2003

An ethic of care in practice

C. (Colette) Rabin
San Jose State University

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.6cne-788a>
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AN ETHIC OF CARE
IN PRACTICE

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Education

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Colette Rabin

August 2003

UMI Number: 1417498

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APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

7/2/03
Dr. Helen Kress

7/2/03
Dr. Michael Katz

7/2/03
Dr. Kristeen Pemberton

APPROVED FOR THE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

AN ETHIC OF CARE IN PRACTICE

by Colette Rabin

In this thesis, the Rose School teachers' narratives concerning how they foster and sustain relationships in one private school confirmed and gave practical examples of the application of Nel Noddings' theory. Noddings' seminal work on an ethic of care departs from Enlightenment and Pre-enlightenment ethicists' relegation of morality to the rational that cloistered it in formal argument. Noddings posits affect as a primary good and in so doing, suggests that our inclination to be in relationship may motivate moral behavior.

Noddings' moral education centers on the categories of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. The Rose School teachers' interviews revealed their unique conceptions and applications of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation to foster relationships at school. This analysis of in-depth teacher interviews through the lens of Noddings' schema both affirms and extends her theory into examples of caring in practice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank all the teachers who took part in this project. Chair of my committee, Dr. Kress, patiently offered her time to help me pose my initial research question and shared her expert editing skills all along. Dr. Pemberton has given me valuable criticism from her considerable insight. Dharmaraj Iyer and Clare Wildenborg, gifted grammarians, edited drafts. Todd Billingsley saved the whole project with last minute formatting. Thanks to Seth Mott, my brother, for his advice and encouragement.

Much love and appreciation to my husband Matthew Sloan for his love and support. Thanks to Barbara Rabin for her educational insight, thoughtfulness, patience, and love. Thanks to Dr. Michael Katz for guiding me through the entire project, introducing me to care theory and to Nel Noddings. Thanks to Nel Noddings for her encouragement and inspiration.

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
ONE. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW	
A. Introduction	11
1. Choice of Methodology	12
2. Research Question	14
B. Theoretical and Philosophical Background for Care	14
1. Pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment Ethics	15
• Immanuel Kant	15
• Utilitarianism	16
• John Dewey's Pragmatism	17
• John Dewey's Moral Pedagogy	18
• John Dewey's Conception of Experience	19
• Critique of John Dewey	20
• Limits of Reason	22
• Relations versus Principles	22

2. An Ethic of Care	24
• Feminism	24
• Etymology of Care	26
• Caring Moral Education	30
• Categories of Moral Education	30
• Curriculum and Care	41
3. Epistemological Studies of Care	47
• Defining the Term “Care”	48
• Interviewing Educators	49
• Teacher Education	50
• A Student Teacher’s Experience with Care	51
• The Complexity of Care	52
• Voices of Educators	54
• Community School	55
• Caring in an Urban School	56
• Care and Empowerment	57
4. Conclusion	59

TWO. METHODOLOGY

A. Site for Research	60
B. Research Question	61
C. Myself in the Research	61
D. Interviews: Teacher Narratives	63
E. Method of Analysis	68
F. Purpose	69

THREE. FINDINGS

A. Modeling	71
1. Ways of Being	72
2. Collegial Friendship	74
3. Reflection	78
B. Dialogue	82
1. Formal Dialogue	83
• Examples of Conflict Resolutions	86
2. Informal Dialogue	92
• Listening to Students	92
• Spontaneous Conversation	93
• Conversational Meetings	95

3. Immortal Dialogue⁹⁸

	• School Principles	98
	• Stories	100
C. Practice		102
	• Relationship	105
	• Service-Learning	104
	• Habit	105
	• Rocks in the Basket	106
D. Confirmation		108
	• Rocks in the Basket	109
	• End-of-the-Year Ceremony	112
E. Conclusion		115
FOUR. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS		
A. Modeling		117
B. Dialogue		122
1. Formal Dialogue		123
2. Informal Dialogue		128
3. Immortal Dialogue		131

C. Practice	135
D. Confirmation	139
E. Conclusion	143
BIBLIOGRAPHY	145

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

Today students face a world filled with economic, social, and political challenges. “Humankind has not yet learned how to avoid war, or even how to resist the most familiar forms of psychological manipulation that help make war possible” (Noddings, 2002a, p. 32). It is imperative to consider what kind of people our schools foster. Current violence has led educators to focus on fostering virtue.

The traditional organization of schooling is intellectually and morally inadequate for contemporary society. We live in an age troubled by social problems that force us to reconsider what we do in schools. Too many of us think that we can improve education by merely designing a better curriculum, finding and implementing a better form of instruction, or instituting a better form of classroom management. These things won’t work. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 99)

Noddings points towards an endemic problem in education, one that may not be easily fixed with new methodologies, more testing, or any narrow problem-oriented reform. Noddings’ ethic of care presents a viable alternative to begin a complete re-organization of schooling.

I have argued . . . that much of school curriculum should be organized around themes of care; caring for self, caring for intimate others, caring for strangers and global others, caring for plants and animals, and the natural environment, caring for the human-made environment, and caring for ideas. (Noddings, 2002b, p. 180)

This chapter briefly outlines the methodology, presents the question for research, provides a theoretical, philosophical, and etymological background of care, describes its application to moral education, and finally, surveys current epistemological studies of care. The second chapter discusses the methodology in-depth. The third chapter presents the findings from the data and the fourth presents the implications and conclusions.

1. Choice of Methodology

This phenomenological study develops an understanding of the complex social construct of how the Rose School teachers narrated their experience of relationships in one private elementary school. It is a case study that examines the many differing perceptions of individual narratives. "A phenomenological study focuses on descriptions of how people experience and how they perceive their experience of the phenomena under study" (Glesne, 1999, p. 7).

As a participant-researcher, I conducted and analyzed in-depth ninety-minute interviews from seven purposefully selected teachers in order to interpret how these participants described how they foster relationships in a school setting. Questions were open-ended and focused on recalling events, practices, and beliefs that illustrate the participants' notions of how relationships are developed in this organization. I agree with Glesne (1999) that interviews provide first hand explanation of practice. "(Y)ou cannot, except through interviewing, get the actor's explanations. . . . To this opportunity, add the serendipitous learnings that emerge from the unexpected turns in discourse that your questions evoke" (p. 69).

This study analyzed two sets of data: (1) recorded, transcribed, and participant-checked narrations and (2) informal publications the school has sent to parents or used for parents' nights or workshops. The framework for analysis of these data is one of exploring how teachers interpret the nature of schooling.

(I)nterpretivists assume that they deal with multiple, socially constructed realities or 'qualities' that are complex and indivisible into discrete variables, they regard their research task as coming to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them. To make their interpretations, the researchers must gain access to the multiple perspectives of the participants. Their qualitative study designs, therefore, generally focus on in-depth, long-term interaction with relevant people in one or several sites. (Glesne, p. 5, 1999)

Teachers are relevant members of the school community. Grounded in practice, their perspectives are worth examination. Research often neglects the centrality of their roles; teachers are the mediators of school knowledge. Who are the only adults in the classroom? How shall we evaluate schooling without questioning teachers in depth as to the intentions and purposes of their pedagogy? Linda McNeil (1986), in her landmark study, Contradictions of Control, writes:

The teacher perspective is so important because it is at that level that the contradictions of the social control purposes and the educative purposes of schools are resolved. The teachers are supposed to juggle subject matter, student skills, and at the same time student behavior and the technicalities of grades, attendance and course credits. We have ignored this basic truth. . . . (p. 210)

Teachers have an insider perspective on education. They institute policy. McNeil's study shows that educators need to be clearer about exactly what reforms schools need. She uncovers the harm done by policymakers who blindly increase standardized requirements, curriculum, and testing. Without an insider's perspective how can they know what is needed?

In the present study, I approach the Rose School teachers' narratives with an open mind and a respect for individual viewpoints. I intend to try to understand their perceptions, compare them to Nel Noddings' theory of care, and share any differences or connections I find with these teachers.

Qualitative studies that portray teachers as stupid, callous, indifferent, ignorant, or dogmatic do little to improve the conditions of teaching for teachers. . . . So long as we seek knowledge in classrooms, we are necessarily dependent on the teachers and students who are there engaged in a constitutively ethical enterprise. To intrude on that, to betray the trust that lets us in, to rupture the possibility of developing a caring community, is to forget that we should be doing research *for* teaching. (Noddings, 1988, p. 229)

Teachers' narratives on relationships provide another perspective to compare to theory. This study asks the following questions for research:

2. Research Question

How do teachers describe how they develop and foster relationships in one private school? What do their narratives show when compared to Nel Noddings' theory of moral education based on an ethic of care: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation? Based on a phenomenological investigation, this study interprets and provides one way to understand how teachers talked about their school-based experiences of relationships. Do their narrations invite new theoretical considerations in the area of moral education? This research explores how teachers' descriptions compare to Noddings' ethic of care and caring moral education. Care's theoretical background, its conceptualization, and its application to moral education grounds this exploration.

B. Theoretical and Philosophical Background for Care

Noddings claims that we become social beings through the medium of our relationships. Noddings (1984) describes being itself as rooted in the affective: "I shall locate the very wellspring of ethical behavior in the human affective response. . . . (I)t is necessary to give appropriate attention and credit to the affective foundation of existence" (p. 171). Affect could be equated with the motivation for ethical behavior. The desire to be with each other may compel us to care. Noddings (2002a) grounds her ethic of care on the universal human need or desire for care. "An ethic of care – at least as I have described it – is grounded in the human condition. Every human being requires care initially in order to survive, and that need – changing in form over time – continues as the organism grows" (p. 148). Since all human beings need care in various forms during all phases in life, Noddings claims it a primary good. The universality of the desire to be cared for makes the maintenance of relations a catalyst for altruism. Noddings suggests that the desire for care may be the foundation of morality.

1. Pre-Enlightenment and Enlightenment Ethics

Noddings' ethic has developed perhaps in reaction to – and at least in relation to – its socio-historical context. Thus, to make clear the significance of an ethic of care, I will explain in brief how it relates to pre-enlightenment and enlightenment ethics. Since Noddings introduced her ethic at a time largely influenced by the European/Western enlightenment, the importance of her ideas is better understood in this context. The following summaries contribute to the current discussion of care.

- **Immanuel Kant**

The philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724 -1804) separated the moral realm from its pre-enlightenment dependence on a supernatural governing force. Since Kant, morality has often been relegated to rationalized duties. “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). Noddings (1998) presents an objection:

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.... (p. 143)

Caring departs from the Kantian sense of duty or obedience to principle. Instead of action necessarily implying a law, caring arises out of each moment in relationship. It springs from one's emotional connection with the other, the cared-for. Each act does not need to imply a rule, since contexts continually change.

Noddings recognizes the resistance to morality that led Kant (1960) to posit duty as necessary for moral behavior:

To act from a sense of duty, one's own inclinations must be set aside and with

them all the objectives of willing so that nothing remains to control willing except, objectively, the law itself, and subjectively, a pure respect for practical law. (p. 173)

Instead of duty or law, Noddings focuses on feeling. When there is resistance to care, the carer summons what Noddings (2002a) refers to as the original “I must,” or “stirring of the heart” (p. 20). Care arises from feelings of love, as opposed to reason and principle. The focus on love is indicative of a major shift in Western philosophy.

- **Utilitarianism**

Noddings’ focus on feeling removes an ethic of care from not only Kantian ethics, but also utilitarianism. Interpretations of utilitarianism vary; here is one general explanation from John Stuart Mill (1949):

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness . . . the theory of life on which this theory of morality is grounded – namely, that pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends. . . . (p. 169)

For utilitarians, the good outweighs the right. Whereas Kant’s moral agent determines the right in relation to the reasoned categorical imperative, the utilitarian decides based on rational thought with an aim to determine the highest good for the greatest number of people. In Mill’s example, representative of only one variation of utilitarianism, happiness is viewed the greatest aggregate good, and a moral agent’s best moral decisions would produce the most benefit to the greatest number of individuals. Although care theorists want the results of their actions to benefit rather than harm, they will not assert one overarching quantifiable value such as happiness. Noddings describes how both Kantians and utilitarians would agree that lying is generally not good. However, where Kantians would never veer to permit lying to be viewed as morally justifiable, no matter the circumstances, utilitarians must always weigh alternatives. Thus, exceptions to absolute moral rules arise within utilitarianism but not within Kantian ethics. Kant (1960) writes:

“Pure and authentic moral law occurs, however, only in pure philosophy, and this is of the utmost importance practically” (p. 167). Both Kantian ethics and utilitarianism have in common the emphasis on reason and rationality and a singular rational criterion for determining the moral value of an action, decision, or policy.

- **John Dewey's Pragmatism**

Noddings bases her ethic in part on pragmatic naturalism; she refers to the pragmatist, John Dewey. Thus, I will explore Dewey's views in more depth. “In this process orientation, it (care) resembles Dewey's pragmatic naturalism and, more generally, the liberal tradition” (Noddings, 2002a, p. 148). Pragmatism elevates rationality, as does Western philosophy; however, it does so with an emphasis on experience in the world.

We do not have to construct elaborate logical rationales to explain why human beings ought to treat one another as positively as our situation permits. Ethical life is not separate from and alien to the physical world. Because we human beings are in the world, not mere spectators watching from outside it, our social instincts and the reflective elaboration of them are also in the world. Pragmatists and care theorists agree on this. (Noddings, 1998, p. 187)

Pragmatists base decisions on personal responsibility for all the possible results of an action. Results and aims may differ, based on experience in practice. Thus, the moral cannot be understood outside of experience.

‘Moral ideas’ are ideas of any sort whatsoever which take effect in conduct and improve it, make it better than it otherwise would be. Similarly, one may say, immoral ideas are ideas of whatever sort (whether arithmetical or geographical or physiological) which show themselves in making behavior worse than it would otherwise be; and non-moral ideas, one may say, are such ideas and pieces of information as leave conduct uninfluenced for either the better or the worse. (Dewey, 1909, p. 1)

Dewey did not posit fixed principles of knowledge, norms, or intrinsic goods. He saw the world, as well as our knowledge of it, in constant flux.

Knowledge, for Dewey, is never absolute; it is always contingent and hypothetical,

for it is inextricably related to the changing world. The environment and the individual constantly work upon each other to effect change. Individuals journey from biological to social beings. As social beings, they learn to adapt to and act upon their environment through interaction. In other words, they develop phenomenologically.

Ethical conduct is determined by the needs of society, or social communities, and the good is conceived of in social or behavioral terms. Since society, the individual, and the environment constantly affect each other, ethical conduct must conform to the successive moments of experience. Acts are given definition through their relation to other acts. They are judged either good or bad, based on how they affect individuals. Thus, for Dewey, nothing social can exist outside the moral domain or find exemption from moral consideration. All experience can be judged in moral terms. How would Dewey's conception of experience influence moral pedagogy?

- **John Dewey's Moral Pedagogy**

Dewey, and we will see that Noddings, too, argues that morality should not be separated from the curriculum as an individual discipline since principles find their meaning in the social. For Dewey, although there is nothing inherently wrong about teaching morality as a subject in itself; doing so would be an inferior and less effective way of teaching it. Dewey likened teaching morality to trying to teach swimming outside the water: "(I)t may be laid down as fundamental that the influence of direct moral instruction, even at its very best, is comparatively small in amount and slight in influence, when the whole field of moral growth through education is taken into account" (Dewey, 1909, p. 3). Everything a teacher in a school does is infused with the moral and passes its particular infusion on to the student. Why not, therefore, examine *all* school-related experience by moral standards? My study addresses this question, which remains an important influence in Noddings' moral pedagogy and was inspired by Dewey.

- **John Dewey's Conception of Experience**

Dewey is referred to as the philosopher of "experience." This emphasis on experience in the world, moves us closer to Noddings' conception of care. According to Dewey, the moral must be drawn from experience; thus, we will explore what Dewey meant by the term "experience." It can be defined as the interaction or transaction between the individual and the environment. "From this point of view, the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after it" (Dewey, 1938, p. 27). Experience does not exist in itself or in the environment. Experience for Dewey is a participatory and interactive principle.

William Doll applied process-oriented hermeneutics to Deweyen experience in A Post-modern Conception of Curriculum. Doll unclouds Dewey's theory from the misinterpretation of experience as an end in itself. Doll describes how this limited translation misses the essence of transformation and recursive reflection. "(W)ithout a feeling for reflection and its transformative power, Dewey's metaphor of mind as 'primarily a verb' takes on no richness of meaning" (Doll, 1993, p. 139). Doll explains that students' experiential learning, as Dewey imagined, would lead to the continual process of non-teleological dialogic thought. Dewey found three elements crucial for reflection to transform; he states reflection must be "critical, public, and communal."

Dewey believed classrooms could be communal places where 'had' experiences could be openly analyzed and transformed; not a competitive environment where right is pitted against wrong, but one where, through mutual cooperation, students and teachers explore alternatives, consequences, assumptions. This communal and public exploration is done in a critical and rigorous yet sympathetic manner. (Doll, 1993, p. 142)

Experience is not an end in itself, but part of a relational process leading to meaning-making. How teachers describe relationships at school may be a central concern of Dewey, since his morality focused on the social. The limitations of the social realm lead

Noddings to posit care as an overarching and non-generalizable criterion for the moral.

- **Critique of John Dewey**

Dewey judges an individual's understanding of morality by the quality of society's (which could be a school community's) reflective inquiry. We make moral choices based on trial and error in the social realm. One major criticism of Dewey points to the limits of the social. Hook (1975) argues:

Still how to account for the intelligent man [human] who possesses the requisite sensibilities but who lacks moral courage or force of character, who is fearful of standing up to danger and the threats of danger from the mob or the crowd or a tyrant? Even when we acknowledge that the sphere of morality is coextensive with the sphere of life, this does not carry with it the requisite courage to act on the moral insight. (p. xv)

Noddings argues that a criterion of judgment beyond the social is necessary to determine moral action, let alone to bestow one with the courage to act. She points to the problematic nature of rationality as well as community. Groups of people can agree and not necessarily be right. Noddings (2002a) states:

Communities often fail to accept dissenting or unusual ideas. They demand conformity and punish dissent. They may also establish rigid rules for belonging and use the rules to exclude people whose symbolic affiliations preclude their acceptance of the rules. (p. 72)

Dewey considered the social to be a deciding force that could determine the good through reasoned inquiry. As the events of the early millennium demonstrate, our society has not yet proven him right. Social inquiry has not yet led to agreement over the good, as evidenced by the current conflict in the Middle East, the continuing crises in Ireland, Africa, etc., let alone issues of segregation in American schools, violence toward women and homelessness. If Dewey, committed as he was to the transforming power of experience, lived now, would his philosophy have developed in the same way?

Noddings, in "Thoughts on John Dewey's 'Ethical Principles Underlying Education,'" argues that quality of inquiry is inadequate to determine the moral.

Although Dewey frees us from the transcendental or external powers on moral matters, he leaves us in the hands of “objective” reasoning.

(W)e are led to think through our options and behave responsibly in the sense that we must be willing, in case we do enact the plan, to take responsibility for the consequences that we have foreseen. But what induces the approval or disapproval Dewey foresees? Are there consequences we should approve or disapprove? And is an act to be judged moral simply because the actor accepts responsibility for it? There are questions, it seems to me, that Dewey never answered adequately. We are still troubled by the need for specifically moral criteria. (Noddings, 1998, p. 486)

If a community’s consensus on the good is wrong, where does Dewey’s moral science leave us? What if most of those involved in a social group (such as a school) approve of harming another group? Noddings illustrates her point with an otherwise beatific description of community characterized by altruism and self-sacrifice, except for its elevation of the Aryan race. Her description comes from Adolf Hitler’s Mein Kampf and renders unavoidable the historical problematic with rationality and community. She asserts the need for universal principles based on care. Greene (1976) suggests Dewey’s response:

(I)n spite of his antipathy to fixed principles of any kind, Dewey always had in mind a number of criteria for judging which value claims were justified and which were not. These include ‘regard for the welfare and integrity of the social groups of which we form a part.’ They include as well what he called ‘faithfulness,’ conscientiousness, a willingness ‘to discover new values and to revise former notions,’ and ‘sensitiveness to the rights and claims of others.’ (p. 17)

I agree with Noddings that society requires not only criteria, but also the recognition of universals. “(T)he criteria of judgment need not be stated as rigid or absolute principles, but they must acknowledge certain universals in the human condition” (Noddings, 1998, p. 447). She suggests particular concern with avoiding the infliction of pain and attending to the provision of care. Noddings has highlighted the shortcomings of both consensus and the measure of the rational. Do the teachers in this study rely on rationality, or do

they too seem to assert universals such as avoiding unnecessary harm and providing care? Do they foster relationships through improving students' abilities to reason or to care?

- **Limits of Reason**

To Noddings (2002a), reason is not an adequate gauge of morality and educators must "educate the passions:"

We believe that reason is (almost) slave to the passions. The educational task, then, is to educate the passions, especially the moral sentiments. Faced with evil, we must feel revulsion. Faced with another's pain, we must feel the desire to remove or alleviate it. Faced with our own inclinations to cause harm, we must be both shocked and willing to face the reality. Then we can invite reason to serve our corrected passions. (p. 8)

Noddings' ethic sees caring as a logical corollary of the responsibility humans have to one another. If care stems from any particular value, that value is the relatedness of a natural love or compassion. Instead of suggesting a list of categorical values, Noddings defines each in its particular context of caring. This context is always in flux within individual experience. The relationship, rather than the moral agent, is the point of focus. "A supremely lonely and heroic ethical agent marks both Kantian ethics and the age of individualism. An ethic of caring returns us to an earlier orientation – one that is directly concerned with the relations in which we all must live" (Noddings, 1988, p. 219). Theoretically, a Kantian, utilitarian, or pragmatist could decide the moral on his or her own; Noddings' carer must evaluate his or her actions on the basis of their effects on the cared-for.

- **Relations versus Principles**

Noddings argues that moral people do not refer to moral ideas or principles and then act accordingly. Instead of an agent who decides based on moral principles, Noddings describes a relation and the action which might serve the cared-for. Noddings

draws from both David Hume (1711-1776) and various recent empirical studies to suggest that reason is subordinate to passion.

The Humean position is supported by some impressive empirical studies. For example, in their study of non-Jewish rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust, Oliner and Oliner (1988) found that most of the rescuers acted out of a group moral identity ('we are compassionate people, people who will help a sufferer') or direct care/compassion. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 8)

Those who helped sufferers did not speak about their decision to do so in terms carefully reasoned. Noddings also sites Hartshore and May's (1929) landmark studies, which located a disconnect between stated belief and actual behavior: "The achievement of specific standards, attitudes, and modes of conduct does not imply their integration. Integration is itself a specific achievement" (p. 454). Their comprehensive findings showed that children's behavior was not a product of what moral educators taught them or of what they said was "right" or "good." "Cooperative behavior is specific and largely a function of the situations in which children are placed and in which they have acquired certain habits or tendencies" (Hartshore and May, 1929, p. 157). They found that children behaved differently depending on whether or not their teacher or other authority figure was present. For example, their willingness or ability to refrain from cheating or lying had no correlation with what teachers and authorities told them to do. Rather, children's behavior fluctuated, based on whether or not authorities were observing them.

A recent study supporting Noddings' claim is William Damon's (1999) "The Moral Development of Children." Damon traces psychological and biological theories of the moral development of children. As the director of the Center of Adolescence at Stanford, Damon explores how children develop moral identity. In this study, researchers asked children about their beliefs concerning sharing. They were then given enough chocolate pieces for only some children. Researchers analyzed their behavior through a double-sided mirror. Children's beliefs about sharing did not always lead to actual sharing

when faced with decisions of what to do with the chocolate. These findings confirm the Humean position and Noddings' assertion that agents do not respond morally according to stated belief. "The idea of responsibility is to be brought back from the province of specialized ethics into that of lived life. Genuine responsibility exists only where there is real responding" (Buber, 1965, p. 20). "Real responding," as Buber (1878 – 1965) puts it, appears a central focus of feminism. Not only does feminism refer to experience, but also it refers to feeling.

2. An Ethic of Care

- **Feminism**

Noddings not only situates her ethic within Dewey's natural pragmatism, but also within feminism. Feminism, like pragmatism, grounds caring in experience. The focus, however, is weighted towards the relational realm. Carol Gilligan, care ethicist, (1982) states: "(T)he logic underlying an ethic of care is a psychological logic of relationships, which contrasts with the formal logic of fairness that informs the justice approach" (p. 73). The focus on feeling and emotion in relationship draws on feminism. Traditionally the rational subjugates feeling and emotion. Since feeling and emotion are associated with reproduction they are often connected with the feminine. Noddings (2002a) writes:

The public world and its associated processes is considered the realm of the rational. Feeling and emotion have no place in it, and neither do intimacy and connection. Instead, analysis, critical thinking, and self-sufficiency are the dominant values. . . . In our culture love and caring are not only linked to the reproductive processes of society, they are thought to be dysfunctional in relation to society's productive processes. (p. 188)

The feminine position of primary care giver, service professional, and child-bearer has been belittled. This historical undervaluing underscores the importance of my interviewing and valuing the viewpoints of teachers. Jane Roland Martin (1989) writes of how this disparaging happens:

In my research on the place of women in educational thought I have invoked a distinction between the productive and the reproductive processes of society and have argued that both in and outside of the academy those concerned with education define the educational realm in relation to society's productive processes, not its reproductive ones. (p. 187)

The disparity in salary between business and education reflects one societal value of productive processes. Martin refers to traditional Western philosophy's denigration of reproductive work. For example, Plato allows for only exceptional women to be educated in order to participate in the running of the polis. He relegates inferior women to the running of household, caring for children, and tending the infirm.

A thorough discussion of the future of caregiving will reveal that the male model of dominance is still operating. It is more nearly acceptable now for a woman to be like a man – to enter fields traditionally associated with men – than for a man to be like a woman and become an early childhood educator, nurse, or full-time parent. Worse . . . much of this vitally important work is so denigrated that able women, too, avoid it. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 57)

In the face of this apparent imbalance, Martin suggests that both sexes could be educated for both productive and reproductive work.

