Caring as a Teacher Virtue: Objections, Responses, and Affirmation

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to prove that caring, as conceptualized by Nel Noddings in her works on care ethics, must be a teacher virtue for students to achieve their potential. Several criticisms of caring as a teacher virtue are presented and rebutted. These criticisms include that caring is a private affair, teachers should focus on subject teaching, not every teacher has a caring character, not every student needs to be cared for, male teachers have caring anxiety, caring is a heavy burden, and caring will dominate teachers' professional viewpoints. Additionally, several positive reasons to support caring as a teacher virtue are given: (i) Caring makes education more decent; (ii) caring improves students' academic achievements and positive behaviors; (iii) caring is a win-win strategy; and (iv) caring establishes a connection to being. By way of debunking the criticisms and offering evidence for the positive benefits of caring, the result of this research affirms that caring must be a virtue for teachers.

Keywords: caring relationship, teacher-student relationship, rights vs. virtue, care ethics, Noddings

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關懷作為一種教師的德行：
質疑、回應與肯定

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摘　要

　　本研究之目的在於證成諾丁斯所構思之關懷倫理的概念應成為教師的德行，使學生得以發揮其潛能。首先，本文陳述並駁斥數項對於關懷做為教師德行的質疑。這些質疑包含關懷應屬私領域之事、教師應著重於科目教學、並非每位教師均有關懷的個性、並非每位學生均需要關懷、男性教師會有關懷的焦慮、關懷是沉重的負擔、以及關懷將宰制教師專業觀。其次，本文提出支持關懷應為教師之德的數項理由：關懷使教育更合宜、關懷促進學生學業成就與正向行為、關懷為雙贏策略、以及關懷可建立和存有之聯結。最後，透過對反對意見之駁斥與提出支持的證據，研究結果肯定關懷應為教師之德。

關鍵詞：關懷關係、師生關係、權利與德行、關懷倫理學、諾丁斯

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Introduction

Since all students need *caring* to achieve their developmental milestones, but many students do not have enough caring outside of school, caring should be a moral demand on the teacher (Noddings, 2003). Today, students' behavioral and learning problems are amplified in an indifferent society where the need for authentic caring relationships, which have a positive impact on students' learning, is not being met (Newcomer, 2018; Warin, 2017). We, however, do not typically use caring as a part of our profession's moral vocabulary. In ancient times, peripatetic philosophers focused on traits such as courage, temperance, friendliness, and truthfulness (Aristotle, trans. 1995), but *caring* was never a main concern nor was it fully conceptualized. Kant (1758/1990) proclaimed a rule-based categorical imperative, but it is detached from human affection. Mill (1863/2007) emphasized utility over the generalized idea of caring, yet the relational nature of *caring* means that value is placed on more than just the ends achieved. These three popular traditional moral theories do not provide much consideration to caring as an important part of being a moral agent.

In modern times, based on empirical observations, Piaget (1932/1997) distinguished children's moral judgments into two social relation types. The first describes relations of constraint, the source of duty and heteronomy, whose characteristic is to impose upon the individual from outside a system of rules with obligatory content. The second type of social relation considers relations of cooperation, good, and autonomous rationality, whose characteristic is to create within people's minds the consciousness of ideal norms as foundational to all rules. Kohlberg (1981) echoed a Piagetian typological scheme of general stages of moral thought, bringing moral development into a typological scheme that contains six stages of moral judgment. Kohlberg's theory dominated moral education for decades.

Gilligan (1982/1993) criticized Kohlberg's moral development theory because it was based on eighty-four boys in 1958 and did not consider gender differences. Gilligan challenged Kohlberg's theory for uncritically accepting a male perspective in which relationships are subordinated to rules and universal principles of justice. Noddings (2003)

expanded on Gilligan's work and extended the caring relationship into moral philosophy, specifically as care ethics, by highlighting how females have made substantial contributions but have been largely neglected in our male-dominated society. Thus, Noddings suggests that caring should be practiced in the public domain to both cooperate and compete with rule or justice based moral approaches.

More recently, caring and relational ethics have been thrust into the public domain (Rifkin, 2009), especially in professions which depend on person-to-person interactions. Professions such as social work and nursing have seen tremendous academic interest on the topic of caring over the past 20 years. Teaching is also considered a caring profession and may be the most likely to benefit from a serious discussion of this branch of ethics (Crosswell & Beutel, 2017; Kimura, 2010). A model teacher combines the roles of care-giver and professional together to be a caring professional (Noddings, 1996). However, the need for adopting and practicing a caring ethic is still controversial outside of what is seen as mostly "feminine" professions such as those identified above. In other domains, there are many conventions and norms to dissuade people from adopting care ethics as the guiding principles of their profession. In the educational discipline, few people deny teachers need to "care" for students (in common parlance), but students usually cannot appreciate their teachers' caring as the teachers may have expected or intended because patriarchal caring presets the pursued goals while authentic *caring* (in the framework outlined by Noddings) helps students reach their own positive aims. Moreover, under the rules and laws of most places where teachers practice, rights and duties dominate discussions of educational ethics, while caring is only seen as a laudable option if it is not even openly opposed. It is important for caring to be accepted as a teacher virtue because it will increase students' positive emotion and improve students' academic engagement (Gasser, Grütter, Buholzer, & Wettstein, 2018), but many obstacles still lay ahead.

Caring from a Traditional Perspective

In the traditional history of education in Taiwan, a teacher's social status was as high as any public officer; the teacher-student relationship was as intimate and as close as that of any family member. Society has had lofty expectations for the teacher and her

role, and these expectations are only increasing in the modern era. At the same time, an effective teacher dedicates herself to teach students. From this high societal expectation and personal self-dedication, the teacher was authorized to use varied ways, soft or hard, to enhance students' learning, to improve students' behavior, and even to form students' character. Until now, many teachers worked hard in their own ways to nurture the student as a whole person while still helping students to maximize their achievements when compared to standard curricula requirements. Indeed, these sorts of teachers may have perceived their efforts as in the students' best interests.

