*. . . . He would send us to these camps. . . . One of the camps he sent us to and he really promoted was called "Camp Any Town." There were probably 100 students from my high school who went. . . . That camp taught you about racism, [bias], and stereotypes. The very first night, I left feeling I learned so much. The first night we gathered into this room [and] broke up into different ethnic groups. One group was made up of Latino students, one group was made of Asian students, one group was made of African Americans. We would then send one group out of the room at a time. For example, the Asian students were sent out. The students in the room would then throw out all the stereotypes affiliated with that group . . . like "chinky eyes," or "rice eaters." For the black students, it would be like "nigger . . . ." Then the group would come back and we would read the chart to them. And then they would reflect on how they [felt]

about those stereotypes. We did the same for gays and lesbians, and it was shocking to see who came out during this time. People who you would never think of as homosexuals came out. And we learned to accept them. We also did disabilities, so we all had to pretend to be in one way or another, disabled. I was blind, for example, and didn't have an arm. And then there were people who lost both of their arms. And we had to figure out how to eat dinner like that. So we had to cooperate and help one another to achieve what we wanted to do, like eating dinner. Then we would have time for reflection. We would break up into groups to talk about our experience of how we were feeling. It was such an eye-opening experience. *The camps he sent us to [were] very deliberate, where we would be challenged in our thinking, learn new things, lessons, and so on. . . . And he was deliberate as well in the classroom.* (Grace) (italics mine)

#### 4. Possessing Subject-Matter Expertise

Many of my participants spoke of their teachers possessing specialized knowledge for the subject they taught, and taught it well. At times, the teachers' expertise and passion affected the students in a very positive and powerful way. Many said they came to love the subject taught by their teacher or deepened their appreciation for it.

Dawn described how her dislike for science was transformed partly due to her teacher's passion and expertise.

He had *lots of knowledge about science*, and it showed. For someone who didn't like science, the class was not painful as I expected, but was really enjoyable and challenging. . . . I could have *easily gotten a C but I got an A because of him.* (Dawn) (italics mine)

Priya, Lan, and Lacie spoke of their teachers' subject-matter expertise and how they came to love language arts because of these teachers.

She was *an expert* in Hindi literature. I *fell in love with the language because of her.* The way she exuded passion, the way she explained the subject matter. There was so much passion and warmth, it was contagious. (Priya) (italics mine)

He made me a much better writer. . . . He was *amazing, especially in his knowledge of English* and the way he taught us. . . . The first part of the semester, he would teach us basic grammar. . . . After that there were two years of literature, all of which were amazing literature. *English became my favorite subject.* (Lan) (italics mine)

She was a *language arts expert*. I always liked language arts, but *I especially liked it in her class*. (Lacie) (italics mine)

Grace and Dottie expressed how their teachers' expertise deepened and expanded their appreciation for it and for the world.

He *knows a lot of historical information* [about] places. If you go to New York with him, he will tell you everything about Grant's tomb, the history about the buildings in the financial district. . . . *The things that I learned really opened up my eyes. My awareness of the world expanded*. (Grace) (italics mine)

I was *enriched by the fact that she was a subject matter expert*. I *appreciated the language more*. There was never any doubt about her ability to teach us Spanish. (Dottie) (italics mine)

## CONCLUSION

Caring appears to be an integral part of these teachers' qualities and effectiveness.

According to my data, the six most prominent qualities the teachers in my study possessed, according to their students, were: *passion, caring, compassion, strength, intelligence, and humility*. Of these six, three were related to care and three were unrelated to care. Other adjectives the students used to describe their teachers were: *sincere, loving, hard-working, selfless, and inspirational*.

The teachers in my study shared these common practices: *creating a caring learning environment; seeing potential in students; setting high expectations for them; listening to students; generously making time for students; promoting critical thinking; empowering students; engaging students; and possessing subject-matter expertise*. Five of the nine practices employed and shared by these teachers are related to care, and the remaining four are unrelated to care.

In the next chapter, we will examine the theoretical relevance between these teachers'

qualities and practices and the work of Noddings and Mayeroff.



## CHAPTER FIVE THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

### Did Caring Play A Role?

Caring, according to my subjects, played an important role in these teachers' effectiveness and their ability to influence their students in a significant and lasting way. In this chapter, I will present the relationship between my data and the care theories of Mayeroff and Noddings.

I will attempt to connect the evidence to Mayeroff's three main components of care: *empathy (being with)*, *responsiveness (being there for)*, and *respecting the other's individuality (being for)*, and Noddings's four elements of moral education: *modeling*, *dialogue*, *practice*, and *confirmation*.

### Part I. Findings In Relationship to Mayeroff's Care

Mayeroff's caring involves many characteristics. However, Mayeroff highlights the three most critical components of care: *empathy (being with)*, *responsiveness (being there for)*, and *(being for) nurturing and supporting the other's individuality*. Caring ceases, according to Mayeroff, in the absence of any of these three features.

#### 1. Being With the Other--Empathy

As mentioned earlier, Mayeroff's caring entails the presence of empathy. Empathy, in Mayeroff's notions, requires a deep attunement to, and understanding of, the cared-for by the one caring. The one caring, Mayeroff contends, should seek to understand the other's world and to know what it feels like "to be inside it."

The presence of empathy abounds in this study. When asked if their teachers sought to understand them, all eight participants replied in the affirmative. To some subjects, their teacher's

empathy for them was the most special and meaningful element of their relationship.

Here, Leila related a remarkable story of empathy.

When I was in her class, someone I knew sexually molested me. I was a young girl, and the thing was so confusing that I told no one. And then it came out years later when I was in boarding school, when I was 14. It came out that the man turned himself in. Apparently, he molested another child, and this girl later told and he turned himself in. While my identity was kept a secret, the school was notified that two former students were the victims. Immediately, [my teacher] Adele came to my mother and said she knew right away that I was one of them. I was really surprised because I never told anyone, not even my parents. And Adele knew who it was (teary eyes) . . . when it came out. It wasn't like I was her only student. It really blew me away that Adele *was so in tune with me*, that even when I didn't tell her--*she must have sensed something was going on, and she remembered that change years later. She probably noticed a shift in me, or when things began to turn for me*, you know, especially when something like that [happens] to a child. It amazed me . . . after all those years, she knew right away something like that [had] happened to me. (Leila) (italics mine)

What is being understood like from the perspective of the cared-for? Because the other understands him, he feels he is not alone, he feels that the one caring knows him and understands what it feels like to be in his shoes. Because she understands him, he can open up to her and make it easier for her to help him. In Mayeroff's view, having empathy is crucial for the carer, and characterizes the process of caring.

What Dottie remembered and appreciated most was her teacher understanding her "inner being." Most of Dottie's memories of this teacher were outside the classroom, many of which consisted of being listened to and understood. Dottie shows us what it feels like to be the recipient of empathy as one cared-for.

