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An Ethic of Care in High School Instrumental Music

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to apply Noddings' ethic of care to a qualitative inquiry of select instrumental music educators. In the first section I describe and define an ethic of care, considering specifically who is involved in a caring relationship, how an ethic of care can be taught, and strategies for educational implementation and reform based on care. This section concludes with a presentation of prior literature exploring the implications of an ethic of care for music education. The second section includes findings from a study in which I observed the presence of care in instrumental music classrooms. Themes emerging from the data analysis included: (a) care; (b) teaching students to care; (c) fostering a classroom environment conducive for care; (d) caring for the individual; (e) continuity; and (f) benefits. Findings suggest that including care in the classroom can have powerful benefits both personally and musically. Keywords: ethic of care, music teacher education, professional development, social and emotional challenges, case study

A caring music teacher, I believe, approaches the learner from a holistic perspective—academically, musically, socially, and emotionally. In this respect, I resonate with the following statement by Nel Noddings (1995):

> We should want more from our educational efforts than adequate academic achievement, and we will not achieve even that meager success unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others. (675−76)

From this perspective, to be cared for is a universal need. Beginning as infants we are entirely dependent on the care of others. This desire to be cared for and the subsequent importance for children to be taught how to care are at the foundation of an ethic of care. The purpose of this paper is to apply Noddings' ethic of care to a qualitative inquiry of select instrumental music educators. In the first section I

outline Noddings' concept of care, concluding with a presentation of literature exploring an ethic of care in music education. In the second section, I present findings from a study in which I observed teachers' caring interactions in instrumental music classrooms.

An Ethic of Care

Previous authors have sought to link music education to an ethic of care (Bates 2004, 2009, Nourse 2003, Silverman 2012). The following is meant to build on that work and to contextualize associated qualitative data. An ethic of care, as described here, is couched within feminist ethics, which in turn, is part of the larger field of moral philosophy. Caring, from this perspective, has been viewed as feminine, evolving out of the initial bond between infant and mother. Gilligan (1978, 1982), credited with originating the concept that care as a distinctly feminine morality (Shelby 2003), believed that men and women conceptualize the world differently: "Women's perception of self is so much more tenaciously embedded in relationships with others and their moral dilemmas hold them in a mode of judgment that is insistently contextual" (Gilligan 1978, 53).

One of the controversial aspects of an ethic of care is reconciling the universal expectation to care with this feminine foundation (Liddell, Halpin, and Halpin 1992). "Critics often allege that gendering morality reinforces and perpetuates female stereotypes of all kinds" (Silverman 2012, 105). This controversy stems dually from women feeling as if caring is their sole responsibility and men feeling as if they are at a biological deficiency to care. Responding to criticism for conceptualizing care as feminine, Noddings wrote: "When I used the word feminine (and I probably will not do so again), I intended to point to centuries of female experience and the tasks and values long associated with that experience" (Noddings 2003, 225). Transitioning from the realm of the feminine could advance an ethic of care beyond the role it already occupies since, as many critics argue, men are equally competent carers and women should not be expected to bear the brunt of caring (Slote 2010)[1].

Historically, to put it rather bluntly, men were warriors and women were mothers. Although men are no longer, to the same extent, collectively instructed in how to hunt, gather, and fight for survival, these themes are "imbedded in literature

and political history, in sports, in a controlling view of science, in academic contests, in the hierarchical structure of school districts, and in competition for grades" (Noddings 2002, 110). Given its inception in the military, band, in like manner, has stereotypically been a masculine activity. Gould (2005) notes:

> Music education occupations in the U.S. have been segregated by gender and race for decades. While women are most likely to teach young students in classroom settings, men are most likely to teach older students in all settings, but most particularly in wind/percussion ensembles. Despite gender-affirmative employment practices, men constitute a large majority among band directors at all levels. (147)

As viewed through a feminine, care-based lens, this could be problematic. The notions of a female assuming the traditionally masculine role of band director or a male band director performing his role as caring could pose potential conflicts relative to (and opportunities to confront) gender stereotypes. However, these kinds of gender roles, although acknowledged as stereotypical by Noddings (2002), need not culturally limit the universality of caring. Everyone, as Noddings argues has both the responsibility to care *and* the capacity to care in a genuine relational manner even though traditional models of education and of band might limit that possibility.

The Carer and the Cared-for
According to Noddings (2005, 2003), "a caring relation is, in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings—a carer and a recipient of care, or cared-for" (15). Caring is relational, thus necessitating at least two participants— the one actively caring, "the carer," and the one receiving the caring, "the cared-for." The carer's obligation is to adequately interpret the cared-for's needs. The cared-for has a complementary obligation to respond to the carer. In other words, the role of the cared-for is not only to be receptive of care, but also to observe how care is being modeled for them. It is through this process of being cared-for that children learn how to care (Noddings 2005).

Caring relationships can be equal (significant others, friends, colleagues, and neighbors) or unequal (parent/child and teacher/student) (Noddings 2005). In equal relationships, each party has responsibility to care for the other. Conversely, in unequal relationships one party has responsibility while the other does not. For

example, an infant cared-for is entirely dependent on the parent and is unable to care for the needs of the parent. This relationship evokes a necessary divide between carer and cared-for. It is the goal of care education to eventually transition from unequal to equal relationships (Noddings 2002). Even in unequal relationships, however, Silverman (2012) argues that the divisive I/me and you/them dichotomy could effectively be replaced by we/us: "I think we can…abandon the first-person pronoun. Does not 'what are we doing in the classroom?' mean something different? Is not an 'I' present in 'we'? And isn't the 'self' actually a part of the larger 'us'?" (102). Adopting a process and team approach rather than highlighting the clear distinction between teacher and students could help eliminate the first-person on behalf of both the teacher and student. It is this blurred line, as teachers struggle to make unequal relationships equal, which will be explored in the context of an instrumental band classroom. As students learn to be competent carers the inequality of caring has the potential to disappear.