Although Noddings notes the devaluation of care and its historical location in the feminine, she does not assert the essentialist position that women are more suited for care. Research has not indicated an innate difference, although there is certainly an extant social one. For example, why don't we earmark especially caring boys for nursing or early education? Why do we send the brightest girls only to math and science? Noddings (2002a) states:

(T)he universal has been described by males, and culture has been created or at least interpreted by men, schools are pervaded with male language and structures. Although the manly arts of the warrior are no longer extensively or explicitly taught, they are embedded in literature and political history, in sports, in a controlling view of science, in academic contests, in the hierarchical structure of school districts, and in competition for grades. (p. 110)

Extrication from such a comprehensive paradigm requires more than its mere recognition. We must ask how to transform the language and structure of education. To transform education around Noddings' ethic of care, we must first understand what she means by the complex concept of care. Thus, etymology becomes central to this research project. Furthermore, in my analysis of the teachers' narratives, I refer to this core understanding of Noddings' concept of care. A deeper understanding of care is therefore necessary.

- **Etymology of Care**

The following describes the concept of care with reference to Simone Weil (1909-1943), Milton Mayeroff (1971), and Nel Noddings (2002). Care demands a movement in individual awareness beyond one's self. The one-caring expands his or her consciousness to include the object or individual cared-for. Mayeroff describes how the one-caring comes to know the cared-for and supports what is growth or actualization for her or him. One cares for another when she or he supports her or his development.

In caring, the other is primary; the growth of the other is the center of my attention. The teacher's interest is focused on the student rather than on himself. . . . Only by focusing on the other am I able to be responsive to its needs to grow. (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 29)

Noddings describes caring as involving receptivity, responsiveness, and relatedness. It calls for due concentration on discourse, concerns, and needs. When repeatedly one enacts a selfless attention to the other, a relationship develops.

In a relation of caring, the one-caring comes to understand the cared-for's needs. Apprehending the other's reality, feeling what he feels as nearly as possible, is the essential part of caring from the view of the one-caring. For if I take on the other's reality as possibility and begin to feel its reality, I feel, also, that I must act accordingly... (Noddings, 1984, p. 16)

The one-caring has enough energy for the cared-for so that her or his motivations will be displaced toward the others' struggles and victories. In order to achieve this sort of knowledge of another, our thoughts and feelings must be engrossed on the other. As Weil

(1977) puts it: “The soul empties itself of all its own contents 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” (p. 51). The one-caring would subjugate his or her own needs for those of the cared-for. For example, when a student wants to give up, it might demand little energy or attention for the teacher to agree and allow the student to stop trying. It may be caring to find a way to encourage determination to continue in this context. Does the word “care” emerge in the Rose School teachers’ interviews?

A full assessment of caring, I think, is measured in Noddings’ (2002a) conception: “In the analysis of caring . . . we must note that directionality is from cared-for to carer” (p. 14). Thus, caring is situated in the relation between the one-caring and the cared-for. Noddings departs from Mayeroff in saying that the one-caring can only know if she or he has satisfactorily cared by the response she or he receives. To Mayeroff, the one-caring may be resented for his or her care, but still have cared or have done the best thing for someone without his or her recognition.

In the following example, Mayeroff and Noddings would agree. In Henrik Ibsen’s (1828-1906) play, A Doll’s House, Nora’s husband, Helmer, believes completely that he has cared for Nora by providing her with children and a home. Helmer could not conceive of more for Nora; he wished to know Nora only as a caregiver. Nora ends up by rejecting his stifling care:

I was...your little songbird, your doll, and you’d have to take care of it [the doll] twice as hard as before, since it was so frail and fragile.... You’ve always been very nice to me. But our home has never been anything but a playpen. I’ve been your doll-wife here... (Ibsen, trans.1995, p. 61)

I would argue that Helmer did not fulfill the demands of caring. To Mayeroff, who judges caring on the performance of the one-caring, Helmer’s caring is lacking in that he not only fails to support Nora’s growth, but actively seeks to impede her development. “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 and what is relevant to such response" (Mayeroff, 1971, p. 7). Helmer relied on her dependent fragility. However, Helmer believed fully that he did care: that helping Nora grow was to keep her as a "doll." It may be more difficult to fault his caring, flawed, as it is, if we did not include the words of Nora, the cared-for. Herein lies Noddings' assessment, in the cared-for's response. Nora's comments easily preclude the possibility of Helmer's genuine caring. Caring for students means appreciating and valuing them as they are, before they have performed in some way pleasing to the teacher.

When a teacher asks a question in class and a student responds, she receives not just the 'response' but the student. What he says matters, whether it is right or wrong, and she probes gently for clarification, interpretation, contribution. She is not seeking the answer but the involvement of the cared-for. For the brief interval of dialogue that grows around the question, the cared-for indeed 'fills the firmament.' (Noddings, 1984, p. 176)

Teachers must have time to do what Noddings suggests, to "probe gently" and seek for involvement. Without the un-pressured space to know each other and develop a real bond, I argue that the teacher and student cannot have a relationship of caring. What do the Rose School teachers add to this argument?

Noddings (1984) and Mayeroff (1971) distinguish between caring *about* those we cannot know and caring *for*, which requires an extended period of time one must devote and commit oneself to. "The commitment to act on behalf of the cared-for, a continued interest in his reality throughout the appropriate time span, and the continual renewal of commitment over this span of time are the essential elements of caring from the inner view" (Noddings, 1984, p. 16). As a teacher, I care *about* all the students in my school, but I have the opportunity to care *for* only those I can attend to consistently. Although she does not revoke the importance of caring-for, Noddings, in a later publication, Starting at Home: Caring and Social Policy (2002), suggests that she may have underestimated the importance of caring-about. Aaron Schutz (1998), in "Caring in Schools is not Enough:

Community, Narrative, and the Limits of Alterity,” summarizes the dissent among theorists opposed to an ethic based on care:

Many of Noddings’s critics have argued, however, that caring alone, without an accompanying ethic of justice to supplement it, is too weak an ethic to resist systematic oppression or to ensure a moral commitment to those who cannot be cared for directly... (p. 373)

Thomas F. Green (1985) corroborates this dissent in “The Formation of Conscience in an Age of Technology.” He argues:

These (an ethic of care and values clarification) are essentially movements of thought about moral education that are calculated to inform the education of persons for the private and intimate spheres of life, not for any civic existence. (Green, 1985, p. 9)

Critics perceive a weak bond between the one-caring and those she or he cares about.

They argue that this bond may fail to prevent discrimination and ensuing inequities, which is of concern to small, as well as large social groupings. Noddings (2002a) states:

I still believe that the basic distinction between ‘caring for’ and ‘caring about’ is right, and at the time my intention was to emphasize the special nature of ‘caring for.’ ‘Caring about’ can deteriorate to political self-righteousness and to forms of intervention that do more harm than good. . . . But ‘caring about’ may be the foundation of justice.” (p. 86)

In caring-about we care for those who are distant. We value them as individuals above and beyond our differences of opinion and social norms. Instead of rationalizing moral action without hearing the cared-for’s response, within an ethic of care we must grapple with the many perspectives that multiculturalism brings. Caring-about is the subject of Noddings’ response to her critics in Starting at Home (2002), in which she extends care into family and society at large. If we agree that rational thought does not suffice to determine moral action, then justice needs more than the rational to ground it. In fact, the concept of justice or duty would necessitate a foundation in care. Justice may be achieved only through the strengthening of relational bonds in social groups such as homes,

families and schools. How would she suggest schools become places that foster caring social relations?

- **Caring Moral Education**

I will discuss Noddings' moral education, including the categories of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation, with which I compared the Rose School teachers' narratives. Noddings enumerates overarching changes applicable to the multifaceted experiences of schooling: the hierarchy of school management, use of time, types of relationships fostered, size of schools and classes, instructional aims, both teaching methodology and content, and assessment. To cover the entirety of these aspects exceeds the scope of this paper. I will provide an overview of the general nature of her reform. Since the teachers in my study also elevate relationships in their school setting, their narratives provide an interesting perspective on Noddings' reform. In addition to Noddings, I will refer to Paolo Freire (1970), Nicholas C. Burbules (1993), and C. A. Bowers (1984). Noddings (2002a) states: "Care ethicists depend more heavily on establishing the conditions and relations that support moral ways of life than on the inculcation of virtues in individuals" (p. xiii). The following four categories – Noddings' aspects of moral education: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation – figure largely in my interpretation of teacher narratives.

- **Categories of Moral Education**

1. Modeling

Within the concept of modeling, a teacher would recognize her or himself as an example: she or he teaches not only the intended content or skills, but also all of her or his tacit beliefs and underlying biases. To be a successful model of caring, a teacher would

need to reflect on his or her practice and its far-reaching effects.

Although the sociology of knowledge is often left out of a discussion on moral education, I find concepts such as hidden curriculum and taken-for-granted belief support Noddings' position on modeling. C. A. Bowers (1987) states:

A theory of education that is grounded in an understanding of how our patterns of thought are acquired will enable the teacher to understand which 'moves' in the language game of socialization are likely to bind the student to the world of taken for granted belief and which 'moves' enable the student to obtain conceptual distance necessary for reflective thought. (p. 50)

Dewey's term, *collateral learning*, and the postmodern conception of the *hidden curriculum*, refer to the power of language to transmit cultural values and definitions. Educational theory that stresses a social and relational construction of knowledge confirms the importance of the values and meanings which pedagogy transmits. This theory underscores the importance and the power of teachers as models. How much do we affect students with a smile or lack thereof? What if we have differing and unexamined expectations for boys and girls in our classes? Or for students of different cultural backgrounds? Ultimately, each moment of encounter, according to Noddings, is an opportunity for care.

2. Dialogue

Noddings asserts that dialogue is the most fundamental component of the care model. Therefore, I will deal most extensively with this dimension of moral education, relating Noddings' use of dialogue to the work of Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), Bowers in The Promise of Theory (1984), and Burbules in Dialogue in Teaching (1993). Moral educators have used dialogue with the goal of developing well-reasoned arguments to defend moral decisions. Noddings (2002a) points out that care theorists would be concerned that moral educators may forget why this is important: "to establish

and maintain caring relations at both individual and societal levels” (p. 18). Moral educators say the goal is to find the “right” decision. Care ethicists argue that you cannot determine the right in a vacuum. Through dialogue, we discover the needs of the other and also the effects of our own behavior. We also discover each other’s thoughts and concerns. Noddings (1992) states:

My use of the term dialogue is similar to that of Paulo Freire (1970). It is not just talk or conversation – certainly not an oral presentation of argument in which the second party is merely allowed to ask an occasional question. Dialogue is open-ended; that is, in a genuine dialogue, neither party knows at the outset what the outcome or decision will be. . . . Dialogue is a common search for understanding, empathy, or appreciation. (p. 23)

Since Noddings refers to Freire’s as well as Burbules’ use of dialogue, I will briefly explore their conceptions. Freire asserts that a focus on developing dialogue between teacher and student as both a starting and integral part of curriculum will help to free us from the dividing constraint and imbalance of power. Freire (1970) states:

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in the dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on ‘authority’ are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it. Here no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are ‘owned’ by the teacher. (p. 80)

Ultimately, participation, involvement, and action free learners to be co-creators in both their own and society’s growth and change.

Burbules (1993) defines dialogue as a *pedagogical communicative relation*. He recognizes the difficulty in demarcating dialogue as something set apart from conversation in general. However, dialogue has certain demonstrable characteristics, as part of a family of types of verbal communication. Two or more interlocutors, in the spirit of general

consent without a predetermined end in mind, make statements back and forth between them, building upon each stated thought to uncover meaning. Burbules makes the point that even in the face of differing opinion, participants maintain a caring and respectful rapport. Dialogue sustains difference with respect and represents an anti-hierarchical democracy.

Burbules (1993) examines each of these elements: pedagogy, communication, and relation. Dialogue is pedagogy in the highest sense in that it is discovery without a predetermined end. It leads to an understanding of the self, the other, and the topic of discourse. It engages the learner in the revelatory process of how knowledge is made. As a form of communication, Burbules describes dialogue as inherent in the nature of language, a capacity of our reasoning, a way we come to ethical understandings, and a foundation of democratic social organization. Lastly, he asserts that dialogue depends on the relation of its interlocutors.

Dialogue is unique in language, as separate from a lecture, instruction, or other form of pedagogy, in that its participants are involved in the creation of meaning and come to understanding through their own use, understanding, and participation in the process of language. According to Burbules (1993), teaching would be:

... defined less by 'giving' students certain things, 'shaping' students in particular ways, or 'leading' them to particular conclusions, and more by creating opportunities and occasions in which students will...construct a more mature understanding of themselves, the world, and others – an understanding that, *by definition*, must be their own. (p. 10)

Upon arrival at the discovery to which dialogue leads, learners gain the most valuable skill: learners know how to learn autonomously.

Secondly, Burbules (1993) considers the nature of language itself as dialectical. "(L)anguage is both the means to dialogue and the product of it..." (p. 11). If the word comes before its meaning, and we want to make meaning in the learning experience,

what could be more important than dialogue? Who would benefit more from dialogue than students, opening as they are to the world of words? Furthermore, it is in dialogue that we reason. "Our ratiocinative capacities are formed by the internalization of communicative interactions we have with others from a very early age" (Burbules, 1993, p. 11-12). Students must engage in dialogue in order to develop their capacity to reason. Also, to arrive at norms of ethics, we use a dialogical model. Learners as a group of two or more, through a respectful dialogue where each voice is valued, could determine and justify moral norms applicable to their group. Burbules (1993) describes the very meaning of "word," logos, to connote relationship: "This conception of logos, then, connotes the negotiated, relational status of validity claims. It situates meaning and truth not in transcendent criteria, but in the practical attainment of understanding and agreement between persons..." (p. 15). Learners would invest more in maintaining such norms if they were included in the discourse determining them. This model of inclusion may reflect Burbules' conception of a democracy.

(D)emocracy in a full sense can exist only when different individuals and groups are able to learn about and understand competing positions on issues and, while not necessarily always coming to agreement or consensus about them, grasp sufficiently the points of view of others so that the outcomes reached by the democratic processes are acceptable. (Burbules, 1993, p. 14)

Finally, dialogue is relational. Dialogue is a way for students to learn to be with each other, to express themselves, and to listen to the views of others. Here Burbules' discussion of dialogue is most directly related to Noddings' aims, although she would elevate the relational over his other characterizations of dialogue.

The concept of dialogue as a process of communication is closely tied with the values of involvement, respect, and concern for one's partner(s) in discussion. It connotes an egalitarian spirit and an open-mindedness about considering other points of view that are fundamentally admirable. For authors as different as Nel Noddings (1984) and Paulo Freire (1970) dialogue is associated with a caring sentiment and with love. (Burbules, 1993, p. 12)

To participate in a true dialogue, one without a previously decided end, each individual would learn to take into account the others' viewpoints. "What sustains a dialogue over time is not only lively interchange about the topic at hand, but a certain commitment to one's partner; a commitment that might not precede the dialogue, but arises only gradually in the spirit of the engagement" (Burbules, 1993, p. 15). A dialogue must take place over a span of time and is based on the relationship developed between the people speaking.

Noddings (1988) agrees with Freire and Burbules: "True dialogue is open; that is, conclusions are not held by one or more of the parties at the outset. . . . Clearly, time is required for such dialogue. Teacher and student must know each other well enough for trust to develop" (p. 223). Noddings, citing the work of both Freire and Burbules, refers also to an open-ended non-teleological discussion. Noddings adds to the theory of dialogue a focus on how participants would attend to their relationship first and foremost. Rather than a product of dialogue, relation would be a primary starting point.

Dialogue is central to moral education because it always implies the question, What are you going through? It permits disclosure in a safe setting, and thus makes it possible for a carer to respond appropriately. Dialogue provides information about the participants, supports the relationship, induces further thought and reflection, and contributes to the communicative competence of its participants. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 17)

Noddings mentions *communicative competence* here as well as relationality. This concept is central to the work of C.A. Bowers. Bowers (1987) centers on the concept of communicative competence as the overarching goal of education:

In short, communicative competence can be understood as the outcome of being culturally literate, which I have described elsewhere as the ability to read or decode the taken-for-granted assumptions and conceptual categories that underlie the individual's world of experience. (p. 2)

Teachers would provide students with the chance to participate consciously in culture. Students would gain the competence to evaluate their own taken-for-granted beliefs and also their own cultural traditions. They would then be equipped to participate in

determining which traditions they choose to maintain.

Within the goal of communicative competence across cultures, Noddings (2002a) keeps the focus on the ultimate goal of caring.

(W)e would attempt to socialize our children to the stated standards. But we would do this with a respectful uncertainty, encouraging the question Why? and recognizing our responsibility to present opposing alternatives as honestly as we can. Despite sometimes irresolvable differences, students should not forget the central aim of moral life – to encounter, attend, and respond to the need for care. (p. 23)

Formal, immortal, and normal dialogue

Noddings outlines three different aspects of dialogue: *formal*, *immortal*, and *normal*. Rules bind formal conversation and subject matter defines immortal conversation. Immortal conversation, or conversation based on custom or culture, refers for example, to the traditional subjects of religion. Noddings (2002a) suggests that we consider the “immortal conversation” in the following light: “Every school subject can be related in some way to the immortal questions. Without such relation, the subjects are just mere conglomerations of skills and superficial concepts” (p. 125). She refers to the importance of story in immortal conversation. Stories help us make meaning of the complexity of moral behavior.

(S)ories may help us to understand what happens – why people who are usually good sometimes give way to temptation or even evil, how whole tribes or nations can go wrong, how we are led to betray our friends out of fear, how we try to be good and become confused over what ‘good’ means, how thoroughly dependent on one another we are for our moral goodness. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 9)

An ethic of care is characterized by indirect, as opposed to direct instruction of virtue, and is thus consonant with Burbules’ open-ended dialogue.

Noddings would also agree with Dewey that an attempt to inculcate virtue is largely ineffective. Inculcation may teach, as Oliner and Oliner’s (1988) landmark studies

showed, a capacity to follow instructions when an authority is present. Care theorists would refrain from positing a fixed series of virtues that must be learned. All virtues are acceptable within a framework of care, although all would be subject to critical analysis. As a starting point for critical analysis, Noddings (2002a) discusses empathizing with not only the victim, but also the perpetrator:

Sometimes, in our horror of victimhood, we are comforted by the fact that we are not the actual victims; the actual victims are not as smart, not as innocent, not as blessed as we are. And when we look at the perpetrator, we are again comforted because we are not, could not be, that monster. But when we look at the scene of suffering and see both possibilities for ourselves, then a new horror is aroused, and that horror provides a starting point for morally directed critical thinking. (p. 50)

Noddings emphasizes critical thinking when engaging in immortal conversation.

Another way she refers to the starting point for critical thinking is to engage students on an emotional level. This could be done using great art. Noddings (2002a) refers to literature:

Yet surely it is possible, and perhaps even morally obligatory, for us as teachers to reach that 'residual cosmos.' In mathematics classes, teachers can share with students the great interest of many mathematicians in theological questions: Descartes' attempt to prove God's existence, Pascal's famous wager, Newton's expressed feeling that theology is more important than mathematics, the mysticism of the Pythagoreans, the contemporary fascination of mathematicians with the infinite, mathematical arguments for a pluralistic universe and possible forms of polytheism, the Platonic positioning of mathematical forms just beneath the supreme good. (p. 125)

Care theorists would not only read stories or myths to children, but also respond and reflect on them with open-ended questioning. Above all forms of dialogue, Noddings elevates normal conversation. Here follows a summary of several conditions for normal dialogue:

- i. The adults must be attempting to be kind, reflecting on their effect on others.
- ii. The adults must care for the children and like their company. Children will try to emulate adults, thus opportunities for "exploration, debate, and correction" will arise. Adults must refrain from marginalizing children's comments to be

- merely “cute.”
- iii. People involved in the conversation are more important than what they say. Interlocutors must remember they are not competing, that the goal is being together. Finally, putting our partners above our arguments and principles suggests limits on what we will do to win our points or enact our principles.

Conversation should not emphasize the differences between interlocutors. Their various roles are secondary. Here Eamonn Callan (1995) argues that Noddings’ moral dialogue is insufficient given his own belief that critical moral commitment is actually constitutive of one’s self. Callan claims one’s moral questions cannot be considered to be separate from one’s self.

To treat a topic of serious moral dialogue as something to be subordinated to the value of our interlocutors and our relationship to them is to treat moral questions as if they were external to the constitution of one’s own self and the self of the other, matters of mere volitional commitment that should not distract us from the real business of who we are and why we matter. (p. 12)

From such a perspective, if two interlocutors disagree, their moral arguments are *themselves*. The possibility of dialogue across cultural and moral differences appears bleak. From this perspective, it’s a wonder that individuals with differing moral beliefs ever converse. Callan’s view precludes the possibility of an individual’s ability to participate in dialogue concerning an open and transformative concept of truth, as described earlier in Dewey’s pragmatism. On the other hand, Noddings (2002a) leaves us with relational and contextual definitions of goodness and moral truth.

It (dialogue) leaves open the definition of goodness and suggests a wide range of acceptable views. Insistence on respect and loving regard leaves us open to influence; we are pledged to learning and exploring together, not to a total transmission of moral values. . . . Putting our partners above our arguments and principles suggests limits on what we will do to win out points or enact our principles. This is preparation for a moral life of openness, friendliness, trust, and caring. (p. 129)

Perhaps, it is no wonder that theorists such as Callan argue against the possibility of a caring dialogue. When we look at our present, let alone our past, we see great

inequity and conflict among individuals, nations, and tribes. So how are we to trust dialogue, what Noddings professes to be the most important category, to cross such great divides? The adults of today and yesterday may have not had a chance to experience an educational environment where care was valued as much as academic development through competitive means.

3. Practice

Noddings (1992) argues that students must be given opportunity to practice caring. They need reasons supported by teachers to interact with each other. Support, she mentions, does not mean good grades for being nice. Here we are reminded of Dewey's discussion of grade rewards and the effect they have of pitting students against each other. "So long as our schools are organized hierarchically with emphasis on rewards and penalties, it will be very difficult to provide the kind of experience envisioned" (Noddings, 1992, p. 24). Noddings' schema would transform the structures of school into the practice of care. Thus, schools would be places where moral behavior is rewarded in a non-hierarchical manner. Noddings (2002a) states:

A thoroughly relational ethic emphasizes our ethical interdependence. We hope that children will overcome ordinary temptations, and now and then even extraordinary ones, but we accept the limits of ethical heroism. And so it becomes part of our everyday moral obligation to develop and maintain an environment in which moral life can flourish. (p. 9)

Noddings is careful to mention the limits of our own power to foster virtue in others. Simply put, we cannot make anyone *be good*. The most she claims is that we can "work toward a world in which it is possible for the majority of people to be good" (Noddings, 2002a, p. 9). How shall educators foster within children the possibility and desire to be good?

4. Confirmation

To confirm another is to locate and draw forth his or her aspirations. Martin Buber (1878-1965) explains the term, confirmation.

Man [sic] wishes to be confirmed in his being by man, and wishes to have a presence in the being of the other. The human person needs confirmation because man as man needs it. An animal does not need to be confirmed, for it is what it is unquestionably. It is different with man: sent forth from the natural domain of species into the hazard of the solitary category, surrounded by the air of a chaos which came into being with him, secretly and bashfully he watches for a Yes which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another. (Buber, 1965, p. 208)

To confirm another is to notice the ways in which he or she is special. A teacher looks for the directions in which students want to grow, then recognizes and affirms their aspirations. “It is wonderfully reassuring to realize that another sees the better self that often struggles for recognition beneath our lesser acts and poorer selves” (Noddings, 2002a, p. 21). Confirmation does not deny current behavior, but places it in this affirmative context. There is no shortcut, such as high standards, to confirm a student. The focus on expectations is helpful, but expectations without a true desire to know a person are too simplistic. “If without knowing a student – what he loves, strives for, fears, hopes – I merely expect him to do uniformly well in everything I present to him, I treat him like an unreflective animal” (Noddings, 1988, p. 224). The teacher must come to appreciate his or her student enough to discover his or her aspirations.

Confirmation also does not reflect the traditional religious moral education of accusation, confession, penance, and forgiveness. “This sequence... depends heavily on authority, obedience, fear, and subordination. We can be harsh or magnanimous in our judgment and forgiveness. Our authority is emphasized, and the potential power of the offender’s own moral struggle is overlooked” (Noddings, 1992, p. 26). In knowing, the teacher awakens his or her compassion for the student and does not judge her or his inner aspirations.

When we attribute the best possible motive consonant with reality to the cared-for, we confirm him; that is, we reveal to him an attainable image of himself that is lovelier than that manifested in his present acts. In education, what we reveal to a student about himself as an ethical and intellectual being has the power to nurture the ethical ideal or to destroy it. (Noddings, 1984, p. 193)

In summary, Noddings has posited modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation as four overarching categories of moral education. A teacher *models* caring relations, values care, and recognizes each moment as an opportunity to care. He or she reflects on his or her practice in light of caring. Noddings' concept of an open-ended, unhurried *dialogue* between teachers and students demands respect and authenticity where participants value the relation over and above the discourse. Students in such an environment would *practice* caring for others where support and cooperation are valued as well as individual academic achievement. Finally, *confirmation* entails knowing a student well enough to recognize and encourage potential growth in light of his or her best interest. Noddings' moral education involving modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation concerns method more than content in curricula.

• Curriculum and Care

How would an ethic of care shape school and classroom curriculum? Instead of preparing all students in the same way, and often in opposition to their own interests and particular intelligences, curriculum would be tailored to the needs of the cared-for. Noddings' (2002a) ultimate goal of producing "caring, competent, loving, and lovable people" would direct *all* the elements of school, from organization to curriculum. Noddings calls for more consistent teacher-student relationships and attention to community members and parents. She describes curriculum that struggles with real meanings, actual interests, and existential questions. Noddings (2002a) explains: "It [curriculum] connects to our lived experience and not just our conceptual experience" (p. 36). She constructs colorful examples of integrated thematic units based on concepts such

as love, hate, evil, God, friendship, and home. Noddings (2002a) outlines the following six tasks to transform curriculum.

