Culturally Responsive Teaching as an Ethics- and Care-Based Approach to Urban Education

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Abstract

Research shows culturally responsive teaching affects urban students positively. Current literature is an excellent resource for urban teacher preparation and provides definitions, models, and examples to help preservice teachers recognize the "how" and "what" of culturally responsive teaching. Missing, however, is an accessible, in-depth discussion of the "why" or theoretical components of culturally responsive teaching—a crucial part of developing culturally responsive teaching practices appropriately. This article addresses the gap by using Noddings's care theory to frame culturally responsive teaching as question of ethics, inquiry, and caring and explores critically the theory–practice links that make this approach so effective.

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Introduction

> Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men—the balance-wheel of the social machinery.
>
> Horace Mann

> A world-class education is . . . a moral imperative—the key to securing a more equal, fair, and just society. We will not remain true to our highest ideals unless we do a far better job of educating each one of our sons and daughters.
>
> Barack Obama

These two statements, uttered more than a century and a half apart, capture the role of public education as our nation's civil religion (Bankston & Caldas, 2009) and illustrate the difficulty we have had reconciling our cultural ideals with objective realities. These difficulties are especially apparent in the context of urban schools. Despite multiple waves of school reform, urban education still struggles to overcome myriad, well-documented issues: personnel shortages and high turnover, underfunding, deteriorating buildings, low academic performance as measured by standardized tests and graduation rates, and many other objective indicators of deficiency. Some educational discourse also considers cultural and linguistic diversity a "deficiency." Cultural and linguistic diversity (and other forms of diversity) are objective realities in urban education; however, we reject deficit models of thinking (Blanchett, Klinger, & Harry, 2009; Dunn, 2010) that imply students who are not able-bodied, heterosexual middle-class English-speaking adherents of European American culture primarily complicate educational processes and drain resources. Instead, we argue that cultural and linguistic diversity is a valuable resource in urban schools and that teachers who combine culturally responsive teaching practices with caring, ethics-based approaches have the means to do "a far better job" of educating our urban students.

The existing literature on culturally responsive teaching provides empirical evidence to support this claim, albeit typically based on small samples or autoethnographies. These studies are extremely helpful for urban educators and faculty in urban teacher preparation programs in that they describe the "how" and "what" of culturally responsive teaching, thereby providing definitions, models for emulation, and confirmation that culturally responsive teaching is effective, satisfying, and attainable. We argue, however, that this literature would be even more helpful, especially for urban teacher educators and their students, if it also presented an accessible, in-depth discussion of

theoretical aspects—that is, the "why" of culturally responsive teaching—as well. Our work serves to fill this gap in the existing literature.

This gap first became apparent to us when, as members of a Title III Teacher Quality Enhancement grant task force, we undertook an extensive review of 317 journal articles culled from academic databases such as ERIC and Expanded Academic ASAP by task force colleagues and coded them by keywords developed with our external evaluator, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL). We also revisited ERIC using keywords to fill in potential gaps in the article set. As we reviewed search results for "culturally responsive teaching," compiling strategies and techniques that could be incorporated into teacher preparation curricula, we discovered that we had no single, accessible theoretical work to guide faculty and student discussions. We gained insight into the missing "why" in Hostetler (2010), who identified an "obsession for method, technique, and *progress*" (p. 413) in current education research paradigms, leading to a narrow focus on what education "is" at the expense of considering what it means. Without these considerations, according to Hostetler, findings lack coherence, unification, and the basis to evaluate them as appropriate means to a desired end. More important, teachers who adopt "best practices" at face value without under-standing theoretical and ethical issues involved become mere functionaries: unable to reflect deeply on why they do what they do, shortchanged in their ability to figure out how to do it better and, given this truncated improvement, prey to a loss of professional respect (Hostetler, 2010, p. 406). The tacit point in Hostetler's argument was that findings shorn of theory, such as our com-piled list of strategies and techniques, are more likely to reproduce status quo problems in education than to solve them. Piqued that our list may uninten-tionally teach our students to merely reproduce the status quo, we resolved to frame culturally responsive teaching as a question of ethics, inquiry, caring, and social justice and selected Noddings's care theory as the most applicable and accessible method to do so.