Care Ethics and Justice Ethics

Justice ethics are characterized by "objectivity, rationality, and separation" (Liddell, Halpin, and Halpin 1992, 326) in contrast to the receptivity and relational motivations to care—meeting the needs of others versus following the rules (Enomoto 1997; Liddell, Halpin, and Halpin 1992). Consequently, in an ethic of care, moral action stems from feeling the need to care for others. So, in a sense, people are more important than rules, and rules may have to be broken to ensure care. Silverman (2012), however, encourages us to "think more deeply about the connections between 'care' and 'justice,' resisting the temptation to consign them to gendered categories" (105). Held (2006), in like manner, suggests that "justice and care as values each involve associated clusters of moral considerations, and these considerations are different. Actual practices should usually incorporate both care and justice but with appropriately different priorities" (41). Justice seeks to treat people fairly by "identifying and fulfilling rules, principles, rights, and duties" (Liddell, Halpin, and Halpin 1992, 326), while care "responds to people in a way that ensures that the least harm will be done and that no one will be left alone" (326).

In an educational setting, justice often prevails due to the perceived necessity for consistency among students (Enomoto 1997). Classroom management through strict enforcement of rules, for example, can seem antithetical to Nodding's ethic of care. On the other hand, from a novice perspective, care might be construed as creating a classroom without order. It can be a struggle to apply an ethic of care within a rule-based culture. As I will suggest, the experienced teachers highlighted in part two of this paper actively demonstrate both care and justice (feeling and reason) in their classrooms and, even though the culture of band can make caring difficult, care can be present while maintaining standard rules and procedures.

An Ethic of Care in Music Education

"Our main educational aim should be to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people" (Noddings 2002, 94). To this end, Noddings makes the following suggestions: a) organize curriculum around themes of care; b) be unapologetic about the goals of care; c) keep students and teachers together longer and in the same building; d) relax the impulse of control in schools; e) reduce testing; f) get rid of hierarchies (e.g.. honor tracks); and g) address care daily (2005). Even though the caring relationship in school is "necessarily unequal because students cannot assume some responsibilities" (107), teachers can do much to foster care through modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (Noddings 1988, 2002, 2003, 2005). Thus, it is necessary for caring adults in unequal relationships to model caring—from infancy through adolescence. Children who are cared for learn how to care by receiving care, by interacting with others within caring classroom environments, and by approaching school subject matter from the standpoint of care.

> An emphasis on the social relationships in the classrooms, students' interest in the subject matter to be studied, and the connections between classroom life and that of the larger world provide the foundation for our attempts to produce moral people. (85).

From this philosophical foundation, music educators are responsible for teaching more than music; they are obligated to model and otherwise foster ethics of compassion and care in the classroom (Richmond 1996). Silverman (2012) discusses how she personally experienced care while teaching in New York. She believed that

music education "must include the development of students' awareness of their responsibilities as democratic citizens, the enhancement of their artistic and academic growth, their personal well being" (111). As a result, she found "facilitating caring relationships in collaborative classrooms enhances opportunities for transformative musical-affective experiences, for positive interpersonal relationships, and for democratic agency" (112). To accomplish this, she had to move beyond teaching notes and rhythms: "The more I engaged my students in discussions about the 'what', 'why', and 'how, of music class, the more we created an environment that was conducive to education *through* music" (113). In addition to this dialogue, she took an interest in the students' music and created an environment where they taught her. This helped blur the lines between carer and cared-for. "I was much more than these students' teacher. I was their confidant, their creator of a 'safe' place" (Silverman 2012, 114).

Bates (2004, 2009) explored an ethic of care in music education, referring to it as a "nurturant" ethic. For him, care stemmed from empathy: "In a nurturant ethic for music education, guidance for practice arises ultimately from the empathetic interaction between teacher and students within musical space. Empathy mediates all other considerations such as musical ability, musical practices, musical traditions, and musical works" (2004, 7). In sum: "Music instruction by caring music teachers can and does lead to the formation of caring relationships that are extremely valuable for the students" (9). In order to negotiate the challenges of nurturing (or caring) for each student within a large ensemble setting, he articulated three goals to help teachers: 1) serve as many students as possible; 2) bring about results that will last as long as possible; and 3) focus on the students who have the greatest overall needs. Bates (2009) also noted "tension between institutions and individuals" (14), suggesting that there are particular difficulties with band, as a cultural institution, in the satisfaction of human needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence, concluding that it might be easier to meet students' needs in a guitar class.

Nourse (2003) discussed *teaching* care in a private lesson studio, suggesting that, due to their one-on-one nature, private lessons can be ideal sites for fostering caring relationships between teachers and students. Conversely, as Nourse explains, musical performance can foster shame, fear, and a prevalence of teacher pride. This

could manifest due to public announcement of performance results (seating auditions), teacher concern focused on personal public reception rather than student benefit, or dictatorial directors leading rehearsals. Caring about musical perfection, in other words, must not interfere with caring about students. The infusion of care could alleviate these issues and "breathe life into the learning experience" (Nourse 2003, 64).