She was like my mother on campus. She was a safe place for me. . . . Of all the people around me at school, she *understood me the most*. She was someone I believe I could say anything to and there would be no penalty . . . there was no judgment. When you called, crying about a boyfriend, she would help you think and feel your way through. . . . She made me feel that I was not alone, that I was okay. . . . I had some sizable issues as far as self-esteem is concerned, as a teenager. And because she chose to love me, I

could show her all of me, including my weaknesses. And she still liked me, respected me, and cared about me. That was *so, so affirming for me as a young girl.* (Dottie) (italics mine)

Hope came to her teacher's English class with a tumultuous past. Her brother had passed away the year before. Her family had been homeless. Hope was missing school an average of 1 to 2 days a week and had a 1.5 GPA. The first time she encountered this teacher, Hope was struck by the attentiveness she displayed while listening to Hope. Hope said her teacher sought to know her on a deep level and understood that "inner part" of her that was most vulnerable. That understanding meant a great deal to Hope, and, in Hope's view, contributed greatly to her success in school and in life.

Similar to Mayeroff's empathy, Noddings speaks of *engrossment, of motivational displacement*, of the one caring's motive energy going toward the other where she receives him into herself and feels with him. The essence of Mayeroff's empathy and Noddings's engrossment or motivational displacement is abundantly present in Hope's description of her teacher's sensitivity and actions.

I was struck by the way she spoke with me. *She would look at me like I was the only person there was.* She looked at me sincerely, very authentic. When I spoke with her about problems at home, she would look at me, *and I would know she understood.* I felt that I *had her complete attention.* . . . I had a learning disability and I was horrified at being called upon. The most horrific thing a teacher would do to me was to bring me up and tell me to spell some words or to do something unexpected. I would be so terrified because this happened in the past. *I never explicitly told her that, but she knew and she never placed me in that spot.* She respected me as a student. . . . *She was very aware of our weaknesses as individuals.* If someone was horribly shy, she would not put that person on the spot; she tried to make that person feel comfortable and safe. She kind of slowly empowered them. She did that for me. . . . *I appreciated so much how she knew that part of me that was afraid, and was sensitive to it.* Because of that, she was able to help me to get to where I am today. (Hope) (italics mine)

Grace spoke of the way her teacher was so in tune with her that he understood her gifts

and strengths more than others did, including herself.

I was the yearbook editor and I was good at it. He saw in me writing, designing, and editing skills and . . . encouraged me to foster those talents. He sort of pushed me to go toward that direction. But I didn't really see it that way. When I was applying to college, I chose to major in science, and I was so miserable. "Why didn't I listen to my teacher?" I thought. Then I told him I wanted to switch my major. He said he knew I wouldn't be most happy with science. He wanted me to explore my options, to discover what was right for me, and to make decisions on my own. He *knew me so well*. And in some ways, *he understood me at times more than I or my parents did*. (Grace) (italics mine)

Lan spoke of her teacher's intuitive knowing of her thoughts and capabilities even when she was not voicing them.

Because I didn't always raise my hand . . . he *always seemed to know when I knew the answer*. He *never called on me when I didn't know the answer*, but he would call on me when I knew. . . . He was thoughtful that way. There was this *unspoken understanding* . . . (Lan) (italics mine)

Priya described the attunement on the part of her teacher to Priya. Her teacher appeared to understand what Priya was thinking or feeling even when nothing was said. As Mayeroff contends, empathy requires the one caring to understand the other person's world and to know what it feels like to be inside that world. When we possess that kind of empathy toward the other, spoken words, at times, are not necessary.

When we went to music contests, it could be very upsetting when I didn't win. And I would hide the fact that I was upset. And in that moment, she would say: "You know, winning is not important, it is the experience that matters." Or when I felt any insecurity or self-doubt, and without me telling her, she would say something profound to us *as if she was speaking to me*: "If you want others to recognize you, you have to recognize yourself first . . . ." (Priya) (italics mine)

## 2. Being There for the Other

Mayeroff's caring requires the carer to *be there for the cared-for*. *Being there for* someone, in Mayeroff's notions, means being available and responsive to this other's needs. In

*being there for the other fully*, Mayeroff asks that the one caring is accessible and willing to reprioritize her life to respond to the other's needs, especially when these needs are "critical ones" or when the other is in a "crisis situation." Similar to Mayeroff's sentiment, Noddings speaks of *engrossment*, of the one caring being *engrossed* in the other; her motive energy goes toward the other; she feels what he feels and from that place of sympathy, she responds to his needs.

Caring, to both Mayeroff and Noddings, means being responsive to the other's needs.

Priya described how her teacher responded to her desire to start a Hindi music society.

Priya said her teacher taught her that caring means "she was simply *there for me* whenever I needed her."

I wanted to do something no one had ever done, starting a Hindi music society. She helped me found the society. . . . *She was right there, right in the front. She was behind me—and whenever I needed her, she was with me, by my side, and I was so confident because she was with me.* I started that music society. I was so happy. . . . *She taught me that caring is not about lovey-dovey. Someone who hugs you and kisses you and gives you gifts, and praise[s] you. She taught me that caring is that you are there for the other person. Like she was there for me always. . . . She didn't praise me a lot or give me gifts, she was simply there for me whenever I needed her.* (Priya) (italics mine)

Dottie described how her teachers responded to her emotional needs as a teenager.

When I was messed up in some form or fashion, I would go to her. *And she would listen and comfort me.* . . . I was not less of Dottie or less of a person. I was someone that something happened to. She would guide me in my thinking. She would say: "Let's see how we can move forward and be healthy in as many ways as possible. Why get all worked up about something that already happened? There is nothing you can do about it." And we would figure things out together. (Dottie) (italics mine)

Here is how Hope's teacher responded to a student and her family's financial crisis.

I felt I was so important to her, and my problems were also her problems. . . . She was the one who actually *cared for my well-being.* . . . We were homeless for a while. . . . My mother was a single mom. She worked as a nanny. . . . One day, she couldn't pay rent . . . [and we would be evicted] and Ms. G. gave her the money for rent. . . . *She didn't have to do that for me, but she did.* (Hope) (italics mine)

Lacie spoke of how her teacher sought to help Lacie come out of her shyness by encouraging her to take on a leadership role, and building Lacie's confidence by drawing on Lacie's strength.

Mrs. Waters knew I was shy, and she really wanted to see me be an active participant. . . . She encouraged me to take on more of a leadership role in the classroom and in the school. She gave me opportunities and the ability to learn leadership skills while in the comfort of the classroom. . . . *She knew each of us well, and she knew what we needed and she responded to those needs.* For example, my strengths were in reading, so *she would try to build my confidence in the classroom by calling on me more.* (Lacie) (italics mine)

Lan described how her teacher responded to her lack of participation and shyness and sought to instill confidence in her. Again, we see a student flourish as the result of the teacher's understanding and sensitive responsiveness to her need.