We also adopted a nontraditional writing paradigm, rejecting standard lit-erature review–methods–findings–discussion format to interweave theory, findings, and discussion to situate clusters of culturally responsive strategies and techniques in the theoretical context of Noddings's (2002) model of moral education. We present pedagogy as embedded in theoretical and ethi-cal contexts that necessitate reflective thought and discussion. As such, our work does not specify "how" to teach culturally responsive pedagogies to preservice or in-service educators or "how" to construct culturally responsive classrooms. It does not specify "take away" points per se because, in our view, take-away points can be easily misconstrued as "how" and "what" to

do and undermine the spirit and intent of encouraging critical reflection on what education means, especially in the context of urban schools.

Our discussion begins with the critical distinction between "caring about" and "caring for" students. Next, we present the components of Noddings's (2002) care-based education: modeling, dialog and attention, practice, and confirmation. Within each, we introduce theoretical considerations illustrated with examples from selected qualitative studies of "effective teachers," that is, teachers who fostered academic, social, and emotional development in highly diverse, low-income urban classrooms. We close each component by reiterating the links between care theory and culturally responsive practice.

"Caring About" and "Caring For"

Noddings (2002) noted that "caring about" others is important to a moral society: It turns one's attention to the lives of others and spurs one to seek justice for them, even for distant others one does not know and shall never meet. "Caring about" sentiments drive research on urban education. Educators review research findings; teacher preparation programs rely on them to identify best practices; and professional development entities develop programs around them. Research based on "caring about" urban education produced pockets of improvement but has had little across-the-board effect. Why not?

Although problems in urban schools stem from multiple factors, one often overlooked factor is that "caring about" anything is a relatively detached activity (Noddings, 2002). Infinite issues affect others, while one's capacity to attend to others is finite and circumscribed by day-to-day responsibilities. As there is only so much that one can "care about," one hopes to see that "caring about" is productive and benefits others. If one's investment of "caring about" seems unproductive or wasted, caring may turn into resentment or "deteriorate to political self-righteousness and to forms of intervention that do more harm than good" (Noddings, 2002, p. 86).

A simple scenario illustrates Noddings's point: Suppose 50 preservice teachers study the achievement gap in urban schools in teacher preparation courses and learn specific pedagogies to minimize it. Half of them are moved morally to "care about" the achievement gap; half are not. The 25 "carers" accept teaching positions in majority–minority urban schools and immediately encounter myriad pressing issues. Fifteen of them switch their "care about" sentiments from the achievement gap to other issues. Ten stay committed to "caring about" the achievement gap, and seek like-minded others and professional development opportunities that reinforce this sentiment.

Over the next few years, five of them transfer to suburban districts; five stay in urban schools. Despite their best efforts, three of them cannot raise their students' assessment test scores to meet district goals. They receive negative evaluations and are told they must transfer to another school or reapply for their positions. For these three teachers, "caring about" the achievement gap produced no benefits for their students or themselves. They risk significant personal loss due to the very issue they "cared about" for so long. In response, one teacher develops an inward-looking self-righteous attitude; the second seethes with resentment; the third alienates students through sarcasm, punitive grading and harsh discipline policies.

The two remaining teachers, however, found ways to help their students flourish academically, socially and emotionally by "caring for" them, not just "caring about" them. "Caring for" springs from the capacity to "care about" but occurs within ongoing face-to-face relationships, where one focuses attention intensely, experiences the issues, sees the consequences, and understands how one's caring affects others (Noddings, 2002). Two key concepts in "caring for" are engrossment and motivational displacement. Noddings defined engrossment as "open, nonselective receptivity to the cared-for . . . [not] infatuation, enchantment, or obsession but a full receptivity. When I care, I really hear, see or feel what the other tries to convey" (Noddings, 1984, pp. 15, 16).