1. Be clear and unapologetic about our goal.
2. Take care of affiliative needs.
3. Relax the impulse to control.
4. Get rid of program hierarchies.
5. Give at least part of each day to themes of care.
6. Teach students that caring in every domain implies competence. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 99-101)

I will describe each of these tasks in detail:

1. "Be clear and unapologetic about our goal" (p. 99).

Here Noddings asks, why not ponder the big questions in school? Schools often deal with existential questions impersonally in major campaigns once problems are already rampant, i.e. drug education or teenage pregnancy. This practice is arguably inadequate. Kozol sums up the apparent limitations of short, rally, or slogan-oriented school reform programs:

Celebrities are sometimes hired...to organize a rally to sell children on the wisdom of not dropping out of school. . . . He tells the kids, 'You are somebody.' They are asked to chant it in response. But the fact that they are in this school, and doomed to be here for no reason other than their race and class, gives them a different message: 'In the eyes of society, you are not much at all.' This is the message they get every day when no celebrities are there and when their business partners have departed for their homes in the white suburbs. (1991, p. 81)

Real life human questions should be asked in schools. What would happen if students like Caulfield Holden in J. D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye talked about the struggle to find meaning in life? What a strange place school seems when it neglects such common human experiences as angst or ennui.

The question Who am I? must be encouraged, and as students explore their own interests and capacities, they should be advised and supported. . . . Someone has to care about the individual kid who is asking the question; someone has to be proud of the answer that is emerging. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 33)

2. "Take care of affiliative needs" (p. 99).

Here Noddings refers to prioritizing student-student and teacher-student affiliations. She suggests keeping students with one teacher for more than one year in the same location with the same group of peers. To care-for another takes time and repeated effort. It takes discovering the needs and aspirations of the other.

3. "Relax the impulse to control" and
4. "Get rid of program hierarchies" (p. 100).

The deleterious effects of control and hierarchy in curriculum, assessment, and school organization must be understood before Noddings' alternative takes on its full impact. The following digression to a landmark epistemological study by the sociologist Linda McNeil (1986) provides this background.

In Contradictions of Control, McNeil examines the conflicting goals constitutive of school knowledge, that of education and control. Her study concentrates on how high school organization, policy, and practice when focused on control, fails to educate. Noddings' suggestion to relax control takes on greater significance given McNeil's description of its deleterious effects. McNeil found that teachers are rewarded for maintaining a semblance of order in their classrooms through simplified curriculum, lectures, and worksheets. Inquiry or dialogue fails to restrain the behavior of students, interferes with the lock-step credentialing process, and is therefore discouraged. For example, in one classroom, researchers tabulated a total of twelve comments all semester. Through an ethnographic study of four high schools, McNeil discovered that the teachers taught to monitor behavior with defensive strategies, as opposed to educative strategies.

Teachers reducing content to rituals of lists, apologizing for assignments; students quietly engaging in minimum efforts for a course credit, doing the least to get by in school; defensive teaching, and its transformation of cultural content into 'school knowledge' – it all brings us back to the Gryphon of Alice's wonderland: 'That's the reason they are called lessons, because they lesson day to day.' (McNeil, 1986, p. 209)

Since *A Nation At Risk* (1983) documented widespread illiteracy and low scores on standardized tests, ranking the U.S. behind all other industrialized countries, policy makers, unaware of the causes, have in my view, instituted blind reform. Top-down reforms have further controlled the process of teacher and student certification and increased standardized curriculum, testing, and teacher paperwork. I argue the antithesis of what Noddings would propose has only led to an increase in the problems in schools. Why? The importance of McNeil's study lies in the fact that she provides a historical perspective on current pedagogical practices centered on control. These practices have remained largely unquestioned since their institution. She traces their roots to less than educative sources and shows how they relate to schooling's current state.

The historical development of the structures of schooling, especially the effects of industrialization, reveals economic rather than educational reasons. A lack of awareness concerning the history of the organizing structures of schools has often led to blind acceptance of inadequate practice. Policy, organization, and practices are so ingrained that educators have largely forgotten why the policies were instituted in the first place. Since they are taken-for-granted, educators lack the perspective necessary even to recognize these taken-for-granted practices as the outcome of choices they have made. Nor do reformers usually look to the practices when trying to reform our largely ineffective school systems. McNeil's focus on the deleterious effects of the history of control in schools shows the necessity of the far-reaching transformation that Noddings' reform might entail. In my view, McNeil's study may underscore the importance of Noddings' tasks to transform curriculum around the concept of care.

History of control in schools

At the turn of the century, schools were seen as places where most of the millions of new immigrants could be transformed into model citizens of the United States of

America. A student's character was already considered the responsibility of schools as well as that of church and family. If an immigrant's church and family did not hold the same values in esteem, then the schools were expected to "Americanize" the new citizens.

During this period, industrialists and social reformers alike turned to the school as the only universal institution, as the best organization for breaking down the home culture and replacing it with American values. In addition, the schools could train, sort, select, and certify able and willing workers. (McNeil, 1986, p. 5)

Not only were immigrants to be Americanized, but industry also awaited their labor. The industrial revolution demanded large numbers of workers; schools were instrumental in locating and preparing an adequate workforce. Simone Weil (1909-1943) reflects Noddings' position in her description of the ill effects such a focus has in a school.

The intelligence can only be led by desire. For there to be desire, there must be pleasure and joy in the work. The intelligence only grows and bears fruit in joy. The joy of learning is as indispensable in study as breathing is in running. Where it is lacking there are no real students, but only poor caricatures of apprentices who, at the end of their apprenticeship, will not even have a trade. (Weil, 1977, p. 68)

The Industrial Revolution would not lead educators to ask how to make students love or care for learning. Instead, their focus turned to productivity and efficiency, the goals of industry. A fascination with scientific management techniques ensued. The internal problems in schools at the turn of the nineteenth century, such as corruption around both funding and hiring, rendered the schools vulnerable. Enamored by the huge successes in industry regarding scientific management techniques, school leaders adopted the same models.

In the name of efficiency and honesty, they set in motion plans to place schools on cost-accounting models similar to those of industry, while ignoring the fact that industrialists were shifting to taxpayers the costs of sorting, selecting and tracking their future workers. (McNeil, 1986, p. 5)

Industrialization lent education its models of efficiency and productivity. Thus, educators did not adopt ideas such as "covering" discrete skills and information for educational

reasons. The prolific educational industry still seems to prey on this misconception. Just as factory work replaced handmade unique items with mass-produced cheaper versions, education prepackaged reproducible lessons and handouts for all children – the antithesis of Noddings’ reform. Instead of depth, the focus was on superficial breadth – on “covering” lots of information as quickly as possible – and curricular efficiency. Blocks of time and segmentation of subjects arose out of the business model. The segmentation of tasks and time in factory work became the model for organizing the curriculum. The origins of the curriculum planning models with their set goals and incremental sequenced segments of information fit social efficiency models. McNeil describes how the sociology of knowledge has been instrumental in understanding the organizing structures of school knowledge. She mentions Michael W. Apple and reproduction theory: schools reproduce and produce social class and class inequities, as opposed to their professed function of opening doors of possibility for all children.

Noddings’ suggestions for curriculum, assessment, and organization of schools respond to the root of the problem uncovered by McNeil. School knowledge must be connected to experience. Curriculum must respond to the actual and practical interests and needs of students. McNeil found that students who are unengaged in school tend to resist school. Noddings (2002a) concurs: “Without listening to what students are going through, what they really want to know, we treat them as units in a collection and force them into a mold they resist” (p. 30). Resistance begins the vicious circle depicted by McNeil, where teachers must resort ever more to measures of control and coercion. Noddings argues that if students knew the true purposes of curriculum (which necessitates the existence of real or practical purpose) there would be no need for coercion.

Noddings also questions the necessity of preparing unique individuals in exactly the same way. The emphases of education betray a narrow set of cultural values. For example, do we teach students to respect all forms of talent?

A moral policy, a defensible mission, for education recognizes a multiplicity of human capacities and interests. Instead of preparing everyone for college in the name of democracy and equality, schools should instill in students a respect for all forms of honest work done well. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 96)

Although not all students will use geometry, they will all engage in relationships and most will have children. Why doesn't the content of school address these life skills? "Almost all of us enter into intimate relationships, but schools largely ignore the centrality of such interests in our lives. And although most of us become parents, evidence suggests that we are not very good at parenting..." (Noddings, 2002a, p. 97). What if educators and students talked about, valued, and practiced caring for family, friends, the environment, and strangers? Do the Rose School teachers address such topics in their interviews?

I return here to Noddings' last two suggestions for curriculum:

5. "Give at least a part of each day to themes of care." (p. 100)

Here Noddings suggests educators focus on themes of caring at school. Schools could discuss spiritual matters, interpersonal relationships, and caring for the environment. Teachers and students would value and practice care in all its forms, care for each other, the world we live in, the human-made world, etc.

6. "Teach students that caring in every domain implies competence." (p. 101)

This practice of care would be applauded in school. If the structures of schooling do not appreciate or value caring, then a student's inclination toward it may be suppressed.

How do schools measure up to the aforementioned goals? Current epistemological studies examine structures of schooling in terms of Noddings' conception of care. Before undertaking my own study on teachers' narratives concerning relationships, I explored other studies on caring in schools.

3. Epistemological Studies of Care

I will examine nine epistemological studies. Epistemologists interested in care

have questioned how individuals in the world understand and define care. In one such study, “Caring: A Negotiated Process that Varies,” Barbara Tarlow (1996) examines the processes and concepts which eighty-four participants defined as caring. She found the participants in schools, as well as in families and in voluntary agencies. Tarlow deemed the relationships studied to be caring if they were described as “positive, satisfying, and valued” (p. 57). She located eight caring concepts in her ninety-minute interviews. They were “time; be there; talking; sensitivity; acting in the best interest of the other; caring as feeling; caring as doing; and reciprocity” (p. 57).

- **Defining the Term “Care”**

All the participants in Tarlow’s study mentioned the importance of *time* spent together as the prerequisite for caring acts to occur. To *be there* signified open willingness to present oneself to the cared-for. Open, truthful, recurrent, and unstructured *talking* served to construct and maintain relations. Participants described those who cared for them as *sensitive* to their concerns in the forms of “consistent attention, remembering past behavior, integrating impressions, making comparisons, weighing alternatives, and then responding” (p. 66). Tarlow found *acting in the best interest of the other* complex and dependent on recognition of the uniqueness of the cared-for. Its nature was fluid, always defined differently depending on various best interests. Subjects described *caring as a feeling* in terms of emotional experience involving intense sentiment. Tarlow found most conclusive her last two concepts: *doing* something for each other and vice versa, a *reciprocity*.

Caring was a process, and it was work. Caring could be routine, ordered, and predictable, or it could require creativity and innovation, spontaneity, and assertion. People constantly reassess needs, make decisions, and institute new ways and means of caring. (Tarlow, 1996, p. 76)

Caring to these participants meant a process continuing over time, involving support, “affective and instrumental interchanges embedded in reciprocal relationships” (p. 81). Tarlow’s study examines what her participants said care means. Their meanings confirm Noddings’ focus on feeling and the cared-for’s point of view. Since this study addressed various professionals, how would educators talk about care? The next study provides a more concentrated focus on participants involved in education and how they talk about care in their school context.

- **Interviewing Educators**

In “Understanding Caring in Context: Negotiating Borders and Barriers,” Jaci Webb et al (1993) describe the different ways parents, teachers, students, and researchers define care. They explore the major barriers which race, class, gender, and age present to a common understanding. After completing part of a larger ethnography about teachers trying to care against odds, they met with severe criticism from the teachers themselves. The teachers criticized the way they had focused on the poverty of the community surrounding the school:

What also was happening was that we, the outsiders, realized we needed to look beyond our naïve attempt at empathy to reciprocal communication across cultural borders. We learned the hard way that, no matter how hard you ‘try to care,’ if the caring is not received, the claim ‘they don’t care’ has some validity” (Noddings, 1992, p. 15). Our assumptions about what it meant to act on behalf of the community violated the process of reciprocity...” (Webb et al, 1993, p. 29)

In response to their initial negative reception, the researchers sought to reconfigure their attempt to “help.” They turned their attention to discovering the participants’ common understanding of caring. They found that all the various cultural groups at the school defined caring differently; caring was de-contextualized.

They all care, but these groups – influenced by personal biographies and cultural histories – do not necessarily see the caring in each others’ actions. . . . Caring is

thus decontextualized, and each group defines acting in the best interests of others without consideration of the others' perspectives and circumstances. (Webb et al, 1993, p. 44)

Webb et al concluded that borders between groups needed to be negotiated in order for caring to occur. This study shows the complexity and challenge in caring. It also clarifies the opportunity an understanding of the demands of care would bring to multi-cultural social groups. If to care for each other means negotiating borders and understanding the intentions of others, then care proves its critics wrong in its support of more than didactic relations. Noddings' care theory supports civic and social relations. If care is complex and challenging, but crucial, then how much more effective could teacher relations be if care were a priority in teacher education? The following two studies explore this issue.

- **Teacher Education**

This study addresses the importance of care in teacher education. Dwight Rogers and Jaci Webb (1993) in "The Ethic of Caring in Teacher Education," argue the need to reorganize teacher education around an ethic of care. They base this argument on findings from interviews with teachers and students who described good teachers as caring and good teaching as that involving acts of caring. Teachers and students defined caring as the promotion of dialogue, attention to needs and interests, and the creation of meaningful and engaging curriculum.

In their discussion of caring the teachers and students revealed that caring means much more than simply the 'caring for kids' often cited as teachers' primary motivation for choosing a career in teaching. It is more than regard or protection, more than affect alone: In the classrooms that we observed, caring is the basis for thoughtful and educational and moral decision making, and it requires action. (Rogers and Webb, 1993, p. 174)

Researchers argue that caring for students is not a simple directive. Although clearly a common goal of educators, it is nevertheless complex. This study confirms Noddings'

complex multi-dimensional conception of caring moral education. For teachers to understand how to care for students, to foster thoughtful moral choices, the following study claims it must be part of teacher education. However, when student teachers try to care, the necessity to control their class impedes their ability to do so.

- **A Student Teacher's Experience with Care**

H. James McLaughlin (1991), in "Reconciling Care and Control: Authority in Classroom Relationships," explores one student teacher's tension between the desire to care and the aspiration to control her classroom. McLaughlin chose a teacher named Kerry for her clear expression of the attempt to form and sustain relationships with her students. McLaughlin discovered that Kerry manifested caring in three primary ways: being authentic, developing relationships with students, and transforming curriculum to engage students.

Kerry found it challenging to enact caring in these ways due to temporal structures, spatial constraints, and social organization inherent in the student teacher process. Kerry lacked the time necessary in the classroom to fulfill her goals for developing relationships with students. The classroom was not hers to arrange; the desks were far away from each other, preventing students from speaking to each other. Thus, any of her curriculum ideas involving group work were impractical in the space. Also, Kerry had to answer to the expectations of both the supervising teachers' goals as well as the university's. "Acting spontaneously or attempting new activities runs the risk of students' getting out of control, and student teachers are well aware that classroom control is a major facet of their evaluation by others" (McLaughlin, 1991, p. 191). In terms of social structures, McLaughlin (1991) refers to tracking:

She (Kerry) had seen how the tracking system in her school relegated certain students to a prescribed curriculum and lockstep teaching methods, along with

a set of teacher expectations that influenced behavior. The cooperating teachers spoke of students as 'basics' and 'averages' and 'gifteds,' designations that carried academic and behavioral assumptions. (p. 191)

McLaughlin concludes that the conflicts between caring and control must be recognized and student teachers must reflect upon them. His findings reflect those that McNeil's study highlights. McLaughlin (1991) also raises the question of control in the classroom:

... Noddings' (1986) idea of fidelity in caring ... emphasizes the 'welfare of the other and that of the relation' (p. 497). Fidelity depends on the teachers' control of the spatial/temporal environment and on responses to social structures that shape relationships in the classroom. Ethical caring, the bedrock of fidelity, requires that teachers exert some control of the spatial/temporal environment and on responses to social structures that shape relationships in the classroom. (p.194)

McLaughlin (1991) refers to "legitimate authority" (p. 192). Student teachers need to establish positive social interactions; McLaughlin sees these interactions as partly a function of their ability to control students in the classroom. He deems control a necessary component to balance caring. His study suggests that control, like caring, is a complex concept. If caring is complex to consider implementing in one class, how would it be to implement it in a larger setting, such as an entire school or school system? How does it play out on an organizational, rather than an individual, scale?

• The Complexity of Care

In the following study, researchers juxtapose control with caring on a larger scale. In "Caring and Continuity: The Demise of Caring in an African-American Community, One Consequence of School Desegregation," Dempsey and Noblit (1996) show the importance of the cared-for's point of view. The demise of the Rougement School in 1975 as a result of desegregation left its community bereft. The African-American community school, Rougement, was determined short of meeting the school board's criteria for a "good" school. A court mandate ordered it closed. Dempsey and Noblit (1996) explain:

In the eyes of many in the Rougemont community, their school was a 'good' school, and desegregation eliminated not just their school, but their good school. In this case, *good* was defined as being embedded in the community and caring for the children and the community. But *good* in this sense was not good enough when the school in question was an African-American school. (p. 127)

Legally, *good* meant combined races and the academic standards set by the white school boards. Dempsey and Noblit found that the former members of the school considered many things about their school to be worthy of continuation.

Education was explicitly moral. You went to school to learn, but more important you went to school because it was symbolic of your commitment to your people. . . . (T)hese schools did not seem to pit learning content as being separate from having a relationship with the child. Caring about a child meant that teachers taught valued information and nurtured and sustained the child. (Dempsey and Noblit, 1996, p. 115)

Researchers found that the closing of the Rougemont School led to what community members describe as the dissolution of an entire community. In interviews, community members reported increased crime as well as feelings of fear and alienation. African-American teachers lost their jobs. Students reported being tracked into lower level classes where they lacked the support to succeed. The authors lead us to question: What if their lack of resources had been addressed without completely demolishing their entire learning community, including firing their teachers? Although churches maintained a vestige of continuity and connection, they represented differing beliefs and served to divide the community. The school, on the other hand, served to bring together the children and their parents in the community.

The authors argue that this case demonstrates the importance of caring in schools, for both the unity of a community and the academic success of students. Students described how they found more success in their prior school with the help of caring teachers. On this larger scale, researchers uncover the importance of the cared-for's perspective. In this scenario, if the ones-caring had attended to the real needs of the

cared-for, they would have considered preserving the caring community. Dempsey and Noblit (1996) conclude:

Caring seems to work in at least three levels. First and foremost, caring seems to nurture and sustain students. Rougemont students interpreted themselves as being developed via the school and the classrooms. Second, caring builds the interconnective tissue of community by promoting and valuing relationships ... Third, caring gave each person more than an identity and a set of relationships. It gave a sense of continuity. Identity was more than just a sense of one's self, it defined one as a part of a larger cultural and historic movement. (p. 127)

Researchers concluded, "schools must be part of communities to be successful" (p. 127).

The school board failed to ask what the African-American educators did that *worked*.

What would African-American educators have said about their school? In the next study, researchers attempt to provide African-American educators with an opportunity to express what they considered "good" about their school.

· **Voices of Educators**

In "Interpersonal Caring in the 'Good' Segregated Schooling of African-American Children: Evidence from the Case of Caswell County Training School," Emilie V. Siddle Walker (1996) seeks to restore a voice to those African-American educators whose schools were determined inadequate even though they considered them "good." Walker does not mean to suggest re-segregation, only to point to the opportunity to learn from what happened in these schools that worked. "Their [students] dominant memories in conversations about their former schooling usually speak to the extent to which they felt cared about, by a teacher, teachers, or the principal" (Walker, 1996, p. 143). She corroborates the importance of caring in schools and the lack of recognition of the positive aspects of schooling in African-American schools. Walker's retrospective recounting shows elements of caring extant in schools closed under desegregation laws.

(It may be possible that the African-American teachers and principals who taught students in oppressive circumstances may yet have much to teach as they remind current educators of the importance of building self-esteem, of placing high expectations, and of being willing to provide individual attention to students. (Walker, 1996, p. 144)

Perhaps most importantly, the narratives Walker describes convey how the teachers' caring helped the students succeed. For example, under-performing students were spoken to personally. Frequent counseling sessions between principals and teachers encouraged students to talk about what personal issues made school hard for them. Teachers, parents, and students described working on the issues together. Students cited teachers and principals as the reasons students believed they could go on to finish high school or college. In one situation, a student described how a teacher's financial support allowed him to escape factory work for college. Theory based on caring provides the structure and language to legitimate narratives descriptive of caring. Care theory also, in the study that follows, provides a way to measure when claims to care fall short.

- **Community School**

Although the prior two schools were closed and considered unworthy, another highly respected school proved only an outward reputation of caring. Jane A. Van Galen (1993), in the study, "Caring in Community: The Limitations of Compassion in Facilitating Diversity," discovered that the requisites of caring reveal limitations at the Midwestern Catholic school St. Tarsisius High. In this study, concepts of community and caring come into question. Extensive interviews showed that the teachers spoke often about their willingness to work individually with students on academic tasks, to attend extra-curricular activities, and to joke with students. The observers found, however, that teachers were twice as likely to help white male students as they were to help any other group. Most teachers attended boys' sports consistently, while very few attended girls'

sports. Teachers' jokes were often sexist when directed at women and gender-neutral when directed at boys. Van Galen (1993) describes:

Many female and minority students of St. T.'s are learning their roles as observers and supporters of caring directed at others, while white male students are learning of their entitlement to the care of their teachers and peers. . . . The teachers at St. Tarsisius, for example, may want to question why they and their students do not wonder whether they need to learn more about the 'realities of the others' so that they would be able to care more completely for students who are from backgrounds different from their own. . . . I observed for example, discussions of racism in religion and social studies classes, but these discussions were usually centered around abstract situations in different times and places. (p. 163)

Van Galen concludes that St. Tarsisius shows the need for school reform, for teachers to examine what they mean by caring. She notes that teachers do not often think of care as necessitating empowerment or emancipation. Van Galen (1993) states:

The political, curricular and structural changes that must be made if schools are to serve all children well might come to be understood by teachers and researchers as necessary and logical extension of teachers' relational work with students. Framing politically grounded reforms within the understanding that reform will inevitably be implemented in the contexts of relationships that teachers build with their students suggests many questions for teachers and scholars to consider together. (p. 165)

Van Galen shows how discourse over caring hides the discriminatory treatment of female and minority students. A truly relational view of caring demands that it meets the needs of all students, not only non-minority male students. What would distinguish such a school? What characterizes a school that cares across race, class, and gender?

• Caring in an Urban School

In "Caring in One Urban High School: Thoughts on the Interplay Among Race, Class, and Gender," Lynn G. Beck and Rebecca L. Newman (1996) researched Wilson High School, a large urban high school in Los Angeles. "Wilson High School has the reputation in the Los Angeles Unified School District of serving the poorest students from

the city's poorest neighborhoods" (Beck and Newman, 1996, p. 181). Beck and Newman (1996) chose this site serving housing projects associated with gangs, drugs, and violence since students, teachers, and administrators "indicated that they felt safe and happy" (p. 173). Researchers considered it a site to explore caring across cultural differences.

We discuss the fact that the adults we saw genuinely caring for students seemed to hold agency, not deficiency, models of these youngsters. Second, we explore the ways educators interacted with students in a highly personal manner, recognizing that young people had feelings, hopes, thoughts, and dreams just as they, themselves, did, and that these needed to be acknowledged and respected. (Beck and Newman, 1996, p. 186)

Beck and Newman noted countless examples of caring which transcended race, class, and gender. Students, administrators and faculty made concerted efforts to develop a multiracial community. For example, they had a school rock band with multi-ethnic performers and music. Administration demonstrated care for student points of view. For example, the school board's policy involving metal detectors was opened to an all-school dialogue. The students themselves came up with their own alternatives to make Wilson a safer place. Beck and Newman conclude:

It may be that one of the keys to the development of this kind of atmosphere lies in the foundational beliefs and assumptions of many who work at Wilson. . . . They view students, parents, and persons working and living in the Watts neighborhood as partners – partners who work with them to create a genuine community in this urban setting – even as they, themselves, attempt to teach the young people they serve. (p. 196)

The authors found teachers and administrators viewed the cared-for in their community as "partners." Partnering suggests a valuing of their relationships. What would such partnering look like in a classroom between teachers?

- **Care and Empowerment**

The following study examines such a partnering of teachers in one classroom.

In "Caring as Empowerment: School Collaboration and Community Agency," Mercado and members of the Bronx Middle School Collaborative (1993), detail the study of a collaboration between a middle school class, their teacher, and a professor. Marceline Torres, middle school teacher, invited Latina professor, Carmen J. Mercado, into her classroom of underprivileged and mostly Latino students on a weekly basis to engage her sixth graders in collaborative research. Mercado and Torres (1993) describe how their activities led to empowerment and affirmation for Latino and Afro-Caribbean-American students.

We (Torres and Mercado) believe that it is our way of relating to one another that is an important influence on students' academic accomplishments. Because students perceive that we care about them as individuals, they are willing 'to put more effort into their work,' to accomplish what many consider to be beyond their capabilities. However, in the process of engaging in these experiences, their capacity to care is also nurtured and developed. (p. 201)

Mercado describes a collaborative approach to pedagogy where students learn to use ethnographic procedures: devising a question for research, interviewing, note taking, and reflection. They work in groups and assess themselves using portfolios. Students choose their own questions for research and often explore an element of their own lives. They ask questions about their experience, such as: why are there homeless people? Although the teachers do not talk explicitly of care to their students, one graduate of Torres' class named Angel, returned to mentor new students and in so doing, explained to the class that research helped him to care. Mercado (1993) discusses Angel:

(A)s Angel suggests, just as we learn to care when others care for us, we also stop caring when we do not feel that others care... Through their research activities, students have made us aware that insensitivity to the needs of others is a serious problem in their community as it is in society in general. (p. 212)

In gaining awareness of the inequities in the often un-caring world in which this student lives, researchers describe how he learned to care. Mercado and Torres suggest their efforts to care led to increased academic participation and success. It should be noted

that for Noddings, caring is not viewed as an instrumental good, one that promotes other educational goods. In general, the aforementioned studies underscore the importance, complexity, and applicability of Noddings' theory of care. They point to the importance of examining teachers' points of view, the purpose for the participatory methods of this study of relationships and caring in the context of Rose School.