I was shy and did not want to speak at times. He always *called on me, in a non-intimidating way, and somehow knew that I knew the answer.* And he would encourage me. . . . In speaking out, I learned that I had much to contribute to the class. . . . He really *fostered building confidence.* I became less shy, and so interested and involved in the class. . . . *I gained confidence in myself.* (Lan) (italics mine)

Hope said her dyslexia was ignored by all of her past teachers until she met her high school English teacher—Ms. G. Immediately, Ms. G. noticed and took action. In Hope's account, we see how Hope's needs were ignored by all of her previous teachers, and were responded to instantly by Ms. G.

When I handed her my paper, she looked at me and she looked at my paper, and she was like . . . she saw that I was transposing letters and had the characteristics of a child with a learning disability. In a way, I kind of knew I had something, whether it was dyslexia or an LD. But no one ever tested me. When I voiced: "Hey, I might have something wrong," none of my teachers would do anything about it. *So when I [had] this teacher telling me: "You know, I think you might have a learning disability," it was like: "Okay, somebody actually cared."* *She put me through with a counselor,* and I couldn't get tested because I was a junior. I was almost out of the system. They didn't see any value in testing me. So

*what she did was, she ensured that we had computers, you know, with spell check. So that . . . was a tool I could use to counterbalance my disability.* (Hope) (italics mine)

When one is cared for and responded to in an ideal way, Mayeroff tells us, he is more likely to flourish. Hope described how her teacher's caring responsiveness influenced her attitude in learning.

I was really happy with the fact that I had resources such as the computer. . . . I used it to spell check. . . I was no longer intimidated by my spelling. I stopped letting it define me. I felt that somebody *genuinely cared*. What resulted was *more of me invested in school*. When I had teachers who weren't as invested as Ms. G. was in me, it didn't matter to me. So I raised my G.P.A. When I graduated, in my senior year, the Fall and Spring, *I had a 4.0 G.P.A.* (Hope) (italics mine)

### **3. Being For the Other--Honoring and Supporting the Other's Individuality**

The one caring--Mayeroff contends--must *be for* the person she cares for. *Being for him--* according to Mayeroff--means she recognizes and respects his human individuality and all that it encompasses. She *is for* him in the sense that she celebrates and nourishes his uniqueness--his thoughts, ideals, interests, and aspirations--even if they are different from those of her own. She does not seek to manipulate or mold him into an idealized image of her own liking. When she does so, caring ceases and she no longer cares for him authentically.

In helping the other grow, I do not impose my own direction; rather, I allow the direction of the other's growth to guide what I do, to help determine how I am to respond. (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 5)

Buber (1965) differentiates the pedagogy of a propagandist to that of an educator. The propagandist seeks to impose on the other her own opinions and ideology. The educator, on the other hand, seeks to nurture the soul of the other so that he can grow into his own "special form." The student learns and grows, not through the imposition of the teacher, but through his I-Thou relationship with her. The propagandist, like Freire's (1970) banking teacher, does not have faith

in her student. She does not trust that he can grow into something worthy from his own power but constantly needs her imposition, interference, and molding. The true educator, on the other hand, has faith in her student. She believes that the power that exists in her also exists in him and in all human beings. Hence, she looks for this power and seeks to bring it forth. From this perspective, she cares for him lovingly but non-intrusively. When caring is practiced in its most ideal form, the one cared for is more likely to blossom and flourish into his own person. True caring, in this sense, empowers the learners.

How then, does the caring pedagogy translate into classroom practices? In the classroom, *being for* the students involves--on the teacher's part--the act of empowering students, of listening to their voices as individuals, and supporting them.

Here are some accounts of *being for* the other in the classroom.

Hope described how her teacher allowed the students to contribute to their own learning experiences and participate actively in making decisions.

*We became the Freedom Writers because of us. . . . One day, we were learning about the Civil Rights movement and we had to watch the video about the original Freedom Riders who rode the buses from Washington to Alabama. . . . One of the students was like: "We should call ourselves "freedom writers" because we write to then get us that freedom." It was all because the student raised his hand. And she was like: "Okay, let's do it." And when we were like: "Maybe we should go to Washington D.C.," it was done. Or when we said: "We want to meet the Holocaust survivors," it was done. . . . It was always our voice, our participation that contributed [to] what should happen. . . . (Hope) (italics mine)*

Grace described how her teacher sought to put the students in charge of their classroom and their own learning.

When we worked on a project, he never told us what it was we should have changed. He wanted to hear from us. He *wanted us to come up with the idea*, and what we wanted to do to improve our project, and how we would want to incorporate our ideas into the next



activities that we do. *We always had a voice. . . . [The classroom] was student-directed, student-centered, student-ran.* He never hovered over us telling us what to do. *He let us change the classroom how we wanted it.* If we wanted to paint the room, he would let us . . . as long as we had a plan as how it could get done. (Grace) (italics mine)

My subjects also spoke of their teachers valuing who they are as individuals. Their teachers, according to my subjects, encouraged them to be their own best "selves." Mayeroff mirrors this sentiment.

In caring for the another person I encourage him, I inspire him to have the courage to be himself. (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 32)

Dawn described how her teachers cared for the students "as individuals," encouraging students to follow their own inspiration instead of having their path dictated by others.

He cared for us *as individuals.* *He challenged us to think for ourselves and to ask "why?"* When we went through the process of picking [a] college, he really wanted us to make good decisions. I remember saying, when I got into Davis: "My parents think it would be a good decision for me to go there. I think I am going to end up there." When he heard me say that, he countered: "*Are you going there because your parents think it is a good decision to go there, or are you going there because YOU want to go there?"* (Dawn) (italics and capitals mine)

Leila, who attended a religious school, described how religion was never imposed on students. Leila described how her teacher's actions were guided by the students as individuals, and the students' happiness instead of by religious dogma.

Even though we were a religious school, religion was *never imposed* upon us. The presence of God was subtly infused into everything that she did. . . . When conflicts arose . . . and mistakes were made, *she would not say: "God is disappointed in you, or this is what we should do to please God."* She would say: "*What would be good for everyone without getting anyone upset? What would make everyone the happiest?"* (Leila)

*Being for* someone means the one caring celebrates and seeks to nourish the other's uniqueness--his thoughts, ideas, interests, and aspirations. Leila described how she felt loved, cherished, and valued by her teacher as a unique individual.

She really *respected us as individuals*. And we [felt] valued by her. She has *always valued my creativity, my thoughts, my own ideas*. . . . She *loved and still loves that part of me that was unique and unconventional, that others may not [love]* . . . . (Leila) (italics mine)

Leila related an incident where her teacher rejoiced and exuberantly reveled in her students' creative contributions.