On receiving the other through engrossment, those who "care for" experience motivational displacement or the "desire to help":

> The sense that our motive energy is flowing toward others and their projects. I receive what the other conveys, and I want to respond in a way that furthers the other's purpose or project . . . Just as we consider, plan, and reflect on our own projects, we now think what we can do to help another. (Noddings, 1992, p. 16)

"Caring for" is not unidirectional energy flows from the carer to the cared-for. The cared-for must reciprocate and complete the cycle of caring, not by inverting the roles of carer and cared-for but through a "willing and unselfconscious revealing of self" (Noddings, 1984, p. 73) in which "[t]he cared-for receives the caring and shows that it has been received. This recognition now becomes part of what the carer receives in his or her engrossment, and the caring is completed" (Noddings, 1992, p. 16). As with "caring about," "caring for" is also imperfect: either party may lose attentiveness, respond inappropriately to the other or not respond at all, or find the response thwarted by circumstances beyond either party's control (Noddings, 2002, p. 14).

However uncertain or labor-intensive (see Bergeron, 2008; Dunn, 2010; Newberry & Davis, 2008) the cycle of caring can be, Noddings argued that "caring for" relationships are the true foundation of education and a moral society, not criterion-based standards, norm-referenced tests, or character education programs:

> The way to a better world is more likely to depend upon better people than on better principles, but a question arises as to how we might produce better people. Care theorists rely more heavily on establishing conditions likely to encourage goodness than on the direct teaching of virtues . . . Moral people rarely consult abstract principles when they act morally. (Noddings, 2002, p. 1)

Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Components of Care-Based Education

The point of culturally responsive teaching is to *respond* to students in ways that build and sustain meaningful, positive relationships (see, for example, Bergeron, 2008; Brown, 2004), that is, to "care for" them rather than "care about" them. Notably, Noddings argued against academic achievement as the sole measure of educational outcomes and reframed outcomes as aims—what one wishes to accomplish and to whose benefit—and "happiness":

> Education, by its very nature, should help people to develop their best selves—to become people with pleasing talents, useful and satisfying occupations, self-understanding, sound character, a host of appreciations, and a commitment to continuous learning. A large part of our obligation as educators is to help students understand the wonders and complexities of happiness, to raise questions about it, and to explore promising possibilities responsibly. (Noddings, 2003, p. 23)

Noddings (2002) identified four components of care-based education, each representing a way of "caring for" students; encouraging their "goodness" as people; nurturing their social, emotional, and academic growth; and helping them understand happiness. These components are modeling, dialog and attention, practice, and confirmation.

Modeling

Noddings (2002) acknowledged, "All people everywhere want to be cared for" (p. 21) but stated that "caring for" others is not an innate behavior but must be

learned through reflexive modeling. Preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and teacher educators often claim to value and practice modeling but may do so in the detached manner of an exemplar: in effect, modeling "caring about" teaching rather than "caring for" others. Noddings was emphatic that "we have to show in our modeling what it means to care" (p. 16) by monitoring the effect one's behavior has on others and asking, "Is our response adequate? Could we have put what we have said better? Has our act helped or hindered?" (p. 16).

Content knowledge and pedagogy are important venues for modeling well-rounded competence: "[C]aring implies competence. When we care, we try hard to do well what is really needed . . . we exercise the competence we have with great care and . . . continually strive for greater competence" (Noddings, 1997, p. 51). Research found that effective teachers modeled competency well. They possessed clear mastery of academic content (Bonner, 2009), presented well-prepared lessons (Evertson, 1989) with smooth transitions across activities (Rutherford, Quinn, & Mathur, 1996), used engaging pedagogy (Bonner, 2009) and displayed consistency across words and actions (Evertson, 1989).