4. Conclusion

The theoretical basis of Noddings' ethic of care, caring moral education and curriculum, as well as epistemological studies based on care reveal the necessity of a perspective grounded in a pragmatic and feminist ethic of care. As pragmatism informs, for an ethic of care to have salience, it must make sense. Van Galen (1996) states:

Many questions remain as to how teachers define caring, how administrators, students, and teachers come to identify their relationships with one another as being part of a more encompassing 'community'; and how the relational facets of teaching and learning contribute to school success. More emic work is needed to better understand schools in which the norms of 'caring shape the planning of, reflection upon, and legitimation of school practices. (p. 148)

These questions on caring demand more exploration studies in schools. The schools in the aforementioned studies are bound by statute and legislation, which dictate curriculum goals and teacher accountability. In my study I examine what the Rose School teachers said about fostering relationships when they were not legislated by outside or unsympathetic forces. The following study purports to examine the narrative reports about relationships in one small private school.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

This project is a case study of one small private school called Rose School that claims a priority on the growth and preservation of relationships between all of its members. I examine two sources of data: (1) recorded and transcribed in-depth ninety-minute interviews with the full time teachers, as well as specialty teachers, and (2) informal publications the school has sent to parents or used for parents' nights or workshops. The seven teachers described how they foster relationships at school and how they see themselves treating students well. The teachers took part in the process not only in narrating responses, but also reading the transcribed conversations, providing feedback and suggesting revisions on all transcripts, analyses, and findings. Here follows a description of my site, role as a researcher, interview questions, intentions and methods, methods of analysis, and purposes.

A. Site for Research

The Rose School comprises kindergarten through fifth grades. All of the approximately fifty students attend multiage classrooms, K - 1st, 2nd - 3rd, and 4th - 5th grades. I interviewed five fulltime classroom teachers: Rachel Weinburg, Helena Smith, Damon Conner, Cynthia Hanes, Maria Davis and two specialty instructors: Oliver Grant for the theater program and Molly Greene for dance. When I proposed the idea to explore the school as a case study, I met with unanimous acceptance and support from the faculty. The Rose School teachers told of both their keen interest and involvement in the social life of the school. Their professed priority adds an interesting dimension to these teachers' descriptions in that they intend to develop and nurture bonds among their students and

each other. Although relations are a main concern, the faculty at this school does not know the theory of Nel Noddings. I will compare and contrast their narratives with her theory. In what ways does teacher discourse reflect or differ from Noddings' ethic of care and how this discourse informs moral education?

B. Research Question

How do teachers describe how they develop and foster relationships in one private school? What do their narratives show when compared to Nel Noddings' theory of moral education based on an ethic of care: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation? This phenomenological investigation interprets and explains how teachers talk about their school-based experiences of relationships. Do their narrations imply new theoretical consideration in the area of moral education? This research explores how the teachers' descriptions compare to Noddings' ethic of care and caring moral education. Care's theoretical background, its conceptualization, and its application to moral education ground this exploration.

C. Myself in the Research

Nel Noddings directed me to the work of L. M. Antony and C. Witt in A Mind of One's Own (1993) and M. M. Brabeck's Practicing Feminist Ethics in Psychology (1989) when I wrote to her concerning this project. These volumes on feminist epistemology, as well as Corrine Glesne's guide, Becoming Qualitative Researchers (1999), on qualitative research inform my methods. As both feminist and qualitative research methods necessitate, I considered my role as it influenced the process. From a feminist perspective, I recognize that bias is inevitable. I agree with Antony and Witt that my own perspective and experience affect my research. Research gains meaning from clear and thorough explanation of biases.

A naturalized approach to knowledge, because it requires us to give up *neutrality* as an epistemic ideal, also requires us to take a different attitude toward bias. We know that human knowledge requires biases ... (Antony and Witt, 1993, p. 215)

Antony and Witt continue to explain that biases can only be useful if they support us in our search for the truth. “(B)ias are good when and to the extent that they facilitate the gathering of knowledge – that is, when they lead us to the truth.” (Antony and Witt, 1993, p. 215). My bias includes a compassionate stance towards Noddings’ ethic of care and a respect for the sincerity of the narratives of teachers immersed in practice. I use most parallels, disparities, and patterns that emerge to support, rather than negate either Noddings’ theory or the critical role played by practice in fostering relationships. Disparity between practice and theory need not render either theory or these teacher’s experiences misguided or wrong. Instead it may point to the necessity of further communication between practitioners and theorists.

Monitoring subjectivity is not synonymous with controlling for subjectivity, in the sense of trying to keep it out of your work. When you monitor your subjectivity, you increase your awareness of the ways it might distort, but you also increase your awareness of its virtuous capacity. You learn more about your own values, attitudes, beliefs, interests, and needs. You learn that your subjectivity is the basis for the story that you are able to tell. It is the strength on which you build. It makes you who you are as a person and as a researcher, equipping you with the perspectives and insights that shape all that you do as researcher, from the selection of topic clear through to the emphasis you make in your writing. (Glesne, 1999, p. 109)

Not only do my biases involve prior experience with theory, but also with my interviewees since I have taught at Rose School for the last eight years. As a participant-researcher, I am aware of the limitations that might arise from my own involvement in the school. “Limitations are consistent with the always partial state of knowing in social research, and elucidating your limitations helps readers know how they should read and interpret your work” (Glesne, 1999, p. 152). I am not in a position to critique what my colleagues do, although I may instigate their own process of reflection. Supporting my

colleagues does not mean agreeing or failing to pinpoint possible weaknesses in school structure, policy, or practice. Glesne suggests that feminist research also recognizes practitioner involvement in the “field:”

The identified problems and strengths of these modes (critical, feminist, and action research) suggest that much potential lies in the concept of practitioners (e.g., teachers, nurses, social workers) as researchers who investigate, with others, their own ‘backyard.’ (Glesne, 1999, p. 14)

It will not do to neglect the very theory I explored in my own relationships with participants. “Feminist researchers ask questions of the role power and relationship play not only at a societal level, but also at the level between researcher and researched” (Glesne, 1999, p. 13). I consider myself to be working with, rather than on, my subjects.

(T)he research process can be viewed as a series of decisions, from the conceptualization of the problem to empowerment of those who are affected by the use of the results. Feminist ethics can inform each of those decisions. Science would be far better if researchers examined the activity that goes into their scientific knowledge base, the use of that knowledge base, and the treatment of humans (and animals) along the way. (Brabeck, 2000, p. 102)

As a feminist researcher, coming from a standpoint of care theory, my bias is towards supporting, valuing, and seeking to understand the teachers’ narratives. It will be important not to value the opinions of theorists above those of teachers and vice versa. I consider myself more as the facilitator of a dialogue with the responsibility of helping the reader understand all the interlocutors, rather than a judge clarifying which party may be more accurate than another in her or his views.

D. Interviews: Teacher Narratives

I have chosen this topic based on my previous experience with the teachers at this school. I undertook this study with the assumptions that each participant’s perspective informs other teachers, myself and care theorists as to how these teachers described the attempt to create relationships in school. Although I did assume they had something

to share, I did not assume that the content of that sharing is completely accurate. Each person interprets her or his experience through her or his conceptual lenses.

Often, the hazard is that your research is on a topic about which you may know a great deal through study and personal experience. What you know is the basis for the assumptions that preclude you from seeking explanations and that shut down your depth-probe inclinations. If you second guess your respondents, then you forego the chance to say, 'Tell me more.' (Glesne, 1999, p. 83)

I recognized my tendency to anticipate what my interviewees might answer; therefore, I questioned and patiently awaited my participant's answer. I intended to model comfort with silence and to reflect only encouragement and support for all responses. Since I took notes, as well as audio-recorded the sessions, I underscored the importance of interviewees' narrations. I composed the following list of open-ended questions without reference to Noddings' specific terminology, so as not to narrow or lead the teachers' responses to one understanding of caring. The teachers might have had many ways of thinking about relationships. I afforded each interviewee equal opportunity to respond to each question, often adding the comment, "tell me more."

1. Interview Questions

- 1) How/why did you decide to teach at this school?
- 2) I want to explore how you see yourself treating students well. In your experience, in what ways do you see the development of relationships embedded in school life?
- 3) What do you notice about student teacher relationships? Teacher to teacher?
Student to student? Student to parent?
- 4) Do you try to foster an environment in which relationships develop? If so, how do you do it?
- 5) Describe what role you see yourself having in these relationships.
- 6) What kinds of things do you talk about with children? Describe a conversation you've had with a student.

- 7) Are there special times during the day when it's appropriate for students to speak to each other? What times?
- 8) What do you do when a student struggles with schoolwork? Friends? Problems at home? What if one student demands more attention than others do?
- 9) Have you ever had an argument with another teacher or a student at school? What happened?
- 10) Can you describe how you help students during class?
- 11) Describe a situation in which one student did not understand something in class.
- 12) Describe a situation in which a student became upset at school.
- 13) What is the most important thing you teach at your school?
- 14) Aside from academic subjects are you teaching anything else? What else are you teaching and how?

The awareness that I found the teachers' comments worthy of research seemed to foster acceptance and trust in my good will.

Research friendships flourish more easily in critical and feminist research where researchers adopt an ethic of advocacy on behalf of research participants. Such researchers have been instrumental in disputing the presumed necessary distancing of more traditional research: 'Traditionalists tended to eschew 'politics,' to avoid 'total immersion,' and to be wary of 'going native,' all of which, in contrast, are elements of feminist methods.' (Glesne, 1999, p. 103)

Glesne mentions several drawbacks of friendship within sampling that demand attention. She points out that the researcher's likes and dislikes may lead to over-identification with particular members of the study. I chose to counteract this tendency by interviewing every single teacher, even the specialty teachers with whom I have less contact. I planned meetings in advance to fit with participants' after-school schedules and went to their own classrooms to be in their environments at a time comfortable for them. I attempted to give equal response time to all the teachers. I also allowed any of the participants to examine my transcriptions to clarify or edit their comments after seeing them in print or reflecting on their responses over time.

Glesne mentions another tendency among familiar researchers and participants to try to agree with one another. In order to ensure that this did not occur, I assured interviewees that I sought their particular and unique way of answering my questions. I reflected genuine pleasure with any response to my questions, not just responses I might approve of or have devised myself. I suspended any judgment and positioned myself as someone learning from the interviewee's point of view. This was not a challenge; after having labored over my questions, I was thrilled that anyone would agree to answer them.

Casting yourself as a learner, correspondingly casts the respondent as a teacher. For many, this is a flattering role that enhances the respondent's satisfaction with being interviewed. And when you are a learner, you get taught. (Glesne, 1999, p. 84)

I assured interviewees of the absence of any wrong or right way to answer any of the questions. Seeking to illicit more responses, I did not agree or disagree with participants. I assured my interviewees that I was in no hurry, and demonstrated this with comfort during silences.

As researcher you are an interested, emotional person who, most likely, has an opinion on the topic into which you are inquiring. But as researcher, you want to learn the respondents' beliefs, experiences, and views rather than to persuade them of your perspective. . . . What you, as researcher, do not ordinarily communicate, is that you also share (or do not share) these meanings and feelings. For to do so would enable your respondents to shape their comments in reaction to you. (Glesne, 1999, p. 85)

In relation to Feminist research, I did not attempt to distance myself in any false professional manner from my interviewees. Although non-judgment and authenticity may seem at odds, they have not been mutually exclusive in this research. As a researcher, I found myself quite satisfied with the willingness of interviewees to sit and answer my questions in any way they saw fit. For without their participation I had nothing to analyze. Two of the full-time teachers, Rachel and Helena, have taught for over thirty years and anyone willing to lend an ear might learn from their experiences. Two teachers, Cynthia

and Maria, in their first few years of experience lent exuberance and attention to each new moment in their responses. Damon's background as a scientist and mathematician renders him a careful logician. Molly and Oliver are both artists whose backgrounds at various schools provide them with a unique perspective. In general, schoolteachers are not often listened to as experts and yet I believe they have much to add to theory. Glesne refers to Marlene Pugach's suggestions:

She suggests that we interact with openness, honesty, and respect; not with the masks that rapport can provide or with the walls of professional distancing. In effect, Marleen urges us to remain reflexive, but to be fully authentic in interactions and to honor the consequences of acting with genuineness. (Glesne, 1999, p. 105)

Glesne asks researchers to consider how participants would react to their analyses, to watch for paternalistic interpretation. I remained faithful to the data and resisted the temptation to "fit" them into the mold that theory provides.

The final limitation of friendship in the sampling that Glesne addresses is overconfidence in my interpretations of what participants explained in interviews. The availability of my drafts and analyses of interviews to all, rather than some, of the interviewees, provided a chance to correct any misunderstanding. "By sharing working drafts, both researcher and researched may grow in their interpretations of the phenomena around them" (Glesne, 1999, p. 152). The interviewees critiqued my assertions regarding the identification of patterns, connections, and descriptions. "To promote trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest a procedure for enlisting an outsider to 'audit' fieldwork notes and subsequent analysis and interpretations" (Glesne, 1999, p.152). An outside perspective supported me in developing clear comparisons, codes, and conclusions.

Friendship means mutual liking and ... You trust your friends; even more, you like them and will do things for them that you would not do for others. . . . You do not need to like or to be liked by your others (participants), although your work will be even more rewarding if mutual liking occurs" (Glesne, 1999, p. 96).

This practice of involving teachers in my work not only increases the validity of my findings, but also fosters a wider use. “When your colleagues also believe this (the analysis), they use your work in the ways that trusted outcomes can be used – to confirm, expand, and inform their own work – and thereby contribute to the accumulative nature of knowledge (Glesne, 1999, p. 151).”

E. Method of Analysis

The Rose School teachers’ narratives were analyzed in relation to Noddings’ dimensions of caring in moral education. I identified responses in relation to modeling, practice, dialogue and confirmation. When considering Noddings’ theory and the extent to which teacher discourse related to her schema, I discovered that comments may relate interchangeably to caring-for and caring-about. For example, teachers conceive of curriculum plans for students they have not met and therefore care on the level of caring-about. However, when they manifest these plans they use their methods and content towards the development of relationships on a one-to-one level. Thus, although I kept the overarching concepts of caring-for or caring-about always in mind, I related the discourse to the categories of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation.

I distinguished between whether or not the teachers described confirmation or modeling, for example. The word dialogue itself and, its synonyms, such as discourse, conversation, or talking, as well as reflections of some part of Noddings’ definition (as I understand it) arose in conversations about developing and fostering relationships. In interviews, the Rose School teachers told of traditions in which all the teachers participate. If one teacher explained a subject in detail, covering all the elements mentioned by other teachers and more, then I used his or her explanation as representative of what went on at the school. When one teacher’s comments focused more comprehensively on a particular subject, I included her or his narrative.

Here follows a review of the categories:

- *Modeling* involves how a teacher chooses to act and the concurrent impact his or her behavior has on students.
- Noddings claims that students need to *practice* caring for others. Caring must find expression in their daily acts.
- Noddings locates three different kinds of *dialogue* important for moral education: formal, immortal, and informal. Specific rules or guidelines characterize *Formal dialogue*. *Immortal dialogue* concerns existential questions as well as their traditional religious and philosophical treatments. Noddings deems *informal dialogue*, time spent in unguided conversation about any subject, the most important for moral education.
- When a teacher *confirms* a student, he or she supports his or her very best intentions.

F. Purpose

I sought to gain an understanding of how these teachers build relationships and how their practices relate to Nel Noddings' ethic of care as it informs moral education through her categories of modeling, practice, dialogue, and confirmation. These teachers intend to build strong and loving relationships between all the members of their school community. How do they try to do so? Do their attempts resemble anything like modeling, practice, dialogue, and confirmation, the categories that Noddings asserts for a caring moral education? Do teachers use similar terminology? Do they use it in a parallel or divergent way? The relationships between the teachers' perspectives and practices and current theory may spur a dialogue. Dialogue among teachers may lead not only to a possible expansion of the repertoire of practices, but also to potentially deeper reflection and development of theory.

One of the challenges of teaching is that teachers can face quite solitary work lives. This project attends to the hidden voices of teachers and invites them to participate in a dialogue. By involving them in a larger forum, it values their perspectives. Furthermore, a philosopher of education, such as Noddings, must draw from and meet the real experience and needs of teachers. Research may uncover where misconceptions arise, allow philosophers to meet practitioners in these moments and together come to helpful understandings. Research may uncover gems hidden in isolated classrooms and reveal them to theorists who may in turn convey them to many other practitioners.

In the following chapter on findings, the data is organized into the categories of modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation. Although I did refer to and cite theory, the issue of whether or not the teachers' voices concur with theory is postponed until chapter three on implications.

CHAPTER THREE

FINDINGS

As suggested by the literature, the Rose School teachers I interviewed talked about the development and maintenance of relationships in terms of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. However, these teachers' conceptions do not directly parallel Noddings' schema. The names of the categories themselves, their synonyms, or reflections of some part of Noddings' definitions (as I understood them) for the categories arose in interviews. Yet the teachers referred to their own experience in school. Thus, the categories served as a framework to analyze the teachers' narratives. This chapter focuses on understanding what the teachers' self-described experiences contribute to understanding these concepts and theory. Although at times I refer to Noddings' theory, I postpone the overall issue of comparison to highlight the voices of teachers.

A. Modeling

The Rose School teachers discussed their aspirations, relationships with their colleagues, and reflections on their own personal growth and learning as important features of being models. Their responses to the following questions reflected their understanding of what it means to them to model ways of being that support relationships at school.

- 1) How/why did you decide to teach at this school?
- 2) I want to explore how you see yourself treating students well. In your experience, in what ways do you see the development of relationships embedded in school life?
- 3) What do you notice about student and teacher relationships?
- 4) Do you try to foster an environment in which relationships develop? If so, how do you do it?
- 5) Describe what role you see yourself having in these relationships.

The teachers all said that they aspire to embody differing ideals to foster relationships at school. Their behavior, they reported, influences the development of teacher-to-teacher, teacher-to-student, and student-to-student relationships. Collegial relationships play a central part in their conception of their role as models. They said they aspire especially to be learners on a social as well as an academic level. Three ideas emerged as central in the teachers' reflections on modeling: ways of being, collegiality, and reflection.

1. Ways of Being

When the teachers talked about fostering relationships, they stressed the importance of their own behavior. Although their aspirations differ, these teachers seek to act in whatever ways they hope their students will learn from, since they see students as seeking to emulate their teachers. Rachel, a long-time second and third grade teacher – as well as teacher mentor – referred to teachers as influential models for student learning when she responded to the question: “Describe what role you see yourself having in these (student-to-teacher and student-to-student) relationships.”

Well, everything about a teacher, the student learns from. Students learn from how cheerful a human being the teacher is, how enthusiastic about anything and everything, how patient or impatient, how tenacious, how willing to live with ambiguity, how steady and how consistent in response to the wide variety of behavior and situations that happen during the day.

All of those things, a sense of the absurd, a ready laugh, the ability to entertain many perspectives, the quick recognition of mistakes, the lack of attachment to being right, flexibility, trustworthiness.

Do I as the teacher re-negotiate things when they change? Do I have boundaries? Can students trust me? Everything I do has an effect on students. A student has to survive socially, mentally, and physically in the environment that is controlled by the adult. All of my behaviors impact students and how they negotiate their relationship with others in the classroom and with me.

Rachel deemed every moment of interaction as meaningful in a student's experience at school. Thus, according to Rachel, the teachers not only act in ways that students may emulate, but also the teachers set standards for norms of success or failure, and behavior in general, as the sole adults in the room where students try to "survive socially, mentally, and physically." For example, a teacher may conceive of, lead, and grade activity in the classroom. She said that a student has to negotiate how to behave in a way acceptable to her or his teacher. She mentioned the importance of a teacher's "steadiness and consistency." In light of a teacher's "control" in a classroom fair use of that authority may foster trust. Rachel mentioned cheerfulness, enthusiasm, patience, tenacity, willingness, consistency, humor, flexibility, humility, and trustworthiness as important qualities by which students are in some way influenced. She did not seem to suggest that a teacher can instill these qualities in a student, or that they are possessions one can bestow on students. Instead patience in a teacher, for example, constitutes part of the overall socialization occurring in the student's environment.

The dance teacher, Molly, provided her perception of the overall school environment in terms of relationships. She responded to the question, "What do you notice about student and teacher relationships?"

Being a specialty teacher who teaches in two schools, I notice how generally kind 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. It's like a big family and the kids learn to be patient with their brothers and sisters.

Molly said that students mirror the behavior of their teachers. If so, then Noddings' (2002b) statement seems to apply here: "We can cultivate moral sentiments such as sympathy, concern, and joy in our relations directly by displaying them ourselves" (p. 214). The students may have learned to acknowledge and comfort each other through their teacher's modeling and encouragement.

Given these teachers' beliefs concerning their influence on students, in their discourse they focused on aspirations. For example, the math and science teacher, Damon, when asked, "How do you see yourself treating students well?" talked about the ways he wants to be with students:

I listen, listen, listen, and practice patience. I should be mature in that I try to relate to realities other than my own.

Damon's expectations and aspirations for himself as a teacher are to aspire to listen patiently to students and attempt to relate to them as unique individuals. Furthermore, maturity for him is the important capacity to relate to the point of view of others, in this case, his students.

In my interviews, the teachers emphasized the importance of ways of being in their roles as models, although all focus on different ideals, such as caring for students when hurt, being trustworthy or patient. Noddings (2002a) also asserts the importance of valuing different traits: "(Care theorists) believe that people want different outcomes, treasure different values and express different needs" (p. 149). The teachers' responses demonstrate agreement over their influence on the nature of students' relationships. The teachers described modeling attending to their students, listening to their students, and relating to others' points of view. In their explanations of these ways of being in their relationships, the teachers also noted their colleagues.

2. Collegial Friendship

The teachers described themselves as models for their students' relationships in interactions with faculty. They claimed that students learn from their teachers' interactions. They said their own faculty relationships exemplify social patterns such as a warm or cold reception or a respectful or disrespectful tone – patterns that reflect the many possibilities of human exchange. The teachers drew parallels between the tenor of

their own relationships as a faculty to the relationships which students develop at their school. These teachers said that their ability to communicate, willingness to include and attend to one another, cooperation, and collaboration can foster similar patterns of behavior and similar attitudes in their students.

Math and science teacher, Damon, gave an example of the most general and broad effects of collegiality on student's relationships. When asked, "In what ways do you see the development of relationships embedded in school life?" Damon compared the influence of faculty relationships on student relationships to that of students' parents' marriages. He told a story of two contrasting sets of faculty relationships and how they affected his own experience in graduate school.

I think one of the things that help the kids make friends at this school is that the teachers get along with each other and it creates a safety and a support for them, just like a harmonious marriage does. When the people they rely on get along themselves, then I notice they find it easier to feel safe and happy. When I was in college in computer science and math, the math department was like a warm homey family with laughter and fun. There was this certainty and awareness that you really could learn math. It was light and upbeat. On the other hand, the computer science department was cold and disjointed and even unorganized. I felt a little alienated from the other students.

There was more of a sense of being separate from the teachers. The order of the classes was unclear and I mentioned this. A faculty member said the computer science faculty came up against philosophical disagreements and gave up working together. They weren't clear about how they wanted the department to be, whereas the math professors did get along and were in agreement and did laugh.

I think the fact that the Rose School faculty gets along is one of the reasons I think the kids get along. We believe that we teach who we are, not just math or science; Therefore, what happens between teachers is important. Whether or not I'm happy at school becomes important. I once got in an argument with another teacher and we both realized that we wouldn't have this disagreement festering indefinitely. For the sake of the children, we worked it out. It was interesting that what was most important to me was working it out for the sake of the students. I thought it would have the worst effect on them.

Damon described how these teachers resolved their disagreement for their students. He claimed the teachers consider camaraderie so important that they put aside their disagreement or came to some understanding for their students' well-being. Damon said that the lack of camaraderie in his former math department's faculty led to his increased feeling of distance from other students. Thus, he perceives faculty collegiality as instrumental in fostering a sense of togetherness or closeness among students. Damon's harmonious relations with his colleagues may create an atmosphere at the school in which students can experience an increased level of contentment, safety, and closeness.

How do teachers foster collegiality so important to relationships? They described many opportunities throughout the day to communicate and spend time together. Second and third grade teacher, Rachel, responded to my question, "What do you notice about teacher-to-teacher relationships?"

The children see us as a faculty laughing with one another, vacuuming and cleaning with one another, and that's real cooperation, caring, friendship, and collegiality. We have an attitude that depends on focusing on each other's strengths ... we don't gossip in the faculty room. We don't speak in sarcastic ways about students or each other and that's a huge priority since it goes against all our aims.

There are no false hierarchies among the faculty and I am mentor teacher for our first grade teacher this year and I have been a mentor teacher for many years. The most fun about it is that I get to learn who these people are and develop a friendship with them and their ideas are refreshing and innovative and wonderful and very quickly we have an easy give and take. I don't need to accentuate my authority. My experience speaks for itself and our relationships mean more than any other aspect of their learning. It's exactly the same with the children.

Rachel said that her students see the faculty "laughing" and "cleaning" together. She referred to their "real cooperation, caring, friendship, and collegiality." Rachel claimed she considers her relationships more important than her role.

In general, these teachers value communication among the staff. First year kindergarten teacher, Cynthia, when asked the same question concerning "what she notices about teacher-to-teacher relationships," stated:

Each week, we have a meeting all together to discuss everything from curriculum to dealing with particular students or parents. Besides that, Rachel and Nicole are always available to me – and we meet once a week too. This school would not be what it is without the amazing camaraderie we have. The veteran teachers have taken Maria and I under their wings from the beginning, but without an ounce of condescension. I find that remarkable in any profession.

Cynthia described frequent meetings, camaraderie, and a lack of condescension among the teachers. In response to this question concerning the teachers' relationships at this school, math and science teacher, Damon, added:

The students see me appreciate other teachers. We communicate with each other and never with a student against a teacher to the student. We may voice disagreements in private, but not criticize a teacher to a student.