She really enjoyed the children's ideas and the children's originality. We created this newsletter and *she made such a big deal of it*. I created a slogan for it and *she loved it . . . she gushed about it. She loved it; she went over it; she sucked it in; she relished it*. . . . She *[appreciated] each of our creative contributions, thoughts, and ideas*. (Leila) (italics mine)

## **Part II. Findings in Relationship to Noddings's Care Ethic**

Noddings's ethic of caring involves four main elements: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation.

### **1. Modeling**

As one caring, Noddings tells us, the teacher has a unique power. She can contribute to either the enhancement or diminution of the student's ethical ideal, and therefore, she needs to be mindful of her actions and words. To her students, she is providing a model of one caring. The teacher, Noddings contends, should not merely "talk" ethics but "live" it. Instead of lecturing to her students about honesty or telling them to be honest, it might be more effective for her to model for them, showing them how she arrives at an honest decision. Everything the teacher does, Noddings contends, has a "moral overtone." The way the student approaches his ethical dilemmas is likely to be influenced by his encounters with her and what she has taught him through her own doing. Examples of modeling abound in this study. All of my subjects perceived their teachers as influential role models. They all believed what their teachers taught them the

most came through their (the teachers') own actions and examples.

Dawn described how her teacher has influenced her perception of the teaching profession.

The class has . . . encouraged [me] about the teaching field. As a future teacher, I am more encouraged that there are exceptional teachers like that. *He was just a good example for me.* (Dawn) (italics mine)

Leila explained what her teacher has taught Leila through her own daily practice.

*She was a really good model for me as a child, for having passion the way she did. . . . She instilled in us a habit of looking out for the goodness of life, of seeing the best in others, of seeing life as the glass half full. She didn't teach that directly—but through the daily practice, she instilled that in us, and it became important to us, at least to me.* (Leila) (italics mine)

Dottie described why this teacher was a great role model for her.

*She modeled moral and ethical ideals by her own behavior. As much as she cared for me, I never got the idea that she had favorites. She modeled inclusiveness in that sense. She was wise and practical. "Whatever happened, happened. What should we do to move forward?" I learned from her how to not make big deals, where big deals don't need to be made. She was honest. . . . Honesty was a big part of her. Everything seemed to be on the table with her. . . . And I learned that honesty is fundamental in any relationship.* (Dottie) (italics mine)

As an aspiring teacher, Lacie described how her teacher has influenced her decision to become a teacher.

Because of her influence, I really solidified my interest in becoming a teacher. *I really wanted to be like her. I wanted to have the same positive influence on my students that she [had] on me.* (Lacie) (italics mine)

By modeling compassion and open-mindedness, Lan's teacher instilled the same qualities in her.

*From watching him and the way he interacted with us, I learned to be more compassionate and open-minded.* (Lan) (italics mine)

Noddings contends that the teacher's primary responsibility should be that of nurturing the

students' ethical ideal. The ethical ideal, according to Noddings, comprises the memories of caring and of being cared for. When faced with an ethical dilemma, we draw on the memories of our best moments, of caring for others and being cared for. These memories--our ethical ideal--hence, influences our capacity to care.

This memory of our own best moments of caring and being cared for sweeps over us as a feeling--as an "I must"--in response to the plight to the other and our conflicting desire to serve our own interest. . . . When I encounter the other and feel the natural pang conflicted with my own desires--"I must--I do not want to"--I recognize the feeling and remember what has followed it in my own best moments. I have a picture of those moments in which I was cared for and in which I cared, and I may reach toward to this memory and guide my conduct . . . . (Noddings, 1984, p. 80)

In caring lovingly for her students, Hope's teacher contributed significantly to the enhancement of her students' ethical ideal. Being cared for well, Hope became one caring. In the following account, Hope related an experience in college where the well-being and success of her college classmates mattered to Hope almost as much as Hope's well-being and success mattered to her teacher. We see here how Hope's inner "I must" was awakened when she drew on her memories of being cared for by her teacher. The result was her inclination to adopt a caring attitude towards her classmates.

When I first went to junior college, I [saw] so many kids . . . in the classroom, that in a way got forgotten 'cause they [didn't] show up. Eventually they [were] lost. [My teacher] inspired me because she didn't do that. It was 100% her accountability. If there was a kid in class who was failing, she took it personal[ly], as if she [herself] was failing the student. There was something, she believed, she [hadn't done] right. I see those students in my college classes who are just not noticed. . . . If a student is missing, or he was there for the first couple of weeks and then faded away, I would make a note of that. [My teacher] inspired me to engage and help those students. If there was a classmate who [seemed] lost, I would say to [him] . . . "Do you know what the assignment means?" . . . [He] missed class one day, and I was like: "Oh, I see that you weren't in class . . . . Do you want to copy my notes? Do you understand the assignment?" I was like: "Where is your paper?" I sometimes took accountability for him. It is not just about me surviving and get[ting] an A. It's about everybody in the classroom. *That's [what] Ms. G. inspired me*

*to put forth. Not just to invest in myself, but also in others in the classroom. (Hope) (italics mine)*

Priya spoke passionately of the many ways her teacher influenced Priya through what she practiced and embodied. Humility and love, Priya said, are the most powerful things she learned from her teacher.

*I wanted to be [as] loving and peaceful and smart as she was. . . . I am so happy I have had someone like her in my life. She taught me about humility. Humility is what I learned from her. I am humbled because of her. . . . She was a walking, talking example of humility. She modeled for me how to be firm and polite. I didn't know politeness and firmness go together but she modeled it for me. She showed me that it is possible to balance the required framework and discipline for your students with love, care, and embracing everything together. . . . She taught me most about love because she lived it and embodied it. Love, love, love. That a teacher doesn't have to be a teacher who teaches you something explicit. She teaches you by what she embodies, by the way she does things, by the way she speaks to others and treats them. I learned a lot through her unspoken words, and I am affirmed just in her presence. The one thing I learned from her is love. That teaching is about love. Because love inspires great things. Love makes you work hard for the ones you love. If you find that love, there is nothing like it. And you as a teacher can help your students find that love—love in yourself, love for what you are teaching [subject matter], and love for education. And my teacher embodies love. And she taught me the power of love . . . . (Priya) (italics mine)*

As a student teacher, Priya described how the memories of her teacher influenced her behavior in the classroom. We see here how Priya draws on her ethical ideal—memories of being cared for by her teacher—subconsciously and consciously—in caring for her own students.

*She is influencing the way I am with my students. I think it's like a subconscious thing. I would sit next to my students. I ask them questions about their lives. She used to do that. She cared about everything about us. I want to know my students on a deep level. And I have a tendency to know my students well. I smile at my students a lot, I want them to get the smile first, because I remember how wonderful it was to see her smile. . . . I want to include them in my aura. . . . Subconsciously, I have picked up from her these caring tendencies. (Priya) (italics mine)*

Grace described how her teacher contributed to her ethical ideal as a future teacher.

