

WEBS OF EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses a number of stories from my early practice as a secondary teacher to illustrate what for me is the crux of teaching—relationships. I use the work of Nel Noddings and Hannah Arendt to analyze these stories and to discuss the importance of relationships in teaching.

Nel Noddings has written extensively on the concept of an ethic of care and her book the *Challenge to Care: An Alternative Approach to Education* is an in-depth description of a curriculum organized around centres of care. For Noddings education is complex and takes into account the whole person: their values, attitudes and relationships with others. I talk about the role of the care-giver and cared-for. Noddings believes that we all have the capacity to care; caring requires one to be receptive, to recognize when someone needs to be cared for. Caring also requires courage. To be a care-giver one must know the cared-for, that is, one must be in relationship; accordingly teachers must foster educational relationships with their students. I also discuss the roadblocks schools put in the way of educational caring and developing students themselves to become care-givers.

I will be using a number of Hannah Arendt's concepts that have significant educational importance. She divides human activities into labour, work and action and I discuss what these activities look like in an educator's day. I will also discuss her concepts of private and public and how the classroom is both a private and public space. Her most important concepts are plurality and natality: plurality involves making sense of our lives in dialogue with other people; natality signals the uniqueness each of us brings to those conversations. It is crucially important for teachers to respect both plurality and

natality in educating children to take their place in the world and more importantly to make their mark.

I will then compare the work of Noddings and Arendt, showing that, while their ideas may seem antithetical, their projects are in important ways complementary. Noddings is primarily concerned with educating students to care: to care about themselves, about others, about animals and about the environment. Her concern is to care on an individual level. Arendt wants students to care about the world. She wants people to make a difference, she wants them to interact and through this dialogue action can occur.

As a result of writing this paper I believe I more fully understand my role as an educational leader. I now more fully appreciate the responsibility teachers have in educating the young. I now understand that in my current role as an administrator taking the time to interact with people is educationally important: for example, taking time to show a new student to their locker, taking time to listen to a teacher explain an incident in class or taking time to listen to a personal concern. Relationships are what matter and making the time to develop and maintain relationships is the most important part of my role as an educational leader.

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Chapter 1

STORIES FROM MY PRACTICE

We moved to British Columbia after having spent ten years in Winnipeg. The move was prompted by my husband's desire to change careers. It turned out to be an incredibly important step in my professional life. I found myself working part time at the University of British Columbia in the teacher education program. I taught a seminar course and was a faculty advisor working with twelve secondary student teachers. I now realize that it was the first time that I really had the time and the opportunity to step back and reflect on my practice: to think beyond the everyday, to think more broadly about education and about my role as an educator. Probably one of the most important events in this process was reading Nel Nodding's (1992) book *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, which was incredibly important for my self-respect as an educator. Mostly it reaffirmed what I had been doing in my twenty plus year teaching career. Here was someone who was recognized as an important educator and philosopher, expressing, very eloquently, what I had been trying to do for most of my career—care about kids. She talked about so many of the things that I had done throughout my career and provided a rationale. I had cared intuitively, but now someone affirmed what I did; this was incredibly important to me. I am basically an insecure person and while caring about kids is very important to me, it is not something that always garnered respect from my colleagues.

Standing up for students and taking their side in issues did not always lead to being appreciated by my colleagues. There are many times when I had self-doubts about how I related to and reacted to students. Did I always do what was best for my students? This time given to me, and the reading of Noddings' work provided the impetus for me to reflect on my previous practice and to challenge what I had been doing. Following my two years at U.B.C. I returned to high school as a vice-principal and a couple of years later began a masters programme in curriculum and instruction which provided me with further resources with which to look at both my previous and current practice.

Who I am in the classroom and how I came to be that person is very much a result of my own high school experience. It was not a positive experience and I believe I went into teaching to ensure that no one treated children the way I had been treated. However, that is a discussion for another time. When I left Winnipeg, I had been teaching in the same school for ten years and was, I now see, in a bit of a rut. I still enjoyed teaching but no longer felt I was making enough of a difference. The first couple of years in British Columbia allowed me the time to step back and reflect on my practice, time to think about the things that had shaped my teaching. I did not feel that I was doing a very good job over the last few years; I was not very proud of the teacher I was. I felt after my two years at U.B.C. that I could be a better teacher. I was still learning things about teaching and my enthusiasm and energy had returned. I was also aware that I missed everything about high school and wanted to return. My return to high school was as a vice-principal. I am now studying in a masters program and many of the readings are also playing a role in my reflections, stimulating a recall and review of my early years in teaching.

As I think back about my practice a number of stories come to mind. These particular stories surfaced, I believe, because they have had an impact upon my entire teaching career and because they tell something about me, about who I am in the classroom. They reflect some very broad themes: the relationship teachers have not only with their students but with their families, how important teachers are in the life of their students, and how the educational bureaucracy often gets in the way of teachers becoming educators. Teaching is first and foremost about relationships. I will use these stories to help illustrate how both Nel Noddings and Hannah Arendt have helped me to better understand my years as a classroom teacher and how they impact on my current practice as a high school administrator.

The first story is from my second year of teaching. I really cannot recall very many stories from my first year of teaching, a year that was all about survival. I had seven or eight preps in two languages, and all I recall is a blur of hard work. My second year had me at a new school, a high school in a middle class suburb of Montreal. I had had a successful first year and was fairly confident about my teaching (many second year teachers are). George was in one of my junior classes; he was not doing well: he did not do any homework and accomplished very little in class. I had kept him in at lunch, had spoken to him many times, but nothing seemed to be working. I had threatened calling home and now it was time to follow through.

I remember speaking to his mother and explaining the difficulties I was having in getting him to work. His mother assured me she would speak to him, that his education was very important. The next day he arrived in class with bruises on his arms and face. I have no knowledge or proof that this was a result of my phone call. I do not remember the

details of this story, not even the specific course George was in. However, I do remember being very upset at the time and swearing never to call a parent again.

This story was brought back to me, after reading "From Grade School to Graduate School: Reflections of a Good Kid" by Gary Raspberry. It became clear to me why today, as a vice principal, I hesitate to call home as my first response when dealing with students. For my colleagues it is often their first response to an incident and the advice they give to teachers. While I believe it is important to keep parents informed, I prefer to do it in person and will always check about a student's home life first. Until just recently I had not realized how significant this incident from my early teaching career had been. As a classroom teacher I believed that establishing a relationship with my students' parents was important and I tried to meet all of the parents, particularly those of the needy students. I did not contact parents to complain or discuss issues until I had met them. As an administrator it is simply not possible to meet all the students' parents and I find it very difficult to call parents about issues without having met them first. I am often forced to call home cold, in which case I make every effort to set up a meeting so the issue I am calling about can be discussed in person.

Earlier that same year I had another experience in the same school that has also, I believe, profoundly impacted my teaching. I was teaching a short vocational record-keeping course to a group of approximately twenty students, the majority of whom were male. It had taken a while for me to gain their trust but slowly it was beginning to happen. Short vocational courses are "dead end" courses designed for students who will not be going on to post secondary institutions. They are courses for students who many define as having "no future". Kurt was one of these students. He was a very quiet boy who kept to

himself, did his work and rarely asked for help. He was one of the brighter students in this class. During one of my prep periods I was in the hall when I saw Kurt. I asked him where he was going and got a mumbled response. I then asked him what was wrong. He told me that his father had his younger brother (5 years of age) barricaded in their house and his father had been drinking. It was obvious by his tone and behaviour that he was scared. I remember being stunned. I knew this was way over my head and suggested that we see a counsellor. He told me his counsellor had just yelled at him for being in the halls and he did not want to see him. It took me awhile but eventually we did end up in his counsellor's office. Kurt asked me to stay with him and I did. Kurt told his story to the counsellor which led to the police being contacted and his brother was safely removed from the house.

No matter what may be going on, making the time to listen to students is so important—more important than keeping to the lesson plan for the day. Knowing one's students is what teaching is all about. I have always been amazed or confused, I am not sure which, by my colleagues that feel students should shut off their personal lives, no matter what may be going on, when they pass through the school doors. That a separation between school and home is the only way—school is all-important and the rest can wait till the end of the day. For me formal schooling is less important and it is the person and their needs that cannot wait.

A third story is brought to mind again in the same year at the same school. I had a female student named Carly who was somewhat difficult. She was very rude and could be disruptive in the classroom, in her mind the whole world revolved around her needs. I invited her mother in to discuss Carly's behaviour and see if we could come up with a plan to make the balance of the year better. After spending half an hour with her mother, I

decided that Carly was not so bad after all. If I thought Carly's behaviour was immature and self-centred, it was only a warm-up for my interactions with the mother. The conversation was all about her and what hard work it was to raise a child and the terrible job the school was doing. Whatever point or concern I raised was met with either hostility or how the school was at fault—we were not doing enough for her daughter. My first thoughts after the meeting were that the kid had turned out remarkably well in spite of her mother. She had learned the lessons from her mother well: to blame others and not to accept responsibility for your own behaviour.

These three stories help explain a lot about my behaviour in the classroom and the beliefs that form the foundation of my practice. These stories made me realize just how naïve I was as a beginning teacher. I had been raised in a working class family and received unconditional love. While material things were not plentiful, I knew that whatever was available was for the children. We were the centre of the universe for my parents. The thought of being hurt by them just never occurred to me. My stories of the young man who had arrived bruised to class and Kurt's story were my first real experiences that not everyone had grown up as I had. While many children have parents who are caring and take part in their education and introduction into the world that is not the case for all children. In many cases teachers are the significant caregivers, they take on the parental role. In the twenty-five years that have passed since I began teaching I see this parental role increasing. As more and more children are being raised by parents stressed about financial responsibilities or by single parent families and more energy is put into providing the basic necessities of life for their children, less time is available for developing meaningful

relationships. This would seem to indicate that it is even more important today than ever that teachers develop relationships with their students.

These stories from my first few years of teaching were about the link with families, the next stories are about the impact teachers have on their students and come from my ten years in Winnipeg. The role we play in our students' lives, the impact we have is often far greater than we realize. Ramona's story is about this impact.

Ramona walked into my accounting class and sat down quietly at her desk, as was her normal practice. When I had finished my presentation and the class was starting the day's assignment Ramona approached my desk: this was not normal, she rarely asked for help. She had been away for a few days and had had trouble with one of the assignments she had worked on at home. I helped her and she returned to her desk. Ramona was an average student, created absolutely no trouble, got help when needed and paid attention in class. This was the third year that Ramona had been in one of my classes; we had had a few personal conversations, but I did not feel that I really knew her.

The year progressed and Ramona went on to graduate. The following year our librarian, Monique, approached me at lunch in the staff room. Monique had run into Ramona on the weekend: she was now attending community college. Monique told me how Ramona talked about how grateful she was to me, how without me she would never had gone on to college and about the a difference I had made in her life.

At first glance this would seem to be one of those times when you get a thank you from a student. This is supposed to make you feel good: teachers do make a difference in student's lives. However, this information had the opposite effect on me: it made me very uncomfortable. This was a student that I had done nothing special for. She was an average

student, created no trouble and did well in my courses and yet somehow I had still touched her—I had made a difference. I taught a lot of students in those years that I had done many extra things for, things that might have warranted the comments Ramona made, however, Ramona was not one of them. This made me aware, very aware, of just how much power we have over our students. While in this case, it was positive, it made me think about how many times I might have had a negative effect on students and not been aware of it. While it is wonderful to have this ability to affect others lives, I hope we remember just how powerful this ability is and how much responsibility comes with it.

This story had a powerful effect on me at the time and continued to crystallize as I worked with student teachers at U.B.C. It raised a number of questions such as: How do I remember the potential impact I might have on children on a daily basis? How do I not let myself say something that will be hurtful to students? How do I remember how sensitive and vulnerable students are? These and many more questions emerged as a result of the opportunities I had during the first two years I lived in British Columbia.

Because students are so sensitive and so vulnerable it is necessary to create a safe space for them. The classroom must be a space that students consider their own and one where they can express themselves--where they are allowed to care about each other. Linda was a student in my senior typing class. The class was a small one and many of the students I had had at least once before in other classes and for many it was our third year together (Ramona was one of these students). Linda, however, was a new student; she had just arrived at our school in September. She fit in easily and had been accepted in our small typing class. Sometime in the middle of the year, I believe towards the end of winter, she came into class late, went to her desk and began to cry. The students were all working on

assignments and I was busy at my desk. I got up and went over to Linda. I asked if I could do anything, she shook her head. I then asked her if she wanted to see a counsellor. She explained that she had just come from the counsellors and that she would be okay. I gave her a brief hug and went back to my desk.

Throughout the next ten minutes each student in the room (the majority of whom were female) got up and approached Linda, not one of them asked her to explain what was wrong, they all just expressed support in some way—a hug, a pat on the back, comforting words. I have never been so impressed or so touched by a group of students, as I was that day. They all showed they cared, they all showed support and they all did it in a non-intrusive manner. That was one of those days when teaching and all the nonsense that goes with it, was worth it: I had somehow created a space, an environment where it was all right to express concern for another person, to show you cared was acceptable.

Not only must we create safe spaces, but we must use them to establish trusting relationships. My next story is about a young man I met in my role as an administrator and it makes a very clear point about how important it is to know your students, to develop a relationship with them. It fills with meaning the old saying ‘never judge a book by its cover’. Allan is one of those students that stand out, he would stand out in any high school, partly because of his appearance and partly because of his beliefs. Allan’s physical appearance was different to say the least: he had beautiful red hair that was dyed black, always wore black and his clothes were different from the other students. No jeans or sweat pants for Allan and his t-shirts always had a message or represented a group that was important to him. He was a large boy for his age and over the years he added more and more metal to his body and to his clothing. Allan’s nose was pierced; he wore a ring in his

eyebrow and later added a tongue ring and more earrings. He liked to wear a dog collar with large spikes but at this we, the administrative team, drew the line, he could wear it to school but had to remove it and keep it in his locker. He wore several chains at his waist and again we had rules about the number and size he was permitted to wear in the school.

Allan was the first student I met in my new school, in my new role as vice-principal. The principal introduced him to me before school started. There were a couple of students that she had told me about over the summer, students that needed extra care and that would present challenges (educational jargon for problems or difficulties)—Allan was first on this list. He was an incredibly caring and sensitive young man, although it took getting beyond the surface to see this. You had to get to know Allan, really know him before becoming aware of this side of him. Unfortunately for many teachers what they saw was a difficult, at times arrogant young man who refused to fit into the box prescribed by the education system—he did not do assignments, his questions were not easily answered and he was often uncooperative in class. I believe he scared some of his teachers. The year prior to my coming to the school Allan had passed only a few courses and by the end of the year was only attending a couple of classes. I made a point of getting to know Allan and we got through our first year together with him attending a few more classes than the previous year, but far from a full class load.

The next year did not start out that well: he was in grade 11 and was having difficulty getting along with some of his teachers. His attendance began to slip early in the year and by the end of first term was reaching the point where he was spending as much time out of the classroom as in it. Unlike some students who skip, Allan was not a problem: he did not create problems in the hall or disturb other classes; he either left the building or

found an out-of-way place to pass the time. During this time we had many talks and these eventually lead to threats that he would have to get it together or he would be asked to leave. His skipping was becoming more and more of a problem not just for Allan and his academic progress, but also for the perception of other students. They did not understand why it was okay for Allan to skip (Allan had a high profile with his peer group) and not for them. In the early spring I did ask Allan to leave. He did nothing for quite a while and then I heard that he had gotten a job at the new movie theatre. He would come back to school occasionally after he began work and these visits increased as June approached.