Rather than critique one another in front of students, Damon said he finds it important for his students to see their teachers include, converse, and learn from each other's differing opinions. Can a teacher ask a student to include another friend in his or her game if the teacher doesn't welcome other teachers in his or her classroom? If a teacher did make such a request, would it be met?

First grade teacher, Maria, added another angle to the effects of collegiality in her response concerning teacher-to-teacher relationships:

We are careful to include each other when we go for tea or something fun. I think when you ask someone else, like a student in your class, to do something, you need to be able to do it too, or have tried and know how hard it is.

Maria implied that the teachers' requests would lack credence if they have not tried to value others over their own convenience. She did not suggest the teachers must be perfect at including one another, only that they be aware enough to "have tried and know how hard it is." Noddings (1984) writes: "The ones-caring for a child need not be perfect nor unfailingly patient and gentle. Indeed, it is assumed we cannot be" (p. 121). The issue, these teachers explained, and I relate in the next section, becomes their ability to learn from their mistakes through reflection.

The Rose School teachers consider collegiality in general as influential in fostering harmonious relationships at school. The subject of collegial relationships emerged in responses to questions about relationships in school life in general and among teachers. The teachers claimed that “frequent meetings” and an attitude of “appreciation” rather than criticism fosters harmony in faculty relationships. The teachers mentioned an underlying attitude of support, respect, and admiration for each other. To remain aware of their behavior and its effect on others, these teachers said they must reflect on their actions toward becoming increasingly expressive of the qualities to which they aspire. Self-awareness and self-transformation is another central theme in the teachers’ discussion of modeling.

3. Reflection

Another characteristic of these teachers’ descriptions of modeling is reflection on their own learning. The teachers asserted the importance of continuing to learn from their experience as teachers, to be increasingly expressive of the very qualities that they consider relevant to their roles. Second and third grade teacher, Rachel, answered the question, “Do you try to foster an environment in which relationships develop? If so, how do you do it?” She depicted teaching as an opportunity to learn to be increasingly aware, appreciative, and present.

As a mentor and longtime teacher, I have seen many teachers and listened to many conversations in faculty lounges. I think what makes a teacher who has good relationships with children, and who fosters good relationships among children, is someone who can learn from children. Teaching gives one the opportunity to learn a great deal about oneself moment to moment. It never stops. Teachers who don’t do this tend to blame kids for their feelings or problems in the classroom. Teaching can be difficult and try one’s patience. The more aware I am of my inclinations, my preferences, and myself the more effective I will be as a teacher. Teaching gives me a chance to appreciate children’s energy, enthusiasm, exuberance, and ability to be present in the moment. It gives me a chance to celebrate some very elemental and easily forgotten aspects of life. They express

wonder and delight in a way adults never do. They can laugh, forgive, and move on. In these ways students are very, very serious teachers of how to live. My role is to guide, teach, appreciate, and live together with children. It is to celebrate growth.

As a veteran teacher, Rachel told how she has noticed that in order to be effective, she must examine, “be aware of,” and reflect on her reactions and feelings towards her students. She has noticed that without reflection on one’s practice, a teacher may fail to consider her or his role in difficult classroom dynamics or fallibility in general and blame students. Instead, with reflection and self-awareness, Rachel said she could appreciate and learn from her students’ wonder and delight “in the moment.”

The K-1 science teacher, Penelope, also referred to her own learning when she answered the question concerning how she sees “her role in fostering an environment in which relationships develop:”

I find actually in teaching that my limitations are always being pushed and I learn how to be better myself. It’s ridiculous to think of some people in the room as learning and some teaching. On a simplistic level, yes, I teach about gardening or biology, but more complex interchanges are happening. So it’s a reciprocal thing, kids teaching teachers through each new encounter, and teachers teaching kids with everything they do, like a garden of reciprocity.

Being a teacher starts with oneself – within – so that it’s not something I conjure up. I don’t mean teachers must be perfect, but we can be aimed towards being kind, loving, caring, reflective, thoughtful, understanding, all these things. I mean our intentions and aspirations must be foremost in our minds. Then I can compare my behavior in reflection with what I want it to be and learn from my experience. For we aren’t just teaching with our words; we’re teaching with our whole selves. Kindness, consideration, thoughtfulness, however I want kids to become – such as understanding or loving – has to be lived first by me in relationship with students.

When Penelope talked about teaching who she is, she mentioned coming up against her own limitations. By the very act of stating desired ways of being, she said she becomes more aware of her own flaws and believes she can grow and learn from reflection. She described aspiring towards the qualities she considers important in her role as a teacher in relationship with students.

Penelope continued with a comparison between motherhood and teaching, in that both provide great opportunities to learn about oneself.

Motherhood was a time I learned more about myself than I ever did before and teaching is just like that. It's like going into a hall of mirrors – the ramifications are huge for learning.

English teacher and director, Helena, when responding to the same question, mentioned the attitude she thinks the teachers have towards their strength – the sense that they are guided more by their goals than their momentary successes or failures:

We define ourselves more by our aspirations and our own long-term goals than our momentary failures or successes. I think we're more comfortable with the learning process because we are learners, too.

According to Helena, the teachers' involvement in their own learning renders them more comfortable with learning as a process.

First grade teacher, Maria, in answering my question about “why she decided to teach at this school,” revealed her intention to improve and learn. She said she sees herself learning from the school's principles:

I was looking at the school principles and I was thinking about the one that says *Practice Kindness*, and I realized that in order to teach that I would have to model kindness and if I could model kindness I would have to embody it. This kind of rule, which demands I become a better and better me, is why I chose to work at this school. I would like to be the kind of person who aspires to those principles throughout life.

In Maria's mention of “embodying kindness,” she stated that “to teach I would have to model ...” She claimed “teaching” kindness necessitates “modeling” it. She also implied a learning process without limitation. Math and science teacher, Damon, when asked about what “role he saw himself having in relationships at school,” also referred to two of the school principles, which involve social behavior, *Practice Kindness* and *Be a Loving Friend*.

He described these principles as important in his own life.

As teachers, we also try to follow the school principles. And we find it challenging. Our school principles are not 'No running in the hallway.' They are, for example, *Practice Kindness* or *Be a Loving Friend*. These principles are not to regulate external behavior. They are to motivate children to work with their inner feelings and energy. They are guidelines for good living that adults can benefit from as well. I think we strive to better ourselves, and listen to what's trying to happen. I am trying to become a better person. This helps me relate to my student's own struggles to improve their behavior. I also think it lends weight to my words when I am telling them to work on something that I've worked on in myself. If you're trying to improve, you are learning and struggling and you can appreciate that they are doing the same thing and you can relate to the kids. They will then listen more intently to your words.

Damon said he has tried to practice kindness and be a loving friend himself. Therefore he recognizes the real challenge more clearly. Damon told how his requests of students to try to include each other have an authentic tenor that comes from his own struggle to learn, to "listen to what's trying to happen," and to recognize and reflect on that learning.

In general, the teachers conception of modeling centers on reflecting upon their own process of learning. They responded to questions concerning the decision to work at this particular school and their role in fostering an environment in which successful relationships develop. Their own growth through reflection is central to their ability to model behavior that fosters effective relationships, since they explained their students may reflect not only their behavior, but also their attitudes. In order to be successful models, the teachers asserted that they must be aware of how their conduct relates to their aspirations and they must be willing to reflect on their own conduct to learn about themselves as role models.

To summarize, I have discussed three aspects to the teachers' conception of modeling: ways of being, their collegiality, and reflection. As teachers and colleagues, they have described their behavior and their reflection on their practice as influential in terms of what sort of relationships develop at school. They reported that they aspire to

embody the kinds of attitudes they want students to learn, such as care, humor, honesty, willingness, flexibility, trustworthiness, and patience. In addition, the teachers indicated that they try to include other faculty in common activities, before they ask students to include each other. In this way, they reported that their modeling of their own attitudes may imbue their words with meaning and authenticity.

To increase the reader's understanding of how the teachers described their actual exchanges with students in conversation, I shall now explore their descriptions of actual conversations with students. The following exploration of dialogue leads to greater appreciation and breadth of what the teachers said about relationships.

B. Dialogue

The Rose School teachers described dialogues that lead to understanding and respect for differences as well as the development of relationships when I asked the following questions:

- 1) What do you notice about student-to-student relationships?
- 2) What kinds of things do you talk about with children? Describe a conversation you've had with a student.
- 3) Are there special times during the day when it's appropriate for students to speak to each other? What times?
- 4) What do you do when a student struggles with schoolwork? Friends? Problems at home? What if one student demands more attention than others do?
- 5) Can you describe how you help students during class?
- 6) Describe a situation in which a student became upset at school.
- 7) What is the most important thing you teach at your school?
- 8) Aside from academic subjects are you teaching anything else? What else are you teaching and how?

Dialogue in these teachers' narratives came to light as both leading to, and dependent upon, recognizing and respecting otherness. Noddings posits three types of dialogue: formal, normal, and immortal. I related the teachers' comments that refer to facilitated discussions or formal discourse over conflicts to *formal dialogue*. The teachers told

of *normal* or casual conversations when they listened to students, shared interests with them, planned discussion meetings, and occasionally, when they recognized a student's needs took precedence over their own plans. Finally, the teachers mentioned existential questions or shared in *immortal dialogue* when they talked with students about their school rules and great literature.

1. Formal Dialogue

In my interviews, all the teachers talked about their tradition they refer to as "conflict resolution," involving deliberate and guided conversations that can foster relationships at school. The teachers said they practice attending to and facilitating relations between students in conflict. In answer to my question concerning when students "struggle with other students," second and third grade teacher, Rachel, described the general process in detailed steps.

1. *Stop* refers to when we intervene in an argument or fight. This part of the process is not always necessary. It is important to us to allow students to develop their own ability to refrain. A teacher helps them to prevent harm with a firm but calm 'stop.' Soon children learn how to free themselves from conflict before their emotions overwhelm them in a full-blown fight. If they are screaming or sobbing, then we practice breathing with them. I think the practice of waiting for a friend to calm himself or herself teaches respect and patience.
2. Once calm, participants face and *look* at each other. While this may seem too obvious to mention, I mention it because an upset child's tendency is to avoid looking at the friend who has hurt him or her, or if she or he is the aggressor, it is natural not to want to view the damage. In asking the child to see and face the feelings he or she caused lies the possibility for awareness of the other.
3. Participants practice *listening* to each other. Often an upset child cannot find the words to make his or her feelings known. If this is the case, we teachers might model for the child. For example, 'Do you want to tell him that he hurt your feelings when he grabbed the ball away from you?' If the child nods a 'yes,' then she or he might practice looking at her or his friend and repeating the words directly. Before long, students learn to speak for themselves.

4. *Discovery* concludes the whole process. The negotiation over the solution, whether it reflects justice to both participants, and whether or not the arbiter actually attends to the consequences, gives students reason to trust this process or not.

Rachel continued:

It's important to be patient; impatience signals a lack of interest or caring to students. I must consider whether to speak softly, to speak with strength and conviction, or not to say anything at all.

Rachel described facilitating dialogues with students if they have hurt feelings, altercations, or arguments of any kind that they need support to "stop" and solve. When students harm one another, the teachers said they intervene and attempt to settle conflict. Although Rachel referred to specific steps with which to guide students, when asked to "describe a situation in which a student became upset at school," she explained that the effectiveness of conflict resolution does not lie primarily in formality or a strict following of specific steps:

Honesty, acceptance, and empathy are the primary ingredients for a successful conflict resolution. Honesty is disarming and makes it possible for one to see another's reality. Sometimes this alone dispels conflict. As we become aware of a friend's true feelings, the desire to understand arises naturally within us. With this desire comes the possibility of compassion and resolution.

For example, it often happens that one child really looks at his or her friend crying and hears their words of unhappiness and hurt feelings and feels compassion. The opportunity for understanding arises. With understanding, it is but a short step to finding resolution.

Rachel described a priority the teachers place on acknowledging their students' feelings whether they have or lack a clear and well-organized argument. When students express their feelings, their partners have the opportunity to practice listening. Rachel said the process of conflict resolution cannot be understood as a merely formulaic discussion, although the teachers carefully and intentionally guide it. Rachel claimed that when guided to listen to another's viewpoint, her students feel concern for each other and over

time, this practice usually motivates them to treat each other respectfully. Before the teachers guide their students toward reconciliation, they said they encourage both sides to tell their story. Rachel continued:

An emotionally safe environment is another essential element for this process to succeed. If students are shy, they find help to begin to speak up about their feelings. Kids who instigate disagreements discover they will face the effect of their actions. Everyone can learn to explain him or herself and listen to each other in relationship through these guided dialogues. Children sense when the adult is fair and really concerned about them, and they are quick to forgive us as we try, with their help, to learn how to resolve conflicts, for it takes practice to learn how to be helpful. A skillful arbiter has a good sense of timing, listens actively, and seeks to perceive what each child is experiencing.

It is only with experience and trial and error that one learns how much to say, when to stop talking, or when to move on because the energy has changed. Prejudgment dooms the process. Also, the whole process depends on one's relationship built from the beginning of the year. You draw on your relationship when you ask a child to stop and listen.

Rachel explained that the teachers intend for their students to come to trust that this sort of support exists for them at their school. The students discover support to learn to express themselves when they are shy and to face the effects of harmful actions. Within Rachel's last statement lies a key to what she deemed a successful conflict resolution. She said she draws on her relationship with students and yet she does not let prior experience predetermine her response. Basing her response on how well she can attune herself to the particular situation with her particular students, Rachel said she refrains from "prejudgment" and "seeks to perceive what each child is experiencing." Noddings (1984) explains the attention necessary to care for another:

Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves. Our reasons for acting, then have to do both with the other's wants and desires and with the objective elements of his problematic situation. (p. 24)

Rachel's own desire for a certain outcome would keep her in her "own personal frame of reference" and she might miss whatever the child is actually going through. Rachel explained how each conversation differs, especially in light of the diverse personalities of children and teachers. In general, all the teachers agree that conflict resolution often leads to interpersonal understanding. Furthermore, that understanding increases the depth of bonds between students and students and students and teachers. Since conflict resolution does not always seem to follow by the steps just described, examples may afford the reader with more specific understanding.

• Examples of Conflict Resolutions

The teachers' descriptions of conflict resolutions do not always appear to conform to the steps. Some conversations involved less and some involved more than the steps suggested. Although all the teachers presented examples of conflict resolutions, especially when they responded to the question, "Describe a situation in which a student became upset at school," I chose one for its sparse reference and one for its extended reference to the steps.

In the following example, Rachel responded to the question about "an upset student." She described in detail a situation in which she helped three students recall their friendship and de-escalate their altercation without going through all the steps:

Andy, Edward, and Sally are all in second grade and are very close friends. At the end of the day in the middle of the time when we all were working on the play, Sally punched Edward as they were waiting on the bench to be picked up by their family. Then Sally said to me, "I punched Edward," so all three of them were upset. I squatted down near them so that I was actually a little below them. I looked at each of them. I know them very, very well. I could tell they were exhausted and shocked by what had happened, not angry.

So I said, "Children, you are such good friends, such good friends. Haven't we talked about what happens during these big rehearsals and how easy it is for nervous tension to be present? It's the end of the day. You've cooperated so much

all day and you are such good friends. Is there anything we should do now?" And they smiled, and said no, and it was over.

It takes a long time to know when to use all the steps of the conflict resolution and when enough is enough and little needs to be said. Sometimes just my being there and listening to each person is enough and then they are ready to go play without any more words. Also, such an incident must be remembered and can be drawn on. Before our next rehearsal I mention without specific names, what nerves and tiredness can lead to. It gives more weight to my descriptions about how to be with each other.

Rachel noted the time of day and how her students were tired. She said they had experienced a unique and demanding theater schedule. When she discovered that one student punched another, she told how she kneels to their height so as not to tower over them. They can meet each others' gazes comfortably. She said she uses not only her voice, but also her body, to be with the students. They have asked her to intercede; thus, they may not need her to tell them to stop.

Based on her own relationship with the students, Rachel described how she determined a unique path to reconciliation. She said a relationship figures centrally in this and all conflict resolutions. She told how she draws attention to her students' relationship, notices their expressions, and finally, determines the need for her attention and recognition. Rachel claimed that these students do not have a habit of punching and this behavior was out of the ordinary. To exaggerate their culpability could alienate and confuse them. It might discourage them from the conflict resolution process. Noddings (2002b) writes: "The message, 'I am here for you' signals a willingness to listen, to help, to defend, and to guide. It is, as Buber noted, the foundation for the most vital relationships" (p. 226). If Rachel had responded by berating Sally when she was just tired and acting out of the ordinary, then her response would not suffice to "be there for Sally," who might be unlikely to come to her for support again. Rachel seemed careful not to suggest that hitting is something to ignore. She said she will remember the incident and

refer to it to help them face their next long day without resorting to punching. She implied that no predetermination of response is possible. The teachers in general said they must listen and observe students to decide how best to nurture effective relationships.

In this case (of punching), Rachel needed to speak clearly and minimally. In the following example, in answer to the same question, "to describe a situation in which a student struggled with another student," she addressed a more extensive intervention in a long-term conflict.

Samantha has nerve damage on the right side of her face; therefore, her face is disfigured and she drools. She is also new this year. Samantha has very limited social skills. The other two students involved, Mary and Tom, have been at our school for four years, are good friends, very socially adept, and very, very versed in the steps of conflict resolution. They express themselves verbally and are very secure in the school environment.

This is the third year I've been Mary's and Tom's teacher and we have a very good big friendship. Three different times they've complained about Samantha wanting to follow them, sit between them, always eat with them, and be in the middle of their conversations. Mary's annoyance with me showed her strength and assurance in her school. One time the three of us came inside and sat on the story time rug and Mary and Tom spoke directly about how they felt in 'I' statements to Samantha. They were both very proud of their ability to speak clearly, state their case adeptly, a case of their annoyance and impatience with this new girl.

As they spoke Samantha's big blue eyes filled with tears, her lips quivered, she folded her arms tightly across her body. I said, 'Mary, Tom, look at your friend. Look at Samantha. She can't even talk right now because she is so sad. And what is she feeling?' And I looked at Samantha and I said, 'Tell them what you're feeling,' and she said, 'You won't be my friend.' I put my arm around Samantha, gave her some tissue, and we were all silent for a few moments.

I knew not to do anything more right then because sometimes with deep feelings there is no quick fix. Simply their expression where empathy is present is enough. Then those things need to be there, and we go on. We took a walk together and I held their hands. And we took some deep breaths. I said these things are hard and it is a sunny day. Then this happened two or three more times. Tom and Mary came to me to express their continued annoyance. Alone with them I spoke about what I had told the whole class already. 'Samantha has not yet learned the congenial or polite ways that work to enter a group that is already very established. We need to help her.'

So then our conversation became how to help her, the logistical first step. I said, 'Well if it's disturbing for her to sit in between you, could she sit on the side?' They know this is an atmosphere that values kindness. There is a lot of weight behind what I say. So they agreed to that. Then with Samantha alone for a walk, hand in hand, I asked her if she could think of a way to sit near them that might be better received. She couldn't think of one, which just shows what I knew, that she didn't know or she would have already done it. However, it's respectful of me to ask, and it gives me permission to answer my own question.

I suggested Samantha and I role-play it. 'What if I'm sitting with Nicole and you plop yourself in the middle and yell or make a funny sound? We may already be in a conversation, so what's a way to do it without interrupting?' I am extremely concrete and explain every descriptive detail aloud. Adults already jump through these steps. I say it slowly to Sam, like thoughts. 'I could walk over and stand and listen. I could sit on one side and listen to the conversation, seeing if there was something I have to add, gradually people who know each other will become used to my being there.' Then I have to check back on this, but also let go of it.

In this complex resolution, over many months, Rachel described how she attends to a sensitive issue concerning two socially adept students who do not want to play with one less socially adept and disabled student. Rachel told how she enters into a dialogue with the three students. She first joins them in a physical sense, on the story rug together. She explained how she provides a safe place for Samantha to share her feelings and for the others to hear her. In a sense, she seems to have described setting up a situation where her students must face the effects of their actions. In facing the effects, they may feel for Samantha. In Rachel's description, Mary and Tom see Samantha cry and hear her wish that they wanted to be her friend. Having heard Samantha, Rachel said she asked for a change in Mary and Tom's behavior. She explained she recognizes no pat or simple response will render the three students equal friends in one conflict resolution. In this explanation, she relayed how she takes into account the real complexity and gravity of the situation.

Rachel described over time how she revisits and chips away at the student's resistance to Samantha. Noddings (1984) underscores the importance of time in the caring relation:

The commitment to act in behalf of the cared-for, a continued interest in his reality throughout the appropriate time span, and the continual renewal of commitment over this span of time are the essential elements of caring from the inner view. (p. 16)

Rachel told of slowly breaking down the behaviors that our culture finds acceptable for entering a discussion and joining a group of friends in a conversation over time. Taking her cue for addressing these sensitive issues from the students, Rachel never described forcing the subject. "Caring is largely reactive and responsive. Perhaps it is better described as receptive" (Noddings, 1984, p. 19). Rachel did, however, mention her insistence that her words carry weight, since students recognize the insistence on kindness pervading the whole school. She balances releasing and revisiting the situation, like the ebb and flow of a wave.

Maria, first grade teacher, provides another perspective on the situation with Samantha. She responded to the question: "What do you notice about student-to-student relationships?"

I notice students talking about the school rules and they have these big ideas on their minds. They ask each other to practice kindness. I also notice that most of the students all get along, in the whole school. There isn't anyone who's an outcast. Sam, who has a hard time communicating because she has nerve damage and drools, is still included and children are conscious of trying. You can tell it's hard for them, but they are learning more and more how to relate to her. Also, it's evident that her behavior has developed in response to being made fun of for most of her life. She is beginning to accept suggestions about how to talk to others and how to join games without barging in on them.

From Maria's perspective, the school's conflict resolution and principles, such as *Practice Kindness*, help students learn to relate to one another.

Math and science teacher, Damon, when asked what he notices about student-to-student relationships at school, mentioned the practice of conflict resolution as it occurs over an extended number of years. He claimed that he notices the students gain facility with independent and purposive dialogue over conflicts.

As the children get older, they begin to resolve smaller conflicts on their own. In this way, misunderstandings don't always lead to hurt feelings. And conflicts are dealt with and faced, not hidden away or grumbled about. We deal with misunderstanding conflict, rather than pretending it doesn't exist because it's hard to deal with. When I was in school, kids with a conflict were each given a time out, to cool off. That was it. No communication face to face. No finding words to express feelings. No tools to avoid shouting, hitting, or crying. Just go stand by the wall.

Damon described accepting the existence of conflict and dealing with it in dialogue rather than physical fighting. In his experience, dialogue replaces fighting at his school. Thus, Damon argued its importance as a method to foster student learning concerning how to be in relationship.

In general, when the teachers guide their students in conflict resolution, they all said they try to listen carefully and bring students together to hear each other's points of view. They said honest explanations may lead to understanding. When the teachers must quell an altercation, they explained how they draw on the step of intervention. Once involved, instead of applying a pre-formulated statement, they intend to draw on past experience with their students – an approach which informs decisions about how to be helpful (in terms of increasing student understanding of how to develop caring relations with others, i.e. to respond in ways to meet the other's need and to reduce the possibility and likelihood of future harm being done). Sometimes the teachers explained how they just listen; at other times they share and ask their students to share with one another as well. The teachers said they guide their students towards connection and relationships with others through attention over time in conflict resolution.

These teachers talked not only about dialogue as crucial when their students experience disharmony or conflict, but also they described how they engage in informal conversation over many varying subjects.

2. Informal Dialogue

As well as guided conflict resolutions, according to the Rose School teachers, informal dialogue plays a relevant role in developing caring relationships. These teachers stated that they make time to ask students about their own lives. In listening to their students, the teachers said deeper relational bonds may form between teachers and students. As well as listening to their students' interests, the teachers told of sharing their own. Also, from time to time, spontaneous informal conversation may take precedence over the teacher's plans. Finally, the teachers mentioned individual meetings during which they converse with their students. Overall, the teachers described how they believe relationships, understanding, appreciation, and trust develop through casual conversation at school. They responded to the following questions:

- 1) What kinds of things do you talk about with children? Describe a conversation you've had with a student.
- 2) Are there special times during the day when it's appropriate for students to speak to each other? What times?
- 3) What if one student demands more attention than others do?
- 4) Can you describe how you help students during class?
- 5) Describe a situation in which a student became upset at school.
- 6) What is the most important thing you teach at your school?

• Listening to Students

The teachers I interviewed all stressed the importance of listening to their students to help them form successful relationships at school. When asked, "Can you describe how you help students during class?" first year kindergarten teacher, Cynthia, described listening to students:

I help them develop relationships by acknowledging their thoughts and ideas. I listen to the children during their work and throughout the day so I can be aware of their reality. I think this helps them because I'm not alien to their world; I'm approachable and care about Thomas the Train and how rubber bands can look like a star when stretched a certain way. Once I'm approachable to them, they'll listen to me, too.

Cynthia said she considers listening and acknowledging students important in her effort to develop a relationship with her students. She described how she gains an awareness of her student's world and responds with interest. One might compare her discussion to Noddings' (1984) following description: "Always, the one-caring moves toward the other's needs and projects ..." (p. 123). When Cynthia "cares about Thomas the Train," what she deems an interest of her students, she said she becomes someone to whom they can approach.

First grade teacher, Maria, when asked, "What kinds of things do you talk about with children?" explained:

I talk about whatever I'm excited about outside of school. I tell them about my practice of the violin, bicycle rides, and books. They see me as more than someone who knows how to read and will help them learn to read – they see me as a person who loves to read.

Maria described sharing her own interests with students to allow them to see her as a person as well as their teacher. In order to form relationships with their students, the teachers said they listen to and engage them in conversation. Noddings (1984) states: "(R)eceptivity requires sharing and reflecting aloud" (p. 122). The teachers said they show they are receptive, or as Cynthia put it, "approachable," to their students' needs through conversation. Through casual conversation students and teachers may acquaint themselves with each other as persons whose lives are larger than their roles. To attend to their students' needs, sometimes the teachers revealed they must reevaluate their plans and engage in spontaneous conversations.