Allsup and Benedict (2008) characterized the role of band conductor historically as a masculine and dictatorial role, the band environment as one that elicits fear, and specific methods associated with large group instruction as less conducive to a caring environment. Bates (2009) argued that how band is typically structured in schools can make it difficult to satisfactorily address student needs for autonomy and relatedness. Silverman (2012) likewise pointed out that care in a large ensemble is difficult, but not impossible: "a music classroom should be founded on reciprocity between the carer and cared-for, despite the asymmetrical relationships that undemocratic school environments tend to impose on teachers and students" (111). In the following case study, I explore how four band directors find spaces for care—arguably with varying degrees of success—within the intricacies of traditional American instrumental music programs.

A Case Study in Caring

The purpose of this instrumental case study (Stake 2005, 2006) was to explore approaches of four high school instrumental music educators to care (relative to Noddings' ethic) in their classrooms. The instrumental music educators, all of their band classes and students, and band parents comprised the participants within each program. The four participant band programs were selected based upon the instrumental music educator's reputation as having caring relationships with his or her students, representing diverse settings, and having at least 10 years of professional band directing experience. Specifically, I chose two male and two female instrumental music educators representing urban, suburban, and rural settings as defined by Hall, Kaufman, and Ricketts (2006), to examine how care might manifest in different settings and demographics. Public perception, as determined by discussions with area teachers and university student teaching supervisors, of caring

teachers was the primary criterion in participant instrumental music educator selection. Data included instrumental music educator interviews (three for each participant), an instrumental music educator focus group (one), student focus groups (one for each setting), parent interviews (one from each setting), and observations (three full-days at each setting). See Figure 1 for instrumental music educator participant and school demographics.

School (pseudonym)	Instrumental Music Educator (pseudonym)	Years of Teaching Experience	# of Students in School	# of Students in Program	Demographic	Population of the City	Population Density (people per sq. mile)
Atwater	Mr. Andrew (male)	15	1,806	304	94% White 3% Asian 1% Black 2% Other 5% receive free or reduced lunch	8,932	1,930 Suburban
Branford	Mr. Brandon (male)	29	1,700	160	58% White 35% Black 7% Other 53% receive free or reduced lunch	33,315	3,004 Urban
Cobblestone	Ms. Catherine (female)	14	620	63	90% White 6% Hispanic 2% Black 2% Other 62% receive free or reduced lunch	3,783	1,485 Rural
Drake	Mrs. Danielle (female)	13	1,925	126	85% White 11% Black 4% Other 20% receive free or reduced lunch	96,942	2,500 Suburban/ Small Urban

Figure 1: Participants [Population density calculated by the 2010 US Census (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The classification of urban, suburban, and rural guided was by Hall, Kaufman, and Ricketts, (2006), based on those numbers]

Participants

Atwater HS[2], Mr. Andrew—"I teach them life."

> We do technique requirement sheets. As it came across my desk I could tell at least three of the signatures on there were not mine—forged. So, I called him into my office, 'Are these my signatures?' 'Oh yes, you signed those.' 'Okay, look at the dates. February 29th? It's not a leap year.' Immediately he knew he was caught. I said, 'We have two ways we can do this. I can write you up. You'll get busted for signing my name. Or you get a C for band and I want an hour of community service from you.' He said, 'I'll do whatever I need to, please don't turn this in.' I said okay. So we talked about how this is where you learn these

> mistakes. You learn it in high school where the consequence is 'I get a C in band.' If you do that in college you plagiarize, sign something that's not yours, you're going to get expelled. After college, you're going to jail. This is a good time to learn this. He came in he worked, he did service. He took his C. We had a meeting with his parents to discuss it. He was a junior when that happened. At the time he was very mad—he was angry that he had been caught. At the end of his senior year he wrote me a letter saying that was one of the most positive things in high school that possibly could have been. It turned him away from a direction he had been. It was a real focusing event for him because he felt like he had a good relationship with me and he had betrayed that. He had a lot of pangs of guilt with that. That process turned him around in school. (Re-storied from Mr. Andrew, Interview 2)

This example represents how Mr. Andrew appeared to value the student more than the rules. Still, Mr. Andrew often exhibited justice-oriented actions in his applications of care. He expressed that there had to be rules (due dates, anti-plagiarism, technique sheets); however, when the rules were not followed he tempered his justice with compassion aimed ultimately at facilitating the personal growth of his student. It was an opportunity for him to model care, talk about responsibility, and confirm the best in his student. In other words, Mr. Andrew capitalized on a learning experience to teach life lessons, readily accepting the role of carer. "You're not a music educator, you're a kid educator" (Mr. Andrew, Interview 1). He attributed this disposition to the model provided by influential people in his own life, specifically his parents. He stated that part of his job was to teach his students to be good human beings: "There are certain core values, fairness, respect, tolerance, all those things we teach" (Mr. Andrew, Interview 1).

Branford HS, Mr. Brandon—"If you focus on being a good human…"

> The kids made me that podium. They came and swiped my regular podium—I was livid that someone would take my podium. I had everyone searching all over the school for this podium. I was all full of myself. This was probably my fourth or fifth year teaching. They came back for the Christmas concert, had made that podium and had one of the local guys carpet it. Wrote "Sir" on it and all that stuff. That was my 'ah hah moment' when I said I can be somebody different in class. I didn't have to be that mean nasty person all the time. We could share, and love, and care, and hug, and everything else. (Re-storied from Mr. Brandon, Interview 2)

Mr. Brandon did not always readily accept the role of caring teacher in his early career. At the time of the study, however, he actively focused on teaching the kids more than the music. "It comes down to being a good human… If you focus on being a good human, the rest takes care of itself" (Mr. Bandon, Interview 2). Mr. Brandon valued the relationships he built with his students. He facilitated a calm, caring, compassionate environment in his classroom by his own calm demeanor, lack of intense interactions, and approaching each student in a unique and individual manner (Observations). In his mind, "being a good teacher comes from respect and love, and a desire to see someone else succeed" (Mr. Brandon, Interview 2).