The ideal image of a traditional Taiwanese teacher is that she is a person-teacher (a renaissance, generalist teacher) more than a subject-specific teacher, but, in reality, feeling pressure to help students attain high grades on their high school and university entrance examinations, teachers have become overly focused on test scores rather than concerning themselves with individual student's interests and needs. As a result, many students report that no one "cares" for them as Noddings (1996) has mentioned. Eventually, we must ask whether students' fulfillment, autonomy, and potential are being maximally incubated under this sort of authoritative, high stakes system.

Modern Teachers' Concern for Respecting Students' Rights as the Dominant Theme of Education Today

Rebelling against the traditional authoritative system, liberal educators adopted and implemented a school theory based on respect of individual rights affected by liberal dictums such as that contained in Mill's harm principle (Mill, 1859/2011). After a few years of struggle, rights instead of tradition and authority became the dominant theme in education (Pace, 2003). For example, the first article in Taiwan's *Educational Fundamental Act* (2013) states: "This Act is enacted to protect people's rights to learning and education" (Article 1). To avoid crossing the red line of student rights, teachers drew back to the shelter of their subjects, which was the safest place for the teacher's daily operations. Liberalism, with the emphasis it places on freedom and personal autonomy, gave teachers a comfortable excuse to ignore students' personal lives. "Caring" does not fit well with liberal attitudes because caring is essentially personal and requires crossing

the distance created between student and teacher with the establishment of clearly defined rights.

Caring seemingly has no place in an education system that emphasizes due process and the student's right to privacy. Caring, clearly not a substantive right, is eliminated completely when due process concerns become a ceiling, and not a base, in educator's minds. Furthermore, the act of caring can be misconstrued as an invasion of privacy because of its emphasis on attention and motivational displacement of the teacher toward the student (Grossberg, 1993). The bounds of "caring" could not be clearly delineated the way rights and duties could, so it was excluded from the modern teaching ethic. A perception gradually arose that caring belongs solely to the private sphere, and teachers avoided official intervention and left the job of caring for the students to the parents or other educational staff specifically tasked with the management of carefully delineated personal issues of the student.

Under this rights-based liberal theory, teaching itself became an individual construct, no longer being an extension of an educational system, and thus, teachers had their own right to reject things beyond enumerated obligations. Respect for rights protects teachers' and students' basic human dignity but segregated them into mechanical and quantifiable teacher-student relationships. For example, most school systems today have prescriptive policies for how teachers can use social media, fearing these teachers might do something that exposes the school system to liability. This overly legalistic and short-sighted reaction does not account for that same untrustworthy, incompetent, or unprofessional teacher who would abuse social media also having daily, direct one-to-one interactions with the students. Such a social media policy can only come about if the teacher is theorized as an interchangeable part of a system, with equivalents readily available, rather than a holistic being, with unique strengths, weaknesses, and variances in human connectivity. As a result of educational policies similar to social media restrictions, teachers lost the closeness of intimacy which had previously been backed up by traditional teacher-student ethical relationships. Even if a new teacher had an initial desire to practice "caring", they would soon lose any sense of obligation as they became transformed by an educational system that is now driven by authority and focus on rights

and duties (Pace, 2003). Thus, whether a teacher practices in a system where there is pressure for success on high stakes tests, or a system where the space between teacher and student has been closed off by walls of personal rights, the modern teacher cannot easily adopt an ethic of care in her professional practice.

A Caring Teacher Is a Better Teacher

A Teacher who adopts and practices *caring* will be a better teacher because that teacher will be better equipped to address modern educational challenges. These challenges are increasingly complex as students' problems entail an increased demand for caring. As Dworkin (2010) points out, the U.S. caring industry (including psychologists, mental health counselors, social workers, therapists, and others) increased one hundred times from 1940 to around 2000, but the American population only doubled. The reason for the increasing size of the caring industry is that Americans are becoming increasingly separated from and indifferent to each other, therefore their caring needs cannot be satisfied by even their closest family, friends, or teachers. As a promoted virtue, caring is a reasonable response to these artifacts of modernity.

A similar phenomenon appears today in Taiwanese society and education. In order to solve increasing student problems, the Article 10 of the *Compulsory Education Act* (2011) created more than two thousand and six hundred counselor-related positions in elementary and junior high schools. Adding more counselors and related mental health professionals to our schools may not solve current problems if we do not focus on the source of student problems. If Dworkin's description of the problem is correct and true for Taiwan, then the student's basic caring needs are not being satisfied. Educators should regard the caring relationship between teachers and students as an important preventative force, remediating student problems before they reach the mental health professionals.

If every teacher could maintain caring relationships with students, our students will have more opportunities to develop their potential and will be encouraged to avoid misbehavior and harmful activities (Newcomer, 2018). Teachers who lack caring will approach education like a market, see school as a factory, and treat students like products (Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001). The less caring relationships present between teachers and

students in schools, the more demand there will be for other "caring" professionals. If we appreciate Martin Buber's (1923/1937) I-Thou relation or our traditional paradigm of person-teacher and not subject-teacher only, we shall emphasize the teacher's caring virtue because the caring virtue of teachers could provide students with the positive support they need to reach their full potential and solve or avoid many common problems. This belief echoes Noddings' (2007) caring ethics as well as Sockett's claim that "the development of professional dispositions in a teacher is a process of moral education, given that teaching quality is primarily a moral, not a technical, matter" (Sockett, 2006, p. 9). Like other aspects of the teacher's professional skill set, caring is a set of a tools that the teacher must be equipped with and that will be developed and enhanced as the teacher matures in her professional career.