*He was so caring and giving, and showed that in whatever he did. So I think a lot of*

*students took that with them. I know I will as a future teacher. (Grace) (italics mine)*

## 2. Dialogue

Dialogue is one of the most fundamental components of Noddings's care model. Dialogue is essential to care ethic as it allows those in caring relations to receive one another. In dialogue, we experience the *otherness* of each other. We care about the other enough to be engrossed in his thoughts. The primary aim of those in dialogue is to attend to the other. Dialogue is critical to moral education as it continuously implies the question: "What are you going through?"

Another important feature of dialogue is that it neutralizes the power structure in the relationship. In the classroom, authentic dialogue is important because it empowers the students and it allows them to have a voice. The imbalance of power is neutralized in the presence of dialogue.

The evidence of dialogue abounds in my data. Dialogue was employed by the teachers in this study for both purposes—understanding students and empowering them.

Leila here described how dialogue was an important aspect of her classroom experience. The students, Leila said, played an important role in decision making when conflicts arose.

*It was always encouraged that we talked things out with each other and with her. We talked about everything. There was never any question unanswered. That dynamic of open communication was something that was really strong. She really encouraged that type of environment. . . . When conflicts arose, she would ask us: "What would make everyone the happiest, what would be good for everyone without getting anyone upset?" And we would talk things out until a happy solution is reached. (Leila) (italics mine)*

Authentic dialogue requires the active act of listening, of suspending one's judgment and having a sincere desire to understand the other. Noddings speaks of dialogue in the context of caring and education.

Through such a dialectic, we are led beyond the intense and particular feelings accompanying our own deeply held values . . . to the realization that the other—who feels about that which I do not believe—is still one to be received. . . . Such dialogue . . . is vital in every aspect of education. (Noddings, 1992, p. 186)

David Peat (1987) captures the spirit of dialogue as "the ability to hold many points of view in suspension, along with the primary interest in the creation of common meaning." (Bohm and Peat, 1987, p. 82)

Here, we see how Lan's teacher employed the use of dialogue to foster understanding and compassion in his students. Lan emphasized how, through dialogue, students were able to come to and accept different points of view and create "common ground and understanding."

He really *encouraged active free debates*. When complicated moral issues came up in the books . . . we were *able to debate any issue, and not feel that one person was right or one person was wrong*. He really *encouraged people to voice their ideas*, and he challenged ideas, too. He would ask: "Have you ever thought of it this way?" *Because of these debates, we developed compassion and the ability to understand what other people were going through, their points of view . . . because not one point of view is necessarily right. . . .* Because of him, we—at least I did—gained the ability to be compassionate and open-minded. *He guided us in those debates so [that] we wouldn't shut down other people's ideas*. I think that was so important. . . . What was most impressive was that he created an environment where *people could discuss anything, and [be] listened to, and . . . create common ground and understanding*. (Lan) (italics mine)

For Noddings, the ethic of caring is grounded in the feminine perspective. It treats caring from the perspective of feeling, not reason. Women, Noddings observes, approach moral predicaments differently from the way men do. Faced with a moral dilemma, women, or the majority of women, do not attempt to solve it by abstract reasoning, nor by referring to a set of rigid rules. Their approach is rooted in caring, in the desire to feel with, and care for, the other. Carol Gilligan describes:

. . . women not only define themselves in a context of human relationship but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care. Women's place in man's life cycle has been

that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships . . .  
. . . (Gilligan, 1979, p. 440)

Drawing on this ground, Noddings's care ethic is guided by caring--by the well-being of the other--and not by rules. The student, Noddings insists, is always more important than the rules. The rules are in place to serve something higher--the student--and should not be sacred to the teacher; it is the student who should be sacred to her. Hence, as Noddings reminds us, the well-being and interest of the student should guide the teacher's actions and not the rules.

Confronted with a difficult moral dilemma, Hope's teacher--through the medium of dialogue--made a decision with her students, a decision which might not have been perceived as a moral one for those who are rule-oriented. However, for Hope and her classmates, this solution was a caring choice. The students' well-being, and not the law or rules, guided the decision made by Hope's teacher.

The most important discussion we had was about the writing of the book. We had legitimate concerns; she also had her legitimate concerns. As a mandated reporter, she had to report any issue of molestation, even if it happened in the past, if she were to find out. . . . This might sound horrible, but sometimes it didn't help by reporting. It would create a huge turmoil at home for students. If that information got out, for example, it would harm the students more than helping. It sounds horrible, but it was actually true. *And she cared about the students. She didn't just say: "I had to report; it's the law." She wanted to protect and respect each of us, each of our stories and our rights to privacy. It was a huge discussion that went on for months. She wanted to hear from everyone. She took it seriously. And we decided, the one thing we came up with was that it had to be anonymous.* (Hope) (italics mine)

Hope's teacher and her peers came up with a solution where reporting the molestations was not necessary, and the interests of both teacher and students were protected. Initially, I was ambivalent about this decision. But as I reflected on it, I began to see how the students involved might be harmed if their wishes were ignored. Without dialogue, I believe Hope's teacher would



not have been able to reach a sensitive and caring decision—where everybody's interest was taken into consideration.

Dialogue is important to Noddings's care ethic as it allows those involved to receive one another. In dialogue, we experience the *otherness* of the other. We care enough about the other to be engrossed in his thoughts. In dialogue, we grow in empathy and understanding. Dottie described how her relationship with her teacher deepened in dialogue. Through it, we see how Dottie's teacher received Dottie fully and completely.

*We talked about everything.* I would talk to her about challenges with my father. I talked to her about boyfriends. We talked about sex, about teachers. I talked to her a lot about my parents, and my relationship with my mom. . . . *And the beautiful thing was that she would listen and understand, and [give] me feedback when appropriate. . . . Our mutual love and understanding . . . grew in those conversations . . . .* (Dottie) (italics mine)

Priya described how the students were attracted to her teacher's class because of the "dialogical" nature of the class.

The class was very *dialogical*. People wanted to be in her classroom because *it wasn't a cut-and-dried, one-way traffic thing*. (Priya) (italics mine)

### **3. Confirmation**

Noddings agrees with Buber (1958), who declares: "To confirm others is to bring out the best in them." In order to bring out the best in others, Noddings insists, we must believe in and recognize the best in them. As mentioned in the previous chapter, all of my subjects reported being confirmed by their teachers. Since I have already reported much of the evidence regarding confirmation (teachers seeing potential in students and believing in them) in the previous chapter, I will not repeat it here. However, I would like to add two accounts of confirmation which were not previously reported, and which made an impression on me.

Leila described how her teacher encouraged students to confirm each other. From that practice, Leila said she learned to "see the best in others."