Effective teachers were also competent at interweaving valued elements of students' cultural identities into content and pedagogy. They created classrooms "awash in multicultural materials" (Ullucci, 2009, p. 19) and actively used these materials to illustrate core concepts. Competent command of the cultural metaphors, rituals, and social structures that permeated their students' lives allowed these teachers to weave them fluidly into classroom discussions, explanations, and informal interactions with students (Bonner, 2009; Milner & Tenore, 2010; Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2007; Ullucci, 2009). In addition, effective teachers possessed interpersonal and pedagogical competencies to help students succeed in the classroom. They gave explicit, concrete instructions and demonstrated how to carry them out (Brown, 2004; LeMov, 2010; Ross, Bondy, Gallingane, & Hambacher, 2008). They also monitored student behavior (Evertson, 1989) and helped students understand expectations without embarrassing them (Garza, 2009). When students made mistakes, these teachers expressed concern but focused energy on whatever it took to help students succeed academically and socially (Garza, 2009). In short, these teachers modeled "caring for" by demonstrating respect and appreciation for cultural diversity (Brown, 2004; Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2006; Price, 2006) and through their own deep interpersonal empathy and understanding (Bogotch, Miron, & Murry, 1998; Dunn, 2010; Milner & Tenore, 2010; Schmakel, 2008).

Although teachers who "care about" students may also possess competency in these areas, the higher-level distinction between those who "care about" and those who "care for" students is the degree of reflection: "Is our response adequate? Could we have put what we have said better? Has our act

helped or hindered?" (Noddings, 2002, p. 16). Noddings made clear that "caring for" others entails attending to them in ways that encourage "good-ness" or ethical behavior (Noddings, 2002), and effective teachers strove consciously to do so. Like many teachers, they invested significant time and effort developing and reflecting on their curricula and pedagogies. However, a key difference is that effective teachers did not cite anything outside of themselves to explain their motivations—for example, teacher preparation courses, research findings, professional development workshops, and so forth—or speak of "caring about" education, teaching, or students. Instead, they drew on a strong personal, moral commitment to *be responsive and reflective*, a commitment that Noddings identified as the "I must":

> This "I must" is induced in a direct encounter, in preparation for a response . . . The "I must" expresses a desire or inclination—not a recognition of duty . . . Ethical care is always aimed at establishing, restoring or enhancing the kind of relation in which we respond freely because we want to. (Noddings, 2002, pp. 13-14)

The link between care-based theory and culturally responsive practice can be summarized as follows: Effective teachers employed and modeled well-rounded competency to create classroom environments in which teacher and students responded to one another freely and eagerly, not because they had to but because they wanted to. By adhering to and modeling their own deeply held commitments, effective teachers taught academic content, classroom behavior, and, more important, the personal standards caring individuals hold for themselves (deep knowledge, preparation, and organization); the attitudes caring individuals hold toward others (understanding, appreciation and empathy); and the actions caring individuals use to "care for" others (clear communication, attention to others' actions, providing sincere assistance, and self-reflection). Conversely, had these teachers lacked content knowl-edge or were habitually ill-prepared, dull, disorganized, and self-contradictory, their modeling would convey that it is not important if students learn and, most tellingly, that the students themselves are not worth the teacher's time and effort—the antithesis of "caring for" students.

Dialog and Attention

Noddings focused on dialog and attention as means to build relationships:

> Dialog is the means through which we learn what the other wants and needs, and it is also the means by which we monitor the effects of our

acts. We ask, "What are you going though?" before we act, as we act, and after we act. (Noddings, 2002, p. 19)

Attention focuses the participants toward one another, provides the basis for true listening, and allows one to understand wants, needs, and the effects of actions as accurately as possible:

A carer must attend to or be engrossed (at least momentarily) in the cared-for, and the cared-for must receive the carer's efforts at caring. This reception, too, is a form of attention . . . People in true dialog within a caring relation do not turn their attention wholly to intellectual objects . . . they attend nonselectively to each other. (Noddings, 2002, pp. 16-17)

When teachers engage in true dialog and attention, relationship building intertwines with opportunities for teachers to model "caring for" skills and for students to practice them.