Methodology

In order to achieve the aim of the study, several objectives need to be completed, such as: clarifying the term of caring, understanding the substance of caring through its phenomenon, interpreting the meaning of caring, and criticizing the ideology blocking the extension of caring from the private sphere to the public domain. To realize these objectives, Habermas (1968/1971) has provided a methodological direction in his second and third cognitive interests for understanding, interpreting, and criticizing research issues. The empirical-analytic sciences incorporate a technical, cognitive interest (first), but this part of the framework is not relevant to this study. The historical-hermeneutic sciences incorporate a practical interest (second), and it guides the understanding and interpreting aspects of caring. The critically oriented sciences incorporate the emancipatory cognitive interest (third), and it leads the emancipation of caring for the public sphere.

Clarifying the term *caring* is the first step in our method since there are many different understandings and manifestations of the concept of caring (Engster, 2004), all of which may create confusion when discussing it. A conceptual analysis can clarify the ambiguous language usages in the educational context (Peter, Woods, & Dray, 1973), and by the analytic tradition, this paper will develop a clearer description of caring as

the foundation for the contemplation and interpretation of caring as a branch of moral philosophy. To understand the substance of caring, a phenomenological approach will be necessary (Assalahi, 2015) to discover authentic caring since phenomenology offers a way to distill the nature of caring as Noddings (2003) has done. Noddings' basic notion of caring is formulated as for "A and B to be a caring relation, both A (the one-caring) and B (the cared-for) must contribute appropriately. Something from A must be received, completed, in B…" (Noddings, 2003, p. 19). The nature of caring could be the foundational reference for a model teacher virtue. To interpret and extend the meaning of caring into various manifestations, the hermeneutic approach can fulfill this exploration (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) so as to enrich the meaning of caring practice in the school and extend the effect of this necessary teacher virtue.

To remove the ideological obstacles of caring, critical theory will be relied on (Assalahi, 2015; Habermas, 1968/1971). There are several patriarchal ideologies that block caring from being adopted as a teacher virtue. These ideologies should be discovered, revealed, and removed through a critical and reflective examination.

By way of these approaches, this study will outline the idealized teacher virtue of caring, discover the nature of that idealized teacher virtue, extend the meanings of that idealized teacher virtue, reveal the ideologies against caring as a teacher virtue, and finally justify that caring must be an acceptable, and even preferred, teacher virtue.

What Is Caring?

To begin building our case in support of caring as a teacher virtue, the meaning of caring should be specified and defined since caring denotes different meanings and manifestations (Engster, 2004). However, a comprehensive explanation of these different uses of "caring" would require an extended discussion beyond the constraints of this research. Therefore, this paper conceives a concise discussion of caring as follows below.

First, caring ends with eudemonia, or a personal flourishing. Caring in education leads toward certain directions and the most obvious direction is toward developing students' full potential which is necessary for human flourishing. At the same time, a caring teacher will flourish and attain her professional aspirations too.

Second, caring only exists in relations. One of the most influential formulations of caring is given by Noddings who summarizes caring relations in three main points:

(i) A is attentive to B in a "non-selective way", meaning A, as best as possible, pauses her own projects and evaluative forces and focuses on B. In this moment, B conveys a need, implicitly or explicitly, and A's attention is directed at receiving "what-is-there" in B;

(ii) A experiences motivational displacement to respond in a positive way to the need B has conveyed and A takes some action in accord with this motivational displacement, which may or may not be successful in fully responding to B's need; and

(iii) B recognizes and acknowledges that A cares for B. (Noddings, 2007)

Third, caring is a relational virtue. As a relational virtue, caring will become an important partner in education and cooperate with, but not dominate, other virtues or rules to promote eudaimonia, where all "good" efforts lead as MacIntyre (1984) expects in practice. The exact ways caring acts in harmony with other virtues or rules will be an art 一 as teaching is an art (Dawe, 1984).

Finally, we give caring in education a concise description as follows: Caring in education means education based on the no harm principle but extends to regard the student as a person and an end not a means, creates supporting teacher-student relations, perceives student's needs and responds positively and constructively, ends in goods in which the highest good is personal flourishing with happiness, allows the educator to fulfill her vocational purpose, and all goods extend in teacher-student caring relations with voluntarily mutual participation where caring cooperates with other values and rules towards an education system acting in unison to increase satisfaction and fulfillment for all stakeholders.

Responses to Objections That Teachers Do Not Need to Care for Students and Our Reflections

Under the modern teaching paradigm, caring for students has been minimized as a consequence of respecting individual rights. Caring is not antithetical to liberal

theory, but appears to have been disposed of, either consciously or subconsciously, instead of being integrated into the modern system. This de-emphasis on caring has been subsequently fortified by the organic development of attitudes among teachers that they have no duty to care for students, beyond the goals set forth by liberal education theory. These justifications, or reasons for teachers not to care, must be scrutinized and examined.

Caring Is a Private Affair and Not the Teacher's Business

The first reason offered why teachers should not care about students is that subject teaching is a purely public affair and caring is a private affair that belongs to parents. For instance, Barnett (2006) considers how sensitive English teachers must be when asking students to respond to an issue that may invoke too personal of a response. Some English teachers who desire to teach critical literacy see intellectual and emotional aspects of student responses as mutually exclusive, and for modern pedagogical purposes, the emotional is inappropriate territory for the public-school teacher. Thus, focusing on intellectual subject matters has become the most uncontroversial policy, while caring is considered too emotional and sensitive because it involves the student's personal life, which must be contained within the private sphere. When a student does pull her personal life into the academic space, the student is still taught to anonymize and de-identify the shared experiences. For example, in academic writing, students are taught to refrain from using personal pronouns. This attitude spills over the academic ethos, making revealing personal information seem inappropriate. Caring can still be understood as an important aspect of human relations, but by its definition as a private affair, it must be excluded from the modern educator's concern.