On one of these visits Allan came in to see me about the following year—he wanted to come back to school. I explained that we would have to set up an appointment and discuss it. We had a long conversation involving a lot of issues. Did he really want to return to school to get an education or to be near his friends, did he want to return because it was easier than work? I needed to understand his reasons for wanting to return so I could help him make the transition back to school successfully. We met again with the principal early in September and discussed Allan's future. We talked about the things we could not tolerate and asked Allan on what issues he could comprise and those he couldn't. One of the issues was wearing his facial rings and studs, which are not permitted in the chef courses, since these were courses he was interested in. In the end, he chose not to take the chef courses and to keep his facial metal, but Allan came back. He did not have a perfect year, but he did finish the year and had only dropped two courses. Allan went on to graduate the following year. In his final and graduating year he attended all of his classes and did surprisingly well, it was as if he realized that to graduate he had to do certain things. His biggest accomplishment was successfully completing his C.A.P.P. class (a

requirement for graduation). This was his third attempt at the course. He did not think the course was useful, in his words 'a waste of time'. I remember having many discussions with Allan around the theme of often having to do things we did not agree with because they were necessary to reach a goal. We talked a lot about comprising and establishing limits and understanding what is really important to you. This transformation did not take place overnight, but involved many conversations with me, other teachers and certain of his peers. Allan's graduation from high school was an accomplishment on his part and would not have been possible without the care and support he received from a lot of people.

Allan has become an example of success in our school. A student's dress is not always an accurate indication of who the person is. When a student appears to fight the system every step of the way it does not mean that school is not important in his or her life. Allan's story becomes even more compelling when I learned that in his final year his personal life was falling apart: his girlfriend had broken up with him and his parents were beginning divorce proceedings. Whenever a teacher begins to give up on a student we remind them of Allan. There are many Allan stories in the school and they are a constant reminder that we should never give up on a student, that the future is unpredictable.

It is not enough to create safe places for students; they must also be easily accessible to them. For teachers this is easy, the safe space is their classroom and classrooms are open to students. For administrators it is not as simple. The following story talks about the importance of having administrators' offices easily accessible to students. The story is not about a student, but I believe it summarizes my firm belief, my overriding belief; that school, that teaching, is about relationships. Our building is being replaced and over the last year we have been working closely with the architect. When we got around to

talking about the office area I remember beginning the conversation with my request for a window. Currently I have windows in my office but one needs to be over six feet tall to see out of them. I'm considerably shorter than six feet and having a useable window seemed like an important priority. As we got further along in the planning process I realized that the location of my new office meant that students had to go by the counter and probably a secretary or two to get to my office. In my current office, this is not necessary; my office can be accessed directly since it is the first office when one enters the general office area. I had never thought about this before. This is my first job as a vice-principal and therefore the only office I have ever had. When faced with this problem I opted to give up an outside window, to ensure that students could easily access my office. My office will have windows, but they will face the hallway and open area of the school. I realized during this planning process just how important it is to me that students can easily reach me. Building relationships with student's means I must be accessible to them when they need me. It was an easy choice, if my choice was to have students reach me easily without any barriers (human or other) versus a window, then I could easily give up the window. Both of the other administrators offices will look to the outside of the school, to the parking lots, which is necessary for a number of reasons but all three did not have to do so. I will probably not be in the same school when the new school opens, it would be my seventh year in the same school and administrators are usually moved before this, but I am sure the person who inherits my office may wonder why it is set apart from the other administrator's offices and I am sure this will lead to some interesting guesses. Hopefully the person who inherits this office will have views similar to mine and not feel that he/she has been ostracized from his or her colleagues.

After reading over these stories I find that there is one that comes to mind from my first year of teaching and I now see has influenced me throughout my teaching career. It involves process--procedures and rules. Processes are often set up in schools and they are often followed religiously—people follow the process without ever questioning it. In most schools one of these processes is the transition from elementary to secondary, the passing on of a student's history. Something similar happens in high school as information is passed from one year's teacher to the next. Donna's story is about how processes can get in the way of doing what is best for a student.

Donna was in three of my courses—I taught a lot of courses in my first year. She was doing very well in accounting and asked me if she could do some typing during accounting class since she needed extra practice to get her speed up. The only way to improve a skill like typing is to practice. I said it would not be a problem as long as she kept her grades up, but I would have to check with the teacher using the typing room at that time. It turned out to be the department head and she said that it would not be possible, accounting was what was on Donna's timetable and that was where she would have to be. I explained this to Donna and we found a compromise. She took shorthand with me (also a skill subject) and so she listened to dictation tapes during the formally scheduled accounting class, with the same proviso that she kept her accounting grades up. I learned as the year went on that Donna had graduated from the academic stream two years before and had spent the previous year doing her graduation year over in French (the French high school was attached to the English one). Donna's family was unable to finance post secondary education so she had decided to return to high school taking only business courses so that she would have some skills that would lead to a better paying job. This

young lady was an excellent student with great work habits. At the end of the year I decided to read her file because I had been so impressed with her accomplishments. It turned out that her file showed her to have a very low IQ, in the trainable mentally handicapped range. I was shocked and amazed and glad that I had not seen the file before getting to know her or I may have treated her very differently. If I had been aware of this information I may have felt that allowing Donna this much freedom and responsibility would create unnecessary stress in her life. She would not be able to handle it. I would be setting her up for failure. We are often too ready to label students, place them in the appropriate box and not let them develop outside of the parameters we have selected.

All of these stories tell a piece of who I am in the classroom and who I am as an administrator. They all tell a part of what is important to me. As an educator I am first and foremost a caregiver. My role is to help students learn and grow as individuals and to do that I must care about them and to do that I must form relationships with them. I realize that this is very simplified and what any good teacher does in the classroom is much more complicated, but it is a starting point. In the following chapters I want to explore these stories in greater depth using the work of Nel Noddings and Hannah Arendt to help me better understand what I do and the reasons behind what I do and to help improve my practice.

By applying Noddings' and Arendt's work to my stories, I hope I will better understand myself as a teacher and thereby improve my practice as an administrator. Both Noddings and Arendt are concerned with relationships and I want to investigate the similarities and differences in their perspectives. I will begin this journey by first looking at

Noddings' work on caring and how she sees caring as the foundation for curriculum in schools.

Chapter 2

NODDINGS – THE CARING RELATION

I believe that teaching in schools is a very complex activity that is first and foremost about relationships, in particular the relationship between teacher and student. As Cuban (1993, p. 184) says, "At the heart of schooling is the personal relationship between teacher and students." If this is what I believe, then how does Nel Noddings' work help me to understand the stories I have told and to improve my practice.

Education is about preparing people to lead good and worthwhile lives and entails more than mere knowledge. For whatever reason, in our culture, "being educated" has been equated with a person's formal education and the accumulation of particular forms of socially valued knowledge--the number of initials a person has after his or her name, the greater the number the better educated they are. Being an educated person is much more complex. It takes into account the whole person, their character, their attitudes, their values and in particular their relationships with others. It is also about their sense of responsibility to others and to the world. When we educate our children, when we send them to school it should be about a lot more than dealing with the "narrowly" academic subjects taught in schools. I believe Noddings work addresses these issues and grapples with the complexity of teaching and the huge responsibility placed on teachers.

The effect that reading Noddings' (1992) *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* had on me is probably immeasurable. It was an incredibly validating experience! Her concept of developing curriculum around themes of care just made so much sense to me. I read this book during my time at U.B.C., a time when I was feeling fairly negative about teaching; I was in a rut; I was feeling incompetent and hopeless. I felt the number of uncared for and unloved students was increasing at an overwhelming rate. I could not see a way to change the tide, to make a difference. This book played a large role in renewing my faith and providing the energy to return to school with a positive outlook and the belief that I could make a difference.

Nel Noddings is first and foremost an educator. She was a high school math teacher for a number of years, returned to university and became a professor in the Faculty of Education at Stanford. Her writing reflects her experiences as both a teacher and a mother. "She insists that the main aim of education should be a moral one, that of nurturing the growth of competent, caring, loving and lovable persons. To that end she describes in great detail a curriculum organized around centres of care" (Soltis, 1992, p. vii). Noddings has problems with the traditional 'liberal arts education' that has been the foundation of our educational system and its curriculum. It is not that she thinks there is anything inherently bad or evil with the content of this traditional education only that it is not the best education for all children. The current emphasis on mainstreaming, having all students attend the same schools and receive basically the same curriculum, Noddings maintains is not equal education and is definitely not the best education for all children. We are beginning to recognize that human abilities and capabilities are more than just the mathematical/logical ability that is necessary for success in the traditional liberal arts

education. Noddings (1992, p. xii) argues “that liberal education (defined as a set of traditional disciplines) is an outmoded and dangerous model of education for today’s young.” Education is a much broader concept.

What Noddings proposes is a curriculum developed around themes of caring. This new approach would allow for much greater diversity in curriculum to better meet the needs of all students and focus on their abilities and interests. She envisions themes of care around care of: self, intimate others, animals, plants and things. While many of the traditional liberal arts disciplines would still be covered it would be done with a different focus and would not necessarily be for everyone. One of the overriding arguments for a liberal arts education is for equality—all children are treated equally, they all receive the same education and therefore have the same chances in life. She believes that equating equal with identical does a great disservice to many children. Children are not identical. They come with different experiences, abilities and interests—treating them as identical is incredibly unjust. As Noddings (1992, p. 42) puts it “To provide an equal quality of education for all our children does not require identical education for all”. If being just and fair is one of the reasons for justifying a liberal arts curriculum in education then it fails.

To get a sense of Noddings' work and what she has spent the last twenty years writing about I will provide a brief overview of her work on a caring ethic and then look at her ideas in relationship to my stories. For Noddings caring is a relational experience.

The Caring Relation

"I want to build an ethic of caring, and I shall claim that there is a form of caring natural and accessible to all human beings" (Noddings, 1984, p. 27). For Noddings (1992, p. 17) caring is a relational experience. "Caring is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors". There are two parties to caring. In *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984) she uses the term the one-caring, for the person giving care. In *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (1992) she uses interchangeably the terms carer and caregiver to mean the same thing. In both books she uses the term cared-for, for the person receiving care. In this essay I will tend to use carer but when citing Noddings it is necessary for the reader to understand what these terms mean. "[T]he essential elements of caring are located in the relation between the one-caring and the cared-for" (Noddings, 1984 p. 9). In this relational experience the carer and the cared-for must both contribute in certain ways. Care giving involves total engrossment in the other person—we must listen attentively to what they are saying. The cared-for is receptive and usually responds in some way to being cared for. "When the attitude of the one-caring bespeaks caring, the cared-for glows, grows stronger, and feels not so much that he has been given something as that something has been added to him" (Noddings, 1984, p. 20). Noddings aim is for schools to teach students both roles.

In schools students should be the cared-fors, I would maintain however, that we do not do this very well; and we spend little time, particularly in high schools in explicitly teaching students how to care. Noddings (1992, p. 20) maintains that "The structures of current schooling work against care, and at the same time, the need for care

is perhaps greater than ever" We do not manage to teach students how to care for themselves let alone others or things. In schools it is clear that students should be the cared-fors and teachers the caregivers most of the time, but we must begin the process of teaching children how to care. There will be times in our life when we tend to receive care more than we give but there will be other times when we are predominantly caregivers. It is not something we will keep score on, as peoples' capacities to care will vary; however, it is something we should learn how to do.

Noddings sees caring as being a feminine perspective: "An ethic built on caring is, I think, characteristically and essentially feminine" (Noddings, 1984, p. 8). She acknowledges that women often see situations differently than men. When faced with a moral dilemma women tend to want more information and want to concretize the problem. Each problem is seen in relation to the people involved and to the specific situation. Men, on the other hand, tend to look for rules: in this situation this rule or universal principle should apply. In Noddings' words: "Along with the rejection of principles and rules as the major guide to ethical behaviour, I shall also reject the notion of universalizability" (1984, p. 5). Instead of having a rule or a procedure to use when making decisions or judgements, we use the virtue of caring. The decision is based on caring for the other, doing what helps the cared-for grow. The decision or action taken will vary from situation to situation, as each one is different--different people, different time, and different history. An example would be the way I handled Allan's chronic skipping. I asked Allen to leave school because that was what he needed to do at that time. I do not ask all chronic skippers to leave school. I do not work on a universal premise that skipping is bad and if the behaviour continues the student must leave school.

Each situation is different and many factors must be considered before a decision or action is taken.

Caring can involve a brief encounter or a sustained engagement. It can have varying degrees of intensity depending on the relationship you have with the person. “[I]t requires different behaviors from situation to situation and person to person. It sometimes calls for toughness, sometimes tenderness” (Noddings, 1992, p. xi). Caring does, however, generally lead to some form of acting. There are times when caring involves doing nothing in which case the decision of not acting is the caring. An observer or third party cannot always see the caring act and the observer does not always understand it. Often the rationale behind an act of caring can only be understood by the carer. If an act of caring is done to be perceived as an act of caring, then it is no longer caring. “Rule-bound responses in the name of caring lead us to suspect that the claimant wants most to be credited with caring” (Noddings, 1984, p. 24). Caring is complicated and to better understand it it is necessary to understand the role played by each partner in this relation of caring.

The Role of the Carer

Engrossment

One member of this relational experience of caring is the carer or as explained earlier the one-caring or caregiver. The carer behaves in certain ways when in a caring relation. One of these is a state of engrossment: the carer becomes completely engrossed with the cared-for. This means that the cared-for has their full attention; when listening the carer is really listening, is fully attentive to what is being said and even to what is not

being said. When truly listening one picks up signals other than just the spoken word, body language for example. When one is engrossed in this way they are trying to see the world from the perspective of the cared-for. As Noddings (1984, p. 30) says "I do not project; I receive the other into myself, and I see and feel the other." This is a specific form of empathy; while one is trying to feel what the cared-for is feeling, one is also still aware of his or her own perspective. As Noddings (1984, p. 31) puts it "...the sort of empathy we are discussing does not first penetrate the other but receives the other." To be of assistance to the cared-for you will eventually have to act (at least in most cases). To do so you will have to step back from this engrossment, and think rationally as to how best to help the cared-for. "There is a characteristic and appropriate mode of consciousness in caring" (Noddings, 1984, p. 33).

At this time your engrossment involves taking the information and the feeling that I have received from the cared-for and making decisions about what to do next. "Some situations require only a few minutes of attentive care; others require continuous effort over long periods of time" (Noddings, 1992, p. xi). If a stranger enters the school, appears to be lost and requests assistance. If I give my full attention to this person I am engrossed. The relationship is short lived, you help him get to where he is going, he is grateful and the caring relation is completed. In the case of a parent or teacher the caring relation is a lifetime or a school year and varies in intensity during this time.