Cobblestone HS, Ms. Catherine—"I should have gotten a degree in psychology."

> It was a student last year—he was a senior. I had put him in a leadership position in the marching band. They struggled with their interactions with some of their peers and they struggled with one particular person in general…a lot. They seemed to be fighting all the time. I just remember there were many times last year where this particular student was in my office. It was often, 'Ok, here's what I've heard from other students. This isn't going well.' So it was probably frustrating that it was frequent. But I like to think that by the end, you know he graduated and went on to do good things, but I like to think that by taking the time to talk instead of saying 'UGH forget about it, I'm so sick of this drama,' that he hopefully grew a little bit. And by the end he actually had a better way of dealing with people. I have the privilege of seeing some of these kids from middle school. We talk through things and just some life skills for dealing with people. (Re-storied from Ms. Catherine Interview 2)

Caring took perseverance. Ms. Catherine cared about teaching her student life skills. Teaching life skills is consistent with ethics of care; Noddings (2003) suggests that teachers, as a possible way to reform schools, ought to augment subject matter with practical life lessons. One of Ms. Catherine's friends refers to her as "Caring Catherine" (Ms. Catherine, Interview 1) [Adapted to alliterate the pseudonym]. She found a need to balance her quest for a high quality music program with caring for her students as people and came to the conclusion, "It's way more than teaching music" (Ms. Catherine, 1). For her, care is simply part of being a teacher.

Drake HS, Mrs. Danielle—"It's the decent thing to do."

> Shantie, she's going to be my drum major next year, supposedly. She started failing classes last semester and I can't have a drum major failing classes. She stopped coming to school, she probably had 40 absences last semester. It was a ridiculous amount. I called Shantie's mom, who was a teen mother when Shantie was born, she's a single mom—probably my age or younger with a 16 year old kid. She said, 'You can do whatever you need to do, I'm in full support'—basically because she has no control. This is a mom who works from eleven o'clock in the morning to one o'clock in the morning so Shantie has no parental supervision at all. She can do whatever she wants. Her mom's sleeping when she gets up in the morning. So I sat Shantie down, I told her the plan. I said, 'At absence number six, that's it, you're done. Same thing with all your academic classes. If you have more than one missing project in art, more than three missing assignments in physics, whatever it is. Then, no drum major for you.' Her mom said that is probably the only thing that could get her to turn it around this semester. (Re-storied from Mrs. Danielle, Interview 3)

At the beginning of the study Mrs. Danielle expressed hesitation about her value in this study. She felt she was not the most caring example of a teacher; she locks the door to keep them out in the morning and her schedule and time prohibit her from developing strong relationships with her students—largely due to her negotiated prep time and her time commitments as a mother. "It's time-consuming dealing with kids' personal lives. I don't know how band directors have time to get involved in personal lives" (Mrs. Danielle, Interview 1). Mrs. Danielle seemed to have the greatest personal revelations of all participants in the study; she realized the care she does provide, the relationships she builds, and the positive influence she has on her students. From the voice of one of her students: "With Mrs. Danielle, she knows you better than other teachers do because she does actually care that your best friend moved away and you might not feel like being in band" (Daisy, Drake Student Focus Group).

Findings

Being a caring teacher and teaching students to be caring humans were major themes discussed by the participant instrumental music educators. The findings emerging from the data are presented around the themes of: (a) care, (b) teach

students to care, (c) foster a classroom environment conducive for care, (d) care for the individual, (e) continuity, and (f) benefits.

Care

For all four of the instrumental music educators and their students an essential element for a positive teacher/student relationship was the presence of mutual care, compassion, and respect. Respect, as was observed and coded in this study, represented reducing hierarchies and breaking down unnecessary barriers between teacher and student. It does not mean complete equality, as the relationship remains necessarily unequal; however, it does set the stage for all to be treated with dignity and compassion. The data revealed numerous instances in which respect seemed to occupy a sort of middle ground between care *and* not care. Some aspects of their classrooms were distinctly consistent with Noddings' definition of care (modeling, dialogue, practice, continuity); other elements were less so (leadership hierarchies, respect for authority).

The students recognized care as a teacher showing interest and interacting with them (Atwater HS, Branford HS, Cobblestone HS, Drake HS student focus groups). This included a perception that the teacher had a vested interest in the students succeeding in areas beyond music. "She cares about you as a musician, about what you are doing as a musician, but also if you can develop good relations with other people and her. How well you do in school, how your future is. She cares about you being successful in general areas" (Dennis, Drake HS students focus group). Mr. Brandon showed this concern for his student beyond the classroom too: "It can be as simple as telling a young person 'be careful walking home.' Not because there's a bad neighborhood, but because there's ice on the ground. That simple statement lets them know you care that they're going to come back the next day" (Mr. Brandon, Interview 3). As a result from this type of interaction, Blake saw Mr. Brandon as caring: "He's an extremely caring person when it comes to any aspect, whether it's the music, making you a better person, just caring about your day" (Blake, Branford HS student focus group). Mr. Brandon said:

> You have to listen and then have an honest caring, an honest affection for them. There's a young man in the band that just pushed my buttons every single time. He cranks me. Doesn't mean I don't like him. It also

> means that when he walked out of class today he said, 'Goodbye, Sir. Have a nice day.' Where'd that come from? I think he knows that I care about him. (Mr. Brandon, Interview 2)

This example suggested Mr. Brandon cared for students beyond what they could give to the band program. It might be easier for him to care for the solo trumpet player, for instance, but this exemplifies how he cared for all his students.