This first reason accepts the idea that students need to be cared for but declares that caring is a job for family members, friends, or other professionals, not teachers. Is this claim reasonable? To answer this question, we need to focus on students themselves instead of focusing on parents or teachers because educational purposes are primarily designed to educate students. As we know, most students need caring and this need is continuous and not like a switch that can be turned on in private spheres and turned off in

public spheres. A society that is concerned about the welfare of its members should create mechanisms for its members' welfare in all situations; therefore, a decent society must properly satisfy the students' need for care, no matter whether in school or at home. This is especially true for younger students. Family members can care for students at home, but can family members care for the student's needs anytime, such as when the student is in school? How can a decent society properly satisfy students' needs for care in schools? Can a teacher tell students to wait until they go back home, just like the thirsty fish waiting for water from the East Sea in the Chinese fable of Zhuangzi; or should teachers send students back home immediately, just as if they were suffering from an illness and were being sent to the hospital. Even the most caring parents cannot be called to the school every time his or her child has a situation in need of caring. The above-mentioned methods for meeting the students' caring needs are inefficient or even at odds with the goal of helping children to develop into fully functioning adults. Why should teachers not be expected to care for students directly?

Teacher caring should not be seen as a violation of the students' individual rights if students demand it and caring is regarded as necessary for the basic needs and common good of the student just as all individual rights are limited and balanced against society's interests. If caring is a continuous need of the student, and if caring is an inherently private affair, then the liberal rights existing for students and teachers must be defined in such a way to include caring as fundamental to the liberal student-teacher relationship. It should not be viewed as a divergent characteristic as the current paradigm would have it.

Teachers Should Focus on Subject Teaching not Caring

Another common theme presented among liberal educators is that focus is placed upon subject teaching and skill building. Even if we accept that a teacher's job is restricted to subject teaching and skill building, what is defined as a "good" subject teacher by liberal educators implies caring for students.[1] Caring and subject-teaching are

1 See, for instance, the California Standards for the Teaching Profession which breakdowns teaching into six standards: (1) engaging and supporting all students in learning; (2) creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning; (3) understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning; (4) planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students; (5) assessing students for learning; (6) developing as a professional educator (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2009). Supporting,

not mutually exclusive endeavors. Instead, teachers must master their subjects before they can turn their attention to caring, and in this way, mastery of one's subject is an indispensable element of a caring teacher (Rogers & Raider-Roth, 2006).

To be a good subject teacher, several conditions must be satisfied. First, such a teacher must understand the student's terminus a quo that includes the student's background knowledge and learning styles. This is the difference between personalized education and education by algorithm. A good subject teacher also needs to know how to motivate students. This requires teachers to understand students' interests and dispositions. Teachers need to solve students' learning and classroom behavior problems, which also requires teachers to know students' family backgrounds and life histories, especially when teaching young students. Therefore, a good subject teacher regards students as human beings, not just a mechanical receiver, as in Buber's "I-it" concept— are we interacting with other beings or merely our own mental abstractions of those beings (Buber, 1923/1937). Caring requires interacting with and confronting the being herself, and not just our abstraction of how, who, and what she is.

Teachers must understand a student's cognitive, affective, and motivational needs and respond positively and appropriately when caring is needed. Research has clearly demonstrated that students who are disaffected have lower levels of cognitive achievement (Pintrich, 2003, p. 679). Coming to an academic space with a positive disposition and affect makes one better prepared and better able to learn. Therefore, even subject teaching involves complex relational dimensions that must be attended to by teachers (Frymier & Houser, 2000). A teacher who understands and monitors these complex factors will be better at her job than the teacher who does not. Students' subject learning will benefit, even if the subject-teacher does not recognize this as caring or assigns them other terms. We are not denying the important role of subject or teaching knowledge, but being a caring teacher and keeping caring teacher-student relationships will facilitate better subject teaching.

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maintaining, and understanding student learning imply the needs of understanding and supporting students' cognitive conditions as well as their affective domain such as the need for caring.

Not Every Teacher Has Caring Character

Recognizing the role of caring for students can be divided into caring habits and caring character. A common claim against the importance of teacher caring is that caring, as defined herein, comes more natural to some people than to others. Indeed, we cannot argue that a caring personality is a prerequisite for becoming a teacher. However, just because individuals have different caring abilities at the outset does not mean that caring habits cannot be developed and honed to improve one's effective caring. For example, teachers that may be less inclined to utilize a caring approach can be made aware of effective "caring" techniques (Klein, 2001; McNamee & Mercurio, 2009; Noddings, 1995). Facilitated by Gilligan's and Noddings' care concepts, there has been considerable research into what classroom techniques students perceive as "caring" and these clearly show that caring can be demonstrated in a large variety of ways, across many different situations. Specifically, perceived caring or "goodwill" is thought to be demonstrated by initiating "one-to-one interaction with students, by talking with students on a personal basis, by calling students by name, by showing respect and empathy for students, and telling students that they care" (Teven, 2001, p. 166). Self-described "caring" teachers even show divergences in what they consider appropriate caring, ranging from commitment to the physical care for students to maintaining an active awareness of each student's personal learning achievements (Vogt, 2002).

Furthermore, because teacher caring can be demonstrated in a large number of ways, there may be some techniques that are more transferable than others, depending on the teacher's own established aptitudes. It is quite reasonable to increase a teacher's caring ability in this way. Raising a teacher's consciousness to treat students as human beings, rather than just as receivers, and to sensitize teachers to identify and respond positively to students' needs will allow the teacher to develop truly caring habits. Teachers have many ways available to change their relationships with students (Docan-Morgan, 2009). Even if a teacher's caring habits do not alter the teacher's caring personality, the students will benefit from a teacher's caring behaviors.

Not Every Student Needs to Be Cared For

Another reason for teachers to evade caring for students is that some students do not need or do not like to be cared about. This argument misunderstands caring as it is now understood by most proponents.