Effective teachers can respond to their students' wants and needs because they develop deep connections with and among them that incorporates self-reflection. Research found that effective teaches used several strategies to develop these connections. The most basic strategy was informal conversation to share personal anecdotes, interests, and events (Bondy, Ross, Gallingane, & Hambacher, 2007; Dunn, 2010). During these conversations, teachers strove to learn students' backgrounds and interests (Garrison-Wade & Lewis, 2006) by encouraging them to talk about their hobbies; books, music, or movies; community events; and local restaurants and businesses their families patronized (Gay, 2002). They asked where or how students were after an absence and provided assistance or support with personal matters (Evertson, 1989; Garza, 2009). Another strategy was to learn students' cultural expressions, idioms, and conversational styles and interweave them into discussions and instruction (Bondy et al., 2007; Bonner, 2009; Sharan, 2010) while also introducing students to a variety of cultural words, expressions, and expressive forms (Ullucci, 2009).

More formal strategies involved intentional integration of dialog and attention into curriculum and instruction. Weekly class meetings that allowed each student to express feelings and discuss problems provided opportunities to engage in dialog and receive attention, as well as to practice listening, empathizing, and attending to one another (Ullucci, 2009; Wisneski & Goldstein, 2004). "Response blog" assignments encouraged students to engage one another to share personal perspectives, problem-solve, and discuss assignment content and processes (Zawalinski, 2009). Research projects and presentations

on family surnames, community histories, or "authentic" texts served as a venue to share knowledge and identities (Peck, 2010). Another strategy incorporated dialog and attention directly into classroom academic tasks: For example, teachers invited students to discuss academic expectations and performance (Price, 2006); conducted on-the-spot reflections to ensure that students understood concepts and skill expectations (Garza, 2009); and moderated whole or small group homework and assignment analysis which incorporated discussions of feelings and issues as well as the curricular content and skills (Bonner, 2009).

Care-based theory and pedagogical practice converge when teachers view dialog and attention as integral parts of the teaching and learning relationship and work conscientiously and reflexively to cultivate them. It is important to note that attending to students' wants does not mean catering to students' wants; it means using meaningful dialog and receptivity to help them distinguish between wants and needs, determine when wants should be satisfied, and accept needs they may not recognize (i.e., inferred needs):

> [T]he education of wants [is] both desirable and ethically appropriate . . . to be happy, we need to know when wants can be freely indulged and when they should be subject to rational analysis . . . Indeed, inferred needs and expressed wants often clash, and adults sometimes have to deny children's wants in order to satisfy . . . real needs . . . If a need can be met without it, it is better to avoid coercion. If not, then the act of coercion must be followed by explanation, discussion, and perhaps consolation. The child should be allowed to express his unhappiness or fear, and the adult should respond with understanding and sympathy. (Noddings, 2003, pp. 66-67)

Forms of dialog and attention are present in many of today's classrooms: Most teachers shun strictly didactic pedagogies and very few are wholly inattentive to their students. Yet dialog and attention without reflecting on ethical considerations falls short of "caring for" students. For example, the exchange of informal pleasantries without making conscious efforts to learn anything about the other's interests, life, or culture does not build meaningful relationships. As such these gleaned bits of information are little more than token acknowledgement that one "cares about" the other. Whole and small group discussion implemented simply to meet a curricular or pedagogical mandate is very different from intentional use of such opportunities to facilitate dialog and attention. Finally, with the current political emphasis on "caring about" academic achievement and school safety, close attention to students'

standardized test scores and classroom behaviors primarily to diagnose dysfunction and administer intervention narrows attention selectively to intellectual objects and thwarts the focused, nonselective attention that is central to meaningful relationships.

Practice

Modeling, dialog, and attention are necessary but not sufficient for teaching or learning how to "care for" others. As Noddings explained,

> One must work at developing the capacity for interpersonal attention . . . To develop the capacity to care, one must engage in caregiving activities . . . What sort of practice should children have? . . . [S]tudents should be encouraged to work together, to help one another—not just to improve academic performance, but to gain competence in caring. Teachers have a special responsibility to convey the moral importance of cooperation to their students. (Noddings, 2002, pp. 19-20)

Schmakel (2008) noted that the groundwork exists in the classroom for developing "the capacity for interpersonal attention" (Noddings, 2002, p. 19). Students want teachers to ask their opinions on subject matter, instructional materials, classroom management strategies, and discipline policies. They would like teachers to work cooperatively with them to set personal academic goals. They appreciate teachers who use games, hands-on activities, and group work that facilitate interaction and discussion. In sum, students understand intuitively that classrooms have a moral climate and prefer a climate of care-based ethics.