She did a tradition [called] "rocks in the basket." *You ask the students if they had witnessed something like a good deed, that was done by others. So we were always on the lookout for these acts of kindness. So, for every good deed, we [told] her, and she put a rock in the basket. . . . When all the rocks were in the basket, we [got] a reward at the end. That instilled a lot in us; it was not just a reward system. It instilled in us a habit of looking out for this kind of thing—of looking out for the goodness of life, of seeing the best in others, of seeing life as a glass half full.* (Leila) (italics mine)

Hope described a remarkable story of confirmation. In this story, Hope's teacher demonstrated an example of the powerful and far-reaching influence of a teacher's actions—guided by her tremendous faith in her students. When Hope's teacher—Ms. G—requested certain books for her freshman remedial English class, she was refused and told that her students were not smart enough to read them. Ms. G. ended up purchasing the books for her students and paying the expenses by working a second job.

The first example was *Catcher in the Rye*. The school wanted to reserve that book for the AP students. It came across that we were not smart enough to read that book. They insisted that the book [was] reserved for AP students. So it was decided that we were not to have that book. *She did not accept that decision.* What she did was, she fund-raised and she worked her job, and she got us those books. She got us *Catcher in the Rye*, *The Color Purple*, and all these other books that were being restricted . . . that we couldn't get a hold of. *She knew that her students were not stupid. They were not fated not to learn this material. [She knew] that those books should not be restricted to just AP students. That was so unacceptable to her. She would never take "no" for an answer, if she didn't believe in it. . . . We would read the materials. She would engage us—and so, nothing was ever out of reach for us. We were not stupid in her eyes . . .* (Hope) (italics mine)

Hope and her classmates not only were capable of reading these books, but became exceptional readers and writers. Their English test scores (and G.P.A.) went way up, and they later became authors whose book inspired the motion picture, *Freedom Writers*. True caring, Mayeroff and Noddings tell us, often results in competence. When we care, we accept the

challenge to strive for excellence so that the receiver of our care may flourish. The story of confirmation Hope's teacher exemplified appears to support Mayeroff's and Noddings's hypotheses.

#### **4. Practice**

##### **a) Caring for Others**

To learn about caring, students need to engage in the practice of caring. Noddings believes that we need to cultivate the capacity of interpersonal attention in our students. In caring for others, Noddings contends, one's inner "I must" is awakened.

None of my subjects reported any type of deliberate caring practice, where they, for example, visited nursing homes and homeless shelters, volunteered in soup kitchens, or engaged in different service projects. However, what my subjects did report was an enlarged capacity to care for and understand their peers. For many of my subjects, the caring practice took place within the classroom community. In addition, Priya reported being more caring to her parents because of what she experienced in her relationship with her teacher. Hope reported an enhanced awareness of others' needs and her desire to help them because of what her teacher modeled for and taught her.

According to Noddings, when students are cared for, they become the ones caring. Caring is relational, Noddings tells us, and caring tendencies are cultivated within relationships. My participants' stories seem to have supported Noddings's claim. Many described the caring virtues that arose and developed from the relationships they cultivated with their teachers, peers, and, at times, family members.

Lacie described her special relationships with her peers.

We were a very close group. . . . *We looked out for one another. . . . We cared for those in our classroom community. We always tried to be supportive of each other's efforts and friendships.* All of us got along, and we worked well together. The relationships that we had with each other were very special. (Lacie) (italics mine)

Lan described her enhanced ability to listen, understand, and have compassion for others.

I learned to be *more compassionate, and gained the ability to understand what other people were going through. . . . We listened and understood each other. . . . What he instilled in me was the ability to be compassionate. . . .* (Lan) (italics mine)

Leila described the practice of confirmation her teacher instilled in the students.

*We cared for each other. . . . We were always looking out for these acts of kindness [by others]. So, for every good deed we [saw], we [told our teacher], and she would put a rock in the basket. . . . It instilled in us a habit of looking out for this kind of thing, of seeing the best in others. . . .* (Leila) (italics mine)

Younger schoolmates are often looked down upon and teased by the older ones. Priya said she and her peers treated the younger ones with kindness and respect because of her teacher.

In our music group, we had younger kids. *We were friendly, kind, and respectful to them because we learned from her. We kind of took care of them.* So what, if they were younger? They were human beings; they were respectable people. *We learned to respect each other a lot because of her.* (Priya) (italics mine)

Priya described how knowing her teacher contributed to Priya's "improved" relationships with her parents. Being cared for so well by her teacher, Priya became more caring toward members of her family.

I was not very happy with my parents. . . . [My teacher] bridged that gap for me. . . . She taught me that no matter what, [your parents] are your parents and you need to love and respect them. I am so thankful to her. . . . *I became more considerate and caring to my parents, I understood more the value of love. . . . She helped me see things from their perspective and I became more understanding of them. My relationship with them improved because of her.* (Priya) (italics mine)

Prior to coming to Ms. G.'s class, Hope and her peers rarely knew each other and were deeply divided by race, ethnicity, and gang affiliation. Being cared for lovingly by their teacher, the students became the ones caring. Here are just a few examples of what Hope and her classmates experienced as ones caring and cared for.

*There was a time when one of my classmates became homeless. So I told my mother, and she [my classmate] came to live with us for three months--because her parents and the rest of her family were in a family shelter home--so she could at least have somewhat of a stable home. So it was that type of relationship that we had. We genuinely cared about each other. If [some]one wasn't there, we would question and ask: "Where is so and so?" If [some]one was deferring, or going down the wrong path, or dealing with some issues, they were not alone. We did not want that. . . . We looked out for one another. (Hope) (italics mine)*

*I remember when we were writing the book, I seriously used to do the one-finger typing method, and it would take forever to type. And another student was like: "Do you need help?" And I said: "Sure." And we would sit down together, and I [would] read him my story and he would type it. And he would just look at me, and look at me, and he would say: "I didn't know you went through all this." And I knew he felt my pain. That kind of commiseration fostered our caring relationship and we became more caring and understanding toward each other. In a sense, it was so rewarding. We didn't see each other as a student, or just another kid, but as more than that. (Hope) (italics mine)*

*When we do speaking engagements, we actually engage with kids. We actually sit down and listen to them and they feel like they are listened to. . . . We go to juvenile hall and talking to girls who [have] screwed up homes, and we tell them that they are not alone. . . . We want them to feel included, we want them to feel that they matter on this earth. . . . I do speaking engagements, I listen to people, I want them to see me as someone who cares. Whatever the circumstances, whatever it is, they matter. (Hope) (italics mine)*

#### **b) Caring for Ideas**

Since Noddings views caring as relational, she does not perceive caring for ideas in the same light as caring for people and living things. However, Noddings believes in the tremendous value of helping students to care for non-living objects, such as ideas and subject matter. In Noddings's view, true caring results in competence. When we care, we to strive for excellence so

that the receiver of our care—person, plant, animal, object, or idea—can be enhanced. The only caveat, Noddings tells us, is that in caring for subject matter, the student's ethical ideals must not be compromised.