In the case of Donna, I was engrossed when she explained that she needed more time to work on the skill of typing. She needed access to a typewriter to practice that skill--I listened to her. Her concern made sense to me and when I stepped back I tried to find a way to meet her need. I had to compromise to do so but meeting her need was

paramount at that time, this is motivational displacement, which I will discuss more fully shortly. To be engrossed at that time meant more than just hearing the facts I was also paying attention or listening to how Donna felt and how important this was to her. To be able to do this I had to be receptive.

Receptivity

To be receptive Noddings (1984, p. 35) maintains that we must be open to receiving the other: "The receptive mode is at the heart of human existence". When you receive the other you are totally with them, you hear what they are saying, and you feel what they are feeling. This is not the same as empathy, you are not trying to recall a time when you had something similar happen and try to remember what that felt like; you are experiencing how that person is feeling at that time. To become engrossed with the other you must begin by being receptive. If I had dismissed Donna when she came to me, if I had not been receptive, I could not have been engrossed. My desire to help her involved what Noddings refers to as motivational displacement.

Motivational Displacement

Motivational displacement involves putting your own needs on hold while attending to those of the cared-for. "I allow my motive energy to be shared; I put it at the service of the other" (Noddings, 1984, p. 33). In the example of Donna this meant putting what I was doing aside and attempting to find a solution to her problem. When the obvious one of using the typing room during accounting class did not work out I switched to substituting one skill subject for another—Donna could practice shorthand during accounting classes. In this example the motivational displacement did not last for a lengthy time period. Over the space of a day or two this problem took my motivational

energy. I was still doing other things, teaching, preparing, correcting but this problem was at the forefront. Once a solution had been reached and Donna felt cared-for, the caring relation had been completed. This does not mean that my caring about Donna was over only that this particular caring relation was over. I was still receptive to Donna and if another problem arose I would again be in a caring relation.

At this stage it may appear that there is a formula here—be receptive, become engrossed and turn your motivational energy to the cared-for. This is not how caring works, as soon as one thinks about caring in this way; there is no authentic caring relation. Being receptive is a way of being and cannot be turned on and off like a water tap. As Noddings (1992, p. 17) puts it “Caring is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviours.” There are times when we are more receptive than at other times and some people are generally more receptive than others, “...people have various capacities for caring” (Noddings, 1992, p. 18) but we all have the capacity to be receptive. When the engrossment is not real the cared-for will sense this and a caring relation no longer exists. The cared-for will feel like a problem, react accordingly and will definitely not feel cared-for. “To be treated as “types” instead of individuals, to have strategies exercised on us, objectifies us. We become “cases” instead of persons” (Noddings, 1984, p. 66).

Linda’s story is an example of caring by her classmates. When each student in the room got up and went to Linda to express support, this was true caring. They were receptive, recognized Linda’s distress, and switched their motivational energy, although briefly, to Linda by expressing support. Linda received the support and eventually began her classroom work. The caring relation was completed.

Part of caring is helping the cared-for grow; we respect who they are and encourage them. Caring is not about finding fault; it is about accepting who the person is and helping them. When the carer transmits this message, then the cared for feels it and grows. "...the cared-for 'grows' and 'glows' under the perceived attitude of the one-caring" (Noddings, 1984, p. 67). In my story of Allan I accepted who he was--he did not fit the role of the model student--and by accepting who he was he was able to grow and change as an individual not because I deemed it necessary or because he wished to please me (although this may have been a small part of it), but because he wished to grow. This caring relation was of a much longer time period—three years. The intensity of the caring relation varied over that time, but the relationship continued throughout. I would not have been able to maintain the relationship if I had to continually put all of my motivational energy into this one student. If I had then this caring relation would have turned into a burden.

Burdens

There are times when a caring relation can become a burden and it is necessary for the carer to recognize when this happens. "My caring for this other has turned into 'cares and burdens'" (Noddings, 1984, p. 37). When this happens the carer, in reality, becomes the cared-for. Their motivational energy is directed towards how burdened and overwhelmed they feel. This happens to all caring people and they need to be able to recognize when it is happening so they can pull back, be a little less receptive and recharge their batteries for a while. They need to be cared-for. For those of us in a caring relationship this is easier if we have a significant other to recognize our state and who is able to step in and care for us. For others it may be a close friend or work colleague who

sees the signs and steps in. "Adults need at least one strong, equal relation. This relation makes it possible to do the sort of care giving required in essentially unequal relations such as parenthood" (Noddings, 1992, p.95). Those who experience this type of burden need to understand that it is a natural part of caring and guilt should not accompany this state.

Guilt, Conflicts and Courage

There are many reasons to feel guilty in a caring relation. A major one is what I have just described—one is simply overburdened and needs to pull back. Another is when you are unable to help the cared-for. This is different than when you choose not to help because it is the right thing to do at that time (more about this later), but simply that you cannot help. Another is when you attempt to help but the cared-for is not receptive to your helping--they do not acknowledge your caring. The guilt comes from feeling that you have not done enough. At other times you must make a choice about who to help when the demands come from different people. Our motivational energy can only be directed towards one person at a time. Which one, which person do we care for at this time, becomes the root of the guilt. "In caring we risk guilt, either through accidents while caring is sustained or through the lapse of caring" (Noddings, 1984, p. 39).

With all of these potential sources of guilt one could wonder why we should even attempt a caring relation. The answer for some people is that they do not or that they do so rarely. For those of us that do care it takes courage. It takes courage to take the risk of caring; the use of our energy in time, feelings and commitment; displacing our own needs for those of another. It also takes courage to attempt this relation, knowing that at times it will fail and at others we will make the wrong decision. Our choice in how to help the

cared-for will be wrong and we may make matters worse; create even more hurt or more damage in their life. "There is a double requirement of courage in caring: I must have the courage to accept that which I have had a hand in, and I must have the courage to go on caring" (Noddings, 1984, p. 39).

It would have been very easy for me to stop caring after my experience with George. I was a beginning teacher and George's academic success was important to me. He was not doing well in my class and my solution was to involve his parents. My rather naïve thinking at the time was that all parents cared about their children and they would want to help me help him. It turned out that my solution was misdirected. In trying to help George, by involving his parents, I had inadvertently made matters worse. It would have been very easy at this time to become the kind of teacher who does not get involved, does not try to help students grow. I could have stuck to preparing good lessons, presenting them and going home in the evening to correct the evidence of my good lessons. However, I did not. Was this because, as Noddings believes, caring is a natural capacity that we all have and I could not not care or was it because I had been cared-for and therefore could let the guilt associated with this event go? I believe it is a little of both having been cared-for (both as a child by my parents, and as an adult by my husband) I was able to summon the courage to go on caring to continue to be receptive. Being involved in a caring relation means taking a risk and taking a risk always requires courage. Today I would handle George's situation differently, taking much more time to get to know him. "What we do depends not upon rules..., but upon a constellation of conditions that is viewed through both the eyes of the one-caring the eyes of the cared-for" (Noddings, 1984, p. 13). Part of the reason that I was so quick to involve the parents

in George's case is that as a beginning teacher I followed the rules. Teachers are taught that students must do well and that if they are not the parents are to be informed—that is the accepted policy. "To care is to act not by fixed rule but by affection and regard" (Noddings, 1984, p. 24). While parents have every right to know how their child is doing in school, the relationship should be ongoing—parents should not be contacted only when there is a problem. The relationship between school and home needs to be totally rethought, however, that is another subject worthy of its own paper.

Just as guilt has several sources in caring so too are there different reasons for conflict. Noddings (1984, p. 18) speaks about three types of conflicts that can be encountered in caring.

Conflict arises when our engrossment is divided, and several cared-fors demand incompatible decisions from us. Another sort of conflict occurs when what the cared-for wants is not what we think would be best for him and still another sort arises when we become overburdened and our caring turns into "cares and burdens".

When we have two people who require our care at the same time we are forced to choose. This is a situation frequently faced by parents—both your children require you at the same time and you must decide whose need is greater and put your energy towards that child. When making this decision several facts will come to light; what care is needed, the seriousness of the potential cared-for's problem, the amount of time needed to help, the readiness of the cared-for to receive help, all of these will come to bear on helping you make that decision. As an administrator there are many students who need care; some have a problem they would like help with, some have ongoing issues that

require time and some have never been cared for and need to have someone care about them—I cannot help them all. I am faced with this conflict daily, as I cannot possibly help all those students who need help. I make my decision on where my motivational energy will be directed using the same criteria mentioned above. Is this as easy as it appears to be on paper? Absolutely not and there is no formula. The criteria I use and the importance I place on each piece of information will vary from situation to situation and from day to day. Some days the energy is used with one particular student helping to solve a problem, on others with many students for a brief time and still on others my energies are actually with the adults and not the students if I feel their need is greater.

The second type of conflict that Noddings described is when your caring results in not doing what the cared-for wants. This is more likely to happen in unequal types of caring relations but it happens in all caring relations. Doing what you feel is best for the cared-for may not be what they want. An example is the case of Kurt. Kurt did not want to see his counsellor who had just yelled at him and yet I knew the situation required an experienced counsellor. At the time I was not equipped nor did I have the necessary experience to help Kurt. I had to get him to speak to his counsellor—that was, I believed, the only way to help. This turned out to be the right thing to do as the immediate problem was solved. This had a happy ending. This is not always the case. George's story is an example that did not have a happy ending.

When I called home to inform George's parents that he was not doing well in my class he was beaten up. This is an example of when doing what I thought was the right thing, eliciting help from the parents turned out not to be good—in fact it was terrible. Does this mean I no longer contact parents when I feel it is appropriate? Absolutely not,

it does mean, however, that I obtain more information or I meet with them person to person. Doing what the cared-for wants is not what caring is all about, it is doing, after listening carefully to and feeling what the cared-for feels, what you believe is best for the cared-for. When doing this you do not have to explain it to the cared-for or to anyone else but you must be able to provide a rationale and explain it to yourself. You will not always make the right decision, it may not always turn out the way you expected but your actions were carefully chosen. "When we care, we should, ideally, be able to present reasons for our action/inaction which would persuade a reasonable, disinterested observer that we have acted in behalf of the cared-for" (Noddings, 1984, p. 23). This is where courage is required because if you have made a bad decision or choice you must have the courage to continue to care. You must resist the urge to climb into your shell and retreat from caring, to retreat from being receptive to others. For those who have cared and been cared-for this is easier to do—the courage to continue to care comes more easily.

A third type of conflict is having your caring turn into "cares and burdens"; the carer becomes the cared-for. In unequal relations such as teacher/student this should not happen and it is therefore important, as discussed earlier that the carer monitor themselves and recognize when it is necessary for them to pull back. Unequal relationships are those such as parent/child and teacher/student where the adults' role is predominantly that of carer and the child's is that of the cared-for. This does not mean that the child, at times, cannot be the carer only that they are in the process of learning to be carers and should be cared-for most of the time.

I believe there is another type of conflict in addition to the three that Noddings discusses: doing something that you do not really believe in, such as transgressing a basic

truth or value you hold by doing the opposite because you believe it is right for that cared-for at that time. My story of Allan is an example of this. I believe that teenagers should be in school; I believe that they need an education. I also believe that school is important for many reasons beyond the academic. It provides the basis of a students' social life—it is where most of their friends are. It could also be the place where they have established an important adult relationship. For some students, sad as that is, it may be the only adult relationship they have. For these and other reasons I believe teens should be in school. When things had finally reached a point where school was no longer helping Allan—it was of no benefit to him—I asked him to leave. This was difficult since it conflicted with a basic belief of mine. It was however the right thing at that time for Allan. The fact that we had a sustained relationship over a period of two and a half years when this happened affected my decision. The fact that I knew Allan really well helped me understand that this was what he needed yet at the same time I was conflicted because I also knew that he needed some of the adults in the school, myself included—he needed to be cared for. Allan did return to school the following year and I believe the time away had something to do with his success on his return. I believe Allan knew that he was cared-for in our school. There are many things happening for the carer in the caring relation; he/she must be receptive, must be engrossed and willing to put their energies into the cared-for. As some of my examples have shown this requires a lot of energy and commitment so what exactly, if any, is the role of the cared-for?

The Role of Cared-For

The main role of the cared-for is to accept the caring. It can only be considered a relation if the cared-for accepts the caring. Noddings (1984, p. 68) puts it simply “Does this mean that I cannot be said to care for X if X does not recognize my caring? In the fullest sense, I think we have to accept this result.” “The one caring comes across to the cared-for in an attitude. Her attitude is one of receptivity. But there is a receptivity required of the cared-for too” (Noddings, 1984, p. 59). How does the carer know that the caring has been received? This is not an overt type of reaction; the cared-for does not leap up and say thank you for caring but rather it is an acceptance, an attitude that is felt between the two parties. “This attitude is not something thought by either the one-caring or the cared-for...It is a total conveyance of self to other. Neither the engrossment of the one-caring nor the perception of attitude by the cared-for is rational” (Noddings, 1984, p. 61). The cared-for reacts to this positive acceptance by the carer. This reaction is important to the carer in maintaining the caring relation. A simple example of this is the smile or gurgle of a baby responding to its mother. This type of reaction makes it more likely for the mother to respond in future when her child cries or demands her attention. This also contributes to the building of trust between the carer and cared-for.

The establishment of trust allows the cared-for to accept challenges from the carer. In my story of Kurt, he was willing to accept my help in the hallway because we had already established a relationship in the classroom. There was trust. He was willing to accept me and trusted me to help him with his problem. Without this original trust, or without my receptivity to his need, the caring relation could not have continued. A

solution to his immediate problem, getting help for his brother, did not mean that the relationship was over just that that particular caring relation was completed.

A caring relation between a teacher and a student allows the student, the cared-for, to develop a trust in their ability to meet challenges and to be successful. When a person, in this case a student, is accepted for who they are they are better equipped to meet challenges, to have faith in themselves. "The child, as one cared-for, will often respond with interest to challenges proffered by the one caring" (Noddings, 1984, p. 64). However, if the caring is not real, if the attitude conveyed to the cared-for is missing then the cared-for feels like an object and does not respond to the caring. As Noddings (1984, p. 65) puts it "When this attitude is missed, the one who is the object of caretaking feels like an object. He is being treated, handled by a formula." In an institution that is supposed to be about caring, such as a school, this often happens. Students recognize pseudo caring and instead of helping it makes the student feel like a thing, totally without value. This should not be allowed to happen in our schools. Noddings (1984, p. 66) sums this up nicely "The fact is that many of us have been reduced to cases by the very machinery that has been instituted to care for us."

In my story of Allan it is apparent that we had an ongoing relationship that lasted for over three years (we still see each other). By allowing Allan to be himself, by accepting the clothes, facial metal and at times stubborn attitude he was able to contribute to this relationship. Even during the difficult times of our relationship, he knew he was cared-for and was able to convey this to me. The fact that he asked to come back to the school (he could have gone elsewhere) was his recognition that it was here that he was cared-for. Allan was on his way to becoming a carer. One of the conditions of Allan's

return to school was that he was no longer allowed to wear make-up at school. The previous spring he had been going a little overboard with the black eyeliner, lipstick, etc. He had accepted this condition. Later that year another student, a grade nine boy began wearing black eye make-up. This was a radical change for this student; in grade 8 he had been a very quiet, rather shy, introverted young man. Investigating this change led me to discover that this physical change was a part of this young man's development and had allowed for a significant growth in his self-confidence. Unlike the previous year he now had a number of friends and was much more outgoing and displayed much greater self-confidence. According to his parents this was because of the way he was now dressing, including the dyed black hair and eye-make-up. In discussion with the principal we decided to allow this student to wear the make-up believing that it would probably be a short-lived phase. However, we did feel we owed Allan an explanation. When I spoke to Allan explaining why, giving our rationale, for allowing this young man to wear the eye make-up when we had asked Allan not to, he had no problem with this. This made perfect sense to Allan; this was not an issue for him because he easily saw that it really had nothing to do with him. Because of our sustained relationship I believe Allan was able to accept my judgement in this matter, he trusted me therefore he trusted my judgement. We had made a decision to do what was best for this student. Allan understood better than some adults in the building what caring is all about?