Effective teachers also seemed to understand intuitively this aspect of school classrooms. While individual strategies varied, these teachers valued students' need to be cared for and intentionally fostered students' burgeoning ability to care for others by providing opportunities to practice it. Many of them provided practice through use of activities and games that emphasize kindness and respect (Bondy et al., 2007), and which helped students connect teachers' modeled behaviors to wider applications. As noted above, activities such as whole-group discussions that encourage students to talk about feelings provided opportunities to practice caring for one another (Ullucci, 2009). Rotations of assigned leadership roles and noncompetitive peer-assisted learning activities gave individual students practice in attending to classmates (Madrid, Canas, & Ortega-Medina, 2007; Price, 2006; Ullucci, 2009).

The theory–practice link in providing students with opportunities to practice caring for others is that these activities are productive avenues for teachers to "convey the moral importance of cooperation" (Noddings, 2002, p. 20). In addition, linking these activities with discussions of moral and ethical behavior stimulates critical thinking—a highly valued outcome of education—by providing "turning points . . . at which the thinker reaches toward the living other with feeling that responds to the other's condition" (Noddings, 2002, p. 42).

Confirmation

Educators are steeped in the language of "classroom management," "intervention," and "consequences" as well as the "behavioral problems" that link statistically to socioeconomic variables. They are conversant in models and acronyms that experimental design research linked to things they care about: achievement, engagement, and reduced teacher burnout (Allen, 2010). As an educator, then, if one speculated how Noddings's approach dealt with norm or rule violations, the term *confirmation* is not likely to spring to mind. However, Noddings's (2002) use of the word *confirmation* to discuss behavior issues illustrates powerfully the difference between a "caring for" approach versus the "caring about" detachment of status quo classroom management.

Detachment in classroom management stems from its emphasis on control (Allen, 2010; see also Bondy et al., 2007) that many teachers internalize from their own educational and family backgrounds, preservice training, in-service peer culture, and which political pressure to increase student achievement on standardized tests reinforces. Education research paradigms based on the "gold standard" of experimental design (Hostetler, 2010; Lather, 2006) exacerbate the emphasis on detachment and control by equating classroom management with behavioral modification (e.g., Canter & Canter, 2001) in which teachers become clinicians administering treatment to dysfunctional subject-clients.

Ideological dependence on detachment and control in classroom management becomes teleogical. For example, Mayer (1995) noted that punitive discipline increases the very behaviors it is designed to control, yet teachers often respond to these increases by ramping up their use of punitive measures. Even well-intentioned research that seeks to promote culturally responsive teaching sometimes cannot shed ideological dependence on detachment and control. For example, Sugai and Horner's (2008) schoolwide positive behavioral support (SWPBS) model was designed as both a means toward an

all-inclusive classroom and an alternative to counterproductive punitive measures. Yet as the following excerpt illustrates, Sugai and Horner also relied heavily on the language of detachment and control:

> The success of schools as effective learning environments rests in part on establishing a social context that promotes and supports successful academic engagement . . . Effective behavior-support practices benefit academic outcomes, and effective instructional practices benefit social behavior. Key to this effort is designing and sustaining teaching and learning environments that actively teach and promote contextually appropriate social behaviors and prevent the occurrence of norm- or rule-violating problem behaviors. The collection of evidence-based interventions, practices, and processes that define school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) offer a structure and organization for achieving an effective, efficient, and relevant approach to prevention in our schools . . . Students who display chronic problem behaviors need behavior intervention and support plans that are high intensity, scientifically based, individualized, and proactive. To put these plans in place requires individuals who are fluent with the content, can make appropriate adaptations according to careful analysis of performance data and local environmental contexts, and are not distracted by ineffective and inefficient teaching and learning environments. (Sugai & Horner, 2008, pp. 67, 74)