My participants reported a deepened appreciation and love for the subject matter. Many of them received the subject matter as ones caring. Here is summary of their experience.

Leila, a theatre-arts major, described how her love for performing arts developed and grew, along with that of her peers.

*The yearly play was my favorite. . . . It was something we were excited about and looked forward to. The play experience really instilled passion in us. . . . Many of our graduates are pursuing creative career paths like film, theatre, photography, or arts. (Leila) (italics mine)*

If we succeed in teaching a student X, and he learns it, but ends up hating X and his teacher, then according to Noddings, we have failed educationally. The student has not learned to receive the teacher or the subject matter as one caring. Dawn, who used to dislike science, successfully learned the subject and also became one caring. Dawn received science as one caring and transformed her dislike for it into enjoyment and success.

*For someone who did not like science, I really got into it. I was so into it. . . . It [was] the idea that you put in so much time and energy into something you really got excited and passionate about. . . . I could have easily got a C, but I got an A. (Dawn) (italics mine)*

Priya described being enthralled by, and falling in love with, Hindi literature. Not only did Priya receive the subject matter as one caring—she experienced a mystical communion with it, something Buber would describe as an *I-Thou* relation.

*I actually experienced God in the language. . . . I felt in love. . . . I was under a spell. . . . I was under its power. . . . This subject was my object of veneration . . . . (Priya) (italics mine)*

Hope used to hate writing. As she received it as one caring, Hope transformed her fear of writing into enjoyment and success.

I used to hate literary writing, and I used to feel that I was a horrible, horrible writer. . . . But I got into it. . . . When *I learned not to fear it so much, I began to enjoy it.* . . . I learned that I am a pretty decent writer. . . . We worked on this huge project, and I *gave my all to it.* And it became a book. (Hope) (italics mine)

Lan described how she received English literature as one caring.

He made literature come alive. . . . It became my favorite subject and I really *got into it.* *I used to ponder deeply the moral and ethical issues of those stories, and they made me think . . . .* (Lan) (italics mine)

### **Part III. Students' Perception of Caring**

When my subjects were asked if they agreed with Noddings that caring for students should be the primary aim of education, the response was an unanimous and resounding "yes!"

Noddings (2005) contends that young people "learn in communion" or relationships. Students, Noddings tells us, will do things for those whom they like and trust, and not for those they do not care about. While Noddings values caring as an intrinsic good and does not advocate using it as an instrumental means to realize academic aims, she recognizes the positive influence of caring on students and their learning. Young people, Noddings observes, are more likely to do what is asked of them by adults who care for them and whom they admire and trust. If students love and respect their teachers, chances are they will try to do the things that are pleasing to those teachers. In this sense, Noddings believes caring relationships in the classroom might enhance learning as students are more likely to be motivated and inspired by the teachers they care about.

Kids learn in communion. They listen to people who matter to them and to whom they matter. . . . Kids will do dreadful things as well as beautiful ones for leaders they trust. . . . How can it be that kids who watch television every night do not know where El Salvador or the Philippines or Israel is? The people telling the news do not matter, and if there is not a

caring parent to comment on the news, then none of it matters. . . . Subject matter cannot carry itself. Relation, except in very rare cases, precedes any engagement with subject matter. Caring relations can prepare children for an initial receptivity to all sorts of experiences and subject matters. (Noddings, 2005, p. 36)

Many of my subjects agreed with Noddings, contending that when a teacher cares for them, they want to try and do their best for that teacher. Here are what my subjects said regarding what they perceived to be the role of caring in school and in the classroom.

*If you care for them in a proper way, their success goes beyond the standards. When students are cared for, they have faith in themselves. They are happier because they feel valued. They would be more excited about learning, and they would just succeed so much better in school. (Dawn) (italics mine)*

*Building relationships is so important in education, and it can't be done without caring. . . . The relationships in the classroom are what make students feel safe. If you care for them, they would want to learn more. . . . Caring should be the primary aim of education. (Priya) (italics mine)*

*I think caring and teaching are one and the same, in the sense that you [the teacher] care enough to want them [students] to learn so they can improve as a person. I think when teachers visibly show that they care for students, the students are more willing to learn. (Lan) (italics mine)*

*I believe there cannot be true education without caring. One, the students have to be invested in it. Two, it would be false and selfish to say you are educating without caring. . . . Kids are not going to be invested in it, if you don't care for them. As a former [K-12] student, I remember going through the whole educational system. I remember being taught to, or talked to, but not feeling that I was cared for. Therefore, I wouldn't dare open my mind up to learning. That is, until I met Ms. G. (Hope) (italics mine)*

*I believe that caring should be the primary aim of education. I think that in order for teachers to really support students, to help them succeed in school, they would have to understand the student as a whole, not just the academic aspect of it. They need to understand where the students are in their personal lives, because a lot of what happens outside of school affects how they perform in school. If you care for students as the whole person, that would be beneficial to students for the rest of their lives. (Grace) (italics mine)*

*Caring is essential in education. . . . How can you expect students to learn and thrive without giving them space where they feel comfortable and supported? By caring for students, I feel that they will be more willing to venture out on a limb and try harder,*



*because they are not afraid of mistakes. (Lacie) (italics mine)*

I learn better when I am comfortable, when I am not anxious. . . . How can I learn when I am worrying about the teacher or this other student not liking me? When I am insecure about myself? Every day you hear reports about terrorism, West Nile viruses. The world seems like a dangerous and scary place. There are kids who live in neighborhoods where they hear sounds of gunfire. *So there needs to be a place where they know they matter, where they are cared for and safe.* As a student teacher, I see young people breaking down: "So and so won't be my friend . . . ." There is so much drama. And if you are not caring about the whole child, you say: "Shut up and sit down?" Whether "I lost my best friend" or "my stomach hurts," such things would distract any human. *Yes, you can't learn when you are emotionally distraught. I don't think we can enable learning without caring. (Dottie) (italics mine)*

Finally, Leila contrasted her experience in her caring school and with her caring teachers to that of a different school, one Leila perceived as lacking in care.

*You don't have anything if you don't have happiness and confidence in yourself because you are cared for, whether it is by others or by your teachers. The caring of the teacher and the school will take you far.* I didn't realize how much these other factors contribute to my learning. When I left my boarding school, I couldn't believe how much better I felt. The environment there was so stressful. It became such a hard environment to be successful in. *In an environment that is not supportive and caring, you aren't happy and you can't really be successful. A caring school and your caring teachers make a huge difference. (Leila) (italics mine)*

## **Part IV. Conclusion**

### **Summary**

My data shows that caring was a central feature of what my participants perceived to be their teachers' effectiveness.

Examining their practices from the theoretical framework of Mayeroff's care concept, the teachers, according to their students, were: 1) empathetic to their students; 2) available and responsive to the students' academic and personal needs; and 3) supportive and respectful of their students' individuality.