To force a student into a position where they are expected to receive care when he or she does not have the need to be cared for clearly infringes against the heart of caring, let alone liberal education theory. Authentic caring is caring for students based on their needs and not based on teachers' wants. Caring means providing the attention that is required by the particular student at the time and not according to a predetermined schedule (Noddings, 1993). As Klein (2001) has stated, caring means attending, and attending includes recognition that the cared-for requires a caring action. Therefore, caring is not indiscriminate: if practiced as presented by theorists like Noddings, caring will be directed at those most in need.

The fact that some students have sufficient caring from family or other sources cannot be used to claim that teachers should be exempt from caring. Just as some students may have difficulty learning a particular lesson, requiring more instructional attention from the teacher, so too may some students require more caring from the teacher. These differential effects between the apparent need for increased teacher care has been correlated with student academic performance (ie., the students most "at risk" of failing show the greatest benefit from increased teacher care) (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989; Muller, 2001). Thus, the recognition that some students are resistant or insensitive to teacher caring does not abrogate the teacher's need to care generally. Conversely, it is the teacher's virtue to act in a caring way when appropriate and for the students in need of caring. To be cared for or not is a privilege of the student, to be demanded when needed. The willingness to care for students is the commitment the teacher must make if they want to better achieve the ultimate goal of helping to produce a fully functioning member of society. Finally, the proportion of students who need to be cared for is different at different school levels and across districts, but there always is someone who needs to be cared for in every level of education and this is sufficient reason to expect

that every teacher possess the ability to implement caring techniques when students are in need.

Caring Will Dominate Teacher's Professional Viewpoints and Spoil the Child

Some teachers worry about losing their authority and professional perspective when teachers are caring for students and focusing on their needs. They think that they should stay based in "teachers' professional viewpoints" which could develop students' best achievements in the prescribed curriculum and claim this is their own form of "caring" (Katz, 2007, p. 132). The authentic teacher's professional viewpoints will be more than just focusing on one-dimension achievement such as academic achievement or "value-added" measurements. As mentioned earlier, a teacher who has not mastered her subject is not able to properly care for students (Rogers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Because of this hierarchical dependency, the teacher who has adopted a care ethic will be a more successful teacher (ie., educating students and serving as a positive model) than the teacher who has not, *ceteris paribus* (eg., mastery of subject matter).

Authentic caring is based on the students' needs and responses and exists within the student-teacher relationship. Following this conceptualization of caring, students will be more motivated toward achieving their own personal best potential instead of the teacher's expectation that discounts the meaning and value of self-fulfillment. This is the reason why traditional "caring" may result in student reports that no one cares for them (Noddings, 1996). For example, some teachers may report their "caring" behaviors without those behaviors ever being experienced as 'caring' by the students themselves: This is not authentic caring. Authentic caring, since it exists in the space between teacher and student, requires that the student feel or become cognizant of the teacher's caring (Noddings, 2002a). Authentic caring will only be presented when students feel their needs are being appreciated and positively responded to. Only when the student is not preoccupied with matters unrelated to the lesson, can learning begin. Authentic caring demonstrates the authentic teacher's professional viewpoints.

Another concern with emphasizing caring as a professional virtue is that it may

be a one-dimensional virtue and could lead to spoiling or overindulging the child. For example, the virtuous person has ideal character traits and can act relevantly in any given situation where various factors are considered, such as when required to act for the common good versus the situation where the agent stands alone (Aristotle, n.d./1995). In this respect, caring may be seen as an imbalanced teacher virtue. This notion, of the requirement for a full repertoire of virtues, is also present within Confucianism as it has been said that "There are many arts in teaching. I refuse, as inconsistent with my character, to teach a man, but I am only thereby still teaching him" (Mencius, n.d., Gaozi II). When children misbehave or act inappropriately, a relevant corrective action becomes a real caring act for responding to the child, otherwise caring is not actually being practiced.

To the criticism that caring is but one of many necessary teacher virtues, we believe that caring encompasses all aspects of the model teacher. Caring is not a single dimension virtue since a caring teacher applies their caring with other virtues and values, which include competence, flexibility, patience, open-mindedness, and reflection, under a caring educational environment to cultivate a student being a good person (Noddings, 2007). A caring teacher will focus on building students' good traits through concentrating on the educational conditions for fostering caring relations since children "who are genuinely and continuously cared for usually turn out to be reasonably good people…do not usually commit acts of violence, deceit, or neglect" (Noddings, 2002a, p. 154). Through a supporting caring educational environment and varied collaborating virtues and values, the students' misbehaviors will be prevented in advance and good deeds will accumulate naturally. Caring will not overindulge the child but instead is the educational means to reduce student misconduct from the first stages of socialization.

Male Teachers Have Caring Anxiety

Ironically, although care theory gained early prominence in Gilligan's criticism that Kohlberg's stages of moral development was biased towards the masculine, a common resistance to caring in the past was that caring originated from a feminist ethic and was inherently bound by feminine terms. This grounding in femininity may explain why

some male teachers may be anxious about adopting caring as a teaching ethic. Wrapped up with the question of whether caring has gender-specific attributes is the ongoing societal reality that teachers of younger students are predominantly female (Hansen & Mulholland, 2005; Osgood, Francis, & Archer, 2006). Therefore, showing that male teachers should not be anxious in adopting a care ethic may have the added benefit of not just creating better male teachers, but of reshaping the stereotype of elementary education as women's work (S. P. Johnson, 2008).

Although some may still see caring as having distinctly maternal characteristics (Forrester, 2005), the argument that caring is the prerogative of females or that caring is unnatural for males is receding. In fact, the research overwhelmingly supports the notion that most people do not have a consistent framework for moral reasoning: The details of the moral dilemma (i.e., whether the dilemma is more easily reducible to relational concerns or justice concerns) weigh heavily on the individual's interpretive framework (Sherblom, 2008). Vogt's (2002) description of the care ethic as occupying a continuum from "mothering" to "commitment" would then appear to be better suited to fit the considerable empirical data that has been collected showing that male teacher caring can be effectuated differently from female teachers.