In comparison with status quo emphases on *managing classrooms and behaviors*, Noddings used the language of ethics and relationships to *confirm students* as both "cared for" and as "carers" who reflect on their own behavior:

> When someone commits an uncaring or unethical act . . . we respond—if we are engaging in confirmation—by attributing the best possible motive consonant with reality. By starting this way, we draw the cared-for's attention to his or her better self. We confirm the other by showing that we believe the act in question is not a full reflection of the one who committed it . . . Confirmation is not a ritual act . . . It 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. 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, 2002, pp. 20-21)

One key element in confirmation is determining "the best possible motive" (Noddings, 2002, p. 20), and research reported that effective teachers defined their students in the best possible light. They differentiated among noncompliant behaviors and the need for additional explanation or instruction (LeMov, 2010), did not mistake lack of understanding as intentional uncooperative behavior, and did not dwell on minor infractions. First and foremost, they defined their students as unique, achievement-oriented individuals who took responsibility for learning, and who deserved honor and respect (Bonner, 2009; Milner & Tenore, 2010; Price, 2006).

Another key element in confirmation is that the identified motive must be "consonant with reality" (Noddings, 2002, p. 20). Interestingly, prepackaged, control-based classroom management methods and motivational strategies were absent from effective teachers' classrooms and pedagogies (Ullucci, 2009), dismissed as unrealistic and unnecessary. Rather than "manage" student behavior, effective teachers emphasized shared group norms and reiterated them through regularly encouraging students to discuss feelings and the impact of one's behavior on others (Ullucci, 2009). In effect, these teachers stood their preservice training on its head by using psychology *with* students rather than *on* them (Noddings, 2006, p. 6) to collaboratively construct the classroom "reality." Furthermore, these teachers drew on their deep knowledge of the students' cultures and communities—that is, students' realities—to interweave cultural communication patterns and vernacular into the norms, thereby making the norms relevant and giving students ownership of them (Bonner, 2009; Milner & Tenore, 2010). As a result, "classroom management" arose from a family-like community defined by a shared vocabulary, with all responsible to one another to do the right thing (Davis, 2006; Price, 2006; Ullucci, 2009). Teachers were not left to "pull a motive out of thin air" (Noddings, 2002, p. 21) because teachers and students shared a deep understanding of each other's points of view.

Norm and rule violations did occur occasionally in these classrooms. In the case of minor behavior issues, teachers used culturally appropriate humor, provided clear redirection, and moved on with the task at hand (Garza, 2009; Ullucci, 2009). When humor was insufficient to redirect behavior, teachers used "the Mama voice" (Ullucci, 2009) or "warm demander" style (Ware, 2006) to clarify expectations, emphasized students' positive behaviors and

achievements, and monitored behavior to ensure that redirection occurred (Brown, 2004; Evertson, 1989). If further discipline was necessary, it was skillfully applied so that the main focus remained on instruction (Bonner, 2009), and consequences were made clear and administered appropriately (Ullucci, 2009).

The link between care-based theory and culturally responsive practice is highly evident in the "confirmation" component and is most clearly summarized as teachers' conscientious focus on and consistent reinforcement of the "better self" rather than attempts to focus on and control "lesser acts and poorer selves" (Noddings, 2002, p. 21).

Ethics and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is neither simply about "what" or "how" nor solely an abstract, theoretical "why." It is really the nexus of "what," "how," and "why," and is, at its core, about ethics. It reflects *a system of moral principles* aligned with the interrelated components of a care-based education model. Each component recognizes that overall *rules of conduct* for the classroom arise through caring relationships that acknowledge, speak to, and develop *moral principles* in unique individuals. The ultimate goal and purpose of these interrelated components is to create and sustain *values relating to human conduct*, such that each individual reflects on and develops his or her actions as they pertain to *the rightness of certain actions* and *the goodness of motives and ends*.