Connecting the Carer and the Cared-for

Equal and Unequal Relations

In mature relationships the parties are both carer and cared-for as the need and circumstances arise—these are equal relationships. However, there are also unequal relationships, those in which one party is mainly the cared-for without being a carer or rarely being a carer. Examples of these unequal relationships are parent/child and teacher/student. “The teacher-student relationship is, of necessity, unequal” (Noddings, 1992, p. 107). These relationships should be unequal as the child/student is still learning about being cared-for and eventually about caring. “One of the greatest tasks of teachers is to help students learn how to be recipients of care” (Noddings, 1992, p. 108). Before someone can be a care-giver, they must first experience being cared-for. In the case of parent/child, the caring is a natural response to the needs of the child. The role of the teacher is also to care for the student to nurture the student both intellectually and as one to be cared-for so that the student can one day be a carer. The ethic of care is about nurturing the caring relation. There are times when the child/student becomes the carer and Noddings maintains that when this happens the caring relation has turned into one of “cares and burdens” and the cared-for becomes the carer. If this happens infrequently it is part of being receptive and getting practice at being the carer, but it is not the norm as the relationship between parent/child and teacher/student is not meant to be an equal one. Noddings (1984, p. 107) talks about the importance of the student-teacher relationship “Good teachers do not reject what students see and feel but, rather work with what is presently seen and felt to build a stronger position for each student. To do this effectively requires the creation and maintenance of a trusting relationship.”

The relationships that developed over the previous three years with the students in Linda's class, I believe, allowed them to react the way they did on the day Linda returned from the counsellor's office. They trusted that I would accept their caring for Linda. I also believe that Donna trusted me enough to ask for help in her wanting more time to practice typing. Allan trusted me enough to ask to return to school. If I did not have a trusting relationship with him he would not have done that.

Continuity

Continuity is a theme that appears again and again in Noddings' writing. She believes it is important to have both continuity of people and places in education. "Not all caring relations require continuity, but teaching does require it" (Noddings, 1992, p. 26). To establish the trusting relationships that are a part of caring, teachers and students should stay together for more than one-year. "Students could easily stay with one teacher for three or more years rather than the typical one year. Placement should, of course, be by mutual consent" (Noddings, 1992, p. 68). Currently in high schools students can have eight or more teachers in the year and each year get completely different teachers. The grade 8 students in our school can see twelve different teachers because of the exploratory courses. It is very difficult to get to know your students if they are only with you for 10 to 12 weeks let alone establish a relationship with them. The purpose of the exploratory courses is to allow students to be exposed to a variety of technical and fine arts experiences. When these courses were introduced into schools twenty to thirty years ago it was felt the experience would be richer if specialist teachers taught the courses and this is the route chosen by most schools. While there is some merit in this in that the specialist's knowledge would enable them to present material in creative ways, however,

I believe that the trade-off of knowledge versus a continuing relationship is rarely worth it, particularly in the junior high school years.

In trying to meet individual needs it is felt that students should be exposed to as many electives as possible in the junior grades to help them make decisions as to which areas to pursue in their senior high school years. The focus is on the subject not the relationship between teacher and student. While there is nothing wrong with the concept of introducing students to as many areas as possible, the method--the need for a specialist--a different teacher is not the only way this could be done. If the relationship between teacher and student were the focus then a different way of doing this would be found.

I believe that one of the reasons I had an impact on Ramona was that we had been together for three years. I had taught her typing in grade 10, typing and accounting in grade 11 and the same in grade 12. Recall that I do not remember going out of my way at any time to help her, I had done nothing special for her. Yet Ramona felt I had made a difference. Was her feeling cared-for in our brief everyday encounters such as: answering questions, returning work, picking up assignments enough to make a difference? Noddings (1992, p. 103) sums this up nicely: "Of course, talking, listening and staying-with are forms of support, and with them in place we may not need to give specific advice or further aid". It would appear in Ramona's case it was. She felt I had cared and that had made a difference in her life. The duration of our relationship of three years, I believe, had an impact as well. This caring attitude, this being receptive is powerful and all people, but in particular teachers, must be aware of this power.

Noddings (1992, p. 66) also believes in continuity of place. "They [students] should stay in one school building for longer than two or three years." This is important in building a sense of community and feeling connected to the school. Depending on the structure of schools in specific districts, students can change schools as often as four times before completing high school. The school where I believe I really got to know my students was a small high school; it comprised grades 7-12 with less than 500 students. When I walked down the halls I knew every senior (10-12) student and most of the junior (7-9) ones. Just knowing the names of everyone in the school makes a huge difference in the culture of the school and the way people treat one another. I believe one of the reasons the students in my typing class were able to be so supportive of Linda was that we all knew one another; most had been my students for three years. Caring for one another was part of our culture. It is a lot harder to care for someone who sits two rows over and has never been in a class with you before and very likely will not be in any in the future. In my current school of 1200 students I have been in classes mid-way or later in the year where the students did not know the names of all members in the class and in some cases not even of someone sitting beside or behind them.

Components of a Caring Relationship

Noddings talks about caring involving four components: modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation. I will discuss each of these components separately.

Modeling

Modeling is showing how to care, "we do not tell our students to care; we show them how to care by creating caring relations with them" (Noddings, 1992, p. 22). I

believe that the students in Linda's class were examples of modeling in action. I expressed my concern for Linda by speaking to her and my students then followed suit. First my action gave them permission to do the same and second the culture in our classroom was one that permitted getting up and helping someone. I also believe that they were receptive to Linda's need for support. They were truly caring but part of this caring was related to the caring they had seen by me in this particular instance and also in my daily exchanges with students.

Dialogue

By dialogue Noddings (1992, p. 23) is talking about a specific type of dialogue that is "a common search for understanding, empathy, or appreciation". To be involved in this type of dialogue means that you have to be completely engrossed in the other. Such dialogue is not about lecturing or manipulating; it is about a free exchange of ideas, each party to the dialogue being prepared to listen to the other and being prepared to rethink their view. It is about understanding what the other person is feeling as well as what they are thinking. This is a new way for most teachers to think. The most common type of dialogue in a classroom is really a monologue. It is the teacher passing on their vast quantity of knowledge to the student who listens and becomes a good sponge, soaking up the valuable information being passed on. If the student is not listening quietly, soaking up the knowledge then the dialogue becomes one of recrimination—telling the student that he must behave, he must pay attention, otherwise he will not be a good student, that is, a good person. In Noddings (1992, p.53) words "Unfortunately, there is little real dialogue in classrooms."

For there to be caring relations there must be dialogue. As Noddings (1984, p. 121) puts it "...the central importance of dialogue in nurturing the ethical ideal. Training for receptivity involves sharing and reflecting aloud." Teachers must look at ways to encourage dialogue. This becomes very difficult if the teacher is concerned about getting through the curriculum. If the curriculum is about the student acquiring X amount of knowledge and being prepared to write an examination proving that he or she has attained X amount of knowledge, then the type of dialogue Noddings is talking about will not happen in classrooms. If however, the curriculum is also about nurturing caring individuals then time will be available for this type of dialogue to occur. Establishing relationships with students goes hand in hand with practicing dialogue as Noddings sees it—truly listening and being prepared to accept the other. My relationship with Allan involved the type of dialogue Noddings is talking about. We listened to each other--we didn't always agree but we accepted the other person--there was respect for our opinions.

Practice

Practice means that we must practice caring not just to improve our skills but also to develop some of the characteristic attitudes. We must also allow our students to care, to create the time and space for them to care: about themselves, about others and about ideas. When the students' in Linda's class got up to let her know they cared by their brief demonstrations of support, their actions demonstrated practice in caring. I could have made them stay seated, stick to the work they were doing or I could have insisted that they allow Linda her space but I chose to let them practice caring. At the time I know I did not think about my decision in this way rather it would have been one of the many intuitive decisions that teachers make but looking back on it I now see that my decision

was about letting students care about each other. There have been so many times throughout my career when I have seen teachers, myself included, refuse to let students care, the subject, the material to be covered is placed first and the time for caring is deferred up. As Noddings (1984, p. 20) so simply puts it "The student is infinitely more important than the subject".

Confirmation

Noddings (1992, p. 25) uses confirmation the way Martin Buber does "confirmation as an act of affirming and encouraging the best in others". Her book *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (1992) is itself a prime example of this; it confirmed my attitudes towards students and encouraged me to continue caring even when it would be easier not to, when caring was becoming 'cares and burdens'. Students need confirmation, we all need confirmation. To be able to confirm someone you must know him or her well enough to know what to confirm and have an idea of how the person sees himself. "When we confirm someone, we spot a better self and encourage its development. We can do this only if we know the other well enough to see what he or she is trying to become" (Noddings, 1992, p. 25). Meaningless phrases 'good work, keep it up', 'that was a really good comment', 'that was a great effort' while serving a purpose in the classroom are not what confirmation is about. My sustained relationship with Allan allowed me to confirm him. This was generally not around issues of school but about the kind of person Allan was, he cared about others and that is what we talked about: his concern for his close friends, his involvement with the community in getting a skateboard park built and his relationship with his girlfriend. Allan needed to know how important these things were; he needed to know and then to

accept that these things were important and meaningful. Noddings (1992, p. 25) states “confirmation cannot be done by formula. A relation of trust must ground it.”

Caring is about a way of being, about an attitude towards others—it is not a formula. We cannot take these four components; modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation, and mix them in certain ways like a recipe and say that is caring. While these are all aspects of caring they must become a way of *being* not something that is turned on and off like the hot water tap. “Besides engaging the student in dialogue, the teacher also provides a model. To support her students as ones-caring, she must show them herself as one-caring” (Noddings, 1984, p. 178).

Caring is relational—it involves the carer and the cared-for. As Noddings (1984, p. 78) summarizes “A caring relation requires the engrossment and motivational displacement of the one-caring, and it requires the recognition and spontaneous response of the cared-for.”

Institutionalization and Caring?

Purpose, Policy and Methods

By moral education Noddings not only means educating for people to be moral “but also an education that is moral in purpose, policy and methods” (Noddings, 1992, p. xiii). This last quote opens a floodgate of thoughts for me. In my opinion, the purpose of schools is far from moral. While most school districts’ mission statements have something about developing all students to their fullest potential, preparing them to become good democratic citizens and preparing them for the world of work—this is not the reality. The reality is that current curricula are all about preparing students for their

later life as a worker..More precisely it is focused on preparing students to first enter university, then enter the world of work and finally become contributing members of society. This is what schooling is today and this is definitely not about education and it is definitely does not focus on the moral dimension.

If by moral we are to understand doing what is best for students then the policies developed by provincial departments of education and then elaborated and expanded on by school districts are far from moral. Policies are too often about controlling, about developing procedures to deal with the myriad of things that could arise. We have policies on school boundaries, on harassment, on sexual harassment, on purchasing, on hiring, on firing—policies to deal with the policies. The one thing that is lacking is policy to promote education. I have yet to work in a district that has policies about education. We have study groups, we have committees, most recently we have stakeholder meetings but there is never a policy on education. We get so wrapped up in the things that are necessary to support education that we never really get to discuss actual education. While policies are necessary--they are essential in any institution--they should not take over the institution and prevent it from doing what it was set up to do. Many policies and procedures stand in the way of allowing teachers to develop relationships with their students. An example of this is the recent emphasis on teachers to never be alone with their students. Because of the recent media attention on abuse cases, teachers are instructed never to be alone with a student and never, never touch or hug them. While this is a reflection of our society it was never really discussed in educational terms, instead a policy was developed.

One of the common procedures in high school that often affects the relationship formed between a teacher and student are transition meetings. These are meetings held between elementary school teachers and high school staff to provide information on the students. The focus at these meetings is on learning issues but can also involve personal and family issues. A student's file with all their history is passed on. If I had been involved in such a meeting about Donna I would never have allowed her the latitude that I did--her history, her academic potential (low IQ score) would have affected the way I treated her. I believe that a teacher should form a relationship with the student based on how they see the student at that time not on how the student acted or behaved with someone else. While I recognize there are times when information must be passed on; for example, if the safety of other students is at risk. However, to have a policy that this be done for everyone is not necessary and can adversely affect the relationship between teacher and student.

The stories from my first years as a teacher have greatly influenced the rest of my teaching career and my life—I don't believe they are separate. Nel Noddings work has helped me to understand just how powerful these events were and the reasons why. I believe that education and schooling should be about caring. If we are sincere about providing the next generation with the necessary tools to become good people, good citizens then developing caring people is the place to start. I will now take the reader on a journey through the works of Hannah Arendt and see what she adds to the understanding of my stories.

Chapter 3

ARENDT - WEBS OF RELATIONSHIPS

Before discussing any of Arendt's ideas or theories I intend to provide a very brief overview of her life, which had such a profound effect on her work, and in particular on the concepts I will be using to help me understand my stories. Hannah Arendt was a German Jewess and a university student at the time of Hitler's rise. She managed to leave Germany before WWII began and get to France where she spent part of the war and eventually to the United States where she spent the remainder of her life. One of her major works *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1958) began as an attempt to understand how Nazism could occur, so that it could never happen again, and this theme is apparent in all of her writings. Her writings, which are plentiful, are often difficult to understand and even appear to be contradictory at times, but for Arendt they are her way of working things out, of trying to understand. "As she once explained in an interview, the motive behind her work was her own desire to understand, and writing was part of the process of understanding" (Canovan, 1992, p. 2). One of the reasons her writing can be difficult is that often she appears to wander and interweave ideas, "...interweaving and developing themes rather than presenting an argument" (Canovan, 1992, p. 3). Often while working on one piece her research would lead her in a different direction and she would start something new, with every intention of going back and completing the first project. This

did not always happen. An example of this is how *The Human Condition* (1958) came about. She was starting to write about Marx, in response to criticisms of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (1975) and in an attempt to better understand she ended up expanding her thoughts on the three types of human activity--labour, work and action—each of which is critical to my project.

I am going to attempt in a few paragraphs to introduce some of Arendt's key concepts that I will subsequently develop and apply to my practice stories in the rest of this chapter. This is a difficult undertaking since her ideas and thoughts are so complex; however, I attempt this to give the reader a brief overall introduction to some of these concepts. All of these concepts weave together and are connected to what Arendt terms an active life. Arendt divides an active (as opposed to contemplative) life into three different types of activities, labour, work and action. Labour are those repetitive tasks that are necessary to meet our biological (and as can be argued some social) needs. Work is the creation of the objects that make up our environment, the things that make our world human. Action is where we make an appearance in the world generally through speech.