- **Spontaneous Conversation**

Science teacher, Penelope, responded to my request to "describe a situation in which a student became upset at school." She told a story of how second and third grade teacher, Rachel, addressed her student's sudden interruption.

It's hard to remember exactly - but all the kids were going off to play and Sadie sought Rachel's attention and Sadie took her hand and Rachel attended to Sadie, not to me. We had been in a conversation and it was clear that Rachel noticed Sadie anyway, and that is what I thought was beautiful. Sadie said something about asking Rachel to be her friend. Rachel said, 'I am always your friend whether we are holding hands or whether you are playing in the playground.' It was like she made Sadie feel she cared, without tethering Sadie to her. But, it's also her awareness of being there for the kids and noticing what is needed in that moment.

In Penelope's description, Rachel notices a student seeking her attention despite Rachel's own involvement in a prior conversation. Penelope also mentioned her perception that Rachel did not "tether" the student to herself; thus, Penelope suggested the importance of letting a student feel a teacher's regard without asking for recognition from the student in return. Noddings also conceives of freedom as an important aspect of a caring relation.

The one-caring is motivated in the direction of the cared-for and she must, therefore, respect his freedom ... Indeed, this recognition of the freedom-as-subject of the cared-for is a fundamental result of her genuine receiving of the cared-for. (Noddings, 1984, p. 72)

Penelope seems to have affirmed the importance of a teacher's task in relationship to meeting a student's needs without seeking personal profit.

When asked, "What if one student demands more attention than others do?"

Rachel underscored the importance of attending to whoever needs attention:

Sometimes a child has had a terrible morning and needs to share about how rushed it was or maybe someone lost their shoes or was so rushed she or he did not have breakfast - all the things that happen many, many times. It's important to attend to them, for they won't be concentrating or happy all morning if they're hungry. I have a chance to ask, 'Do you want to get something to eat out of your lunch?' Or I can offer them something in our refrigerator where we keep extra food for them. Children become used to the give and take of respectful and authentically-accepting conversation.

Having experienced challenging morning routines, children often may enter school harried and rushed, according to Rachel. Thus, "respectful" and "accepting" discussion can help them start their day "happy and able to concentrate." Rachel emphasized the importance

of attending to her students' seemingly momentary needs, such as needing to "share about how rushed (the morning) was, having lost his or her shoes, or having missed breakfast." It might seem expedient to ignore such interruptions; however, Rachel pointed out that her failure to address her students' needs would render them unable to participate fully all morning. My interviews revealed that attending to impromptu discussion to meet their students' needs appears important to all the teachers. Also, the teachers said scheduling conversational meetings with their students helps them to cultivate relationships.

- **Conversational Meetings**

The teachers described conversations during class and initial meetings with students that foster bonds when I asked: "What kinds of things do you talk about with children? Describe a conversation you've had with a student." Second and third grade teacher, Rachel, described how she begins the school year with a one-on-one meeting with each of her students. She said that students and teachers discuss any matter of interest to them:

I listen to each individual and spend time alone before they begin in my class. During that time, I share the environment, showing the child where her or his belongings will be kept, all the mundane things of daily life. I also share places in the room where art projects, scientific exploration, writer's studio, conversation, and story time will take place. I ask them what they like to do ... we talk and get to know each other. I also invite each student to my apartment before school begins. I share with the student my favorite things: books I love, art on my walls, so she or he is more familiar with what I care about as an individual entering her or his life.

Rachel said she welcomes students to school by spending time, discussing interests, and familiarizing them with her as a person. She tries to demonstrate the value of the student over and above the curriculum by talking with her students, rather than testing or evaluating them at their first meeting.

Rachel told of another daily event she organizes to spend time in discussion with her students when asked, “Are there special times during the day when it’s appropriate for students to speak to each other? What times?”

Circle time is a most important part of our daily curriculum. It is a time when we sing together, talk together, share from our own lives, reflect on a topic that I introduce, and bring ourselves into the present moment. In order to do that, we need to speak and listen to one another. The main purpose of this time is to establish the importance each day of readiness and receptivity to each other.

Every day after circle time – where we’ve shared in a group dialogue about being together in respectful and kind ways and told and listened to great stories, and so on, we take a walk in the neighborhood together before settling into classroom tasks. Children have partners and so do I. They have a chance to talk to others – and I pair them on purpose with people they don’t know as well – and I talk first about what it means to have a conversation and how they can do it. Since I have a partner too, it is a daily time when I engage in all kinds of conversations with one child each time, from the silliest and lightest to enjoying silence, as we walk hand in hand. For example, one time Sally looked up at me and asked, ‘What are you reading lately, Rachel?’ These conversations give me the opportunity to acknowledge each individual in a meaningful and positive way.

Rachel described circle time as a gathering for the whole class every morning. She told of singing, story telling, and discussing ways to be together. The teachers all asserted the importance of bringing their students together to begin the day, as Rachel put it, with “readiness and receptivity.” On their daily walk, Rachel said students and students and students and teachers converse. Rachel expressed this time as a chance for her to acknowledge each of her students. Noddings (2002a) considers such casual conversations significant:

When children engage in real talk with adults who like and respect them, they are likely to emulate those adults. Even if the purpose of conversation is rarely explicit moral education, matters of moral interest will arise. Adults and children will express themselves, and opportunities for exploration, debate, and correction will arise. (p. 127)

The following and final example epitomizes casual conversation’s centrality to these teacher’s efforts to encourage relationships. In answer to the question, “What is the

most important thing you teach at your school?" Rachel explained why she regards it so crucial to attend to her students before, during, and after class:

I always say you can't learn your math if your stomach is in knots because you're worried about something. So, 'first things first' means we deal with ourselves as people in relationships with each other before, during, after, and always in the curriculum. If someone is crying in the middle of a lesson we stop. In coming to understand and solve whatever the problem is, I constantly show that the answer to the question, 'What's the most important part of our curriculum?' is how we are learning to be with one another. I will say, yes we're learning about art and culture and history and reading and math and science; however, our most important learning, our most important project in life, in school, is to learn how to be with one another in kind, respectful, friendly, affectionate, and caring ways.

Rachel revealed how when a student is upset about something, he or she may not be on task or able to attend to his or her teacher. So it becomes crucial to Rachel to attend to her students "before, during, and after" the curriculum. Not only that, but she deemed the most important curricular learning was learning how to relate with one another.

Thus, these teachers reported that they value and develop bonds with their students through casual conversations wherein they listen and sometimes share, allow for spontaneity, and hold conversational meetings. In general, when responding to questions involving conversing, helping, and attending to students, the teachers mentioned how a sense of togetherness, receptivity, and harmony arise from listening and sharing, time spent together before school, and each day in group discussion and story sharing. They reported that the curriculum of the school involves learning how to relate to each other in effective ways. Noddings (1984) writes: "(The student) is learning not just mathematics or social studies; he is also learning how to be one-caring" (p. 179). Several of the teachers mentioned that the student as an individual and in relationship is ultimately more important than the content of the moment. On the whole, the teachers deemed informal dialogue fundamental for their students to learn to relate to one another and for students and teachers to develop relationships. Important as well are conversations in which teachers and students tackle existential questions and immortal themes.

3. Immortal Dialogue

The teachers described conversations that can lead to greater understanding of others and therefore deeper relational bonds. Dialogue that revolved around *immortal themes*, those concerning their school's principles and great literature, appeared in responses to the following questions:

- 1) What is the most important thing you teach at your school?
- 2) Aside from academic subjects are you teaching anything else? What else are you teaching and how?

The teachers said they guide discussions about the meaning and application of their unique school principles. For example, three that emerged in conversation are: *Practice Kindness, Be a Loving Friend*, and *Enjoy Yourself*. The teachers also mentioned existential themes, such as "How shall I live?" when they talked about stories.

• School Principles

In response to the question, "Aside from academic subjects are you teaching anything else? What else are you teaching and how?" second and third grade teacher, Rachel, told how she guides discussion over time towards existential themes, such as understanding "enjoyment."

I begin the year talking about the school principles one at a time in circle time, often a week on each one. We talk about what each principle means. The principles are created so there is no wrong answer to questions about them. The first principle is *Enjoy Yourself*, so I ask, 'How do you enjoy yourself? When you are alone? With a friend? At school? At home? Inside and outside?' We celebrate the fact that we have many, many ways to enjoy ourselves. We learn about one another and as we learn, our capacity grows to care for one another and to understand one another's differences and similarities.

The other thing is it's possible to talk about *Enjoy Yourself* often and long enough that enough variety will come. Then it makes sense to ask the question, 'Can I really enjoy myself when my friend is disturbed or sad? Is there a point where enjoying myself includes the reality of other people?' Obviously, the hope is

that the idea will occur that I am in relation to many, many other things, the most immediate in class being the friends near me and that their happiness or unhappiness is meaningful to me. For young children to hear that idea or even wonder about that question is the beginning of what through the years we all can ask ourselves. It is the beginning of what would become social responsibility. It evolves through personal experience with people we actually care about.

Rachel described her hope for her students to develop concern for each other. She said she seeks to foster the understanding that their own happiness is related to those around them. She believes that one is not truly happy when others suffer. Social responsibility may arise from students' genuine caring about others.

Other school principles which the teachers described refer more obviously to relationships. Here Rachel continued her response to my question concerning what she teaches besides academic subjects. She discussed the principle *Be a Loving Friend*.

For *Be a Loving Friend*, we ask, 'How do I make a friend and how can I keep a friendship?' One of the most important learnings is that if I want to become friends with someone else, I must not only share what I care about, but I must receive the friend. For example, even if I don't like soccer and he or she does, the better I can listen to his or her passions, then the more I'll understand him or her. It's a huge learning, since we are all so filled with our own preferences and ourselves.

When Rachel said she explores the school's principle about loving friendship she asks her students to reflect on what it means to be a loving friend. She affirmed the importance of showing interest in the concerns and preferences of another person. Rachel explained relaying complex social interactions, like asking someone to play, and trying to separate and simplify them into more comprehensible and feasible tasks. Thus, discussion over existential themes, Rachel suggested, may lead to learning to listen and care for others, and ultimately, greater facility in relationship. Not only did the teachers themselves introduce existential themes (such as those contained in the school principles), but also they emphasized the importance of reading stories that raise questions about life.

- **Stories**

First grade teacher, Maria, in answer to my question, “Aside from academic subjects are you teaching anything else? What else are you teaching and how?” also described how she shares ways her students can extend themselves towards each other. Maria emphasized the importance of stories and how they can raise questions about life.

We are always trying to help students make friends. I like to read stories about friendship and kindness. Just as much attention goes into helping students build relationships as helping them learn to read. We learn to read the principles and we talk about them and we write about them and read stories about love and friendship. Many students haven’t been friends before, so to talk about how to be a loving friend involves ways to practice being a friend. *Practice Kindness* is hard to do. *Be a Loving Friend* provides lots of curriculum for circle time and all day in first grade. We talk about how you can tell by others peoples’ reactions if you’ve behaved in a loving way. I think the principle *Laugh Often* and *Enjoy Yourself* are unusual in a school. When I was in school it felt like school principles were either things we as kids were not told about or they told us not to do those things.

Maria explained how she considers questions concerning friendship just as important as those about literacy. She illustrated the use of stories and the school principles in discussion to “help students make friends.”

When the teachers read stories, they said their classroom conversations can reflect whatever existential questions the author raises. In the following example, a story led to wishes for the world. When asked, “What is the most important thing you teach at your school?” Maria described a kindergarten and first grade story time and the school’s principles:

The most important thing I teach brings me to the school principles. One circle-time I was reading this story about wishes, about a boy and his dog. At the end, Cynthia asked if each student wanted to share a wish. The kids’ wishes caught my attention and we wrote them down. Nancy said, ‘I wish that there would be no wars.’ Jason wished ‘the world was full of kindness.’ Sarah wishes ‘the countries would be nice to each other.’ Afterwards, Cynthia commented on their generous and thoughtful wishes and Nancy responded, ‘That’s because we go to the school with *Practice Kindness* and *Choose Happiness* and that stuff and we got ideas for the world.’

Maria described how a story and the school principles inspired students' concern for others in their larger world.

Concern and understanding for others in the student's greater community arose again in my interview with the director and English teacher, Helena. She responded to the question, "Aside from academic subjects are you teaching anything else? What else are you teaching and how?"

In the plays over a period years, students will be exposed to different cultures, different traditions, in a visceral way, because they take on through the acting, they take on the personas, they take on the characters. They become Indian, they become Italian, as actors and actresses, through what they wear, how they speak. When we write the script, we quote primary sources: in the example of Joan of Arc, I took from the original court proceedings. A poor peasant girl named Joan, with enormous courage and determination, saves France. Prince Siddhartha, raised deliberately protected from the very existence of suffering, discovers the human conditions of old age, sickness, and death. This prince relinquishes all his wealth to search for truth, and defies his country's caste (class) system. Since the stories we tell involve mythological elements, we teachers have great questions to ask students and reflect on ourselves. We can ask, 'How do these other people find meaning in their lives?'

Helena described theatrical stories that spur a dialogue over existential questions. She explained how the play can immerse students in a dialogue with a range of cultural history, tradition, belief, and mythology. As soon as the students experience repeated exposure to diverse ways of being, according to Helena, differences may lose the strangeness of the unknown. Helena argued that understanding across diverse cultures increases with familiarity through immortal dialogue.

When the teachers responded to my questions about what they teach besides academics and the most important thing they teach, their responses addressed the question, "How shall I live?" as well as other existential questions that concern life itself. They related the school guidelines, especially *Practice Kindness*, *Be a Loving Friend*, and *Enjoy Yourself*. The school principle, *Enjoy Yourself*, leads ultimately to discussions about

the interrelated nature of enjoyment. *Be a Loving Friend* and *Practice Kindness* lead to discussions about ways to receive one another in relationship. The teachers also told how stories they have read to students led to conversations about the importance of friendship, ways to treat each other, increased understanding of cultural differences, and the manifold meanings persons make of life.

Overall, the Rose School teachers deemed dialogue crucial for their students to learn to relate to one another. According to these teachers, conflict can come to resolution through formal or guided conversations. They reported that casual conversations build relationships between teachers and students and students and students. The teachers said they begin the school year and the school day with individual and group conversational meetings in order to foster bonds. Finally, through immortal dialogue about existential themes in conversation, the teachers explained how they introduce the students to social responsibility and discussion about, and hopefully increased understanding of, cultural differences. Over subjects as diverse as urgent conflict to what books their students are reading, the teachers declared that relationships form and deepen through dialogue. Over time, they said their students progress in their ability to relate with one another effectively. Improvement can occur through repeated practice, not only in speaking to one another, but also through paying attention to, and meeting the needs of, others.

C. Practice

The Rose School teachers referred to practice in terms of four aspects: relationships in general, service-learning, the formation of habit, a tradition they referred to as *Rocks in the Basket*, and their school principle, *Practice Kindness*. Practice appeared in the teachers' conversations when they answered the following questions.

- 1) I want to explore how you see yourself treating students well. In your experience, in what ways do you see the development of relationships embedded in school life?

- 2) Do you try to foster an environment in which relationships develop? If so, how do you do it?
- 3) What is the most important thing you teach at your school?

The teachers told about how they value and make time for practice in relating to others in general and how they place rocks in the basket in order to encourage efforts to practice kindness. Service-learning also arose in discussion as a way the teachers said they try to provide specifically directed practice in serving or relating to others with different abilities and circumstances.

- **Relationship**

To my question concerning the “most important thing she teaches,” Rachel declared each moment an opportunity for herself and her students to practice being in relationship with one another.

Every opportunity with a friend is an opportunity to practice being a friend, giving friendships to one another. All day, every encounter is an opportunity to listen, to speak, to share and appreciate another person. Sometimes it's easy and sometimes it's hard. I say this to the children. I'll ask. 'Now how can each one of us actually do it?' They suggest ways to practice kindness. We talk about listening to one another, paying attention to others around us and the needs of others as well as our own and we always know that every moment is a new moment, so we focus on what we can do now.

Rachel mentioned friendship as something that her students do not already necessarily know how to “give,” but something they can practice. First grade teacher, Maria, in her response to the same question, mentioned relationship as the most important thing she could teach and as necessitating skills: “Many students haven't been friends before, so to talk about how to be a loving friend involves ways to practice being a friend.” In describing the concept of relationship as something students can practice, the teachers have related it to process and even competency. It follows therefore that the teachers said they consider themselves responsible to help their students gain facility in relationship.

For the teachers, each moment becomes a new opportunity to foster learning to relate more effectively. The teachers said that their students practice respecting and caring for others during their service-learning experience.

- **Service-Learning**

One way that the teachers explained how their students practice relating to others is through service-learning. I asked Helena, English teacher and director, “What is the most important thing you teach at your school?” She described a service-learning experience involving giving meals and other necessities to the homeless at a shelter.

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 that have been worn by other people’s feet. What that means is that they get blisters from them if they don’t have socks. And if you get blisters, and blisters get infected, and your only mode of transportation is walking, then you’re stranded. Ultimately, you’ll get sick since you can’t avoid weather or get food. So socks are everything. We share with the kids the importance of the 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?’ Then we asked them to allow the guest to respond. We asked them to make sure that there was human contact in that. And this is harder than you might think, because sometimes you would go to a table and one of the guests would be overly enthusiastic and would say, ‘Oh, socks! I want one.’ He or she might be aggressive and students would practice maintaining their equanimity and still do the eye contact thing to show respect.

One in particular I remember was a man who really wanted some socks, but he was going through withdrawal and part of the symptoms were that he was shivering uncontrollably and he could not control his hand. This was not a pretty sight. And he reached out to get his socks, but he couldn’t get them because his hand was shaking. And the child hesitated and then simply 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 pair of socks.’ They all have stories. They’re survivors. And I saw a student decide: Am I going to be an

arbiter of morality, or am I 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 get over fear or intimidation over time, then they accept them as brothers and sisters. So it's tearing down preconceptions, where and if there were any to begin with.

Helena described a service-learning experience in which her students practice treating other human beings with respect, no matter how difficult their circumstance or how unsightly their physical appearance is. Helena told how the students practice greeting others, looking them in the eyes, and "making human contact." She said meeting and serving the homeless could be "intimidating" at first. If her students harbor prejudice, she claimed experience soon replaces the preconceptions that composed students' prior judgments with care and understanding in relationships.

Helena alleged through practice and repeated contact, her students gain facility with relating to different people. If the students feared the homeless at first, Helena said through practice and repeated experience in this service-learning situation, they no longer shy away. According to the teachers, practice and repeated experience also leads to habit.

- **Habit**

Habit arose in conversation with the teachers concerning practice. With the formation of habit in mind, the teachers said they consider all the moments of the day as important. In response to my question concerning what second and third grade teacher, Rachel, teaches, "besides academics," she mentioned habit.

The greater importance of seeing moments as times to practice kindness is that what I practice doing, I become. What I constantly think about begins to define me. Therefore when I am attempting to practice kindness there is potential for me to become more kind, aware, and generous. It's as simple as saying we are our habits. When my mind is focused on attempting to embody our school rules, chances are I am functioning with more self-awareness, more patience, more kindness, more trust in the children and myself.

In this light, simple actions and thoughts, such as how the students relate to the homeless people they meet at the shelter, take on increased meaning or gravity. Noddings (2002b) explains the relevance of a habit of caring, in light of the creation of an ethical ideal:

As we try to educate the caring response in every subject that we teach and in a myriad of everyday activities, we contribute to the construction of an ethical ideal. At the core of this ideal is a habitual self that is caring. (p. 215)

- **Rocks in the Basket**

One way all the teachers said they try to encourage “a caring response” as well as practicing kindness, is through *Rocks in the Basket*. According to the teachers, they use *Rocks in the Basket* to encourage their students to practice ways to relate to one another at school for effective relationships to flourish. The teachers did mention that they celebrate all kinds of (what they deem) acts of kindness, as well as anything enjoyable with rocks. Although they celebrate various things, my questions focused on relationships. Therefore, the teachers’ descriptions did as well. Second and third grade teacher, Rachel, responded to: “I want to explore how you see yourself treating students well. In your experience, in what ways do you see the development of relationships embedded in school life?” She stated:

I laugh with them when we walk together. I ask them what I can do to make today a more wonderful day for them. Often I ask them how we can make today a good day together. I’ll ask, ‘How can we put rocks in the basket today?’

In my interviews, all the teachers told how they keep a basket in the classroom with between fifty and a hundred rocks. I refer to second and third grade teacher, Rachel’s description of how they use them, since her response offered the most depth. She responded to the question, “Do you try to foster an environment in which relationships develop? If so, how do you do it?”

We notice acts of practicing kindness, bring them to the attention of the group, and put a rock in the basket. When the rocks fill the basket, the whole class plans a celebration. The teacher celebrates the caring occasion by asking the student to put a rock in the basket. We use rocks to recognize anything from sharing, smiling, cooperating, playing with a new friend, playing with an old friend, or just enjoying anything together.

We do not specify predetermined reasons to put rocks in the basket. Anyone can notice and put one in. We stress the fact that anyone can put a rock in the basket when they have noticed an authentically wonderful happening. It has to be sincere, and the children understand that. When the basket is full, the children empty it and begin again. I notice that my class remembers what they did to inspire rocks to go in the basket. I am surprised by how much they remember. They'll say, 'Oh, I remember this one with the stripe. That's the one I put in when I offered to help Lucia with her math.'

Rachel said that emptying the basket spurs reflective conversation over attempts to care, such as generous, cooperative, and inclusive acts. Her students converse over the parts they each played in how rocks filled the basket. Rachel mentioned that the students themselves learn to notice reasons to put rocks in the basket. In other words, her students practice reflecting on and searching for generosity, caring, etc. Rather than something to compete over, her students can share in noticing authentic and, as Rachel put it, "wonderful" moments. Thus, the teachers described using *Rocks in the Basket* to recognize their students when they try to practice care in relationship.

The teachers mentioned practice when asked about the "most important thing" they teach, how they treat students well, how they foster relationships, and how relationships were embedded in school life. The teachers considered practice important for their students to improve their ability to share, include others, attend to one another, listen, and increase their awareness of others. Since students may form habitual patterns of behavior such as intimidation in the face of human struggle (the homeless), the teachers said they regard activity such as service-learning as important in developing social competence. When their students venture out into the greater community to serve and

when they serve in their own school, these teachers said they consider this to be practice and potential learning in how to respect and care for different people. Each time their students practice a behavior, the teachers mentioned its continuance will eventually form habit, so they try to consider carefully what behavior they promote at school. They stated they encourage their students to notice and practice kindness or relate in ways they consider kind by putting rocks in a basket. Since *Rocks in the Basket* not only encourages students, but also celebrates and recognizes them for their caring acts, *rocks* may also confirm students.

D. Confirmation

Confirmation relates to the ways the teachers described how they notice, appreciate, and encourage their students' growth, development, and learning. In my interviews with the Rose School teachers I found words related to confirmation, such as recognition, celebration, or affirmation. The teachers talked about recognizing, confirming, or celebrating students when they put *Rocks in the Basket* and when they celebrate their students at graduation. In lieu of diplomas at their end-of-the-year graduation ceremony, "qualities" like love or generosity celebrate the students' relational as well as intellectual growth during the school year. *Rocks in the Basket* and the end-of-the-year ceremony emerged in interviews as representative of ways these teachers try to create an environment for relationships to flourish, ways they treat students well, and ways they perceive as exemplifying how relationships are established at school. Their responses emerged in discussion over the following questions.

- 1) How/why did you decide to teach at this school?
- 2) I want to explore how you see yourself treating students well.
- 3) What do you notice about student-to-student relationships?
- 4) Do you try to foster an environment in which relationships develop? If so, how do you do it?

- **Rocks in the Basket**

I will continue discussing *Rocks in the Basket* as it refers to the teachers' conception of confirmation. The teachers explained *Rocks in the Basket* as a way not only to practice relating to others, but also to notice the best in their students. Second and third grade teacher, Rachel, continued to answer the question, "Do you try to foster an environment in which relationships develop? If so, how do you do it?" which initially spurred her description of *Rocks in the Basket*. I considered the following part of her response reflective of how she conceives of confirmation.

Rocks in the Basket is a way to notice – acknowledge – celebrate – affirm – care for – congratulate – and value students. *Rocks in the Basket* keeps an awareness of the opportunity to notice positive interaction always on a teacher's mind. You can't plan for such moments. I think of them as already there. All we do is notice what is already happening. It is not getting the students to do something because the teacher asked them to do it, not about controlling or even guiding behavior. It's not, 'If you do this, I'll give you a rock in the basket.'

I have a way of explaining it to parents. It's like this: At all times, a teacher, anyone, has his or her attitudes of consciousness, typical ways of viewing common experience, habitual ways of seeing things, paradigms. *Rocks in the Basket* supports a positive and thoughtful way of viewing people and circumstances in the classroom.

For example, if a teacher has a child who invariably drops things on the floor and can't get organized, the teacher can easily fall into a habit of expectation for the child to continue and without even realizing it, begin to respond negatively to the student. Even before another incident happens, a teacher might find him or herself expecting one or associating the child with exasperation. Consider this common statement: we fulfill one another's prophecies of ourselves. I think of this: what we look for we will find, what we don't look for, we will never see.

Rachel said that the teachers recognize, acknowledge, celebrate, affirm, care-for, congratulate, and value their students with *Rocks in the Basket*. This practice gives her a positive perspective from which to relate to her students. Rachel explained how introducing *Rocks in the Basket* does not make a messy child neat. She also did not mean to suggest that she celebrates his or her messiness, for that would be false and unhelpful.