Part of an unequal caring relationship is that the carer interprets the needs of the cared-for (Noddings 2003). The teachers, in these cases, imposed high standards for both music and interpersonal relationships. One of the most difficult elements of being a carer in an unequal relationship is distinguishing between what *are* the actual needs of the students and what the carer teacher *assumes* are the needs of the students (Noddings 2005). The teachers in this study held their students to high interpersonal and musical standards because they believed this was what the students needed. While this practice is inherent to how caring is executed in an unequal relationship, the band directors had a responsibility to conduct dialogues with their students to ensure the needs being met were accurate. It appeared the band directors valued conversation; however, due largely to the number of students, assumptions dominated how the teachers provided care. This is counter to how Noddings would idealize care and represents one of the difficulties of caring in band (Bates 2009, Allsup and Benedict 2008).

Mr. Andrew had high expectations for his students. The students at Atwater HS articulated this well: "He respects you even if it seems you don't respect him. There's always that one person in band class that obviously doesn't seem to care too much. He still gives them respect and hopes that things will get better" (Ashley, Atwater HS student focus group). Similarly to Mr. Brandon, Mr. Andrew appeared to care for his students regardless of what they were offering the band. Still, caring did not mean having low expectations. "He's not a pushover…He demands a certain amount of respect, and he shows us that respect" (Adria, Atwater HS student focus group). This reciprocal respect and expectation was at the heart of the teacher/student relationship for Mr. Andrew and his students. In sum, the students believed in the motto, "Get respect, Give respect" (Atwater student focus group). This quote evokes a necessary reciprocity and relationship between teacher and student, which is at the heart of Noddings' ethic of care. To achieve this motto, the students

must practice care, confirm the best in others, and recognize the model Mr. Andrew set for them. Noddings acknowledges that "gentle and limited coercion" (2003, 206) is necessary for care. This coercion can manifest as high expectations and demanding mutual respect in his classroom. Nonetheless, Mr. Andrew's approach may have been more authoritarian than "gentle and limited."

Teach Students to Care

The instrumental music educators' curriculum is guided by musical aims; however, each of the instrumental music educator participants articulated the importance of teaching their students to be good, caring people in addition to competent musicians. This included modeling care (Noddings 2003), showing interest in students' lives outside of the music classroom and providing opportunities to practice caring.

> The instrumental music educators modeled care regularly for their students.
>
> The best thing you can do is model how I solve problems in the classroom as a way for them to solve problems in their lives. So, how I deal with frustration with students, how I deal with problems that occur, and treating people with respect and that kind of stuff is a good life lesson for this as a way you can choose to do this—the right way to do this. (Mr. Andrew, Interview 1)

This type of modeling of non-musical behavior could be viewed as consistent with Noddings suggestion to design curriculum around themes of care. Mr. Andrew felt his students needed to learn conflict resolution and problem solving skills. The act of modeling life skills and interpersonal relations was clearly consistent. Conflict resolution, life skills, and problem solving were not specifically represented as such in Noddings' work but the act of serving as a model in other areas of interpersonal relations, in addition to care, could prove beneficial. Still, Mr. Andrew interpreted his actions as caring even though they might not fully embody Noddings' definition.

> Ms. Catherine spoke to the powerful influence teacher modeling could have:
>
> Hopefully some people see teachers, see other adults in their lives and say, 'Hey, I kind of like how that person functions.' They kind of take that with them as they do things in their lives. 'Say, it's really cool when person A does this. They're always upbeat, they're always encouraging.' (Ms. Catherine, Interview 3)

Mr. Brandon adopted a similar view: "I'm in education because I think I can give them something. If it's a moral compass, if it's direction, if it's leading by example.

It's one of the reasons I've stayed in teaching" (Mr. Brandon, Interview 3). In both of these instances, the teacher expressed the importance of serving as a role model and an example of care and character education.

The students valued the teachers as role models. Deborah saw Mrs. Danielle as someone she would look to as a model: "She's an inspiration. She inspires me to something musically and generally to be that type of person. Everything that she is, everything around her, she's so great!" (Deborah, Drake HS, student focus group). Blake stressed the importance of the caring manner in which Mr. Brandon interacts with his students: "He's extremely caring when it comes to any aspect, whether it's the music, making you a better person, just caring about your day. If you're having a bad day, he'll ask you and he'll actually be sincere about it. Mr. Brandon really cares" (Blake, Branford HS student focus group). These testimonies from students show how students recognize and value the examples their teachers set for them—a foundational element to building relationships.

Stemming from this form of care, students valued when their instrumental music educators had an interest in their lives beyond the classroom in addition to a more academic focus. "Fairness, respect, tolerance, all those things we teach. If you're not teaching those things you're missing out" (Mr. Andrew, Interview 1). "Music is what we say we do, but it goes way beyond that and I don't see how you can begin to develop any sort of rapport with your students if you don't even begin to try to make a connection on some level" (Ms. Catherine, Interview 2). "There's a connection that goes way beyond a Bb or a quarter note rest" (Mr. Brandon, Instrumental music educator focus group). These instrumental music educators realized their music classroom could be an environment to foster care and moral character.

Facilitating leadership opportunities was one way these educators expanded their classrooms beyond music. Mr. Andrew encouraged giving responsibility and opportunities to learn leadership skills.