Action as used by Arendt involves a number of other concepts that I will briefly introduce here (and develop later), the first of which is her notion of natality and plurality. What is wonderful for Arendt is that we all have the opportunity to make a difference. This is because we are all unique; we may all be human, but each one of us is different. Arendt refers to this quality as natality: "Being human means being one of a plurality of individuals, each of them different, each of them capable of starting something new...." (Canovan, 1992, p. 25). When we meet with others and discuss a

problem or deal with an issue we must respect all of the participants; it is only under these conditions, that action can occur. To make this appearance we need others.

Arendt talks about the two realms in which we live, the private and the public. The private would be our intimate and family life; the public is where we form relationships with others that are different than those we have with our family. This public space generally exists around an issue, a problem, or a question that allows people to locate themselves around the other participants, to form relationships. "Actors in Arendtian public spaces attempt to persuade others, then, but their perspectives must always remain open to being changed by the actions and statements of these others" (Schutz, 2001, p. 106). In life we will come together with more than one group and these "webs of relationships" affect our natality, our uniqueness, since each person's experiences and webs will be different from anyone else's. The above is just an introduction to her ideas and I will develop them more fully as I work through the stories and use examples from my public world.

Labour

One of Arendt's fundamental concepts is her division of an active life into three types of activity—labour, work and action. Labour is the repetitive, necessary activity of sustaining our existence "dictated primarily by man's biological needs" (Canovan, 1992, p. 123). It is the daily drudgery of such things as preparing our meals, keeping ourselves and our surroundings clean, the mundane repetitive tasks that are necessary in keeping us alive. Once these things are done they require being done again and again. The task is the same and unending: "...the products of labour have to be continually repeated, and never

reach an end" (Canovan, 1992 p.123). In my professional world, as an administrator, labour involves such things as dealing with paperwork, completing forms and responding to e-mail. As a teacher I was labouring when I called George's parents to let them know he was not working in my class. I followed a policy and reported his behaviour to his parents, a repetitive task for teachers, which has little to do with an active life as Arendt understands it, and, in this example, had nothing to do with forming a relationship with George. Further, according to Arendt, labour is private because it is concerned with taking care of man's bodily needs and does not involve meaningful interactions with others. Canovan (1992, p. 124) explains: "Labour is private, in contrast to Arendt's understanding of the 'public realm.'" I disagree somewhat with this sharp division that labour does not involve others. In my role as an administrator some of what I consider to be the labouring parts of my job does involve others (although perhaps not to the depth that Arendt would wish): for example, checking the hallways between classes and speaking with students; however, these interactions are not about concern for our common world in Arendt's action (which I explicate later in this chapter). For Arendt, labour "forces each man to concentrate on his own bodily needs rather than being concerned with the common world and with interactions with plural individuals" (Canovan, 1992, p. 124). Arendt does go on to explain that in the modern world labour does include more than the purely biological needs they also include "...the artificial necessity imposed by the pseudo-natural processes of society within which we are all engaged in making a living" (Canovan, 1991, p.127). For some teachers, teaching is only about labour, they never form significant relationships with their students—teaching has become a repetitive job at which they labour. Such teachers can make the work aspects of

their job (creating lessons and activities) into labour; it becomes routine, repetitive and predictable. The pattern would be: start with a topic, develop overall plan, develop worksheets and questions, develop test, then move on to next topic. This is very similar to a household routine.

Work

Work involves more permanence. “Work provides an ‘artificial’ world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings” (McGowan, 1998, p. 42). The easiest way to describe work is that it results in an article or an artefact—something that lasts, is durable. For example, a piece of art, a utensil, or clothing are all the result of work. “...work means making *things*, solid objects which are meant to last, to be used rather than consumed and to contribute to the world, the durable human artifice that provides men with a home upon earth” (Canovon, 1992, p. 128). Work has an end. There may be many steps involved in creating this article or artefact and some of these steps may involve labouring but the steps result in a finished product--there is an end. In my professional life this could be a lesson plan or the organization of a parent evening or an awards ceremony. Work can be done alone or in co-operation with others. One of its defining features is that it has an end. The means of how to achieve that end are often open to discussion and ideas may come from many individuals, but there is a predetermined end. In the classroom work often takes place in the form of a class project. This usually begins with an idea that the teacher introduces to the class and together they see this idea through to fruition. The end may be a book of poems, a poster or a video, a finished product that they worked on together.

Action

What Arendt means by action is much more difficult to define. It is not as clear-cut as what she means by labour and work. Further complicating matters for me is the need to let go of the traditional or more common use of the word and its connection to act, to do something. While action, as used by Arendt, does often lead to action in that sense it is also about appearing in the world, about letting who you are, what is unique about yourself, show to others. "To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, "to begin," "to lead," and eventually "to rule," indicates), to set something into motion (which is the original meaning of the Latin *agere*)" (Arendt, 1958, p. 177). Action involves others and in conjunction with others, coming to see something in a different way and consequently altering the way you view something or the way you will behave. Action is closely linked to speech although Arendt talks about subtle differences (Canovan, 1992, p. 131). Action is unpredictable, requires the presence of others and creates something new. Arendt defines action as follows:

Human action, like all strictly political phenomena, is bound up with human plurality, which is one of the fundamental conditions of human life insofar as it rests on the fact of natality, through which the human world is constantly invaded by strangers, newcomers whose actions and reactions cannot be foreseen by those who are already there and are going to leave in a short while. (Arendt, 1968, p. 61)

Arendt quotes Dante when trying to explain that action allows the person to show to others who he or she is. "[I]n every action what is primarily intended by the doer, whether he acts from natural necessity or out of free will, is the disclosure of his own

image...nothing acts unless [by acting] it makes patent its latent self" (Arendt, 1958, p. 175). My everyday interactions with Ramona seemed to show her that I cared, that she was important to me. My specific action in supporting Linda and allowing my students to do the same showed my students who I am and what is important to me.

For me action is when I talk with teachers about their role, about education, or about good teaching. Again, most of my day is taken up with conversations about things that need to be done, or passing on information, that is, labour and work. When I see someone doing something that is detrimental to students I will intervene, sometimes in a very direct manner, and at other times I may plant a seed or direct someone so as to change their behaviour but this is not action. Action involves the rare times I am involved in a conversation about education, about what we want for children, and together a new idea, a different way of looking at something, or a change in our behaviour is born.

The repetitive, routine nature of labour could lead one to believe that it is somehow a nuisance, taking time away from the important activities, from action. This is one interpretation. However, I believe that much of what I do that can be classified as labour is also important, without which I would not be able to engage in activities that can be classified as action. For example, my need to patrol hallways, while repetitive and unending, may also provide an opportunity to get to know the students. Many of the relationships that I have with students began through encounters in the halls and some continue only on this level. I believe the way I interact with students in this environment allows them to get a sense of who I am. Further, labour, while being repetitive, is ephemeral: I get a sense of accomplishment when I respond to the last e-mail, when there are no more red flags to deal with. While the moment is fleeting, briefly there is a sense

of accomplishment. I get a similar sense of accomplishment when I finish cleaning the house, for a few moments, sometimes even an hour (if no one else is home) a job well done and finished. I can now move on to something else. A life involving only labour would not be worth living but labour does have a purpose and does take up a significant portion of our time both at home and at work.

In schools there is a definite overlap between work and labour. When Arendt talks about these concepts, she makes it appear as though there is a clear line, however, in reality there are many tasks or activities that involve both labour and work. One of these is the preparation of lesson plans, a teacher's survival tool. While the task of preparing a lesson plan can be repetitive and unending (as long as one teaches one will have to do it), each lesson plan has an end and each one can be unique. The lesson plan I prepare very much depends on the class and on the relationships that I have established with the students in that class. Each class is different, the groups within each class are different and the individual students and their specific needs are different. All of these things should be considered when lesson plans are being prepared. The teacher begins with an end in mind, how to approach a topic or theme and how best to present it to a specific group of students, and prepares an artefact. This process may be repeated again and again with the end product, the lesson plan, being slightly different each time. This is very different from action where the end or outcome is unknown.

"[Action] is a very broad category of human activity that covers interactions with other people that are not matters of routine behaviour but require personal initiative. However intelligible they may be in retrospect, actions are unpredictable before the

event. Thus, jumping into a river to rescue someone is action, going to work is usually not" (Parekh, 1979, p.114).

Action is a complex concept with many characteristics that I will endeavour to explain and relate to my stories.

Boundless and Unpredictable

Action, since it is unpredictable, can be very scary and requires courage. "Unlike the worker who makes something, the man who acts cannot control the results of his action. He can start projects, but he cannot control their effects, which become hopelessly entangled with the effects of others' actions and reactions" (Canovan, 1992, p 132). My story of Linda, the student who came from the counsellor and was supported very quietly and unobtrusively by everyone in the room is an example of action in the classroom. By showing support for Linda in the manner that I did, I had no way of knowing what effect this would have on the other students in the room or what action they would take in either the short or long term. In this story I believe the students' action was good; it supported their classmate. I did not, however, know what followed after the students left my room. Their future actions were unpredictable and unknown to me. The environment, the space in our classroom, and my relationship with the students made it safe, acceptable for the students to react to Linda's obvious distress in the way that they did. Who we were came through, we appeared to one another.

The connotation of courage, which we now feel to be an indispensable quality of the hero, is in fact already present in a willingness to act and speak at all, to insert one's self into the world and begin a story of one's own. And this courage is not necessarily or even primarily related to a willingness to suffer the consequences;

courage and even boldness are already present in leaving one's private hiding place and showing who one is, in disclosing and exposing one's self." (Arendt, 1958, p. 186)

Humans seem to need and are always searching for a sense of predictability in their life. This provides a sense of safety, a sense of being in control. Action does not meet this need because action can be dangerous. Since it is unpredictable it can actually create uneasiness—it goes against what seems to be a natural human need to be in control of one's life and surroundings. "Besides being unsatisfactory, action can be positively dangerous: its restless initiatives continually threaten the stability of the human world, because these initiatives continually set off processes which are boundless and irreversible" (Canovan, 1992, p.132).

Arendt has explained and discussed the tension between action and a human's need for a sense of order, the need to have some sense of control about what will happen next. "...something that exercised her mind from the beginning was the tension between the human capacity for action on the one hand and the need for a stable human order on the other" (Canovan, 1992, p. 133). This is particularly true for teachers; in the day-to-day activity of a classroom, action can be dangerous. The unpredictability of action when working with thirty teenagers can be scary. Allowing students to express themselves as I did by letting the students show their support for Linda could have resulted in a very different scenario. The students could have intruded on Linda's privacy, crossed the line and been too inquisitive. They could have taken this an opportunity to do nothing—they didn't, they showed their support and then returned to their work. They knew, sensed that this was what Linda needed at this time. "Teachers are positioned very oddly in relation

to the new, since we are asked to facilitate its emergence at the same time as Arendt reminds us that we can neither predict nor control the forms this newness will take” (Levinson, 2001, p.14).

Action also requires the basic belief that we are equal. We can be different, we come with different experiences but we all have an equal contribution to make. This can be problematic on the educational stage as hierarchies have been established: trustees, superintendents, administrators, teachers, para-professionals and students. If we are to seriously consider changes, any changes to the schooling system there must be mutual respect for all involved. Again, this requires trust, we must trust that what we say will be taken seriously and will not be held against us.

This notion that for action there must be equality is a problem for classroom teachers. The simple truth is that there is a power dynamic in schools, teachers have the formal power and students do not. In a power struggle teachers will win—the institution is set up that way. In any institution involving that many people there must be order—without it there would be chaos. In reality, however, students do have power, it is a different type of power and one that is often buried, it is easier to pretend that it does not exist. While many teachers attempt to run what they refer to as a democratic classroom, allow the students to be involved with the curriculum and classroom rules, in the end it is teachers that have the final say. Teachers, however, have no control over what the students do or what they take from the curriculum that is presented. This is an issue and perhaps the reason that true action (Arendt’s conceptual definition of action) in the classroom does not occur that often. For that matter action does not occur that often anywhere. “...action is both so common and so rare” (Canovan, 1992, p. 148). Arendt

believes that teachers should have the power in the classroom although she does not talk about it in terms of power. She talks about it in terms of responsibility, she believes that teachers and parents have the responsibility of preparing students for their world--for the world they will inhabit and hopefully a world they will improve. To do that they will need to be critical thinkers but more than that they need a sense of history a sense of how the world they have inherited came about. It is teachers that have this knowledge and it is their responsibility to ensure that students have access to this knowledge. To make it even more challenging teachers must present this knowledge in such a way that students do not feel harnessed by it but are able to be critical and realize their ability to change it. "To preserve newness is to teach in such a way that students acquire an understanding of themselves in relation to the world without regarding either the world or their positioning in it as fixed, determined and unchangeable" (Arendt, 1968, p. 193). Through their natality, they bring something unique to the world and they have the ability to act. "Natality suggests the possibility that the world can be renewed, but this promise is not guaranteed. Our capacity for action must be nurtured" (Levinson, 2001, p. 18).

I have had the privilege of being involved with a group that is about action and helps to foster trust, courage and equality. We are involved in a somewhat formal way as part of an action research project, but our discussions often go beyond the scope of the intended project. As trust has developed within the group our discussions will often touch on our personal lives, current events and our professional lives. There is always humour, much laughter and genuine respect for the views and comments of each other. What makes this group so easy is that we are all involved to some degree in education, we have similar views about education and yet we are all very different. Our conversations

challenge each other but always in a respectful manner. We are able to discuss things without having to explain everything in detail; this is because we share some basic fundamental beliefs about education. Nevertheless our differences are such that the conversations are not simply a matter of agreeing with one another and patting each other on the back for our brilliant ideas and statements, we challenge, question and together form new ideas. We take risks.

I remember very clearly at one of these meetings discussing a piece of writing a member of the group had written about assigning lockers. This is one of my chores and one that I would sometimes turn over to a secretary. At first glance this very much appears to be a labour activity—get locker binder, see if student has any preference for location, find empty locker, escort student to locker and record lock combination. This activity is performed many times throughout the year as new students enrol. The writer expressed how important this rather mundane chore was to the new student: it was one of their first interactions at the school and probably the first with an administrator. This was an important event. It could be the beginning of a relationship with that student. It was an opportunity to get to know the student and for them to get to know an administrator. After this conversation I made sure I found the time to take new students to their locker and never delegated this chore. As a result of this conversation I changed my behaviour and attempted to change a labour activity into action. “In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world” (Arendt, 1958, p.179). These discussions change who we are and how we act in the world. They affect all of our relationships.

"It is because of this already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions, that action almost never achieves its purpose; but it is also because of this medium, in which action alone is real, that it, "produces" stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things" (Arendt, 1958, p. 184).

Natality and Plurality

Central to Arendt's concept of action are her concepts of natality and plurality. The basis for the unpredictability and boundlessness of action is found in her concepts of natality and plurality. Natality is "...the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born" (Arendt, 1958, p. 247). Arendt believes that each individual is unique and through each person we have the ability to renew. Each person's experiences are different and therefore what they bring to others through speech allows for new beginnings—fresh ideas. "New individuals grow up and enter the human world by speaking and acting, and 'this insertion is like a second birth' because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting" (Canovan, 1992, p.130).