Noddings (1984) states: "To the cared-for no act in his behalf is quite as important or influential as the attitude of the one-caring" (p. 20). *Rocks in the Basket* may orient Rachel toward searching for something positive and this, she said, fosters her positive attitude. She described seeking to encourage authentically, to celebrate her student with the acknowledgement of a rock in the basket and the act turns Rachel's attention to her student's strengths. She talked about the element of looking for the positive in *Rocks in the Basket*, when I asked her if she could "say more:"

I can explain more about *Rocks in the Basket* by giving an analogy. Suppose your living room is a mess and your couch is no longer adequate and this is unpleasant for you and the family. So, you clean the entire room, deep cleaning. All of a sudden, the entire room has brightness and sparkle. It looks and feels better. And it isn't as if the old couch is any newer. You may still want a new couch; however, in the good feeling, and with a fresh mind, you can go forward to address the problem and with more willingness to find the positive in the process. To do any of this, I am assuming the belief that mental attitudes can change. Our predominant ways of thinking, so often un-reflected upon by people, are actually something moving directionally at all times toward the negative or the positive.

Rachel explained how when the teachers face a challenge with a student they may become discouraged. *Rocks in the Basket* gives a teacher, as well as his or her students, a reminder to seek something each student does or expresses to honestly celebrate. She said this very orientation towards a student can render helping him or her overcome a challenge seem both more possible and simpler. "(I)nclusion and confirmation ... is an attitude ... that both accepts and confirms. It does not 'accept' and shrug off. It accepts, embraces, and leads upward" (Noddings, 1984, p. 67). Finally, Rachel said this practice is based on the belief that the teachers can "lead students upward;" students can improve. Perhaps the best way to understand *Rocks in the Basket* is through examples.

First year kindergarten teacher, Cynthia, described how she uses *Rocks in the Basket* in answer to the question: "What do you notice about student-to-student relationships?"

Mike, a kindergartner, will occasionally come up to me in the middle of playtime and say things like, 'Cynthia, I just gave John a shovel. That's practicing kindness, isn't it.' To which I may respond, 'Of course it is, Mike. Thanks for noticing that. Let's put a rock in the basket when we go inside.' And I notice comments like this, believe it or not, float through the kindergarten and first grade like the wind.

Cynthia implied that *Rocks in the Basket* influences the classroom environment and imbues her students' relationships with increased awareness of "practicing kindness," in this situation, sharing the shovel. First grade teacher, Maria, shared another example in response to the same question:

One day Joseph went across the monkey bars, which is an easy task for him. Then I noticed Stewart who is actually older than Joseph, get up and hesitate. But then he slowly went across the bars. Joseph, instead of rushing back up the ladder to take another turn, stood below watching Stewart and yelled encouragingly, 'Way to go, good job, You can do it!' So when we went back in the classroom, I said, 'Hey everyone, I noticed something on the playground.' Then I recounted the incident. I also ask them if they notice a reason to put a rock in the basket on the playground.

Maria said she recognized how Joseph remembered a slower child although it would have been easier for him to jump up and have another go himself. She encouraged Joseph's patience and concern for Stewart and acknowledged him by putting a rock in the basket.

Theater director, Oliver, in response to my interview question concerning how he "sees himself treating students well," recalled how challenging the theater can be and how he tries to acknowledge his students for their participation.

In the play rehearsal process, I am constantly trying to acknowledge the children's effort in a difficult process. The play process in itself makes us very vulnerable since we are on stage where everybody can see us. Just the fact that the students are able to get up is worthy of recognition and acknowledgement and so I always applaud them and put rocks in the basket. When students feel support from their peers and myself as the director for what they do well, when they know you recognize they're trying, they are able to show sides of themselves only available in such an accepting environment.

Oliver said he shows his support and acceptance of students by putting rocks in the basket. He claimed that when students feel confirmed for their "effort in a difficult process," they

bring more of themselves to the task at hand.

Second and third grade teacher, Rachel, in answer to the same question concerning “treating students well,” recounted an example of how she seeks to put rocks in the basket:

I differentiate between the momentary behaviors and the person. The person needs always to feel loved. And I talk about my mistakes and also sometimes tell stories about what I was afraid of as a child. When someone is not sitting down and not getting started and needing me to repeat directions or I've given some kind of reprimand, I always look for something that's genuinely positive so that I can have an interaction that shows appreciation. It must be completely authentic and we'll put a rock in the basket. Then children learn to trust that I don't blame them for their mistakes or hold some sort of grudge for a behavior that is gone.

Rachel described how *Rocks in the Basket* reminds her to confirm something positive in her students. Noddings (2002b) writes of the effects of acknowledging sympathy, concern, and joy: “We cultivate moral sentiments such as sympathy, concern, and joy in our relations... by acknowledging acts that exhibit these sentiments” (p. 215). Rachel seeks out and acknowledges “something that's genuinely positive.” Noddings claims that acknowledgement encourages moral sentiments. While *Rocks in the Basket* acknowledges students on a moment-to-moment basis, the teachers told of a yearly ceremony that confirms students' long-term growth.

• End-of-the-Year Ceremony

The teachers depicted a graduation ceremony in which they recognize qualities in their students, such as laughter, humor, creativity, imagination, excellence, friendship, or love. Math and science teacher, Damon, described this tradition when asked, “How/why did you decide to teach at this school?” He retold his impression of his first time as a member of the audience.

I completed my masters in computer science from MIT and I was working at Xerox Park. I visited the school at the end-of-the-year celebration. What I was so impressed by was giving kids qualities instead of diplomas. It seemed really

meaningful and a way to make each year's end special and again, meaningful. And not just, 'I finished' on a material level. It's a family feeling. Everyone got recognized and it was not just, 'Congratulations on finishing second grade.' Although it's public, it seemed also deeply personal. I know now it's one of the ways the teachers say, 'I love you' and 'I know what you're going through.' It celebrates each student's unique learning. Like I saw someone receive the quality of 'friendship.' It's like the teacher said, 'I know you're making friends, not only paper mache or research reports. I care about your growth as a human being.'

I remember a kindergardener getting a quality like kindness or sharing and I felt like I could see that this came from the child's developing awareness of people around them. The kids themselves and the speeches they gave to accept their qualities and what they said, from kindergarten up really conveyed to me that these qualities had, in fact, meaning for them. The speeches were very moving. They were shining as individuals, conscious and aware of what they said and what it meant. And to me that was proof of the philosophy, because any school can talk about a beautiful philosophy, but as a scientist especially, I was looking for proof. We can talk about the way we wish school could be, but I wanted to see how it was.

Damon said he was struck by the way the teachers recognized the students for what he saw as real and meaningful growth. He perceived that the students demonstrated the qualities they received in their speeches. Furthermore, he described his appreciation for how the teachers congratulated their students for their personal and social achievement, and not only their intellectual growth.

Second and third grade teacher, Rachel, in part of her answer to the question, "I want to explore how you see yourself treating students well," described how the teachers meet to decide on the qualities and how they present them to students:

At our end of the year celebration each student is awarded a beautiful paper with a quality on it. The teachers gather together way before the end of the year and talk about each child, sharing stories about each one, offering suggestions for a quality for each child. The qualities are, for example, things like courage, love, determination, generosity, generosity of heart, compassion, sense of humor, excellence, creative expression, friendship, curiosity, and self-expression.

Once the qualities are decided each teacher sits with each child in her or his class alone and tells the child what the quality is. All these qualities are things we

work on throughout our lives, so they are not about mastery or achievement, they are both encouraging and affirming. The children write about how they have experienced this quality in their lives.

Thus, the end-of-the-year celebration and the presentation of qualities, to Rachel, are a way the teachers give their students a gift of recognition or confirmation. She said they carefully choose the qualities in a lengthy meeting to discuss each student's individual growth. The students reflect on what the quality has meant in his or her life and present this self reflection to the school community to commemorate their graduation. The teachers declared this one way they honor their students' best intentions and strengths. They said they reflect on their relationship with each student to determine a quality and encourage their students in relationship when they celebrate a quality that reflects social facility, such as love, awareness, humor, compassion, or generosity of heart. The teachers asserted the importance of recognizing their students for more than just intellectual competency. The qualities are one way the teachers said they recognize a student as a person and in so doing, confirm him or her.

Rachel gave the following example also in response to my question concerning "how she treats students well."

Susan has been with our school since kindergarten and has just completed third grade. She is a strong willed, bright child from a loving family. In the last few months she has seemed less happy, less cheerful, more emotional and generally unsure of herself. Her parents and I have spoken about this often and openly many times with each conversation ending in our bewilderment.

I decided to give the quality 'delight' to Susan because Susan is delightful ... underneath it all and she needed a concrete reminder, one she would look up in the dictionary, write about her experiences with, share how and when she remembered being and feeling delightful, and live with hopefully long enough to bring it to her conscious mind, and in doing so, remember that it is true. She might remember that she can trust its existence inside herself; that she can see it mirrored in her school's appreciation of her.

I think it's notable that when she gave her speech at our end of the year celebration, she mentioned twice how happy people were when around her. Also, she ended her speech saying, 'I want to thank my mother and Rachel for inspiring me to be so delightful.' As she smiled up at me with those great big blue eyes she seemed confident in her own delightful self.

I have come to understand that children fulfill my prophecies. It seems too simple to be true, but it is not. Our beliefs can support their developing character and confidence deeply.

Rachel described appreciating Susan for her quality of delight, even though Susan had been "less happy, less cheerful, more emotional and generally unsure of herself." In bestowing Susan with the quality of "delight," Rachel implied that Susan became more able to express "delight" and essentially more able to express her "best" self. Rachel's description suggests that her confirmation of Susan's delightfulness allowed her to express delight.

Confirmation on the whole refers to the ways the teachers said they notice, appreciate, and encourage their students' growth, development, and learning. The teachers described how they notice moments that they deem involve good will between students and celebrate them by putting rocks in the basket. At the end of each year, they told of affirming their students' aspirations, strengths, and accomplishments by presenting them with a quality such as joy, love, friendship, humor, or generosity of heart. The teachers said that this confirmation of their students shows they recognize what students are "going through," encourage their good qualities, and exemplify their love for their students.

E. Conclusion

The Rose School teachers see modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation as critical features of fostering their students' understanding of moral and personal development. As models, the teachers stress reflection on their behavior in light of their aspirations. Through dialogue, the teachers reported their attempt to facilitate the

resolution of conflict, establish and sustain caring relationships, and ponder existential questions. The teachers described the practice of not only intellectual tasks, but also relational ones, through service-learning. Such practice may become habit through repetition; thus, the teachers confirm their students with *Rocks in the Basket* and end-of-the-year qualities. Nevertheless, the question arises, how do the Rose School teachers' conceptions compare with those of Noddings? This question shall be addressed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Rose School teachers' interviews, when compared with Nel Noddings' schema for caring moral education, suggest the possibility for its practical application in elementary school. In comparing these teachers' descriptions of school practice to Noddings' categories of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation, I found that the teachers reinforce elements of Noddings' theory and provide ways to conceive of its influence in elementary school.

A. Modeling

In comparing the Rose School teachers' responses to Noddings' theory, I found the teachers' interviews demonstrate that they conceive of themselves as models. These teachers said that everything they do in school influences their students' ability to develop and sustain effective relationships. The teachers did not describe their influence as limited to direct instruction. Noddings concurs (2002b): "No reasonable person would argue that all learning should be incidental, but it would be equally foolish to ignore the power of 'untaught lessons'" (p. 215). Having described how they model ways of being, their treatment of each other as colleagues, and their reflection on their own learning, the teachers underscore "the power of untaught lessons."

According to the teachers, they model ways of being. Throughout all the moments of the day, they said their actions and attitudes may foster standards of behavior and may affect their students' moral as well as intellectual development. Noddings incites teachers to model not only intellectual understanding, but also (and she contends more importantly) respect and consideration.

Because the emphasis in the present discussion is on human relationships, it should be noted that the teacher models not only admirable patterns of intellectual activity but also desirable ways of interacting with people. Such teachers treat students with respect and consideration and encourage them to treat each other in a similar fashion. They use teaching moments as caring occasions. (Noddings, 1988, p. 223)

The teachers also consider their influence as models as extending beyond the intellectual in scope. Rachel, the second and third grade – as well as mentor teacher – asserted the far-reaching influence of a teacher as a model:

Well, everything about a teacher, the student learns from. Do I as the teacher re-negotiate things when they change? Can students trust me? A student has to survive socially, mentally, and physically in the environment that is controlled by the adult.

Rachel stated that students may “learn from everything about a teacher.” Noddings (1984) writes that all of a teacher’s actions have moral implications: “A teacher cannot ‘talk’ this ethic. She must live it... Everything we do, then, as teachers, has moral overtones” (p. 179). Furthermore, in alluding to a teacher’s authority in his or her relationship with students, Rachel’s comment recalls the fact that a teacher is often the only adult in the room. She or he may be the instigator and judge of most activity. From this perspective, Rachel’s description may emphasize the influence of modeling, as evidenced by the following example. Let’s say a teacher prefers witty students. Even if a student’s jokes alienate his or her friends, he or she procures the teacher’s favor. What sort of environment for relationships might this teacher foster? Perhaps vying for their teacher’s attention might pit students against one another. Rachel’s emphasis on a teacher’s authority underscores the relevance of trust and trustworthiness in relationships in the teacher-to-student relationship. Her focus on the inherent power in a teacher’s role also accentuates modeling in general, thereby reinforcing Noddings’ conception.

Since the teachers I interviewed considered their role as models one of influence, they mentioned ways they aspire to be. They described differing aspirations, such as

to be caring, trustworthy, cheerful, mature, or attentive. In accord with these teachers, Noddings (2002a) does not insist on a core set of values:

A central question in the current debate over the introduction of values education is exactly the one alluded to above: Whose values? One side would press for its own; another would press for consensus. Care theorists would answer, Everyone's. (p. 23)

Although the teachers did mention the importance of modeling their values, they did not claim they could directly instill these traits in students. Instead of inculcating virtue, these teachers said they themselves attempt to express their aspirations to show their students how to behave in their relationships.

The teachers talked about modeling successful relationships through their own relationships with their colleagues. The teachers said they do not ask of students what they themselves do not attempt in their own lives. Noddings (2002b) addresses the importance of authenticity in modeling:

Modeling is very powerful, and it appears as a component in almost every form of moral education. To be effective it must be genuine; that is, an exemplar must not consciously exhibit one form of behavior and then – caught off-guard – act in a way that contradicts what he or she has modeled ... Modeling may be more effective in the moral domain than in the intellectual because its very authenticity is morally significant. (p. 287)

The teachers addressed another dimension of the importance of authenticity. Through modeling a behavior for students, the teachers gain an understanding of "how hard it is."

First grade teacher, Maria said:

We are careful to include each other when we go for tea or something fun. I think when you ask someone else, like a student in your class, to do something, you need to be able to do it too, or have tried and know how hard it is.

Maria suggested that excluding her colleagues might render her requests to include others lacking in authenticity. Without having tried herself, a teacher may not be sensitive enough to the difficulty or lack conviction in the possibility of establishing

real collegiality. For example, imagine a teacher flippantly asking a popular student to include someone less socially adept. How effective might the request be if the teacher is insensitive to its gravity?

The teachers said they try to model their own aspirations to be appreciative, communicative, and inclusive with their colleagues. As the math and science teacher, Damon, explained: "The students see me appreciate other teachers. We communicate with each other and never with a student against a teacher to the student." In order to model what the teachers ask of their students, they also claimed the necessity of reflection upon their own practice.

The teachers argued for the importance of reflecting on their behavior in light of their individual ideals. According to the teachers, they influence their students with their attitudes, feelings, or attention. Therefore, the teachers' effect on their students becomes the subject of continual reflection. For the teachers, the onus of cooperative behavior lies not only on students, but also with the teachers themselves. Rachel stated:

Teaching gives one the opportunity to learn a great deal about oneself moment to moment. Teachers who don't do this tend to blame kids for their feelings or problems in the classroom. My role is to guide, teach, appreciate, and live together with children. It is to celebrate growth.

Rachel said she considers reflection crucial given the demanding nature of teaching. An example may clarify her claim. For instance, a lack of awareness of a teacher's preference for organization might cause a teacher to dislike an especially disorganized student. If a teacher has failed to separate the student's disorganization from his or her other characteristics, such a teacher, may find her or himself unconsciously thinking less of the student in general. A lack of awareness surrounding even such a seemingly small prejudice could involuntarily color a teacher's feeling and behavior towards a student. Noddings (2002a) writes: "Thus when things go wrong or threaten to do so, we have to reflect on our own actions and beliefs" (p. 154). Noddings agrees with the Rose School teachers' priority on reflection.

Furthermore, in the very act of positing aspirations, the teachers portrayed themselves in a continual process of learning through reflection. A K-1 science teacher, Penelope, said:

I don't mean teachers must be perfect, but we can be aimed towards being kind, loving, caring, reflective, thoughtful, understanding, all these things. Then I can compare my behavior in reflection with what I want it to be and learn from my experience.

Penelope asserted the importance of both positing aspirations and reflecting on how she might improve her expression of them. Noddings (1984) affirms the importance of reflecting on one's experience to improve one's capacity to care:

Discussions about what was done, what might have been done, and why we might choose to act differently in the future are engaged openly. Emphasis is always on the maintenance of caring, on how to be better – just some, realistically better – than we are. (p. 121)

First grade teacher, Maria, said she chose to work at Rose School for the express reason to improve herself and her ability to "embody kindness:"

I was looking at the school principles and I was thinking about the one that says *Practice Kindness*, and I realized that in order to teach that I would have to model kindness and if I could model kindness I would have to embody it.

Maria implied the importance of modeling her ideals. Maria, as well as the other teachers, affirmed the importance of growth through reflection – of becoming increasingly expressive of whatever traits to which they aspire. Given this perspective, one might argue that they seem not to consider these traits as something they might completely "possess." Noddings (2002a) states: "... I think we make a mistake if we concentrate entirely on *inculcating* certain traits or virtues. The idea of inculcating virtue suggests, again, that they can become possessions" (p. 152). The teachers seem to have suggested a subtler drawing out of virtue through their own example as models than inculcation indicates.

(If teachers approach their responsibility for moral education from a caring orientation rather than an ethic of principle, they cannot teach moral education as

one might teach geometry or European history or English; that is, moral education cannot be formulated into a course of study or set of principles to be learned. Rather, each student must be guided toward an ethical life – or, we might say, an ethical ideal – that is relationally constructed. (Noddings, 1988, p. 222)

Overall, these teachers' narratives confirm the importance of Noddings' theory of modeling to foster student learning concerning relationship. Rachel's discussion of a teacher's authority highlights the influence of teachers as models as well as the importance of trust in the student-to-teacher relationship. The teachers did not mention direct instruction of traits or values as a way to foster relationships at school. Instead, they asserted the importance of modeling their own aspirations. They said they try to demonstrate these ways to be in their own relationships with colleagues. The teachers' attempts to "practice what they preach" render them both more authentic and more effective. To become increasingly expressive of their own ideals, the teachers stressed the importance of learning through reflection. Ultimately, they illustrate modeling as a process that necessitates their own learning.

These teachers talked about what they attempt to model in conversation with students. Thus, much can be learned about what the teachers said concerning relationships in how they described their actual conversations at school.

B. Dialogue

The Rose School teachers described dialogues that lead to both greater understanding and respect for others, as well as the development of effective relationships. In my interviews, more of the teachers' comments could be compared to dialogue than any other category. Perhaps this suggests its overall importance in moral education, as Noddings also asserts. I assigned each teacher's descriptions of his or her discussions to formal, casual, and immortal dialogue, according to each description's most central theme. "The three types of conversation are not discrete; they run into one another, and

one cannot always tell when the conversational switch has occurred” (Noddings, 2002a, p. 142). The teachers’ comments drew on dialogues concerning guided discussions or formal discourse over conflicts, casual conversations in which the students and their teachers converse with a focus on the teachers’ intentions to listen and sometimes share with their students, and finally, immortal dialogue over their school principles and stories.

1. Formal Dialogue

I placed Rose School’s conflict resolution in the category of formal dialogue, although its focus is not on building competent rational arguments. According to its reliance on the specific steps, and to their involvement as guides, the teachers consider conflict resolution apart from casual conversation. They described following guidelines to facilitate solutions to conflict. The teachers said they guide their students to take turns, speak their point of view, and listen to their peers with a goal of understanding one another and developing more effective relationships.

Second and third grade teacher, Rachel, predicated the success of conflict resolution on prior teacher-to-student relationships when she said: “Also, the whole process depends on one’s relationship built from the beginning of the year. You draw on your relationship when you ask a child to stop and listen.” This process is not to be confused with a disciplinary action in which the teachers are not involved. Rachel explained how the teachers guide their students to look each other in the eye, speak honestly, and accept and respect each other’s points of views. Rachel said that this process naturally evokes empathy, meaning receptivity to each other, from which resolution can follow naturally. Noddings (1992) also characterizes dialogue along similar lines. “Dialogue is a common search for understanding, empathy, or appreciation” (p. 23). Rachel described conflict resolution:

Honesty, acceptance, and empathy are the primary ingredients for a successful conflict resolution. Honesty is disarming and makes it possible for one to see another's reality. Sometimes this alone dispels conflict. As we become aware of a friend's true feelings, the desire to understand arises naturally within us. With this desire comes the possibility of compassion and resolution.

In comparing the teacher's conflict resolution to Noddings' theory, I find the teachers' conception differs, although it seems more formal than any other dialogues they described in my interviews. Noddings refers to formalized arguments in moral philosophy. The teachers did not mention training in logic as part of conflict resolution or as a way to foster relationships. Although conflict resolution does not hinge on the development of rational argument, Rachel claimed that her students do practice expressing thoughts and feelings in clear language. She stated: "Everyone can learn to explain him or herself and listen to each other in relationship through these guided dialogues." Furthermore, she argued that a student's self-expression could render him or her more effective in relationships.

Noddings herself cautions against overemphasis on formal dialogue, especially that which pits interlocutors against one another.

We should not, however, exaggerate the usefulness of formal conversation. History is liberally sprinkled with examples of highly trained people who knew the conventions of formal conversation and quickly cast them aside in the heat of emotional debate. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 136)

In the teachers' descriptions of conflict resolution, their students do not weigh arguments. Rather the participants listen, understand, and help each other to understand other perspectives. Noddings (2002a) mentions a practice of intervention that reflects conflict resolution:

...pointing out to the child the effects of his act, insisting that such acts are unacceptable, and showing a better way. Conscientious parents and teachers have used this method for centuries. (p. 151)

In conflict resolution, the teachers also insist on certain behaviors at school. However, they said they use conflict resolution not only to point out and explain behavior, but also to draw from their students a desire to relate and to help them understand how to do so. Rachel stated: "As we become aware of a friend's true feelings, the desire to understand arises naturally within us." Noddings describes the effects of a mother listening receptively to her son's troubles.

Then the two might smile at each other and explore rational solutions; they can speculate about faults, mistakes, and intentions. They can plot a course of action for the future. The child, accepted and supported, can begin to examine his own role in the incident and, perhaps, even suggest how he might have behaved differently. The receptivity of the one-caring need not lead to permissiveness or to an abdication of responsibility for conduct and achievement. (Noddings, 1984 p. 59)

Noddings suggests that "acceptance and support" may render a child better able to accept responsibility and learn from his or her actions. The teachers said they do not shy away from suggestions and expectations of respect and even kindness, if their students fail to assert them for themselves. However, they claimed that their continued practice of asking their students to stop, look, and listen to a friend over time may awaken students to their own inclination to treat others well.

The teachers said the process of conflict resolution occurs often enough to resolve upset feelings or altercations. Although the formal steps seem simple, Noddings' (1984) following description characterizes the sort of attention the teachers described as necessary: "We have to feel something that prompts us to ask, 'What are you going through?' and we have to feel something again when we hear the answer, if we are to respond appropriately" (p. 41). The facilitator engrosses him or herself in the other through the dialogue and is motivated to respond in some way. He or she does not give predetermined responses, but listens receptively and decides based on the context, how much or even whether to speak at all. The following is an excerpt of Rachel's example of conflict resolution with Mary, Tom, and Samantha:

Mary and Tom spoke directly about how they felt in 'I' statements to Samantha. They were both very proud of their ability to speak clearly, state their case adeptly, a case of their annoyance and impatience with this new girl.

Rachel told how she facilitated a discussion where one ostracized student expressed her desire for friendship in front of those so far unwilling to bestow it. Rachel said she recognized she could not coerce Tom and Mary into a friendship. She expressed the importance of attending to the situation with sensitivity over time. Rachel described her attempts to determine Samantha's, as well as the others' needs, and then formulate her caring response. Noddings (2002a) writes:

Recognizing the inevitable otherness of each person ...we put great emphasis on receptive attention, or engrossment. To create a satisfactory response, I cannot simply consult my own preferences; I must find out what need the other is seeking to satisfy. In preparing to respond to you, I assume neither that your needs (beyond basic biological needs) are exactly like mine nor that people 'like you' cannot possibly have needs like mine. I remain open and attentive to what you will disclose. (p. 149)

Rachel described how she first conversed with Samantha to determine how she might best serve her needs and then respectfully shared with Samantha ways to approach Tom and Mary. Rachel also gently asserted herself with her whole class, including Tom and Mary, to allow them to first understand and then to begin accepting Samantha.

How can this simple practice of receptive, engrossed attention actually foster resolution? Perhaps Noddings (2002a) answers this question in her explanation of how caring demystifies altruism, given the connection between receptivity and resolution:

Another advantage of emphasizing the relational sense of caring is that much of the mystery of altruism is removed. . . . The acts we do for others . . . are not entirely for others. If these acts strengthen the relations in which we are defined, they promote our well-being too. (p. 150)

Rose School's conflict resolutions may awaken these students to an awareness of their effects on each other. Samantha's expression of her desire for friendship, along with Rachel's strong but non-accusatory suggestions, may have rendered Tom and Mary more

open to change. Teachers said that sometimes receptive attention alone can resolve conflict. Rachel stated, "Sometimes just my being there and listening to each person is enough and then they are ready to go play without any more words." It seems consistent with the theory of care that when students understand how their actions affect others, their own inclination to develop good relationships with others may lead to caring behavior.

So far, conflict resolution seems to reflect only elements of Noddings' formal conversation, although it draws on the concept of caring-for, involving engrossment with the other and displaced motivation. Conflict resolution differs from the classic response to conflict that Noddings mentions involving informing a perpetrator of the results and the unacceptability of his or her act and demonstrating acceptable behavior. Instead, it attempts to elicit a response from participants and expects the perpetrator to contribute. Sometimes the teachers said they merely acknowledge that harm has been done. At other times they described listening and attempting to understand the student's perspective. Through conflict resolution, Tom and Mary became more aware of how they were hurting Samantha. Samantha in turn became more aware of the nature of her own suffering and what she could do to have it diminished.