The reasons for the male dilemma are numerous and involve many issues external to the student-teacher relationship or the education system itself. They are fundamentally questions of society and culture. On the one hand, females are rated higher in close relationships than males (Murray & Murray, 2004). On the other, male teacher's caring behaviors tend to be misunderstood while a female teacher expressing these same caring behaviors are considered tolerable. For example, one young Taiwanese female teacher uses a kiss to reward students' good behavior or performance in an all-boy senior high school (Xiao, 2000). This teacher behavior has become quite famous for its novelty and is accepted by the male students with goodwill. Society, proclaiming this is in the spirit of innovative pedagogy, has also given its approval. Male teacher's caring behaviors are limited compared to the female teacher's choices, such as patting students' heads or shoulders, embracing them, or even in non-contact caring such as expressing earnest interest in the students' daily struggles. Male teachers who adopt such techniques can

easily be misunderstood by female students or the society itself (Bradley, 2000; Hansen & Mulholland, 2005). Therefore, male teachers need to be more skillful in the ways they care for their students and avoid behaviors that can easily lead to misunderstanding or give the appearance of impropriety.

However, male teachers cannot be exempted from caring because it is usually described as being manifested in actions more naturally performed by females. Male teachers should instead find techniques and develop habits suitable for males (Vogt, 2002). Caring is not unique to any single act or expression, but instead exists within the relationship between students and teachers. Male teachers will naturally exhibit and perform caring acts that are qualitatively distinct from those utilized by female teachers. This is intrinsic to gender differences and expectations, for both the teachers and the students. This is logical when one considers that caring within families is not limited to the role of the mother but can be also performed by fathers. Because mothers do not have a monopoly on caring, it is possible for male teachers to have caring outcomes similar to female teachers without transgressing the boundaries and cultural norms that society has established for inter-gender relations. As the gravestone of the great teacher J. H. Pestalozzi (1746-1827) mentions, "He did everything for others, nothing for himself," we are reminded that there have been many great male educators who cared for his students.

Caring Is a Heavy Burden and Who Will Care for the Teacher?

The last reason offered to try to minimize the importance of caring in education is the reality that caring can be tremendously time consuming, burdensome, and emotionally exhausting. In the past, a common criticism was that caring can lead to abusive relationships or destroy the carer if caring is continuous and unconditional (Hoagland, 1990; Puka, 1990). Model teachers who practice authentic caring for students will feel this heavy burden, not to mention that they will probably not have anyone present to care for his or her own needs.

First, caring is not a continuous and unconditional duty (Noddings, 1990). Caring, like all human relations, has a time and a place. Authentic caring means recognizing and distinguishing beneficial and positive caring from acquiescent or paternalistic caring

(Klein, 2001). In this way then, carers also have a duty to monitor their own caring ability and not offer more than they can give. There is also a difference in the type of caring that is offered: If caring exists along a continuum as postulated by Vogt (2002), then there is a clear difference between caring in the role of a mother and caring in the role of a teacher. A teacher who understands they are not acting as quasi-parents at school, but instead as caring teachers, will manage control and manage their caring commitments (Zhang, 2007).

Ferreira and Bosworth (2001) give one example of a breakdown in the understanding of caring: An eighth-grade girl was disappointed that only one of her teachers came to visit her in the hospital when she gave birth to a baby. This example, among other reasons, is meant to show some of the challenging cases that caring can impose on teachers. However, this appears to be a misreading of the care ethic. An authentic carer will recognize the need in the cared-for, experience motivational displacement to respond, but the response will be mitigated by the actual ability of the carer to respond effectively. In Ferreira and Bosworth's example, we could speculate that the teachers who did not attend to their student's childbirth balanced their carer duties and found other caring activities more important. Although we could just as easily speculate that the teachers in question were not really good carers and failed in attending to their student's needs, caring is not a rule-based, Kantian system and every situation will have a different outcome depending on the carers and cared-fors. Ferreira and Bosworth's example allows us to better understand how carers must learn to manage their beneficial but finite responses.

Second, caring for students may seem like extra work for the teacher, but this is only because authentic caring has been extricated from teachers' job duties. If teachers are expected to care for students, then the burdens can be better managed and accounted for. If caring produces better outcomes, and has real benefits, then over time there will be feedback to provide support for teachers. For example, teachers who practice authentic caring will have students who achieve more. In this way, caring teachers will be rewarded over time. In addition, by way of caring for students, the teacher will also get immediate warm feedback from students, as the students come to understand the new student-teacher

relationship. Besides these positive feedback loops from the students, a teaching staff that practices, encourages, or expects a care ethic will have some level of self-monitoring and self-regulation: Teachers will care for each other in a process similar to the one used to care for students. For these reasons, caring can impose extra burdens on teachers, but that could only occur in a system that has accepted the status quo and rejected an ethic of care or if teachers are not sufficiently trained in how to practice beneficial and positive caring.

The Reasons Teachers Need to Care for Students and Some Reflections

In this section, several reasons are discussed for supporting the needs of caring.

Caring Can Make Education More Decent

Caring means regarding the student as a person. When teachers sincerely implement caring techniques and practices, students will feel they are regarded as human beings, not things; as people, not indifferent objects; and as a somebody, and not a nobody (Noddings, 2003). Teachers' caring intentions entail raising students' self-awareness, recognizing their individual existence, and awakening their distinguished dignity. Caring teachers facilitate the student's entire personal development, while indifferent teachers pour information into students like receptive vessels. Teachers who treat students in a caring way will experience students as unique individuals, each with particular difficulties, aptitudes, and circumstances, whereas indifferent teachers will see students as student identification numbers on an attendance sheet. Education is not a mechanized assembly line producing standardized human units, but an organic, communal experience that requires teachers to do more and go beyond merely teaching lessons and grading papers (Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001).