The difficult task faced by teachers is preserving this uniqueness while at the same time providing the knowledge to introduce students to their world. This is accomplished by the relationships we form with people and by respecting their individuality. In Linda's story this was shown in the way each student supported Linda. This was not a staged behaviour, while it might appear that we were all acting in concert we each did it differently. The way each student showed support was unique to that

person. Those who knew her well gave her a hug, others a simple touch of the arm or hand and others just a brief word or two.

A good teacher knows that reaching students, knowing where they are, knowing what their experiences have been is very important. My relationship with Linda, though not as close as with some of the students in the class that I had known for three years, enabled me to respond to her. I did not know her well enough to push her when she said she was fine and obviously wasn't. I did not know what the problem was and therefore just let her know I cared. Later that week she did confide in me about the issue--she was being abused by her father and I accompanied her to several meetings with social services. The ability to see things through another's eyes Arendt refers to as visiting. This is the ability to think of how a person will receive information and how they will respond to it--seeing things through the other's perspective. In this situation I understood just how upset Linda was and that this was not the time for probing.

Teachers must be able to make connections with the student and relate information to them in a way that makes sense to them. This necessitates knowing your students; you must have a relationship with them. Another role that is extremely important for teachers is to assist students in forming new relationships. The simple practice of addressing inappropriate behaviour with students and confirming appropriate behaviour in a teacher's regular interaction with students is one way of helping students learn how to act. It is through these relationships, each person's webs of relationships that we are able to act—action requires others. “Teachers are positioned very oddly in relation to the new, since we are asked to facilitate its emergence at the same time as Arendt

reminds us that we can neither predict nor control the forms this newness will take” (Levinson, 2001, p. 14).

Belatedness is another of Arendt's concepts that is a part of natality and particularly relevant to the classroom. It refers to the fact that our individual histories; in school terms a student's ‘reputation’, follows them. Just as the history of the world is a part of human civilization so is a student's history a part of them. Levinson (2001) talks about this in terms of social standing and race but I believe it also applies to our perception of students and the reputations they bring with them. Staff room gossip, while not particularly ethical or professional, is a fact of school life. Teachers do talk about, complain and even make fun of students in the staff room. Allan was often the topic of staff room gossip, mainly about his appearance, but often about why he was allowed to stay in school. Teachers new to the staff and student teachers often knew all about Allan before they had even seen him. For many teachers this is a form of venting, a way of handling their frustration with not being able to help or work with some students. For others it is simply a bad habit, one they are not even aware they have. The result of this type of gossip, however, is very hurtful to students. Students' reputations often set pre-conditions on how a teacher will deal with them.

Students like Allan who are different and who stand out from the majority, are often not given a chance. Teachers will label or classify these students, often based solely on their appearance, and never give themselves a chance to get to know them or establish any type of relationship with them. If you dress differently, pierce your body or wear bizarre clothing (and this is often anything beyond the standard teenage apparel of jeans or sweats) you are automatically not *good* student material. There is no point in trying to

teach such students. They become excellent gossip material for the staff room, but are not worthy of any effort in the classroom. When a student/person is treated this way over a period of time they begin to believe they are not worthy, that they are not *good* student material, that they cannot learn and worse yet that they do not have a contribution to make to the world. Their natality—their uniqueness does not count. “As students become aware of the ways in which their social positioning attaches to them regardless of how they might wish to be seen, they begin to feel the weight of history on their shoulders” (Levinson, 2001, p.15). This is one of the worst crimes committed in our schools today and it is far too common. We must learn to accept people, all people and help them come to understand the world they have inherited and help them to make their mark in that world. “If students feel trapped by their social positioning, they are unlikely to take on the difficult task of social transformation” (Levinson, 2001, p. 24).

My story of Donna is also an example of belatedness. If I had looked at her school file before getting to know her I would probably not have allowed her the latitude that I did in accounting class. If this was a weak student, as her file indicated, I might not have believed she could handle accounting on her own and would have insisted that she follow along in class. I believe it is important to let the relationship I have with students form based on my experiences with them. In this particular case the information was more than likely based on incorrect data, a standardized IQ test given in the 60’s that could have been marked incorrectly, the score could have been given to the wrong person, a whole range of errors could have occurred. Even ignoring the fact that the whole idea of a standardized IQ test having any validity to begin with is absurd, relying on this type of

data presents problems. This student's history could have adversely affected the relationship I had with her.

Many teachers believe that the more information, the more history they have on a student the better able they are to help them. Their concern is for their educational history; are there learning difficulties, are there special challenges, are they auditory or tactile learners? Armed with this information they feel better equipped to work with the student. I am merely raising the point that it can also be damaging. I believe that it is my responsibility to recognize any learning difficulties that a student may have and if there are, then that is when I will make further inquiries about that student. I also believe our concerns should go beyond learning issues: Are there things about this student's home life that I should know, have there been recent traumatic events, are there ongoing family issues? I believe we teach the whole student and we need to develop relationships with all our students if we are really serious about helping them grow and develop. Again I believe it is my responsibility to get to know my students and when red flags go up, when I have concerns about a student that is when I should make inquiries. These inquiries are based on my observations not on someone else's that could be misleading.

While natality is about our uniqueness, our ability to create something new, plurality is about the need for others. Action requires other people. It is a coming together around a common theme, a diversity of ideas that enables action to occur. "Plurality, then, means not only that individuals exhibit unique identities in their relationships to others, but also that the full diversity of those identities is displayed only by the involvement of the individuals in a variety of relationships" (McGowan, 1998, p. 23) To have a good and worthwhile life, we need others. Education is about helping students

develop relationships. Kurt in having a relationship with me and being able to ask for help when he needed it enabled him to help his brother. The climate and relationships that existed in Linda's typing class enabled her classmates to be supportive when she needed their support. To make an appearance to show who we are requires others--it requires plurality. This need to have others leads to another duality of Arendt's concepts that I will elaborate on next.

Private and Public

Fostering and respecting natality and plurality requires the development of both private and public spaces. Arendt saw these spaces as separate and distinct. They developed out of her understanding of Greek society in antiquity. The private realm or private location was the home or household. At that time most citizens had slaves whose duty it was to take care of the citizens, to attend to their daily bodily needs. By having these needs taken care of citizens (men only) were free to participate in the *polis*, the public space where all men were equal and where one could make an appearance in the world.

The public has two important features: "...first, that everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity" (Arendt, 1958, p. 50), and "[s]econd, the term "public" signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place" (Arendt, 1958, p. 52). Today, our country or our province is too large to be compared to the *polis* of ancient Greece, however, publics do still exist. Today the public becomes a place where people come together around an issue or topic that is important to all those present. People can be members of several publics.

“These interests constitute, in the word’s most literal significance, something which *inter-est*, which lies between people and therefore can relate and bind them together. Most action and speech is concerned with this in-between, which varies with each group of people, so that most words and deeds are *about* some worldly objective reality in addition to being a disclosure of the acting and speaking agent” (Arendt, 1958, p. 182).

For action to occur people must be with others, there must be dialogue. For Arendt this took place in the public realm. “The public realm is the place of discourse and action” (Canovan, 1992, p. 111). When I meet with teachers individually and we talk I am never certain what action, if any this will lead to. I have no control over their relationships, their “webs of relationships”. “To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time” (Arendt, 1958, p. 52). I believe we all have several public spaces, different spaces where we make an appearance around an issue. I do not know what action, or thoughts will come out of these dialogues.

In the modern world these once separate spaces, the private and the public have blurred, there is an overlapping of these places. Indeed, Arendt argues that both private and public spaces have disappeared. There is definitely no distinct line between them and one of the best examples of this is the classroom. The classroom is at times a private space and at others a very public space. It serves both roles but cannot do so simultaneously. In Linda's story the classroom was a private space where the students felt safe and were able to support Linda. While it is definitely not the private space of one's

home it does take on some of the same characteristics—students should feel safe in the classroom and feel cared for. The classroom also becomes a testing ground to prepare students (provide practice) for making an appearance in the world. At times the classroom is public, all in the room do appear, particularly the teacher. Who she is, is made apparent in the classroom.

“It is, furthermore, only in the public realm that human beings can overcome their mortality by making their mark as unique individuals.., (Canovan, 1992, p. 111). Arendt believed that it was through the stories told about someone, about their actions, that we truly knew or understood that person. The telling of these stories is what made that person truly unique and these narratives often led to action. Narratives are the one way that teachers best communicate their teaching experiences. When teachers get together, be it in staff rooms over lunch, during breaks at formal meetings or conferences, or socially they always end up telling stories. These stories are about their students and the things that happen in their classroom. These stories generally tell a lot about a person; what type of teacher they are, what kind of relationships they have and what their beliefs are, just as the stories I told at the beginning of this piece tell you something about me. My decision to give up an outside window in my office in exchange for easy accessibility by students, I believe, says something about me and about what is important to me in my role as an administrator. The challenge is to find the time and the space to allow teachers to tell their stories and then to reflect on them with others. One must have these discussions with others and not just inner dialogues if they are to lead to action—to a change in one’s practice. One of the challenges in my role as an administrator is to create these spaces.

Forgiveness and Promise-Keeping

"The remedy for unpredictability, for the chaotic uncertainty of the future, is contained in the faculty to make and keep promises" (Arendt, 1958, p. 237). Since action is unpredictable and since we do not know where our action will lead or how it will affect others it can be very scary. I have already discussed the need for courage if one is to act, however, without forgiveness for things we do not have control over no one would act.

"Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we could never recover" (Arendt, 1958, p. 237).

For Arendt it is necessary for us to be able to forgive if we are to continue to interact with people. If part of action is its unpredictability, then the people we interact with are going to do things that require forgiving. We will be hurt by people, usually unintentionally; but nevertheless hurt and to continue with the relationship we must learn to let go, to forgive and move on. "[I]t needs forgiving, dismissing, in order to make it possible for life to go on by constantly releasing men from what they have done unknowingly" (Arendt, 1958, p. 240). As teachers and particularly as administrators, children's misdeeds are brought to our attention regularly; we must forgive so that we can continue to develop our relationship with that student. When I talked about Donna, my desire not to know about a student's past I believe was my way of cutting down on the number of times I would have to forgive past deeds. I did not want past behaviours clouding the relationship I would have with this person. Although it is important for teachers to know their students, to understand them and to know something about their past I believe I need to find that out for myself, not obtain the information from a file

developed by other people's thoughts, impressions and values. Arendt also makes it clear that we forgive the person not the deed. "...forgiveness is addressed to the person, not the act" (Kristeva, 2001, p. 80). With Carly, the young lady whose behaviour constantly required forgiveness, it was important for me to understand her behaviour—she got many of her difficult traits from her mother—which made forgiving them easier. Our role as teachers is to continually forgive children and help them learn from their mistakes. Punishment, which is addressed to the behaviour not the person, is sometimes necessary as Arendt explains "The alternative to forgiveness, but by no means its opposite, is punishment and both have in common that they attempt to put an end to something that without interference could go on endlessly" (Arendt, 1958, p. 241).

My asking Allan to leave school was an example of punishment. Allan's behaviour of not attending classes had gone on for over three years. I was the third vice principal to deal with Allan and his attendance was not improving. The year that I asked him to leave his attendance had hit an all time low. One way to change this behaviour was to change his environment; if he was no longer in school he could no longer skip classes. While asking a student to leave school is a major step there are times when it is necessary. In this case it proved to be the right decision, as Allan returned to school the following year with a different attitude towards school. I believe Allan did some growing up while he was out of school and as returning was his decision he took ownership and responsibility for finishing school.

Action with its unpredictability and boundlessness can create a world that appears to be one big chaotic mess. Students need some sense of stability in their world, they need to know that if they do X then Y will happen. It is important that they are able to

count on certain behaviours. This is promise keeping. They know that if they walk into teacher A's room that their hat should be off and that chewing gum is not permitted. On the other hand neither of these behaviours is a problem in teacher B's room. Who we are, our identities must be consistent. "Without being bound to the fulfillment of promises, we would never be able to keep our identities" (Arendt, 1958, p. 237).

Education and Relationships

I conclude my chapter on Arendt by providing a brief overview of Arendt's views on education which can best be summed up in her own words.

Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from that ruin which, except for renewal, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable. And education, too, is where we decide whether we love our children enough not to expel them from our world and leave them to their own devices, nor to strike from their hands their chance of undertaking something new, unforeseen by us, but to prepare them in advance for the task of renewing a common world" (Arendt, 1968, p. 196).

Arendt talks about a conservative approach to education. By this she does not mean a back to basics or 3 R's approach; but is emphasizing the word conserve within conservative. She believes it is important to pass on to the new generation knowledge of the past. Our past provides information on how we got to the point we are at today and that is the point at which our students will inherit the world. They cannot care about the world (caring about the world is key for Arendt) or make any changes unless they know

something about that world. This knowledge must be imparted without biases and without changing the uniqueness of each student. "In Arendt's view, the most important goal of education is to help children become familiar with the world and feel secure in it so that they may have a chance to be creative and attempt something new" (Gordon, 2001, p. 53). The challenge, put to teachers, is a very difficult one: enable students to understand the world and yet keep alive their individuality and creativity so they can change it—make a difference.

To do this teachers need to live a vita activa--they must lead an active life. A large part of that life involves labour and work but must also include action. Not only must they act but they also have the responsibility of preparing their students to lead an active life. I believe this is accomplished through relationships--relationships with my peers, with education groups and with my students--these are my webs of relationships.

In the next chapter I will compare Arendt and Noddings. I believe that their ideas are compatible and they each have much to offer and much for teachers to think about.

Chapter 4

SHARED BELIEFS

At this stage I would like to expand on how these two philosophers have helped me make meaning of my stories. How did I go about looking at my work through the eyes of Nel Noddings and Hannah Arendt, two very different philosophers? Noddings is an educator; she questions schools and their purpose, that is, what we mean by education. She proposes a different focus for curriculum based on an ethic of care, a shift that would involve a radical change in schools. In her book *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (1992) she gives an overview of how a school would operate if it were based on an ethic of care instead of the 'liberal arts' curriculum model that has existed for the last century.

In contrast, Arendt is a political philosopher who looks at the world with a much broader lens. She has written very little directly about education. Her one essay "The Crisis in Education" (1954) was actually a response to an article she wrote on desegregation in the southern United States. Her views on education must be gleaned from her other writings. Arendt is not concerned so much with the individual but with human kind. A statement made by Arendt (1958, p. 7) and used by her on more than one occasion signals this distinction: "the fact that men not Man, live on earth and inhabit the

world." Her ideas and writing have huge implications for education, but they did not begin as concerns for education.

Nevertheless, I do see similarities in these two women's work. The most obvious is that both women are concerned with our world and with the people who inhabit that world. Noddings' concern is for the individual and in particular with his or her education; Arendt's concern is with the world and how to continue to renew our world and at the same time preserve that world. They both believe that education is important; where they differ is in the ends. For Arendt education should prepare people for action—to make an appearance in the world--and for Noddings education should prepare caring individuals. In this chapter I intend to discuss some of the similarities and, of course, the many differences in their work.