Looking at these teachers' practices through the lens of Noddings's care ethic, we see that the teachers: 1) modeled moral and ethical behavior to their students; 2) engaged students in dialogue; 3) confirmed their students; and 4) inspired their students to become ones caring.

My study, as a phenomenological investigation of students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness, has revealed what seems to be a critical dimension of both teaching and education: the teacher-student relationship. Within the content of this relationship, I believe caring plays a central role. Both personal caring, where the teacher cares for the student's personal well-being that extends beyond academic learning, and professional caring, where the teacher cares for the student as a learner, appear to play a critical role in the teacher-student relationships my subjects described. Many of my participants pointed out that personal caring and professional caring accompanied and complemented each other and contributed significantly to their academic learning and well-being. Although all of the teachers in my study appear to have cared both professionally and personally for their students, it was the personal aspect of caring that seems to have made the deepest impression on my participants. It was, I believe, within the context of personal caring that trust was established in these teacher-student relationships. Grounded in these trusting and supportive relationships with their teachers, my subjects—according to the evidence—flourished both academically and personally.

The teacher-student relationship, grounded in care, appears to be an essential feature of what my subjects perceived to be their teachers' effectiveness.

#### **Unexpected Findings**

Some of my findings were ones I did not fully anticipate. I will thus summarize the most prominent of my "unexpected findings."

### 1. The Central Role of Personal Caring

I expected that personal caring would play a role in my participants' perception of their teachers' effectiveness. I did not expect that it would be perceived to be such a central and integral part of these teachers' pedagogical practices.

### 2. Misconception of the Caring Pedagogy

Three of my subjects reported that their teachers--although greatly loved and admired by their students--were not understood or appreciated by their school or colleagues. Dawn reported that her teacher was fired because the school administrators did not appreciate his unconventional methodology. In Dawn and her peers' view, he was an exceptional teacher. Priya reported that her teacher--although greatly loved and respected by her students--was not appreciated by her colleagues, and eventually left the school. Hope's teacher--Erin Gruwell--was ostracized and criticized by most of her colleagues during her four years of teaching. Her very successful methodology was not recognized and celebrated until years later.

Because caring is not often perceived as a critically important feature of a teacher's pedagogical practices, I wonder if a caring pedagogy might be one that is often misunderstood and possibly resented.

### 3. Student-Student Relationships

Not only did my participants identified the caring teacher-student relationship as an essential feature of what they perceived to be their teachers' effectiveness, some of my subjects also identified the harmonious and caring relationships they established with their peers as a positive influence on their learning.

## **Caring and Academic Excellence**

The primary goal of school, Noddings believes, is to care for students and help them to become happy, competent, caring, and moral people. While Noddings does not recommend viewing care as an instrumental means to achieve academic excellence, she insists that schools cannot achieve their academic goals without caring for its students.

And I will argue further that the school cannot achieve its academic goals without providing caring and continuity for students. (Noddings, 2005, p. 14)

My data appear to support Noddings's hypothesis. All of my subjects reported that they excelled academically in their teacher's class. With the exception of Leila who attended a non-grading school, and Dottie who forgot the grade she received (although contending she did well), all of the participants reported getting A's. Hope turned her 1.5 G.P.A. into a 4.0. Dawn said she could have easily gotten a C but ended up with an A. In addition, and perhaps more significantly, many reported a deepened appreciation and love for learning and for certain subjects.

### **Recommendation**

As mentioned in the previous chapters, Jennifer King Rice believes a large gap remains to be explored regarding research on teacher effectiveness. I agree with Rice, and furthermore, believe that within that gap lies the dimension of the teacher-student relationships and the role personal caring plays on those relationships. In addition, it appears that many studies on teacher effectiveness have failed to take into consideration the students' points of view on what constitutes effective teaching. Hence, I believe more phenomenological studies on teacher effectiveness and caring should be encouraged--especially those taken from the students' perceptions--so that the critical nature of teacher-student relationships, and not merely pedagogical strategies and skills, can be more fully understood and appreciated.

We often tend to associate caring with something nice, soft, and possibly lacking in strength and power. The evidence of my study challenges this notion. We see that when practiced with wisdom, love, and conviction, caring can result in competence and academic excellence. For a student, as the stories of my subjects indicate, the influence of a teacher's caring can be powerful and far reaching. As Noddings contends, authentic caring results in competence. When we care, we strive for excellence so that the receiver of our care may flourish. As some of my participants have reported, a teacher's caring can result in the student's transformation, self-understanding, a deepening appreciation for learning and subject matter, an increased sensitivity to others, and a heightened capacity to care, a capacity which Noddings, Buber, and Mayeroff perceive as central to living a flourishing human life. In Noddings's (1997) own words: "There is nothing mushy about caring. It is the strong, resilient backbone of human life." (p. 37)

As my study reveals, caring may be a critical part of a successful pedagogy. Hence, in my view, the work of care theorists such as Noddings, Mayeroff, and others should be brought to the attention of more educators and policy makers. As a teacher who has been greatly enriched from my phenomenological study of care, I believe that care theories should be studied by all teacher candidates and included in every credentialing program for teachers and administrators.

In conclusion, I believe that more applied research will highlight not only the centrality of caring in effective teaching but also the centrality of teacher-student relationships as the central core of education.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**SCHOOL AND PARTICIPANTS**

<b>SCHOOLS AND PARTICIPANTS</b>					
Subjects	Age	School	School	School	Number of Years Perspective
		Attended	Attended	Attended	
		Small	Large	Large	
		Private School	Private School	Public School	
Dawn	25			X	7
Dottie	40+	X			30
Grace	24			X	8
Hope	26			X	9
Lacie	26	X			13
Lan	27			X	9
Leila	20	X			12
Priya	29		X		11

## APPENDIX B

### QUALITIES OF TEACHERS ACCORDING TO SUBJECTS

QUALITIES OF TEACHERS ACCORDING TO SUBJECTS						
Subjects	Passion	Caring	Compassion	Strength	Wisdom/ Intelligence	Humility
Dawn	X		X	X	X	X
Dottie		X		X	X	
Grace	X		X	X	X	
Hope	X	X		X		
Lacie	X	X				
Lan		X			X	
Leila	X	X				
Priya	X	X				X

## APPENDIX C

### PRACTICES OF TEACHERS ACCORDING TO SUBJECTS

PRACTICES OF TEACHERS ACCORDING TO SUBJECTS								
Subjects	Create Caring Ciss.Rm	See Students Potential	Listen to Students	Make Time	Empower Students	Engage Students	Promote Critical Thinking	Possess Sub. Matter Expertise
Dawn	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dottie	x	x	x	x				x
Grace	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Hope	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Lacie	x	x	x			x		
Lan	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Leila	x	x	x		x	x		
Priya	x	x	x	x		x		x