Caring spawns trust. When caring flows from teachers to students, students' awareness of teachers' good intentions will naturally arise overtime. This student awareness will allow trust to develop between the student and teacher. This trust is natural but exclusive to the teacher-student setting. Frymier and Houser (2000) have said, "When

a trusting and caring relationship develops between teachers and students, a safe learning environment is created" (p. 217). Within this caring, trusting, and safe environment, students' motivation, involvement, and teacher-student interaction are extended. Teachers who have artificially confined their professional space to the dissemination and reception of knowledge and skill mastery have limited their own and their students' potential for success.

Caring and trust create positive affections. Just as caring will foster the development of student trust of the teacher, this caring and trust will create a flow of positive affections from the student to the teacher and the curriculum. The students' feelings and attitudes, or affection, has been recognized as an important factor in cognitive learning (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Rodriguez, Plax, & Kearney, 1996) although the exact relationship between affective and cognitive learning remains uncertain (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006). Regardless of the internal mechanism by which affection influences cognitive learning, optimizing positive affection is desirable in all classrooms (Wiggan, 2007). For instance, once students feel a sense of trust, whereby increasing their positive affection, they will be more inclined to face the challenges of learning, such as by having the courage to raise their hand and ask a question in class. Students who trust will be less likely to feel hindered by potential embarrassment and being charged as stupid and will be more open to actively access knowledge directly from teachers who were previously unapproachable symbols of authority and hierarchy.

Caring increases students' academic achievements. The connection between caring and improved learning is demonstrated by several studies showing that caring relationships improve students' academic achievement (Danielsen, Wiium, Wlhelmsen, & Wold, 2010; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; McKinney De Royston et al., 2017; Pogue & AhYun, 2006; Rodriguez et al., 1996; Wiggan, 2007). Students themselves report that a one-on-one relationship with a teacher outside of the class could help the teacher understand them better and enhance their learning (Chen, 2000). Students who understand the teacher-student relationship is based on caring will not only be more willing to engage the teacher and become an active participant in the classroom space, but they will likewise be more motivated to learn. Motivation invites students to become

more involved in their learning; higher motivation levels increase active participation in the classroom, such as volunteering to raise their hands and answer questions or being more willing to interact with teachers and other classmates (Pintrich, 2003). From a more positive engagement in learning, students will enhance their achievement in school. This achievement makes the students feel rewarded by their efforts, creates a positive feedback cycle, and brings about even more motivation. This additional motivation can launch profound and deep learning experiences, going beyond rote memorization. Finally, students who are cared for develop trust and increased motivation, resulting in positive affection for their teacher and school, contributing to their recognition of the teacher's professional status and, from this, increasing the teacher's effectiveness, furthering academic, affective, and behavioral learning.

Caring improves students' positive behavior and thinking. In addition to having pragmatic benefits in academic achievement, caring can also bring out the proper behavior and positive thinking among students (Docan-Morgan & Manusov, 2009; Mihalas, Morse, Allsopp, & McHatton, 2009). Conversely, negative teacher-student relationships are highly predictive of students' emotional and behavioral problems (Murray & Murray, 2004). Students with a positive inner-self and self-image are more confident, have higher levels of self-esteem, and are more at ease with their surroundings.

If we have caring teachers, students will open their mind and share their problems. The caring teacher will listen and respond proactively to students' problems, reducing the chance that students will resort to radical and unpleasant ways to solve their problems. Caring relationships give students more opportunities to interact with teachers to solve problems immediately and be comforted by teachers. In the end, it will result in healthy, long-term relationships to support students in conquering their frustrations and developing happier lives as learners. This will also have positive effects on students collectively and the classroom environment as a whole; students who are internally content and comforted can more easily attain external harmony. Therefore, caring can improve students' self-esteem, self-confidence, inner-tranquility, positive thinking, giving them more motivation to engage in deep subject learning and remain in harmony with their peers.

Caring promotes social justice to benefit the disadvantaged. Caring benefits, although numerous and substantial for all students, may be the most marked for minority group students (Soto, 2005; Wiggan, 2007). Many minorities have lower socio-economic status, creating a more stressful working life for parents, affording them less time to "care" for their children. Additionally, minorities may face open and notorious forms of discrimination and racism from the majority culture. Since many minorities lack caring at home and from the society, it is even more important for the school to compensate for this deficit. This echoes John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* where he mentioned society's inequalities should be arranged so that the least advantaged members of society receive the greatest benefit (Rawls, 1971/1999).

For minorities, teacher caring may be added to a very small base of caring, while for the majority, teacher caring may be added to a very large reservoir of caring from other sources. Both groups benefit from teacher caring, but minorities will benefit more because the impact of the caring will be much greater relative to the minority students' small base of caring. Therefore, teachers can adopt a caring approach to benefit the most deprived students the most without using extra resources.

Caring may be especially helpful in special education, too. Murray and Pianta (2007) investigated disabled students and pointed out that positive teacher-relationships are important for all students, but disabled students are particularly vulnerable and need explicit and direct support from a caring adult. In school, teachers are the central and most powerful force in the lives of young people so it should be the teacher's responsibility to adopt a caring attitude to ensure that these less fortunate students are provided with an equal opportunity to learn and achieve their potential.

B. Johnson (2008) conducted an Australian longitudinal study from 1997 to 2005 and discovered several ways to promote students' resilience. Resilience is a capacity for students to adapt successfully in challenging and threatening circumstances. The ways Johnson highlighted included teachers respecting everyone as human beings, making themselves available and accessible to students, listening actively to students' concerns, having empathy with students' tough circumstances, and providing students with positive strategies for coping with crises. These strategies are similar to the caring approach to

teaching described in this paper.

Caring Is a Win-Win Strategy

Up until now, it would seem that a lot is being demanded of teachers. Caring may have strong positive benefits, but it is reasonable to ask whether these benefits are outweighed by the heavy burden it may place on teachers. However, caring does not just benefit students, but it can benefit the teacher too. A caring relationship will lead to a win-win situation.