> I talk about strategies and trying to figure out what a person needs. For example, if it's an upperclassmen, 'why don't you give that person some responsibility? Let them go off and work with a freshman…Give them some kind of responsibility within the group to make them feel worthwhile." (Mr. Andrew, Interview 2)

Developing strategies to learn what a person's needs are is an essential skill for being a competent carer. In fact, the carer's first obligation is to accurately interpret the needs of the cared-for (Noddings 2005). Opportunities for leadership and inter-student mentorship provided an opportunity for some of Mr. Andrew's students to practice this form of care. Mr. Andrew implemented a student leadership program explicitly to give opportunities to teach leadership and interpersonal skills for his students, give younger students role models, and facilitate team building. He did not call this care, but it could be related. "I try to get the kids to take ownership over what they're doing so they're doing a lot of the teaching in class themselves" (Mr. Andrew, Interview 1). While a focus on student leadership appears to be contrary to Noddings' suggestion to get rid of hierarchies, it was my impression that by providing leadership opportunities Mr. Andrew was actually relaxing his own direct control, giving students that responsibility instead.

Foster a Classroom Environment Conducive to Care

The instrumental music educators created classroom environments conducive for care. They reported that every student was valued in the instrumental music educators' classrooms. "It's going to be a place where you're all welcome, where everybody's equal and everybody feels like they belong" (Mr. Andrew, Interview 3). This was largely accomplished by incorporating Noddings' ideas of addressing care daily, relaxing (although not eliminating) the impulse of control, keeping the students together through multiple years, and being unapologetic about the goals of care (Noddings 2003). This condition where every student was valued and afforded a safe space helped produce an environment where students could care, be cared for, and socially and emotionally thrive.

Mrs. Danielle realized students could not be forced to be good humans; however, being in a caring setting could prove effective in a variety of ways:

> The only thing we can do is control the environment that they're going to walk into. We can't control the kid. We need to make it an experience they'll want to continue so they stay in your program. Make it an experience they'll feel good about. (Mrs. Danielle, Interview 3)

The word "control" is important in the previous example. While it appeared Mrs. Danielle's motivation to create an attractive environment was caring, her means of

doing so involved maintaining complete teacher control over all variables affecting the classroom. This approach also highlights some possible ulterior motivations to care—program enhancement. The participants stated that they built relationships with their students because they cared for them; however, other benefits such as retention and improved rehearsal behavior were also noted. Having a successful program (defined in a variety of ways—musically, interpersonally, behaviorally, etc.) was important to the instrumental music educators. The means to facilitate this success, however, could run counter to Noddings' ethic of care. In fact, Mrs. Danielle's caring control might be reminiscent of a benevolent dictatorship. Although kindness was definitely present, it is possible that the needs of the cared-for were not always the top priority.

Through my observations I discovered that each of these instrumental music educators facilitated what felt to me like a relaxed classroom environment. The classroom was calm, there was no yelling, and there was little overt pressure put in place by the instrumental music educator. There was musical excitement and intensity, but I never witnessed intimidation, or pressure to behave or succeed musically to which Allsup and Benedict (2008) referred. Navigating high expectations with a lack of pressure was largely accomplished by valuing individual achievement, acknowledging the process of making music as well as the product, and balancing constructive comments with an acknowledgement of accomplishments. The students were not made to feel inferior due to a sub-par performance. Devon at Drake HS appreciated the relaxed, comfortable environment Mrs. Danielle facilitates: "She puts her classroom in a setting where you can be yourself" (Devon, Drake HS, student focus group).

One component of facilitating a relaxed environment where everyone felt comfortable was for the teacher to be positive. Students were complimented frequently for positive musical performance and were not made to feel ashamed for less-than-perfect performance. Mr. Andrew made it a priority to compliment his students individually: "I really became outwardly aware of trying to find opportunities to find them doing something right. I try to compliment 10 kids a day if possible" (Mr. Andrew, Interview 2). Mr. Andrew's students felt this conscious effort both musically and personally: "He will point out when you're doing something well.

He will definitely make a point to talk to you and say, 'That's really good!'" (Allison, Atwater HS, student focus group). "He's one of the most positive people ever. You can be struggling or really stressed out about something and he'll be like, 'Actually, everything's going to be fine'" (Adria, Atwater HS, student focus group). Mrs. Danielle's students also appreciated her compliments: "She enjoys complimenting us…There's always a compliment, after compliment, after compliment" (David, Drake HS, student focus group). The students equated compliments with care; however, positivity and complimenting students does not necessarily equal an ethic of care. Nonetheless, in my observations, praise was sincere rather than manipulative—the teachers did not praise what was not worthy. It was my interpretation that this was the teachers' attempt to apply an ethic of care in order to break some of the social stereotypes associated with bands—the dictatorial, stand throwing director. Creating an environment where students felt and recognized that they were successful was what the directors felt their students needed.

Care for the Individual

The instrumental music educators seemed to realize that the path to a caring community was through caring for individuals. Mrs. Danielle recognized the importance of each individual and how each student is more important than a perfect musical performance:

> I was going to festival with symphony band and I'm taking every single kid in that band. There are kids who are probably playing eight percent of the music correctly. They're going to festival with me. I know directors who take their special ed kids and not allow them to play at festival. To me, the band would sound so much better without those kids. I could say, 'Look, I don't think it's a good idea for you to do this. It's a competitive situation.' But 20 years from now nobody is going to remember that in 10th grade they got a two at festival. But you take those three special ed kids out of the picture, they're going to remember that they were told they couldn't play at festival. In music it's a group endeavor and you have to have everybody succeeding. (Mrs. Danielle, Interview 3)

The participant instrumental music educators stressed that everyone is valued regardless of participation, level of performance, socio-economic status, race, sex, or any other variable (Mr. Andrew, Interview 1, 3; Mr. Brandon, Interview 1). "During that 60 minutes it's going to be a place you're all welcome, where everybody's equal

and everybody feels like they belong" (Mr. Andrew, Interview 3). This lack of judgment helped the students feel like every individual belonged. "You feel like a family in his [Mr. Andrew's] class" (Adria, Atwater HS, student focus group). These familiar elements of prioritizing the other and focusing on themes of care are at the heart Noddings' ethic of care. Noddings states: "what is required is a sincere and meaningful respect for all positive human capacities" (2003, 232). It seemed to me that this is what motivated the band directors in their attempts to value everyone.