Different Thinkers

A major difference between these two philosophers is that Arendt is primarily concerned with the world and Noddings with the individual. To use Arendt's terms her focus is with the public realm and Noddings' is with the private. For Arendt what is important is that people have webs of relationships and through these webs are able to make an appearance in the public world where action occurs. This action, in turn, affects others' webs of relationships and the future action these people will take. For Arendt, action is necessary to continually renew and improve our world. Natality offers the opportunity to renew that world, to create something genuinely new: "the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting" (Arendt, 1958, p. 9). For

Noddings, the caring relation is a private affair; it occurs between two people and people can be in only one caring relation at a time. Noddings' belief is that if we have caring people, people that act morally in their private life, then the world will be a better place. Her goal is to have people care about others and by so doing allow the cared-for to become a caring, moral individual. She explains: "The aim of life, then, is not primarily happiness in either the sense of fulfilling pleasure or avoiding pain and trouble; nor is it perfection in the sense of preparation for another life or of perfecting a separate entity such as the soul. The primary aim is, rather, caring and being cared for in the human domain..." (Noddings, 1984, p. 174).

Arendt and Noddings differ in what they believe to be the ends of education. For Arendt the importance of education is in preparing for the public, getting ready to make an appearance in the world. Her contention is that the more points of view we understand, the more we listen to others, and their perspectives, then the better able we are to make good judgments. Noddings, on the other hand, emphasizes that education should prepare students to be caring individuals: We must create caring people who, in turn, will care for and nourish others leading to a better world: "...we must as ones-caring act to promote that ideal. As parents and educators, we have perhaps no single greater or higher duty than this" (Noddings, 1984, p. 103).

Arendt is concerned that if we allow private emotions or feelings to enter the public realm we can destroy the world and caring would be such a private concern. It is not that she believes care or compassion for others is bad, only that caring belongs in the private realm, between two people. As Canovan (1992, p. 170) puts it: "Her argument is not to deny the goodness of compassion, but only to consider what happens when it

moves out of the sphere of direct, face-to-face personal relationships and becomes entangled with politics. For her claim is that compassion,...like pure goodness is an essentially apolitical phenomenon." My relationship with Allan would not be enough for Arendt; while our relationship enabled him to affirm his uniqueness, if that is all I did, then I failed, as I did not help prepare Allan for the public. For Arendt, education should emphasize preparing children to be good citizens. Again Canovan (1992, p. 178) sums this up nicely:

...it is clear that the point [Arendt] is making is to do with the difference between being a good man and a good citizen. Being a good man in the Socratic sense is a matter of keeping clear of evil-doing, whereas being a good citizen means assuming shared responsibility for the public world.

Noddings' educational project of preparing caring people in the private realm stops short of Arendt's goal of preparing good citizens, that is, for the public realm. Arendt's concern is that this is not enough: "The answer to political evil is not the cultivation of personal goodness, for personal goodness is essentially unworldly, while the specific problems that politics raises cannot be solved by goodness in itself" (Canovan, 1992, p.176). While I agree with Arendt that goodness or caring is not enough in itself, I believe that an education system based on an ethic of care as described by Noddings is far better than our current system and that it is a good place to begin, particularly in the early years. If schools were places where students were cared for they would become more confident and thereby be ready to take their place in Arendt's public as adults.

If being a good citizen involves discussions with others in public about what is good for mankind, one must be prepared to know what mankind is about, that is, our history which for Arendt is a 'liberal arts' education. Arendt believes in the importance of a 'liberal arts' education. She believes that we must pass on the knowledge of the world, that is, we must conserve the world. Her belief is that the new generation cannot make positive changes, or any change for that matter, if they do not know where they have come from.

In short, the problem in education is one of bridging the gap between the old (the past and tradition) and the new (change and creativity). In Arendt's view, as we shall soon see, the only way to solve this problem is by adopting a conservative attitude. (Gordon, 2001, p. 47)

Noddings' concern is that a 'liberal arts' education is not the best education for everyone. She believes very firmly that equal education does not mean identical education. "To provide an equal quality of education for all our children does not require identical education for all" (Noddings, 1992, p. 42). She is concerned with the individual and his or her needs. She recognizes that we are all unique with different talents and abilities and that these differences should be recognized in schools. Noddings would agree with my attempt to help Donna to meet her individual needs, Arendt, I believe, would feel that this was an issue not worthy of a public dialogue; it is an issue that should be dealt with between the student and teacher. "[S]uggesting that although issues that are 'worthy of public debate' change throughout history, some issues permit 'administrative' solutions and hence can be removed from the public-political arena" (Benhabib, 1996, p. 157). Broader issues such as what constitutes good schools, what is a good education are

the issues that belong in the public arena. My decision on how to help Donna does not. Arendt believes that a 'liberal arts' curriculum is the best way to ensure that all students have a basic understanding of our literature and history so that they can be good citizens. To be able to make changes, to renew the world, one needs a sense of what is and what was before. "Arendt thinks that we should recognize that the function of the school is to teach children *about* the world and not to instruct them in the art of living" (Gordon, 2001, p. 51). To some degree schools focus on teaching children how to live: the premise is that everyone receive the same menu. There is a common formal curriculum; in British Columbia it is in the form of Integrated Resource Packages (IRP's), from which changes can be made for special needs students and which allow a certain degree of teacher autonomy. There are minor variations in the number and type of options available to students, this varies from school to school, from district to district as well as with swings in educational thought.

While Noddings has nothing against a 'liberal arts' education for some students, she believes that it is not the right curriculum for all students. "I will suggest that the content of liberal studies is not the content that all children need" (Nodding, 1992, p. 28). Indeed, consistent with her concern for the individual, she is interested in instructing children in the art of living. Her perspective is to do what is best for each individual so that he or she might live a good life as opposed to preparing all students in the same manner. She explains: "I am arguing that it is high time we stopped regarding liberal education as the highest form of education, next to which all others seem inferior. We waste both public resources and individual talents when we insist on liberal education for all" (1992, p. 30).

A liberal arts education can mean many things. I am using it in the sense of our current curriculum model in North America, all students receive fundamentally the same curriculum which includes specific disciplines (literature, history, mathematics and science). The specific disciplines are studied separately as ends in themselves with very little or no effort made to tie them together or provide a rationale as to the purpose of having this common knowledge base to students or for that matter to the teachers. However, if the purpose of having a common curriculum is to facilitate public dialogue about concerns for mankind, we do not necessarily all have to be experts in every discipline. Noddings also wants shared understandings, but feels very strongly that we do not all have to have the same level of understanding in all disciplines: we should use our strengths and develop an extensive knowledge base in only some areas (which would not prevent us from becoming good citizens).

Shared Concerns

While there are differences between these two philosophers they do share a common respect for the uniqueness of the individual. "Like Noddings, Arendt believes that every human being is utterly unique" (Schutz, 1998, p. 387). Arendt's concepts of natality and plurality, the backbone of action, are also shared to some degree by Noddings. For both Arendt and Noddings the uniqueness of the individual is paramount. We are all unique as a result of our different experiences; everyone brings something different, a different perspective to an event or conversation. In the *vita activa*, natality, the notion that we are all unique, provides hope. It is through natality that each individual has the potential to change, to renew our world, to make a difference. This possibility for

continual change and renewal of our world is hopeful: we can continue to change and challenge those parts of our world that are not good.

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, "natural" ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope, It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their 'glad tidings': 'A child has been born unto us'. (Arendt, 1958, p. 247)

Noddings wants us to respect each individual, to respect his or her uniqueness. In a caring relation one seeks to confirm the other, to help that person bring out his or her best: "The one caring sees the best self in the cared-for and works with him to actualize that self" (Noddings, 1984, p. 64). This is the reason that Noddings has so much difficulty with the current curriculum model in schools; that does not respect the uniqueness of each individual. This model also emphasizes the curriculum or the content rather than the individual. Noddings wants a curriculum where it is possible that caring is more important than covering a curriculum in a specified time span, "for me he is more important, more valuable, than the subject" (Noddings, 1984, p. 174).

Both Arendt and Noddings recognize the importance of others in our life. For Arendt this is found in her concept of plurality:

Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, they could neither

understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be; they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood (Arendt, 1958, p. 175).

Action occurs as a result of our interaction with others: it is through coming together with others through dialogue that action occurs. Our webs of relationships and our experiences through these webs help form the persons we are. Our natality—the fact of our birth—makes us unique and this continues as a result of our individual webs of relationships. Education based on an ethic of care also requires others; we cannot be care-givers if there was no one to care for. Again, our experiences as ones cared-for as children and our experiences as carers as we mature make each of us unique and that uniqueness, is a result of our experiences with others.

I believe that the stories I have shared exemplify how I believe throughout my career I have tried to respect students (perhaps at the price of curriculum coverage). I have tried to respect students' individuality and looked for their special talents. In Donna's case I respected her ability to know what was best for her education, to know what she needed from the school. In Allan's case I was able to recognize his inability to fit the standard mould of a high school student. His ways of dealing with what he found stupid in the school system were unacceptable to his teachers and I looked beyond this to see the caring young man that he was. For each of these students following the rules, the accepted procedures, was not what was needed; respecting each as an individual with unique traits, abilities and needs was. As explained earlier, action is always boundless

and unpredictable: We do not know the outcome of our deeds. This is also true when caring for students: We hope that by caring for our students they will learn to be caring individuals, but we have no way of knowing that. While we are in a caring relation we must make choices on how to care for someone, what to do to best help and confirm the cared-for. The result of our choice is unpredictable. Being a care-giver and leading an active life (*vita activa*) requires courage.

Arendt and Noddings also share a concern for dialogue and especially listening: to appear in public and to be in a caring relation both require dialogic virtues. For both of these women dialogue is about respectful ways of speaking and listening. Indeed, listening is more important than speaking: good dialogue requires listening. To respect the other in the dialogue one must hear what the other is saying. Schutz (1998, p. 389) explains: "As in caring, the public actor must be willing to listen to the unique voice of the other and be prepared to be changed by what she hears." For Arendt listening is essential for action: one must hear as many points of view as possible. For Arendt action is not about trying to coerce someone into accepting your beliefs, but listening to one another and forming new and different understandings of the issue. Plurality is about arriving at an understanding together. For Noddings engrossment means listening to get a sense of what the other is feeling, a necessary part of caring. Good listening is essential for caring relationships. We need others to be caring; we cannot care in isolation. "We cannot care for ourselves in any meaningful way in isolation from others" (Noddings, 1992, p. 90).

Public and Private

On the surface it would appear that assigning Noddings to the private

realm and Arendt to the public seems logical. However, it is not that simple. Noddings needs Arendt's public to ensure that the carer is genuinely caring for the cared-for. Noddings talks about the need for the carer to be able to provide a rationale for the decisions and choices he makes in caring for the cared-for. "When we care, we should, ideally, be able to present reasons for our action/inactions which would persuade a reasonable, disinterested observer that we have acted in behalf of the cared-for" (Noddings, 1984, p. 23). This rationale is to ensure that the judgments made by the carer are in the best interests of the cared-for. The explanation may never be given to anyone, but it must be available. The boundaries between private and public often create problems: I cannot always share with staff the reasons for administrative decisions. In respecting students' privacy many things remain confidential, but I still need a rational for my decisions. One of the benefits of an administrative team is the private realm that allows for such a space. This is a space where the rationale for my decisions is made public.

On the other hand, Arendt needs Noddings' caring relations as the educative dimension for taking part in the public, to make an appearance in the world. Although Arendt talks about the public as a place for appearance and action, one does not magically do this without preparation. To be able to make good decisions about individual students I must know them and to do this I need to have established a personal relationship with them. The relationship between private and public is a rich and complex one as Elshtain (1995, p. 281) writes:

Perhaps, thinking with Arendt, we can find ways to sustain childhood, not as a time of innocence, but as a time of apprenticeship that occupies a border *in*

between private and public in a sphere or zone that adults bear the heaviest responsibility for sheltering and sustaining, not to protect children *from* politics but to prepare them *for* politics, for all the responsibilities of adult life.

Caring relations and schools that allow the space and culture for caring relations are necessary for preparing children to take their place in the world; Schutz (1998, p. 390) explains, "...although the public and caring represent different practices, they can also be mutually supportive. The public, as a space of contention, may be strengthened by preestablished caring relations."

The Social

The above may lead one to believe that there is a clear distinction between the private and public, that certain issues very clearly fit into one or the other. This, of course, is not the case and to further complicate matters is Arendt's introduction of a third realm, the social. Modernity with its bureaucratic institutions has fostered the development of a space that is neither private nor public. She explains:

The emergence of society—the rise of housekeeping, its activities, problems, and organizational devices--from the shadowy interior of the household into the light of the public sphere, has not only blurred the old borderline between private and political, it has also changed almost beyond recognition the meaning of the two terms and their significance for the life of the individual and the citizen. (Arendt, 1958, p. 38)

Arendt believes that education should be a private matter and that children should be sheltered and nurtured in private for the public world of adult citizenship. In North America, however, schooling focuses on preparing children for their economic roles as

workers and consumers; indeed, "Whatever we do, we are supposed to do for the sake of 'making a living'; such is the verdict of society," (Arendt, 1958, p 127). Like Arendt, Noddings believes education is much broader, much more complex than just preparing students to make a living. She wants schools to prepare students to be caring, moral individuals.

Schools are bureaucracies. There are many levels in this bureaucracy with teachers and students generally at the bottom. While bureaucracies are certainly necessary they are prone to lose track of their purpose. Arendt puts it nicely "Bureaucracy is the body politic of a labouring society", and while this would be oppressive because it amounts to 'rule by nobody'—that is, by nobody who can be called to account" (Canovan, 1992, p. 85). This is exactly what happens in schools too often: we become the slaves of the bureaucracy and the dialogue is centred on issues of labour (keeping the bureaucracy intact), sometimes of work (all the documents produced by the Ministry to help teachers plan units and lessons), leaving no time for action.

The bureaucracy forces the agenda and coordinates efforts without recourse to dialogue about purpose (Habermas, 1987). As long as I am covering the curriculum and no one is complaining, then I am doing my job. Good teachers know it is not that simple, but are often caught up in the feelings of powerlessness that a bureaucracy can foster; the most such teachers (and their students) can do is ignore the bureaucracy as much as possible and do what they can in the closed environment of their classroom. However, this isolated model does not allow for dialogue with others and therefore does not allow for action.

An example of this bureaucracy at work is the enormous bureaucracy associated with provincial exams. Many teachers are aware of how restricting teaching for provincial exams is. They know that this is not central to education; however, they continue to prepare students for the annual process. As a result, students and teachers both get caught up in the process: teachers become involved in discussions on how to best cover the material students will be tested on, or how to get on exam committees so they can have some say on the exam make-up; students come to understand that education is tightly linked to examination results. This emphasis on labouring frustrates any real dialogue about education. While many teachers recognize this perversion they are hesitant to make changes since they feel their students will suffer. If the bureaucracy measures success by provincial exam scores only then it would be unfair to students to ignore exams. When pushed in discussions about the real purpose of exams, teachers are often aware that exams are simply sorting tools for the universities. However, teachers do not see a way out of this problem and as long as the bureaucracy demands this type of labour any real change is unlikely. Keeping the system running as it is becomes paramount and any discussions that would lead to real changes to the education system rarely occur.