The point is to understand ourselves better, and through that understanding to provide a moral climate in which our children are unlikely to perform violent and vicious acts. . . . (I)t is to respond to this particular sufferer and, beyond that, to the suffering that accompanies recognition that our own souls (ways of being) might be lost ... (Noddings, 2002a, p. 50)

The teachers said they give a chance to speak not only to those who have been harmed, but also those who have harmed others. In so doing, they may offer their students a chance to reflect on their own conduct and change it to be more supportive of the other. In coming to recognize and understand the tendencies to exclude, the students may come to grasp what it really means to include others.

In general, the Rose School teachers described how they ask their students to confront their effects on others through the process of conflict resolution. The teachers explained that when their students look each other in the eye and express themselves, the students may feel for each other. This, teachers claimed, is often enough to inspire a resolution to conflict. This process demands time and a relationship with the students involved. Although the teachers described clear guidelines, they said they must attend more to a student's needs than to a preconceived plan of discourse. Ultimately, in agreement with Noddings, these teachers' narratives reveal that the success of conflict resolution demands time in conversation with students so that a relationship exists *before* a conflict arises.

The teachers said such relationships are formed in casual conversation over time. "(O)rdinary conversation ... is, among other things, preparation for a constructive approach to conflict" (Noddings, 2002a, p. 128). Through informal conversation, students and teachers, and students and students, can develop relationships.

2. Informal Dialogue

The Rose School teachers claimed that the relationships with their students, which underlie the success of conflict resolution, form through casual conversations over time. From my interviews with the teachers emerged narrations of conversations in which the teachers listen carefully to students, attend to spontaneous conversation in class, and make time for conversational meetings. My interviews reveal the teachers' agreement with Noddings over the importance of casual conversation in the development of relationships at school.

Kindergarten teacher, Cynthia, stressed listening to her students in conversation to foster relationships:

I help them develop relationships by acknowledging their thoughts and ideas. I listen to the children during their work and throughout the day so I can be aware of their reality. I think this helps them because I'm not alien to their world; I'm approachable and care about Thomas the Train and how rubber bands can look like a star when stretched a certain way.

Cynthia described responding to her students as unique individuals with their own interests. She asserted the importance of her interest in her students. Cynthia said to "care" and be "approachable" helps her develop relationships. All the teachers I interviewed said they listen and converse with students in casual conversation to foster relationships. They also said that these conversations must sometimes take precedence over their prior plans. Noddings describes how informal conversation is overlooked, even though she considers it possibly the most important aspect of dialogue and moral education in general. "Although all three forms of conversation should be of interest to moral educators, it will be argued that the last (ordinary conversation) is the most important, and probably the most neglected" (Noddings, 2002a, p. 118). The teachers also value casual conversation to such an extent that they intentionally organize unscripted meetings with their students.

In her description of one such meeting, a walk in which students are paired, second and third grade teacher, Rachel said, "These conversations give me the opportunity to acknowledge each individual in a meaningful and positive way." Rachel talked about the importance of any kind of conversation with her students. In the example she gave with Sally, Rachel was able to model for her students her own interest in literature. Rachel added that conversations with her students give her a chance to acknowledge them in a "meaningful and positive way." Noddings (2002a) reveals the opportunity that such conversations may afford.

Perhaps most significantly of all, in ordinary conversation, we are aware that our partners in conversation are more important than the topic. Participants are not trying to win a debate; they are not in a contest with an opponent. They

are conversing because they like each other and want to be together ... In such conversations, children learn all sorts of things – facts, the rules of polite conversation, manner and style, trust and confidence, how to listen, how to respond without hurting, and a host of other factors in human interaction. Because parents are so harried today and because so many do not fit the criteria I have suggested, teachers simply must engage their students in ordinary conversation. The kind of people we are turning out is far more important than national supremacy in mathematics and science. Teachers must be free to ‘jump all the fences’ and explore matters of great and small importance with their students. (p. 129)

Noddings writes that participants in ordinary conversation can express their fondness for each other and demonstrate effective interaction. She asserts casual conversation’s role in fostering students who can, for example, “listen without hurting.” Rachel concurs with Noddings’ assertion of the importance of “the kind of people we are turning out” but places the emphasis even more directly on teaching students how “to be with one another.”

Rachel stated:

I will say, yes we’re learning about art and culture and history and reading and math and science; however, our most important learning, our most important project in life, in school, is to learn how to be with one another in kind respectful, friendly, affectionate, and caring ways.

Rachel averred that attending to her students is “the most important part of our curriculum.” She considers “learning ... how to be with one another ... our most important project in life.” Caring-for students means valuing them as they are, separate from their momentary performance. When Rachel’s students respond in class, she said she attends to them as persons “before, during, after, and always in the curriculum.”

Noddings (1984) explains the sort of attention that caring-for students demands:

When a teacher asks a question in class and a student responds, she receives not just the ‘response’ but the student. What he says matters, whether it is right or wrong, and she probes gently for clarification, interpretation, contribution. She is not seeking the answer but the involvement of the cared-for. For the brief interval of dialogue that grows around the question, the cared-for indeed ‘fills the firmament.’” (p. 176)

Without a professed value on conversation, could teachers afford students such attention?

The teachers I interviewed confirm the centrality of normal dialogue in their narratives of how they foster relationships at school. They seem to recognize that conversation is a means through which they can understand a child's legitimate needs and wants so they can respond appropriately. Through casual conversation, the teachers described how they attend receptively to their students. The teachers said they see time to converse with students as a central vehicle through which caring relationships are established and sustained. In general, the teachers talked about the importance of dialogue throughout the school day when they listen, converse, and meet with students to foster relationships.

Sometimes such conversation draws on themes involving existential questions. The teachers described how their school principles and their conversation over stories reflect immortal dialogue.

3. Immortal Dialogue

I found dialogue concerning immortal themes in the Rose School teachers' narratives concerning the meaning and application of the school's principles, as well as in their descriptions of conversation over stories. First, the teachers told of engaging their students in conversations about the school's principles: "Practice Kindness," "Be a Loving Friend," and "Enjoy Yourself." They reported that these conversations lead to questions and explorations about life. Secondly, the teachers mentioned stories and how themes that address immortal or existential concerns lead to group discussion. Noddings (2002a) bemoans the abrogation of meaningful discourse from schools: "Few professors in these disciplines address the questions that were once thought to be central to liberal studies: How should I live? What kind of life is worth living? How do I find meaning in life?" (p. 72).

The teachers explained how discussions concerning their school's principles draw on existential themes. For example, Rachel described how she intends *Enjoy Yourself* to lead to a discussion of how one's happiness relates to the happiness of others. She said:

'Can I really enjoy myself when my friend is disturbed or sad? Is there a point where enjoy myself includes the reality of other people?' Obviously, the hope is that the idea will occur that I am in relation to many, many other things, the most immediate in class being the friends near me and that their happiness or unhappiness is meaningful to me. It is the beginning of what would become social responsibility. It evolves through personal experience with people we actually care about.

Rachel suggested that immortal conversation, in which students "hear or even wonder" about how "enjoying myself including the reality of other people," may encourage social responsibility in students over time. Noddings considers caring-for those at a distance to be *caring-about*:

Caring-about moves us from the face-to-face world into the wider public realm. If we have been well cared for and have learned to care for a few intimate others, we move into the public world with fellow-feeling for others. We are moved by compassion for their suffering, we regret it when they do not experience the fruits of care, and we feel outrage when they are exploited. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 22)

Rachel may seek to cultivate "fellow-feeling." She hopes her students discover how a friend's trouble can also become one's own concern.

In another example, Rachel related a conversation over the theme of friendship: One of the most important learnings is that if I want to become friends with someone else, I must not only share what I care about, but I must receive the friend.

Rachel indicated that through conversations she tries to foster student learning about how to be a friend. Noddings also considers friendship in her discussion of immortal dialogue. She deems it an aspect of "the good life" and therefore a relevant theme in school. She explains that friendship encourages us to be our best selves.

(T)he good life according to Aristotle – and few of us would disagree – requires friends. Friends (Aristotle contended) not only provide companionship in shared

recreations, they also encourage us to be the best persons we can be. Students should be invited to look at friendship this way. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 140)

Friendship, as well as other existential themes, arose in my interviews when the teachers mentioned conversation over stories. First grade teacher, Maria, stated:

We are always trying to help students make friends. I like to read stories about friendship and kindness. Just as much attention goes into helping students build relationships as helping them learn to read.

Maria said she reads stories about "friendship and kindness" in her attempt to help students to develop successful relationships. Noddings (2002a) writes: "The teaching of literature provides a wonderful opportunity for the discussion of moral sentiments" (p. 138).

Helena also talked about mythological stories, the source for the Rose School theater productions, as important channels for fostering relationship.

In the plays over a period of years, students will be exposed to different cultures, different traditions, in a visceral way, because they take on through the acting, the personas and the characters. Since the stories we tell involve mythological elements, we teachers have great questions to ask students and reflect on ourselves. We can ask, 'How do these other people find meaning in their lives?'

Helena mentioned how the characters and their exploits lead to reflection and questioning concerning the meaning humans make of life itself. Noddings concedes ultimately that immortal conversation ought to be woven into the fabric of all moments of school, just like care. She states: "We should discuss existential questions – including spiritual matters – freely" (Noddings, 2002a, p. 100). Noddings refers to the power of stories and existential questions. In the teachers' portrayal of their theater program, they emphasized their exploration of questions concerning the meaning of life. Noddings refers to these questions as the original goals of liberal education.

We (care theorists) feel that education – real education – cannot neglect the questions, Where do I stand in the world? What has my life amounted to? What might I become? Also, What is the meaning of life? Is there a God? What is my

place in the universe? are all questions that should be explored in true education. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 124)

Not only did Helena say that her students question the meaning persons make of life, but also she mentioned the relational demands of acting. She implied that acting out mythological stories fosters multicultural understanding. Acting demands relating to another unknown character enough to bring him or her alive in oneself. The work of Susan Verducci extends Noddings' concern for the moral development of students through the critical role of drama and the arts in cultivating both the moral imagination and multicultural understanding. Verducci (2000) writes:

An actor must shift out of her own perspective and into the character's (using her own emotional life) to secure an understanding of the inner life of the character. Essentially, an actor's goal resembles that of the caring empathizer; she ferrets out and, to varying degrees, internalizes and instantiates the mental state of, in this case, her character ... An actor also draws information about the character's inner life from the historical period in which the action of the play occurs. She examines the climate of the time and place; the prevalent ideas and values she uncovers comprise a frame through which the actions and behaviour of the character are analyzed. (p. 91)

Verducci underscores the role of acting to foster greater understanding of others. She correlates the demands of acting with a core task of caring, receptive attention, in this case, to one's character. Helena said that her students "become Indian, they become Italian, as actors and actresses, through what they wear, how they speak ... " She suggests, as does Verducci, that students "internalize and instantiate" their character. In so doing they can gain facility in caring and in relationship.

Acting out existential stories and discussing their school principles represent ways these teachers explained how they engage their students in immortal conversation. In Noddings' view, educators must infuse immortal dialogue throughout all experience in school to draw on a student's "total reactions on life":

Every school subject can be related in some way to the immortal questions. Without such relation, the subjects are mere conglomerations of skills and superficial concepts. Probing in search for these relations involves a person's 'total reactions upon life,' as William James put it. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 125)

The lenses of Noddings' theory underscore the importance of extending this conversation in many possible directions. The immortal questions touch on common human experiences, life, and death. In Noddings' view and mine, to ask a student to muse upon these experiences is to care for him or her, and to invite him or her to consider his or her deepest concerns.

The teachers' interviews focused on dialogue as a vehicle for resolving conflict and listening to and sharing with students in spontaneous as well as planned conversations over many topics, including existential and immortal themes. When compared with Noddings' theory, these examples relate to some of her most central points. In Noddings' concept of caring-for students, time and movement to respond are necessary. In conflict resolution, Rachel described listening over time and drawing on a relationship that emerges through many normal conversations. Helena described how the students act out mythological stories and practice relating to portray their characters.

In a sense, whenever students speak, they practice speaking, and, on a deeper level, they practice relating to others. Practice can be considered distinct, however, in the sense that Noddings refers to how teachers, conceiving of students as learning to relate to each other, make time for this learning.

C. Practice

In my interviews, the Rose School teachers described opportunities for students to practice relating to one another. Noddings (2002a) refers to practice: "We could profitably discuss practice ... how to provide students with opportunities to care for one another" (p. 72). The teachers' narrations suggest they prioritize practice in relationship in general,

through service-learning, connection to the concept of habit, and, what they referred to as *Rocks in the Basket*.

In terms of practicing being in relationships in general, second and third grade teacher, Rachel, explained how she considers each moment an opportunity for her students to practice relating to others at school:

All day, every encounter is an opportunity to listen, to speak, to share and appreciate another person. We talk about listening to one another, paying attention to others around us and the needs of others as well as our own ...

Rachel said she discusses the subject of "practicing kindness" and talks about ways to do so. In her description, she equated practicing kindness with "listening to one another, paying attention to others around us and the needs of others as well as our own." Rachel told how she considers relationships important in every moment of her school day.

Noddings agrees that a teacher should value supportive and caring student interaction.

In a classroom dedicated to caring, students are encouraged to support each other; opportunities for peer interaction are provided, and the quality of that interaction is as important (to both teacher and students) as the academic outcomes. (Noddings, 1988, p. 223)

According to Noddings, a teacher concerned with care would provide opportunities for students to learn to relate and value such learning.

One way the teachers I interviewed explained their provision of such opportunity was through service-learning. Helena described service-learning as an opportunity for her students to venture into their larger community to practice serving or caring for others. In the case she described, her students serve the homeless. Helena told how her students practiced both recognizing and meeting the needs of others. Helena related how her students practiced responding to whatever needs they encountered. She said her students "begin to care" and "get over their fear or intimidation over time." In agreement with Noddings, Helena suggested that students need time to practice to care, to overcome their

“preconceptions.” Helena’s students practiced maintaining eye contact and responding to the needs of the homeless persons they meet.

When I care, when I receive the other ... my motive energy flows toward the other and perhaps, although not necessarily, towards his ends... I allow my motive energy to be shared; I put it at the service of the other. (Noddings, 1984, p. 33)

Helena’s students put themselves “at the service” of the homeless. In terms of Noddings’ theory of care, students may gain increased competence in caring through this service opportunity. Indeed, Noddings (1984) asserts that skills in caring can be learned.

There is a dimension of competence in caring ... My engrossment and motivational displacement push me to acquire skills in caretaking. But it is important to recognize that these *are* skills. Girls often quite naturally learn these skills by close and continuing apprenticeship to their mothers; boys often fail to learn them because they are diverted to more impersonal and abstract worlds. One must have encounters, legitimate opportunities to care, in order to go on caring effectively. (p. 123)

Noddings asserts the importance of apprenticeship in caring through the provision of “legitimate opportunities to care.” The teachers also stressed the necessity of allowing and facilitating real experience with others in need of care. Helena’s description of service-learning accentuates the importance of practice in caring, especially in terms of how her students found it “intimidating” before they gained experience. How would students lacking such guided practice overcome their intimidation? What sort of habits might they form if they never had such experience?

Another way the teachers underscore Noddings’ theory of practice is through their assertion of the importance of habit. According to the teachers, each moment gains in import as an opportunity to build habits of increasing facility in relating to others. Noddings also confirms the importance of habit: “At the core of this ideal is a habitual self that is caring” (Noddings, 2003, p. 215). Noddings conceives of the self as “habitual.” Rachel discussed the importance of habit in the construction of a person’s character or identity: “The greater importance of seeing moments as times to practice kindness is

that what I practice doing, I become.” Rachel spoke about the element of continuous possibility to learn and change through the development of habit. She said she considers building relationships to be something students can become increasingly adept at through practice.

The teachers all declared the importance of encouraging their students to learn to relate through diverse experience in service-learning, as well as during all the moments of the school day. They also described their practice of *Rocks in the Basket*, through which they encourage practice in caring at school. With *Rocks in the Basket*, the teachers described noticing and valuing increased awareness of their students’ ability to treat each other well. Second and third grade teacher, Rachel, said: “We use rocks to recognize anything from sharing, smiling, cooperating, playing with a new friend, playing with an old friend, or just enjoying anything together.” Rachel told how the teachers use *Rocks in the Basket* to recognize their students for practice in caring for one another as well as to encourage positive interaction in general at school. Noddings affirms the necessity of emphasizing not only academic success in school, but also the development of “competent, caring, loving, and lovable people.”

Our society does not need to make its children first in the world in mathematics and science. It needs to care for its children – to reduce violence, to respect honest work of every kind, to reward excellence at every level, to ensure a place for every child and emerging adult in the economic and social world, to produce people who can care competently for their own families and contribute effectively to their communities. In direct opposition to the current emphasis on academic standards, a national curriculum, and national assessment, I have argued that our main educational aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 94)

Rather than a technique that disciplines or encourages students to follow a teacher’s directions, *Rocks in the Basket* appears in the teachers’ conversations as their way to encourage “the growth of competent, caring, loving and lovable people.” These teachers said they attempt to recognize moments when their students cared, not only to please their

teacher, but also to express an authentic desire to relate successfully. Rachel explained: “We do not specify predetermined reasons to put rocks in the basket. Anyone can notice and put one in. It has to be sincere, and children understand that.” Rachel implied that her students do not compete over putting rocks in the basket. According to Rachel, rocks support the students in both practicing and gaining awareness of treating each other well. Besides her mentioning that anyone can put a rock in, she depicted the reflective discussion that her students engage in over caring acts. She stated: “I notice that my class remembers what they did to inspire rocks to go in the basket. I am surprised by how much they remember.”

The teachers mentioned practice in terms of relationships in general, service-learning, and *Rocks in the Basket*. In addressing habit in connection with school behavior, the teachers underscore the importance of Noddings’ conception of practice in caring. In the teachers’ descriptions of both service-learning experiences as well as their tradition of *Rocks in the Basket*, they explained how they provide ways to encourage their students to care. They talked about *Rocks in the Basket* in another sense as well. The teachers said they used the rocks to affirm, encourage, or confirm their students.

D. Confirmation

In comparing the Rose School teachers’ comments with Noddings’ theory of confirmation, I found their explanation of *Rocks in the Basket* and their end-of-the-year ceremony to be examples of ways these teachers confirm their students. Noddings (1992) refers to Martin Buber when she defines the term confirmation:

Martin Buber (1965) described confirmation as an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others. When we confirm someone, we spot a better self and encourage its development. (p. 25)

Teachers said that *Rocks in the Basket* reminds them to acknowledge their students not only for their best motives, but also for any time they express their better selves. Noddings (1992) explains: "Confirmation lifts us toward our vision of a better self" (p. 25). The teachers considered acknowledgement of anything positive about a student an important aspect of fostering an environment at school in which effective relationships flourish. Buber (1965) writes:

The teacher who wants to help the pupil to realize his best potentialities must intend him as this particular person, both in his potentiality and in his actuality. More precisely, he must know him not as a mere sum of qualities, aspirations, and inhibitions; he must apprehend him, and affirm him, as a whole. . . . And to give his influence unity and meaning, he must live through this situation in all its aspects not only from his own point of view but also from that of his partner. (p. 178)

The teachers described how *Rocks in the Basket* reminds them to "affirm," attend to, and recognize their students' authentic actions that they deem demonstrate care. Also, in the teachers' descriptions of their end-of-the-year ceremony, they told how they award each student with a quality to convey recognition of that student's experience, accomplishment, or expression throughout the year.

In the following excerpt, second and third grade teacher, Rachel, described how *Rocks in the Basket* prompts her to seek something truly positive in her students. Rachel stated:

I differentiate between the momentary behaviors and the person. The person needs always to feel loved. And I talk about my mistakes and also sometimes tell stories about what I was afraid of as a child. When someone is not sitting down and not getting started and needing me to repeat directions or I've given some kind of reprimand, I always look for something that's genuinely positive so that I can have an interaction that shows appreciation. It must be completely authentic and we'll put a rock in the basket.

Rocks in the Basket seems, given Rachel's description, to be an orientation as opposed to a technique (which Noddings would discourage) since it necessitates knowing the

student well enough to confirm him or her authentically. Noddings (1984) writes about confirmation: "She meets him as he is and finds something admirable and, as a result, he may find the strength to become even more admirable. He is confirmed" (p. 179).

I claim that the practice of *Rocks in the Basket* inclines the teachers toward confirming their students whenever possible. Rachel pointed out that when facing a challenge with a student, such as messiness, "the teacher can easily fall into a habit of expectation for the child to continue and without even realizing it, begin to respond negatively to the student." However, *Rocks in the Basket* reminds Rachel to recognize her student for his or her intentions with an eye on recognizing, as Noddings (2002b) put it, his or her "best motive."

This truly beautiful gesture, confirmation, can be used in a range of situations. If a child is struggling with a math problem or a musical passage, we can say, 'You've almost got it!' instead of 'This part is still wrong.' In moral education we attribute the best possible motive consonant with reality for the child's acts. This is not a mere strategy or technique and cannot be used in the absence of some knowledge of the child. The motive attributed to anyone's act must be consonant with reality in the sense that it really is the sort of motive we have come to expect of this person. Confirming a person avoids shame and leads upward toward a vision of a better self. (p. 289)

What chance has a student whose teacher cannot imagine his or her improvement, who maintains an image of his or her worst motive or weakest self?

Rachel pointed out that *Rocks in the Basket* is motivated by her belief that teachers influence the development of their students' mental attitudes, both positively and negatively:

To do any of this, I am assuming the belief that mental attitudes can change, our predominant ways of thinking, so often un-reflected upon by people, are actually something moving directionally at all times toward the negative or the positive.

Rachel said she sees confirming her students through *Rocks in the Basket* as a way to move her own as well as her students' "predominant ways to thinking ... toward the positive."

Another way the teachers described how they confirm their students, or as Buber put it "affirm him [sic], as a whole ... to give his influence unity and meaning" is their gift of qualities such as love, friendship, or humor, to celebrate the students' graduation. The teachers told of a lengthy meeting wherein they ponder how to celebrate their students as whole persons by recognizing their expression of a quality. Damon described this practice as a way to celebrate more than academic learning:

I know now it's one of the ways the teachers say, 'I love you' and 'I know what you're going through.' It's like the teacher said, 'I know you're making friends, not only paper mache or research reports. I care about your growth as a human being.'

Damon's description implies that the teachers try to familiarize themselves with more than their students' scores in math. Noddings (2002a) argues the importance of knowing the cared-for as a prerequisite for confirmation:

Confirmation ... requires a relation. Carers have to understand their cared-fors well enough to know what it is they are trying to accomplish. Attributing the best possible motive consonant with reality requires knowledge of that reality. We cannot just pull a motive out of thin air. (p. 21)

Noddings asserts the importance of knowing the reality of a student to confirm him or her. Noddings refers to a student's underlying motives, not his or her ability to express them perfectly. The teachers also do not suggest their students express their qualities perfectly. According to the teachers, their students aspire to express their qualities. Damon's impression of the first time he experienced the end-of-the-year ceremony demonstrates his perception that the students relate to the meaning of their quality. "The kids themselves and the speeches they gave to accept their qualities and what they said, from kindergarten up really conveyed to me that these qualities had, in fact, meaning for them." Noddings (2002a) mentions the reassurance of recognition for how one means or strives to be.

When we identify a motive and use it in confirmation, the cared-for should recognize it as his or her own: "That is what I was trying to do!" It is wonderfully reassuring to realize that another sees the better self that often struggles for recognition beneath our lesser acts and poorer selves. (Noddings, 2002a, p. 21)

In general confirmation appeared in these teachers' descriptions of *Rocks in the Basket* and their end-of-the-year celebration. The teachers said that confirming their students through *Rocks in the Basket* reminds them to try to value more than academic achievements, provides their students with recognition for caring acts, and renders students' challenges seemingly more possible to overcome. According to my interviews, the end-of-the-year ceremony confirms the students for their ability in relationship and not merely their academic achievement; it celebrates the students' expression of worthwhile qualities and thus affirms the importance of confirming the students' developmental progress in school.

E. Conclusions

In ninety-minute interviews, the Rose School teachers have related to me how they foster relationships with students and teachers at their private elementary school. Interestingly enough, when free from constraints that the public system dictates, such as standardized curricular goals, the teachers at this small private school describe attending to their students on the level of interpersonal relationships. This study shows that when these teachers talked about how to develop and sustain relationships with their students, they expressed ideas reflective of an ethic of care.

The teachers' discourse related to the concepts of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. The teachers' assertion of their own authority and its influence accentuates the importance of modeling. Although Noddings does not stress the centrality of formal dialogue, the teachers may provide a meaningful way of using guided steps to resolve conflict. Talking and listening in casual conversation with students emerged as the central vehicle through which the teachers try to form relationships with their students. In immortal conversation, the teachers described discussions that drew on existential themes over their unique school principle, such as *Be a Loving Friend* and *Practice Kindness*.

Practice in caring arose in conversation over relationship in general, service learning, and *Rocks in the Basket*. The teachers told of confirming their students with *Rocks in the Basket* and qualities at their end-of-the-year ceremony. These teachers' descriptions of their school practices may demonstrate the possibility of applying Noddings' core categories of moral education in other schools.

Ultimately, more questions for research arise. How would the Rose School teachers' interviews compare with what teachers from another school might say? Is the ability to care related to the organization or demographics of the Rose School? It would be interesting to explore how concerns for fostering effective relationships might operate within and be constrained by the organization and demographics of a public school. Do the Rose School teachers face constraints in caring-for students? If so, what would these teachers do if freed to "jump all fences," as Noddings put it? It is my hope that the Rose School teachers' narrations inspire more theorists and teachers to jump the fences of constraints as they apply conceptions of creative, innovative, and meaningful schooling practices. It is my further hope that other schools will strive to translate Noddings' ethic of care into the normative cultures of their own institutions.

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