Yet we must consider carefully what we mean by moral principles, rules, and values. The ethics of culturally responsive teaching are not grounded in abstract, elitist, or individualized moral principles that tell us what to do. They are grounded in full recognition of ourselves and others and reflect our aims to care for others and alleviate their suffering:

> Then we accept honestly our loves, our innate ferocity, our capacity for hate, we may use all this as information in building the safeguards and alarms that must be part of the [ethical] ideal. We know better what we must work toward, what we must prevent, and the conditions under which we are lost as ones-caring. Instead of hiding from our natural impulses and pretending that we can achieve goodness through lofty abstractions, we accept what is there—all of it—and use what we have already assessed as good to control that which is not-good . . . Everything depends, then, upon the will to be good, to remain in caring relation to the other. (Noddings, 1984, pp. 100, 103)

Similarly, rules of human conduct must be acknowledged, especially in the highly bureaucratized field of urban education, but with a full awareness of what rules can and cannot do. Noddings (1984) acknowledged the existence of rules and their utility as "aids to smooth passage through unproblematic events" (p. 46) but defined them as guidelines for ethical behavior that one should interpret in light of the situation at hand:

> What we do depends not upon rules, or at least not wholly on rules— not upon a prior determination of what is fair or equitable—but upon a constellation of conditions that is viewed through both the eyes of the one-caring and the eyes of the cared-for. (p. 13)

Hence, the teacher has latitude in enforcing rules and should avoid enforcing penalties that risk destroying or subverting the caring relationship:

> To support her students as ones-caring, she must show them herself as one-caring. Hence she is not content to enforce rules—and may even refuse occasionally to do so—but she continually refers the rules to their ground in caring. If she confronts a student who is cheating, she may begin by saying, *I know you want to do well,* or *I know you want to help your friend*. She begins by attributing the best possible motive to him, and then proceeds to explain—fully, with many of her own reservations expressed freely—why she cannot allow him to cheat. She does not need to resort to punishment, because the rules are not sacred to her. What matters is the student, the cared-for, and how he will approach ethical problems as a result of his relation to her. (Noddings, 1984, p. 178)

Once we understand care-based ethics, we can see that, like moral principles, values relating to human conduct are not abstract, externally determined qualities whose emulation shows "character." Values are directly related to caring about others equitably and promoting their happiness and come to life in the "best" homes and schools:

> What should be meant by *best*? . . . [T]he best homes provide continuity of caring relations, attend to and continuously evaluate both inferred and expressed needs, protect from harm without deliberately inflicting pain, communicate so as to develop common and individual interests, work together cooperatively, promote joy in genuine learning, guide moral and spiritual development (including the development

of an uneasy conscience), contribute to the appreciation of the arts and other great cultural achievements, encourage love of place and protection of the natural world, and education for both self-understanding and group understanding. The best homes and schools are happy places. (Noddings, 2003, pp. 260-261)

This way of discussing ethics—the "why" of teaching—often disappears in urban education research due to political, cultural, and economic pressure to identify formulaic, replicable approaches that, theoretically, can be generalized to school populations overall. This mass-production mentality may also couple with a well-intentioned but misguided view of cultural relativity, bias, and objectivity—especially in regards to urban schools—that negates the ability to discuss conduct, rightness, and goodness openly and contextually. However, experience has shown that the narrow focus on academic achievement, "highly qualified" teachers, and our inability to discuss ethics has not improved urban education in the United States. Instead, as Hostetler (2010) stated, it inundated us with "how" and "what" recommendations that do little to help either teachers or students.

As empirical studies document, culturally responsive teaching does make a difference in urban schools not only in terms of academic achievement but also in social and emotional growth and empowerment. However, in our experience it is not at all clear that preservice teachers grasp the full dimensions of culturally responsive teaching and all too clear that of those who choose urban schools, the choice is sometimes based on "caring about" being able to make a difference rather than a personal commitment to "care for" urban students and urban communities. We wish to change that situation and believe that introducing theoretical discussions, such as the one developed above, early and often in teacher preparation programs can foster preservice teachers' capacity to care for and value urban students and help them understand that all they do as teachers—lesson planning, teaching, classroom management, so forth—is not just nuts-and-bolts of the profession but is truly a manifestation of the care and ethics necessary to fulfill education's promise as the "balance wheel" of society and "the key to securing a more equal, fair, and just society."

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