Keeping the bureaucracy functioning smoothly is a major preoccupation of schools and their inhabitants. An important quote for me when thinking about Arendt's concepts and their place in education and teaching is one from Margaret Canovan (1992, p. 78): "...men cannot control events: all they can do is act." Public education in the 20th century is greatly concerned with controlling students, to keep the bureaucracy functioning smoothly (McNeil, 1988). If, on the other hand, we were to consider Arendt's

ideas seriously, teachers can set up an environment to prepare their students to act and to provide some security, some privacy, to practice. Through dialogue and discussion we allow our students to take the ideas we present and the actions we undertake and encourage them to explore these ideas and actions. This can be frightening, but action is frightening; it is not predictable. Such an approach would mean that teachers would have to exercise judgment and accept moral responsibility. This is a tall order and places a different type of responsibility on teachers than is currently the case. Now all teachers have to do is to meet the accepted bureaucratic requirements: for example, ensuring that their students are prepared to write provincial exams or their equivalent. To do otherwise would indeed require courage and raises all sorts of important educational questions: what is good education? how do we train teachers to do exercise judgement? what is the line between parents' responsibility and teachers' responsibility? what should schools look like? what should curriculum look like?

In Chapter 5 I want to discuss how I, as an educational leader, might answer some of the above questions. I will discuss how I believe serious attention to developing an ethic of care and emphasizing the importance of relationships in schools can help change the dialogue among the people in schools.

Chapter 5

Now What

At the end of my research the major question left for me is what have I learned?

Has this merely been an exercise in reminiscing, in reflecting on the beginnings of my career as a teacher and most recently as an administrator, or will this impact on my role as an educator today? I believe I am still a teacher; the only difference is that today my pupils are adults as well as children. Instead of being responsible for the 30 students in my classroom I have responsibilities for the teachers in my school: for helping them think about what they do and the effect their actions have on students. I do not have the same impact with individual students as I did as a classroom teacher, but I believe I still have an impact. I believe that one of the important things I have learned is that the routine interactions matter: every conversation no matter how seemingly mundane can be important.

I understood that as a teacher, it was the small interactions that often made a difference. Paying attention to a student over something as trivial as their new haircut, trying to help a student work through a problem, giving a hug when it was needed and a pat on the back when that was needed; all of these things made a difference. Nothing grandiose, nothing that makes a difference on a global level or that affects all in the classroom, but the exchange can make a difference to that person. I believe that writing this thesis has helped me to understand that as an administrator it is also the small things

that make a difference. I think when I became a vice-principal, somehow I felt my actions, my responsibilities had to be of a grander nature, on a larger scale. I was responsible for more students and therefore my actions had to affect more people. I now understand that I do affect more people, but I still do so by paying attention to one person at a time. My conversations with the teachers in our school make a difference. My beliefs about education, teenagers and what matters in schools are made clear through these conversations and through my actions. It is in this way that I make an appearance in the world, that I make a difference.

Making the time to listen to teachers before and after school about an issue in their classroom, their concerns about a particular student, their personal issues, good and bad in their personal life, is an important part of my job. There are many times when the demands are overwhelming and making this time means an extra long day and that routine bureaucratic concerns are put aside for another day: I now more fully understand why I make this time and why I will continue to make the time. I am now also more aware of the importance of some of the seemingly less important jobs, such as taking a new student to his or her locker, or showing a new student to a class they can't find, or taking the time to find out why a student is in the hall when they should be in class; sometimes as in my story of Kurt this is really important, sometimes students are in the hall because they are in crisis. These small interactions also go a long way in establishing relationships with people--teachers, staff and students--and I believe ultimately that it is relationships that form the foundation of schooling and education. While many people believe it is the curriculum that should form the basis or foundation of a school I believe it is about relationships and writing this paper has reinforced this understanding.

As discussed in both chapters 2 and 3, relationships are key. For Noddings it is about the relationship between the carer and the cared-for; for Arendt is about the web-of-relationships we form throughout our life. For teachers to be effective there must be a bond, a relationship between teacher and student. Does this relationship always look like the bond between carer and cared-for as Noddings describes? Absolutely not; this intensity would be impossible for anyone to maintain. However, it does mean that teachers need to be open, they need to be receptive to their students so that the teachers would recognize when a student does need to be cared-for. I also believe that it is part of a teacher's responsibility to help students become care-givers, to help students recognize the need for and importance of caring for others. I believe it is important for teachers to develop caring educational communities within their classrooms, places where caring for others and being cared-for is the natural way to be, it is the accepted norm.

I believe that I must establish relationships with the teaching staff that helps them in their efforts to support relationships in their classrooms. I believe that this support can range from providing affirmation for teachers who understand the importance of relationships in their work to intensive conversations with those teachers who do not understand the importance of relationships. While I cannot make someone believe that relationships are important (or as I believe the key) to education I can make them more aware; I can encourage them to reflect on their practice; I can role model. However, what I cannot do is make someone change. Action is unpredictable. Nevertheless, I must have the courage to open the door to challenge and to begin the dialogue that may lead to change, to a better understanding of education, of teaching.

Part of my role as an administrator is to help teachers build relationships with their peers. I am not talking about building relationships of a social nature, although this does occur between staff members and is of consequence; I am talking about building professional relationships. Teaching can be a very lonely profession and it is important that teachers have others with whom to discuss what happens in their classrooms. These conversations can revolve around unit plans, lesson plans, resources, curriculum, class dynamics, individual students and general school matters. All of these matters are important for different reasons and at different times. I believe my role is to support teachers in all of these concerns; however, most important is my responsibility to initiate and support discussions about education, about our role as teachers by taking every opportunity to encourage these broader discussions. I might do this simply by providing refreshments and a place to meet; sometimes, however, I might be involved in changing the tone and focus of discussions. Teachers can often fall into a 'feel sorry for me' lament and need direction and a focus to help them engage in more productive dialogue. In Noddings terms, to be a care-giver I sometimes have to appear not to care, not to sympathize, but to challenge people to go forward. In Arendtian terms, it is about providing a safe place to discuss issues that are important to teachers, a private space to prepare them to go public with issues and gradually introduce more public concerns so the dialogue does not remain too private. Recently at our school we have changed the format of the staff meetings; the majority of the time is spent in discussions around an issue or topic that has come out of concerns raised by teachers. This replaces a format that was mainly about the dissemination of information, predominantly by administration and various school committees. This new format allows for action—these discussions do

not have a specific end in mind, no pre-determined finished product, but are about understanding each other about an issue. For example, teachers will make statements such as "we care about our students", and through these discussions we are trying to better understand exactly what we mean by caring about students. Teachers can provide immeasurable support for one another and attempts to improve educational practice must focus on involving teachers in talking about and examining their own teaching.

If we believe that schools are communities, and if we believe that relationships are an important part of that community then it follows that parents and other community members should be involved in the school community. My role as an administrator is to involve parents more fully in the educational life of their children. This must involve more than coming to parent-teacher interviews or coming to PAC meetings to raise money for the school. While these are important events, parents should also be involved in discussions about what counts as education and about what they want for their children. Recently the government of British Columbia has introduced School Planning Councils (SPC's) that are mandated to include a school administrator, a teacher, 3 parents and students at the high school level. For Arendt this notion of representative democracy presents a problem. In action only you can represent yourself. Being part of the group and participating in the discussion is crucial for action. This concern is without even considering how impossible it is for three parents to represent the diverse concerns and opinions of over a thousand parents, as is the case in most secondary schools. The mandate from the government is to produce goals which the school will work towards and which are measurable. This new level may provide an opportunity for schools to interact with some parents and to have discussions about what they want for their child's

education. In Arendtian terms, we may have a common focus with people that are knowledgeable and concerned about the issue—education. A stumbling block is of having the agenda around these meetings set by the Ministry. The Ministry is putting pressure on school districts for accountability contracts and the districts are putting pressure on the schools to come up with measurable goals. Once the dialogue has a hidden agenda it is no longer about action. Action does not have a specific, predetermined end in mind; action is about discussing an issue together and as a result of the different points of view coming to a new and different understanding and from this new understanding, new actions, and new ends may develop. Labour and work can emerge from new understandings. The task at hand is to take advantage of this opportunity to form groups that are interested in talking about education, not in finding ways to labour and produce goals that are measurable. Relationships, which are crucial in schools, are very difficult to measure

Relationships in schools are key to developing students intellectually and morally. We have a responsibility to our children to help them become caring, moral individuals and the only way to successfully accomplish this is through the relationships they have with others in their life. One of the common misunderstandings about leadership is that somehow a good leader can change an entire organization, somehow if the leader has a vision all he/she must do is have a plan, (often a 7-step plan) to implement the vision and then change occurs. I now understand more fully that it is not that simple and I don't believe such expansive change is possible. More importantly expansive change does not ask the important questions—it is not action; it has a pre-set end in mind and attempts to invite, motivate or coerce people to get on board with a particular agenda or vision.

What I have learned as a result of my five years as a high school administrator and most recently in writing this paper is that change is possible in small steps, often baby steps. The conversations I have with the staff, from the small type of check in dialogue:--“Good morning, how are you? “How did that class go you were telling me about?”--to longer, more intense conversations about a specific incident or a specific student can lead to improvement of educational understanding and practice. This is what I will call small 'l' leadership. In these conversations I make explicit my beliefs and values about education; I make a public appearance, I act. I do this differently: the intensity and the starting point of these conversations will vary depending on the staff member. I must, just as a teacher does, take into account the individual, my relationship with them, their beliefs, their previous understanding and experiences and their willingness to engage in the dialogue.

I believe that this small 'l' leadership has led to the formation of a discussion group that has met weekly over the last semester. The group was initially created in response to specific events in the school, but the willingness of the small group of teachers to discuss openly their general concerns and specific disquiet with the way administration had handled some events was a result of the relationships previously established with these teachers. We, the administrative team, tried to provide a safe space to discuss these issues. The group began as a result of two teachers questioning some school wide policies that were put in place midway through the school year. While these policies were widely supported by the staff, and actually demanded by some teachers, the implementation of these policies without student input worried these two teachers who requested to meet with the administration team. These initial discussions led to further

dialogue about how to communicate expectations in general to our student body, and later how to involve the students themselves in our discussions. We moved from deliberating about how to inform students of our decisions to how to create a school-wide dialogue about how we would all treat one another. The initial group expanded to include teachers that had been working on a student mentorship programme and the weaving of these groups (webs of relationships) has resulted in the formation of a programme (Colt Connections) that will begin next September with planning taking place in June and throughout the summer. The programme aims to link our grade 11 students with our incoming grade 8's; the grade 11's would mentor the younger students and our grade 8's would have a different and more positive introduction to high school. These discussions have been very rich and the group has grown and seems to be making a difference.

This approach is completely opposite the big 'L' leadership type of change that takes as its starting point that something or someone needs to be fixed. The premise is that something is wrong, it is broken and it needs 'fixin'. This is often done through some type of 7-step approach (e.g., Covey) and assumes that the whole organization or school must "buy in". We must get everyone "on board" and we must coerce them into believing that the remedy is the best thing since sliced bread and that it will fix everything. People are not machinery and there is no remedy or 7-step program that will "fix" everything or everyone. The whole notion is so inhuman and incredibly disrespectful of people. In short big 'L' leadership will not "work". If changes are needed, such improvements must begin with individuals, and their own understanding of what it means to be a teacher; changes will come from dialogue about education and as a result of the webs of relationships that

people create. I see my role as helping people establish these webs and support them in finding the time and space to talk.

This support involves providing a safe private space for people to share their ideas, a place where they feel safe to express their concerns, frustrations, failures and successes, a place where they can formulate ideas and a practice ground for going public with their thoughts. My role as an administrator is to help create these spaces and to encourage people to venture forth in a more public way, whether through forming new groups, new webs or through writing, but in some way to make their views public. Just as teachers have a responsibility to their students to help them make an appearance, my responsibility is the same for teachers. Schools are in a unique position of being capable of providing that safe place for both students and teachers. Schools can be supportive environments; we can come together with similar concerns and a shared interest in discussing those concerns. Schools provide organizational support to begin these discussions from departmental groups, to teams, to study groups. The challenge comes from broadening the focus of these groups from very practical nuts and bolts type of discussions, problem solving with an agenda and an end to include discussions with no final end in mind other than trying to better understand an issue. For me questions for such dialogue include: What do we mean by education? What is a good education? What role do teachers play in providing a good education? These are questions that are the concerns of many, not just of teachers, and it is for this reason that we must eventually take our discussions public. Teachers must leave the safe confines of their private discussions and become more public with their understanding of what education is. While many discussions held by teachers will be about nuts and bolts issues--how to best teach

a concept, how to meet outside demands, how to cope with challenging students--these discussions must come from a basic foundation of what providing a good education means.

Central to Arendt's notion of a good education is her concern for conserving the traditions and knowledge of mankind. Arendt's conservative outlook on education, providing a similar curriculum and ensuring that mankind's accumulated knowledge is passed on, while a noble ideal, is not what is happening in schools. While the notion of conserving our culture is important, the way that this knowledge is handled in schools has nothing to do with passing on traditions. Schooling seems more about jumping through hoops and while information may be passed on it is usually in a vacuum with no meaning or connections as to the purpose for students learning this material. We neglect Arendt's perspective on the common world and at the same time ignore the uniqueness of the individual: we respect neither plurality nor natality. Noddings wants us to conserve the natural capacity humans have for caring (part of Arendt's natality). Noddings believes this capacity is often destroyed, or at the very least not nurtured, in schools, as they exist today. We need to foster caring individuals. Schools do very little to help build these relationships and teachers are often in the position of having to fight the schooling system to establish relationships with their students, much less help students develop these dispositions. We need to have a clearer understanding of education before we can address either of these concerns. This can best be accomplished through dialogue, through action, not by trying to fix something we believe is broken.

The current political situation in British Columbia has raised a dilemma for me. I have grave concerns about the future of education in this province. I believe that the

current situation has created and will continue to create deep divisions between teachers and school districts and between teachers and school administrators. How can I engage in activities that will make a difference, how can I create spaces for dialogue about the issues that are creating these problems in education? How do I challenge policies that I believe are wrong, that are detrimental to education and to students? Doing so publicly could be detrimental to the school and perhaps even to the school district. Do I simply ignore making a statement and withdraw to my school, doing what I can to make a difference complying with procedures I find offensive only minimally? Do I do all I can to make the situation more bearable at the school level or do I take a more public stance and question the powers that be on issues I find offensive? It is so much easier to withdraw into the shell of my school, doing the best I can under the circumstances. Hannah Arendt might be disappointed; Nel Noddings might be of two minds: she would be pleased that I am caring about the people I can care about, however, she also believes we have an obligation to deal with situations that are wrong.

I believe that I will make a difference one person and one conversation at a time. I am very hopeful and energized by recent events in our school. The change in our staff meeting format and the rich discussions resulting from this change are providing me with hope. The group that meets weekly is truly about action, we are trying to understand what education is, and what the teachers' role is. The resulting conversations are rich. Writing this thesis and the research leading up to the writing has made me more aware of just how important such discussions are and what my role is in creating the space for these discussions to take place. Perhaps I will not be able to change school district policies but I can start a dialogue that may lead to changing practices and eventually policies.

...to bring the school community into an open discussion, to consider the moral issues in the light of overarching commitments, or to talk about what is actually known and what is merely hypothesized. At the very least, there would be wide-awareness (Greene, 1978, p. 45).

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