As part of valuing the individual, the instrumental music educators needed to be acutely aware of individuals' needs. This might take the form of family situations, challenges, or financial struggles, among others. Some students' challenges might be hidden and an aware teacher could uncover a serious challenge. Mrs. Danielle discovered why one of her students was struggling musically:

> I have a boy with degenerative eye disease. He joined my band last January on trumpet. He was there for two weeks, then I went on maternity leave. I came back in May, and I said, 'he's got a really nice sound, but he's not playing any of the right notes.' So I pulled him aside and had him play. I said 'can you play here?' He said 'can't see it, I'm having trouble seeing it.' I said 'why can't you see it?' He told me about this eye disease. He's basically slowly going blind. I had no idea! None of the teachers knew. I said, 'are you having trouble in any of your other classes?' So I talked to the other teachers. Not a single teacher knew that this kid was basically, completely blind. Why did the parents not inform us? Why did the counselors not inform us? He can't see the blackboard; he has to hold things really close. I have to blow up all his music to like giant size for him to be able to see. Kids like that are slipping through the cracks, we're not being informed about it. Like this kid when I found out about it, he has a nice sound but isn't playing any of the right notes. (Mrs. Danielle, Interview 2)

Mrs. Danielle discovered her student's disability through caring awareness and inquiry. This individual relationship fostered the trust necessary for individuals to seek support for their challenges from their instrumental music educators.

Continuity

The most emphatic answer to the question, "What is unique about music education with regard to providing care?" was the continuity of teaching students for more than one year. Continuity of person, place, curriculum, and purpose (Noddings 2003) were present in these four classrooms. Every participant spoke to how important it

was that teachers worked with the same students for years. Depending on teaching assignments, the instrumental music educators could teach the same group of students every year from middle school through high school.

> It's my favorite part of my job! I love that! You get to see them as 14 year-olds, and they're just 14 year-olds, whacky, goofy, relatively unfocused, usually. And then watching them grow up through the next four years, and by the time they really become wonderful, not that they weren't wonderful before, but mature adults, they leave… No one, no other class, even the sports teams, they'll move through their sports teams with different coaches. There's really no other class where they get that four-year continuity. So we have the opportunity to really be their anchor in school. 'No matter what else happens, I always have band. Next year I'm going to be in band. I've still got that group of people—that experience, with Mr. Andrew, and that is something that is consistently going to be there'… We have a unique opportunity because we have that longer span to do it (Mr. Andrew, Interview 1)

Not only is there continuity between years, but the instrumental music educators also see their students for more time, both during school and outside the bells. "I think we see some of our kids more than their parents" (Mrs. Danielle, instrumental music educator focus group). Marching band, concert band, jazz band, musical pit orchestra, basketball pep band, solo and ensemble, and myriad other opportunities created a vast amount of contact time between the instrumental music educators and their students. This time and continuity increases the potential for building trust and unique, caring relationships:

> It's that we see these kids for four years. I don't have these same connections with my junior high students. So that means that a science teacher who gets a kid for a year their freshman year and maybe a semester their junior year isn't going to build that relationship at all. (Mrs. Danielle, Interview 3)

Mrs. Abbott, the band parent from Atwater HS, agreed it with the importance of continuity and time facilitating relationships: "They interact with their band director every day. They can go to him, lean on him" (Mrs. Abbott, Atwater HS, parent interview). The result was that the instrumental music educators knew their students very well and cared for them: "You really know those kids. You know them inside and out, upside and down" (Ms. Catherine, Interview 2).

This extended contact with the instrumental music educators was valuable for the students as well. Blake trusted Mr. Brandon because of the amount of time he

spent in the band: "You know him better. You've had him for four years in high school when you're a senior. Other teachers you have for, what, three months sometimes? (Blake, Branford HS, student focus group). Derick felt the reason he trusted Mrs. Danielle was due to the amount of time they spent together:

> If you're in the music program, generally speaking, you're in it for four years. You have the same teacher for four years. So that makes her a very approachable person because she knows who you are, you know who she is. As opposed to different subjects in different areas where you have a different teacher every year most of the time, so you don't really get to build the same bond. (Derick, Drake HS, student focus group)

Casey valued this consistency with Ms. Catherine: "Reliability! You can rely on the fact that Ms. Catherine and the band will always be there for you and will help you get over anything" (Casey, Cobblestone HS, student focus group).

Benefits

Understandably, the participant music educators perceived that being a caring teacher increased the quality of the music they produced. Still, this was not articulated as a motivation to care, but as a fortunate result. Mr. Andrew felt the musical benefits were profound:

> It's not just icing, it's not just 'it'd be nice if…', it's a critical part of your job every day, looking out for the social and emotional well-being of kids and creating an environment that fosters that. You don't have to give up the quality music program, you don't have to give up much rehearsal time to make that happen. I think the benefits are so much, the musical benefits alone are so much. (Mr. Andrew, Interview 3).