Caring makes teachers more efficient. A teacher with good content or subject knowledge may be an adequate teacher, but if he or she could authentically care for students, his or her teaching effectiveness will be greatly improved, and stress will be reduced for both teacher and student.

First, caring makes it easier for the teachers to reach the minimum requirements demanded by their profession. Student learning is the most essential part of a teachers' vocation and social expectations. If teachers can help students learn better, teachers will feel secure in their job, be more respected, and advance professionally. As mentioned above, caring has been empirically shown to enhance student learning, thus caring is a wise choice to improve students' learning and protect teachers' reputations.

Caring teachers will have more opportunities to learn from their teaching, thereby accelerating the recursive process of teacher development, which is constant and unending. Students who feel a caring presence from the teacher will voluntarily help caring teachers improve their teaching. First, students who feel cared-for will more actively report their learning problems, which will help teachers to adapt their teaching to meet individual student needs. Students will also have a desire to keep a personal level interaction or extra-classroom communication with teachers for better understanding and improvement of learning (Chen, 2000).

Second, students who would like to provide feedback to the caring teacher will feel safe to report on the teacher's teaching, either positively or negatively. Teachers can polish their teaching quickly to reach benchmarks and targets as there will be higher quality information in this feedback.

Third, students would like to interact with caring teachers, and teachers will have more opportunities to better understand students, which is the basic step in successful teaching. The teacher who is less caring, and has students who feel less cared-for, is forgoing a critical resource that can provide some of the best professional feedback and criticism, namely, the students themselves. Caring is an important aspect for the teacher's continuous professional development and self-improvement.

Caring brings teachers happiness and a meaningful life. The more a teacher helps students, the more satisfied a teacher will feel. Helping others is one of the most obvious pathways to feel fulfillment and personal satisfaction. Caring allows teachers to better help students, therefore less caring means less helping and less teacher satisfaction, all which increases the teacher's stress (Yoon, 2002). Caring teachers immerse themselves in mutually positive teacher-student relationships, which then leads to all the positive outcomes previously discussed, allowing the teacher to recognize the achievement of her own professional goals. Because caring can result in more satisfied students and can help teachers to more quickly improve and hone their teaching abilities, teachers who care will be more likely to find pleasure and meaningfulness in their jobs.

Caring Establishes Connection to Being

Finally, from a metaphysical perspective, the practice of caring leads to ontological concern for a human being's status quo. We exist in a world filled with anxiety about terrorism, environmental imbalances, and economic disruption and inequities. For example, one of the drivers for some of our environmental problems today is due to our indifference to others, including other people, animals, and even the entire natural world. Our indifference builds on our misunderstanding over the premises of human ontology. The atomistic-self emboldens us to take actions that exploit or destroy other existences. This ontological premise needs revision.

To protect the earth and create a sustainable world for existence, there must be a global consensus because we all live and share the same air and water and we are woven into the same fate of our planet's crisis (Noddings, 2005). Therefore, we need to evolve beyond the atomistic-self and into a relational-self to concern these issues for promoting

global citizenship. It is inescapable to share the same fate of the mother earth, and our existence is partially shared in the fate of each and every other living thing. What kind of relational-self ontology should we have? It should not be an exploitative one, which has been the experiment of the past centuries and resulted in tragedies of war, colonialism, genocide, massacre, and pollution, just to name a few. We cannot wait for an indifferent existence either. Instead, caring relations should be the paradigm of human existence. The appreciation of relatedness in caring for others, animals, and plants becomes one's ethical ideal when care ethics are practiced (Noddings, 2003).

Caring gives us a chance to be aware of *the other* and attempt to build a connection with others since relatedness comprises a human being's fundamental reality (Noddings, 2003). This connection is fundamental to our conscious existence; lack of this connection leads to suffering, violence, and injustice. Caring reveals authentic existence, releases goodwill to others, and builds trust among us. Furthermore, this relatedness can be a primary source of joy, both to the receiver and giver in the caring relationship (Noddings, 2013). Caring fits the ethical and practical demand to solve many of society's modern problems. Fitting with Buber's I-Thou and I-it critique, the caring ethic in practice is a way to breakdown digital and mental barriers in reclaiming a shared co-existence. Beyond the home, school should be the most prominent place to demonstrate, implicate, and proclaim caring. The world would be very different if we adopt this caring stance; teachers have the privilege to initiate it.

Conclusion

Slogans like "it takes a village," "together everyone accomplishes more," and "building a better world one student at a time" all echo a call for educators to care for students more. However, if we cannot take caring as seriously as we do individual rights, there will always be students who are not being cared for, thus hindering the development of their full human potential. We need to care for students according to their needs and respond to them positively and constructively, and caring should be an aim for us both as a society and as individuals.

Although there are still many worries about caring for students such as whether caring belongs only in the private sphere, teachers should focus on subject-matter rather than caring, not every teacher has caring character, not every student needs to be cared for, male teachers have caring anxiety, caring will dominate teacher's professional viewpoints, caring is a heavy burden, and caring has a cultural difference, all of them have been overcome by the rational reasoning presented in this research.

We echo Nodding's call that "schools should educate not only for public life but also for home and private life" (Noddings, 2002b, p. 283). If a teacher could care for students authentically, the advances achieved will be even more than the educator might expect. Caring can make education more decent because caring regards each student as a person, caring spawns trust, caring and trust create positive affections, caring improves student's academic achievements, behaviors, positive thinking, and caring benefits the disadvantaged most. Caring also is a win-win strategy because caring makes teachers more efficient and brings teachers happiness and a meaningful life. Finally, caring establishes a connection to being which reveals the true nature of education and the human condition. Therefore, caring should be an essential part of education and become a teacher virtue where every educator authentically cares for students and every student develops to his or her full potential.

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