Mrs. Danielle felt her students were motivated to achieve group musical success because of the relationships they developed: "Kids who feel comfortable with you are going to play better for you. They're going to be more loyal to you, and do what you say more than a kid that feels there isn't any connection at all or that you really don't care about them" (Mrs. Danielle, Interview 2). Further, "I think the relationship occurs and the musical product is strong because of the relationship" (Mrs. Danielle, Instrumental music educator focus group). The loyalty mentioned above was an example of an ulterior result from wanting to care and may put more emphasis on the teacher than ideally wanted in a caring relationship. Mr. Brandon

summed it up with, "Always reinforcing the strength of the personal relationship will improve the band" (Mr. Brandon, Interview 2). Understandably, the music teachers had responsibilities other than care and it is difficult to know what really motivated them to care. This relates to what Noddings calls "motivational displacement"—the ability to put one's own needs in the background in order to be completely engrossed in the needs of the cared-for (2005, 16). A focus on the needs of the band, or personal needs, brings up the possibility of insufficient motivational displacement in which case Noddings' caring ideal was not fully achieved. Nonetheless, motivational displacement does not preclude the possibility of simultaneous satisfaction of needs for the carer and the cared-for. It is also possible that the needs of individual students were fulfilled *through* the development of a strong band program. In other words, developing a strong band program is not necessarily self-serving on the part of the band director.

Conclusions

"A caring relation is, in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings" (Noddings 2005, 15). Through modeling care, engaging in dialogue with students, giving students the opportunity to practice care, and confirming the best in others, students can learn to care for others. The participant instrumental music educators actively modeled care daily, especially in how they handled interpersonal interactions and conflict. They could be found interacting with their students before and after class, engaging in dialogue and expressing a genuine interest in their students' lives. Students were given the opportunity to practice care in their classrooms and there was confirmation and trust in these classrooms—the instrumental music educators appeared to assume the best about their students.

There was a necessity for a certain level of teacher-driven interaction due to the unequal relationship of teacher and student (Noddings 2002), but usually with the best interests of the students being the primary concern. The teachers needed to maintain their role of mentors and leaders, but, as these instrumental music educators demonstrated, they were also driven by care for their students. As caring teachers, the instrumental music educators looked to provide the students with skills to care—"teaching them to be better humans" (Mr. Brandon).

Continuity, cited by Noddings (2005) as one of the most critical elements of care, makes music education unique among other subject areas. The participants in this study accomplished continuity of purpose by sharing specific goals of a music program dedicated to musical excellence. Continuity of people, place, and curriculum were accomplished by allowing students to study with the same instrumental music educator, in the same band room, learning the same subject for up to eight years.

Valuing the individual was another crucial element in building trust and individual relationships. Nourse (2003) cited the one-on-one nature of the private music lesson as an ideal environment to foster care. Because the participant instrumental music educators each encountered hundreds of students every day, it was virtually impossible to devote enough individual time and attention to create the "ideal environment for care" (66) for all students. However, teachers were still able to achieve a more limited level of care by striving to meet individual student needs as much as possible and by striving to create an overall caring classroom. As I watched the teachers in this study interact with their students, each gave as much of themselves to individuals as seemed possible. For Mr. Andrew, this was through complimenting 10 students a day, for Mr. Brandon it was telling the students to walk home safely. Silverman (2012) and the participants in this study represent the potential for care, even in difficult situations.

Other elements of Noddings' ethic of care were less evident in the teachers' practice For example, they did not consciously organize curriculum around themes of care, relax the impulse of control, reduce testing, or eliminate hierarchies. While these teachers demonstrate some promising examples of care in a band classroom, there is ample room for improvement. Relationships could be less hierarchical between the teacher and his or her students. Students and teachers could take additional steps to confirm the best in each other (Nodding 2003), the student voice would be heard more clearly both interpersonally and curricularly, and the role of both carer and cared-for could be shared more completely by all students.

Overall, these data also underscore the difficulties instrumental music educators may encounter while incorporating an ethic of care in band. The instrumental music educators clearly had the disposition to care and to interact with students both through and beyond the music; however, even these teachers struggled

to completely adopt Noddings' ethic of care in their large ensemble setting. The strategies presented above, in a sense, represent opportunities to break down the potentially oppressive nature of the band classroom (as described by Allsup and Benedict 2008, Bates 2009, and Silverman 2012). It was a conscious decision for the participant instrumental music educators to interact with their students beyond the music (not all teachers believe this is part of their job). Mr. Andrew, Mr. Brandon, Ms. Catherine, and Mrs. Danielle all had thriving music programs based on the relationships they have built with their students, families, and colleagues at school. They each had a solid reputation as a caring band director. Even though each one struggled with the concept of care and its application in band, they were expressly committed to serving as caring teachers, supporting students in any way possible:

> You just do it. You teach, you open up your doors, you open up your life, you open up your heart, you open up. You're there until the kids go home then you open up tomorrow. That's just kind of the way we operate. (Mr. Brandon, Instrumental music educator focus group)

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Notes

[1] For further details on the history and context of care ethics in relation to education see Silverman (2012).

[2] All names and places are identified by pseudonyms. To facilitate the organization of cases all pseudonyms associated with Atwater HS begin with A, all pseudonyms associated with Branford HS begin with B, all pseudonyms associated with Cobblestone HS begin with C, and all pseudonyms associated with Drake HS begin with D. Several pseudonyms do not follow this organization because they were not participants in the study but were spoken about by a participant.

About the Author

Scott Edgar is an Assistant Professor of Music and Music Education Coordinator at Lake Forest College in Illinois. His previous teaching experience in higher education includes work at Adrian College and Concordia University Ann Arbor. He is an active band clinician and adjudicator, and regularly presents at professional development and research conferences on music education and social emotional learning. He lives in Lake Forest with his wife Steph, their golden retriever, Ella, and their three cats, Stanzi, Elsa, and Wolfie.